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# The world's fare: food and culture at American World Fairs from 1893-1939

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**The World's Fare: Food and Culture at American World Fairs from 1893-1939**

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of  
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

by  
Elizabeth Badger  
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Kathleen L. Kitto, Dean of the Graduate School

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Dr. Mart Stewart

## **MASTER'S THESIS**

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Elizabeth Badger  
July 19, 2012

## Abstract

Why is the American culinary tradition as conflicted as it is? How is it that processed foods, foreign cuisine and home cooking can all be lauded as American ways of eating? This paper highlights the conflict between top-down government and corporate prescriptions on how we should eat and the reality of what was consumed by using American World Fairs as snapshots of particular points in time. Utilizing guidebooks, cookbooks, magazine articles and advertisements, this paper aims to show that these trends, rather than suddenly appearing, were already beginning to develop in part due to ideas presented at these fairs intentionally or otherwise. First covering the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, it highlights the growing rift between home cooks and secular and commercial reformers so that by the 1939 World's Fair, a visible schism between commercial ideas on how to eat and the ideas of gourmands and regular cooks had developed. At the same time, it highlights how neither message was negated by the counterarguments, resulting in a society that eats both hot dogs and lauds local, cooked cuisine. In other words, rather than change national paradigms, the new ideas presented at the fairs simply built on preexisting ones while giving reinforcement to others on why the old ones should continue to exist.

## Acknowledgements

This is a thesis that nearly did not exist. Had I initially chose to stick with my original academic path, there would have been no thesis. For that, I thank my committee chair, Professor Emeritus Leonard Helfgott, for finding value in the research paper I submitted to his research seminar on World Fairs and Spectacle, and subsequently giving me the push I needed to develop this into a much more in-depth analysis. I would also like to thank my other two committee members: Professor Mart Stewart, whose Environmental History course introduced me to the fascinating world of food history in the first place and who taught me vital methodologies for improving my research skills, and Professor Kevin Leonard, who helped me with the more technical questions about the process and was always willing to help me out even though we had only really met as a result of my work on the thesis. All of them helped me write, if not the best thesis, then certainly a thesis I could be proud of on my own. I only hope the fruit of their assistance is obvious for those who choose to read this paper.

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## Introduction

“The association of good food and fairs is traditional in America.” So begins Crosby Gaige in his introduction to *The New York World's Fair Cook Book: The American Kitchen*. In one single declaration, Crosby establishes how vital large public festivals such as fairs have been as a vehicle for food and its connection to cultural development. Though he proclaims it to be an American tradition, fairs and festivals in many countries have provided important outlets for the presentation and communal sharing of food, whether through food stands or pie baking contests. It is nearly impossible to disassociate food from fairs; most people have some fond memories of food connected to visiting fairs, whether it be cotton candy and corn dogs or giant pumpkins and squashes.

Crosby is not, however, chronicling a normal fair in his book, but rather the 1939 New York World's Fair, a megaevent which dwarfed most state fairs in size and scope. Like any fair, however, the 1939 World's Fair, as well as its predecessor, the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and all the World Fairs in between, dedicated portions of their exhibition spaces to food, whether it be via restaurants or displays. A World Fair provided a vibrant and highly visible vehicle for promoting new technology, new ideas, and new foods to the greater public, and corporations, governments and reformers alike took advantage of this. Of course, even without the political and commercial elements, people still needed to eat – something which provided alternative ways to filter food trends among visitors.

However, much like everything else at the fairs, the culinary visions these fairs presented were far grander than the simple presentations of county fairs. World fairs had grandiose visions of plenty in eras of want, though the ideals represented could be vastly different from each other.



The World's Colombian Expo of 1893, on one hand, embraced a vision of agricultural domination, with expanding and developing Western styles of agriculture viewed as the best way to deal with hunger on a global scale. Meanwhile, the 1939 New York World's Fair, over forty-five years later, saw the ascendancy of frozen and processed foods as the wave of the future. Both concepts were rooted in capitalistic and nationalistic ideologies which embraced American technology and industry as the way forward for food production. Furthermore, the fairs introduced and proliferated processed foods which later became iconic elements of American diets, such as Cream of Wheat at the 1893 exhibition and hot dogs at the 1939 World's Fair. A clear project of integrating capitalism with American foodways was underway.

Yet at the same time, the existence of cookbooks distributed during the fairs themselves indicate a promotion of culinary intimacy which seems counterintuitive to the broad uniformity suggested by the vast displays of plenty put forth by official and corporate interests. Cooking can be both a highly communal and highly private act – communal when the chef cooks food and shares it with other, swaps recipes, and uses meals as a method of social bonding; private because it is an act of self-sufficiency, allowing the chef to create his or her own meals without necessarily requiring precisely the sort of mass-produced products promoted by the fairs. They would seem, in that case, to be at odds with the broad messages presented by the fairs.

Then there's the matter of the various national pavilions and the restaurants they provided to feed hungry fair-goers. As expensive as they could be, they also served the purpose of helping introduce a wider public to cuisines foreign to them. This in turn begins to aid in the integration of international culinary trends into the broader American diet, even though such trends did not begin to gain broader visibility until the latter half of the twentieth century. Fair foods invited experimentation, and those who were willing to heed their calls found new methods of preparing foods and new tastes that could work their way into their own cooking styles.

However, do all of these trends necessarily clash with each other, or simply serve to create a greater diversity? What can be asserted for certain, in looking at all the different ways food is presented, served, and discussed at the fairs, is several distinct visions of the American national cuisine were being established. In studying the different methods of celebrating food, then, we can come to a better understanding about the ways in which the World Fairs contributed to the American diet. We can thus understand some of the trends which affect American tables to this day – one national, manufactured and fully tied to the capitalist system, one which promotes regional and local tastes to a wider audience, and one which aims to introduce eaters to a more cosmopolitan perspective on food, creating a diverse national diet created through the unique cultures of each area of the country and the world. In both, we can highlight the underlying tensions that exist between the industrialization of food and a desire to preserve and develop foodways independent of corporate interests.

In analyzing this issue, the paper focuses primarily on two fairs: the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition and the 1939 New York World's Fair, although it does take time to discuss the fairs that came in between in briefer detail. There are good reasons for focusing primarily on these fairs. Chief among them is the fact that both fairs took place in the midst of major economic depressions, making their imagery of plenty seem that much more essential. Also, by focusing on two fairs, one at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and one fairly well into the 20<sup>th</sup>, we can gain both an appreciation of the scope of changes that occurred in national views on agriculture, industrialization, and the role of food. Furthermore, by analyzing the more practical concerns in each fair with regard to cooking and the simple act of feeding attendees, we can see how much or how little cultural ideas about food among the general populace evolved between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and pre-World War II 20<sup>th</sup> Century America. If we contrast these two moments, we can understand how much of an influence larger forces honestly had on the American palate, and

how much of the old traditions continued in spite of modernizing forces.

### **Understanding the Study of the American Diet**

Before delving further into the subject of food and World Fairs, a fundamental question must be asked: Why, exactly, focus on food in the first place? The study of food, scientifically, is nothing new. Interest in the building blocks of nutrients and vitamins have existed since the turn of the nineteenth century, culminating in our current understanding of the building blocks of what we eat and leading to a number of scientific breakthroughs allowing food processors to fortify and alter foods to address deficiencies. The women of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries struggled to make cooking recognizable as a valid topic worthy of study at the collegiate level, both in its applied use of sciences and in its ability to morally uplift women of the lower classes to better provide for their families and thus reduce the social and physical problems that theoretically stemmed from poor cuisine. This eventually evolved into the applied science of home economics, a topic still seen today in high schools, and for a long time even offered at the collegiate level for women.

From this perspective, food has always inspired an intellectual interest, particularly in the refinement of our understanding of nutrition. However, actually investigating our beliefs, habits, taboos, and agendas in regard to food is another matter altogether, and one which until only very recently has been considered worthy of addressing at all. The reasons behind this lack of focus are best summed up by Deane W. Curtin and Lisa M. Heldke, who in *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food* notes that Western philosophic – and subsequently academic – inquiry has tended to “privilege questions about the rational, the unchanging and

eternal, and the abstract and mental; and to denigrate questions about embodied, concrete, practical experience.<sup>1</sup>” The pursuit of “higher truths,” as it were, required philosophers to separate the mundane day-to-day practices of human existence from the larger questions of who, why, and what we are as human beings. The greater concern was understanding why we think, and therefore we are, and not how we are what we eat. In short, philosophers and academics perceived food as too dull and self-explanatory of a subject to warrant anything aside from perhaps surveying the kinds of foods that were eaten, and those subjects were best left to science and its pursuit of understanding earthly things such as diet and nutrition, or to enthusiasts such as gourmands and journalists who could write entertaining tales about their culinary experimentation.

The gateway into opening serious academic interest into the nature of our dietary habits was provided by Claude Levi-Strauss, whose *Mythologiques* series began to propose that perhaps our belief in dietary norms was more of a construct than previously believed. In particular, his first volume, *The Raw and the Cooked*, brought to a larger audience an interest in food studies that go beyond simply what food is made of and how to make it. This observation has been made in many summaries of food history, but is one which has rarely bothered to delve into the larger question of what was so revolutionary about his approach. The subject is certainly about food, and ideas of cooked food versus raw food in certain South American tribes. The central focus of his thesis, however, intended to investigate not just the myths themselves, but, in his words, “how myths operate in men's minds without their being aware of the fact.”<sup>2</sup> By exposing both the tangled web of how mythologies from different tribes tied into each other without a particular start or end point – he states, in defiance of previously held beliefs on scientific and

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1 Deane W. Curtin and Lisa M. Heldke, *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), xiv.

2 Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, 12

historical methodology, that, “There is no real end to mythological analysis, no hidden unity to be grasped once the breaking-down process has been completed”<sup>3</sup> – and the fact that the very nature of mythology is as such that it functions in a fashion that does not necessarily have to be fully consciously applied to a human being's life to have an effect, he opens consideration not just of how mythology and belief systems affect these tribes, but also how they affect European beliefs. This new theoretical construct, attached as it was specifically to myths that related to the preparation and consumption of food, illustrated to those who read the work that even something as basic as the idea that cooked food is good and raw food is bad, that those who share their food are better people than those who hoard it for themselves, can in itself be a human construct and not a natural reality.

The incorporation of anthropology into historical research is an established historiographical turning point in historical methodology, as anthropologists such as Levi-Strauss and Clifford Geertz posited ideas that first began to call into question the notion of an objective truth of history. This led, eventually, into the development of cultural history and the study of the day-to-day practices of ordinary people. However, Levi-Strauss is still often cited as the primary influence behind the development of food studies, if only because the work focused specifically on food myths rather than other myths which might have influenced the day to day lives of the people he studied. By tying mythological study to scientific analysis, the gap between the philosophical realm and the scientific realm was bridged, thus providing the passageway for food to be considered on a higher level than simply as a substance put into human bodies to sustain them.

The beginnings of studying food as a cultural rather than natural phenomenon started in anthropology, but had not yet made the leap to the historical field. Arguably, Sidney W. Mintz's

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3 Ibid, 5

*Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* is the first major work to connect the anthropological interest in food to historical trends, and is frequently cited by historians such as Nicolaas Mink as vital towards removing what he termed “disciplinary boundaries”<sup>4</sup> between anthropology and history, thus paving the way for a new history of food. Its study into the source of demand for sugar in European history and its relationship to the Caribbean colonies, like Levi-Strauss's work, called into question the “natural” desire for sweetness among Europeans. By shifting focus from foreign tribes to Western civilization, however, he turned the perspective inwards, using social history as a method of creating what he called “an anthropology of modern life.”<sup>5</sup> More importantly, however, his work specifically linked anthropological food studies to historical theory, allowing for a deeper consideration of food habits as Westerners had developed them.

That said, American food studies specifically, though growing in number, are still a comparatively small field. Certainly, there have been a number of non-academic works on the subject, and even now many of the most well-known historical works on food have been written by journalists. Academic studies on American food habits beliefs, however, have only in the past twenty years or so begun to see any substantial growth. This point is most evidenced by Donna Gabaccia's experiences with the subject in her source notes in her book *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*,<sup>6</sup> published in 1998. The range of works have expanded considerably since then, but there is still room for more. Nevertheless, what writings do exist only help to illustrate the schizophrenic and seemingly contradictory nature of the American palate.

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4 Nicolaas Mink, “It Begins in the Belly,” *Environmental History* 14 (April 2009): 317.

5 Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985), xxviii.

6 Donna R. Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 235. Specifically, she states that “American eating remains a huge yet relatively unexplored topic.”

In focusing on the American story of eating, there are three distinct elements that appear in these works which are both contradictory and interwoven: the belief in an inherent immutability of tastes that prevents new cuisines from integrating properly into the American culinary tapestry, the belief that, on the contrary, American culinary habits have evolved and shifted to become more inclusive of other cuisines over time, and the belief that tastes are manufactured and constructed through commercial influence. All three of these ideas, in their total, help illustrate the complicated and diverse nature of the American gastronomic portrait, and also illustrate its complexity. Very rarely is one idea completely overshadowed by the others, and in order to fully understand how the American diet evolved historically, it is important to understand precisely how it is these three ideas interact with each other – and, more specifically for this paper, how these ideas appeared and collided at the various World Fairs between 1893 and 1939.

Historiographically, journalists were the first to heed the call to arms placed by Levi-Strauss's analysis of South American food myths, with most of the early works in the years immediately following publication of *The Raw and the Cooked* provided by notable food critics rather than academic thinkers. Among this new glut of historical culinary analysis was Waverly Root and Richard de Rochemont's *Eating in America: A History*. Published in 1976, the book is a basic overview of eating habits in America over the course of its long history. It also argues that American tastes are, for better or for worse – seemingly worse, based on the tone of their writing – still attached to their original British roots. “Americans were only perpetuating the example of their English ancestors, who, from time to time, had shown signs of a desire to profit by foreign example, only to revert quickly to comfortable conformity with the cooking to which

they had been accustomed,”<sup>7</sup> they proposed. American culinary tastes and attitudes, in other words, emulated the British in a conservative attitude that eschewed foreign influence in cuisine as much as possible. The book itself, however, does not go into a great deal of analysis into this thesis; the writers assert a monolithic sense of taste in America which is adapted from British tastes, but do not take nearly enough time to consider what those British tastes were. Part of this is the result of the writers attempting to keep the study contained entirely within American borders; as a result, we are told that there was a general rejection of foreign cuisine – he notes, for example, that French influence on American cooking, in the early days, were mostly more symbolic gestures than genuine integration<sup>8</sup> – but they do not provide enough of an overview of what British style cooking itself was like enough for the reader to gain an appreciation for the conservative nature he asserts. If anything, the text illustrates a fundamental weakness in maintaining a largely insular approach towards food history – namely, that failing to consider the international influences on cuisine, even that of the British, limits the analytical potential of a text. We see the potential for an in-depth analysis, but the reader cannot fully understand precisely what he is attempting to argue because he never fully defines what eating American entails. Root and de Rochemont reject the notion that eating foreign fare could count as American itself, calling the phenomenon of isolated ethnic cuisines “a melting pot in which nothing melts.”<sup>9</sup> It is a decent enough general overview of the foods that can be found across the nation, but hardly an adequate analytical text.

Taking the opposite stance, and representing the evolving palate argument, is *American Food: The Gastronomic Story* by Evan Jones. This book came out a year earlier than Root and de Rochemont's work, but rather than focusing on the ways in which American tastes remained

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7 Waverly Root & Richard de Rochemont, *Eating in America: A History*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1976), 11

8 Root and de Rochemont, *Eating in America*, 104.

9 Ibid, 312.



the same, Jones preferred to argue that the American style of cooking and cuisine had, in fact, been evolving since the beginning. Jones notes the post-World War II boom of interest in foreign cuisine simply a case of “repeating the pattern of bringing from abroad new ways of cooking to be incorporated into an American style that has been evolving since the arrival of the first settlers.”<sup>10</sup> Half cookbook and half history, Jones revels in the culinary diversity across the country, ranging from the influence of the Spanish in the Southwest to the “soul food” of African Americans with “the application of culinary genius to overlooked odds and ends and leftovers,”<sup>11</sup> to the contributions of the Pennsylvania Dutch and the Germans.<sup>12</sup> It thus establishes a diversity. The trouble, however, is that it is an exclusively Eurocentric diversity, noting only the contributions of various European immigrants, and considering little of the Asian – or even African, aside from those African Americans already present – contributions to the culinary fabric of America. Still, it provides a considerably more optimistic viewpoint of American food than Root and de Rochemont.

The previous two texts, while historical, lack a degree of analytical and critical thinking that would help promote them as useful in understanding to a full degree the way in which food interplays with the lives of Americans. Yet they show the seeds of a new way of thinking about food. Another text would start to ask necessary questions about what is lacking in food studies which would open the door to greater consideration of the full nature of the American palate. John and Karen Hess's *The Taste of America*, again the work of journalists rather than academics, opens quite obviously in the “manufactured tastes” mode of analysis into American eating habits. They argue more for the trained palate, the idea that the commercialization and processing of food has resulted in a dramatic shift in the way in which Americans eat, and not for the better.

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10 Evan Jones, *American Food: The Gastronomic Story* (New York: Dutton, 1975), 1.

11 Ibid, 83.

12 Ibid, 67.

“The truth is that good food in America is little more than a memory, and a hope,” they argue, noting that “Americans have been mouth-washed by generations of bad food and brain-washed by generations of bad advice about food, culminating in the gourmet plague.”<sup>13</sup> Simply by the tone of their writing, it is obvious they have an agenda that goes beyond an academic one, noting that the decline of American culinary tradition started about a hundred years prior to their writing, at about the time the Industrial Revolution began to make its impact on food. The book is, for the most part, an argument against the industrialization and commercialization of food. In order to make its point, however, the Hesses delve into the historical origins of American food, both before and after the dawn of food processing. They call food historians of the time to task, complaining of their tendency to cite stories without documentation, and noting that “the truth is more interesting though less tidy than the anecdote, but to find it requires tedious and meticulous research. And of course, the anecdote grows more pat with each telling.”<sup>14</sup> Though not themselves academics, they found that existing historical research about American gastronomy was severely lacking, often utilizing the most convenient and well-known stories to make their claims without sufficiently challenging the official narratives provided by the American food monoliths such as Borden and Armour.<sup>15</sup> They, instead, state that “our food history has generally been told backward, and upside down.”<sup>16</sup> In short, in focusing too much upon the producers who run the food industry, the very practice of food history itself has failed to properly analyze the then current state of American tables. Notably, they hew more towards the notion of traditional American palates as vibrant rather than conservative.

Concerns over corporate control of the distribution and production of food have been a recurring theme throughout all forms of food studies, including historical research. The Hesses

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13 John L. and Karen Hess, *The Taste of America*, (New York: Grossman Publishing, 1977), 2.

14 Ibid, 15.

15 Ibid., 15.

16 Ibid, 20.

touched upon some of the concerns in their book, noting the ways in which they have supposedly corrupted the American palate and distorted the historical view of how food came to be to the point of blatant inaccuracy. Levi-Strauss helped, with his theories on myth and subjectivity, to push academic and philosophical thinking on food. However, the increasing movement against the industrialization and corporatization of food can be more directly attributed to the increasing backlash against processed foods and an increasing gap between natural production and the grocery carts of consumers in the 1970s. This thinking eventually led to increased government interference into matters of nutrition, as well as the rise of organic and, eventually, local foods.<sup>17</sup> As more people began to ask questions about what they put into their mouths, more and more books began to question the nature of the American population's relationship with its methods of food production, a trend which still continues today in books such as Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. Likewise, increased historical research into how the situation evolved the way it did began to be produced. This subject of corporate influence of tastes is somewhat touched upon in academic history, but the real muck-raking tends to stem from concerned journalists outside of the academic field. Particularly excellent examples of historical investigation into industrial culinary meddling are Bee Wilson's *Swindled: The Dark History of Food Fraud, From Poisoned Candy to Counterfeit Coffee*, published in 2008, and Ann Vileisis's *Kitchen Literacy: How We Lost Knowledge of Where Food Comes From and Why We Need to Get It Back* published the same year. The former, covering trends both in England and in America, analyzes the various methods in which food has been unethically adulterated to increase profit, including dangerous additives such as alum to bread and the poor hygienic practices in meat factories that would eventually lead to the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act. The

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<sup>17</sup> For more in-depth analysis of this phenomenon, see Warren Belasco's *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took On the Food Industry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

latter focuses on ways in which food processors and so-called experts have increased the gap between our food's starting points in the fields and pastures and our tables, in the process surrendering knowledge of food to “experts.” Both books clearly take the perspective of the capacity for diets to be formed by outside influences, and use these concerns to inform their works.

The 1980s began to see the advent of more disciplined American food history. In particular, this time period saw the emergence and development of the study of foodways, the ways in which culture and food intertwine. Joe Gray Taylor, for instance, wrote of foodways as they developed in the American South, providing an illustration of Southern hospitality throughout the years, while fully admitting that “little effort has been made at analysis.”<sup>18</sup> This text, written in 1982, is primarily a wistfully nostalgic work. In contrast, a more academic example of such writings is Hasia R. Diner's *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration*, published in 2001, which investigated the ways in which the eating patterns of Italians, Irish, and Jewish immigrants changed as a result of moving to America. Diner, rather than writing simply to document a foodway, aims in her analysis of these three groups to gain better insights into their cultures by understanding their consumption patterns. She argues that the ways in which various cultures respond to problems of food scarcity and hunger, and the cultural constructions each community brings in regards to the importance and nature of food and eating, provides “both a window into and mirror of their culture.”<sup>19</sup> This, too, offers some insight into the importance of food studies in the analysis of cultural development; everybody, after all, has to eat, and analyzing how eating is approached can provide valuable cultural insight. The analysis of the foodway is a vital way of

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18 Joe Gray Taylor, *Eating, Drinking, and Visiting in the South: An Informal History*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), ix

19 Hasia R. Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 3.

understanding the ways in which national diet is constructed, but at the same time is limited in its national scope owing to its focus only on specific ethnic or regional groups as opposed to a unified national whole.

However, during this period of time, bodies of work began to emerge which did begin to analyze the nature and meaning of a “national diet.” Writers such as Laura Shapiro and academics such as Harvey A. Levenstein began to look at food in a more academic and analytical light. Both authors, in particular, focused their attention on the same turn of the century period that the Hesses had condemned in the 1970s as being the start of the decline of American cuisine. Shapiro's work, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century*, is as much a history about women as it is about food. However, in analyzing the connections between the mostly female-led domestic science movement and the developing trends of food and flavor into the twentieth century, her work becomes just as important in understanding both the increasing appeal of processed foods and the homogenization of cuisine which became such a pointed complaint both of Root and de Rochemont and the Hesses. The focus of these women on rudimentary notions of nutrition and a desire to promote moral growth through healthier eating, combined with the aid of major government and educational institutions, helped lead towards a sort of culinary amnesia in which Americans stopped knowing about their food and “content themselves with convenience, which has long been indistinguishable from progress.”<sup>20</sup> Shapiro's book leans more heavily in the idea of tastes as being manufactured even though, as she points out, these domestic scientists in the end were not able to influence the “recalcitrant nature of the American appetite” as much as they wanted.<sup>21</sup> More importantly, however, Shapiro began to draw lines between the development of culture and the development of the American diet that

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20 Laura Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), 7.

21 Shapiro, *Perfection Salad*, 10.

had previously been only lightly touched upon by the journalist writers of the 1970s.

Another major figure to emerge in food history in this period of time, and one of the few academic voices of the period, was Harvey Levenstein, with his first book on the subject being *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet*. He broaches on one of the other camps of food history, noting that there were, at least, “deliberate attempts to change the food habits of large numbers of people for secular purposes.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, he notes that those who succeeded in these attempts succeeded not just in changing American habits, but also in changing the rest of the industrialized world. However, he still asserts that “transported back to 1930, we would find the essence of the ideas which still guide our food choices well established.”<sup>23</sup> He argues, then, that in spite of the changes brought forth by those interested in changing the American palate for whatever reasons, the essential nature of American tastes has not changed. His study is a much more comprehensive exploration of the nature of eating in America rather than simply what foods are being eaten, looking at the various movements from class perspectives rather than regional. By comparing and contrasting the different eating habits of the upper, middle, and lower classes, as well as looking at the ways in which upper and middle class businessmen and reformers succeeded and failed to change the American way of eating to fit their specific moral and economic needs, Levenstein widens the scope of American food studies, and also highlights the degree to which political, economic and moral concerns manifest in the control of diet.

Writing about the American ways of eating began to hit its stride in the 1990s and early 2000s. Academics like Warren Belasco and Donna Gabaccia began to put out works that took issues of food and expanded them into a wider, more international context. During this period of

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22 Harvey A. Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), viii.

23 *Ibid*, viii.

time, the notion of the American diet as primarily Anglo-American began to be called into question. Gabaccia, in particular, questioned the idea of a monolithic American cuisine in her book *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*. Citing the increased profile of the bagel and its multiple ethnic culinary identities as Jewish, 'New York,' or American, Gabaccia argues against the assumption that the increase in the consumption of ethnic foods in America is either a recent shift in American eating habits or an indication of a degradation of the American diet.<sup>24</sup> Instead, by looking at the development of ethnic food exchanges and businesses, Gabaccia states that Americans have always had at least some interest in diversifying their diets. She notes that “As food consumers, Americans seem as interested in idiosyncratic and individualistic affiliations to the foodways of their neighbors as they are in their own ethnic and regional roots.”<sup>25</sup> Rather than focusing on the majority white middle class's eating habits and beliefs, by focusing on the ethnic cuisine of other immigrant groups, Gabaccia opens the way towards investigating something which previous, establishment-focused approaches could not uncover – namely, the dissemination of non-Anglo cuisines into the broader American diet. Furthermore, unlike Root and de Rochemont, who dismissed ethnic eating habits either as being too secluded to constitute part of the American diet or failing to constitute “true” ethnic cuisine – they reject, for example, foods such as vichyssoise and cioppino for being American inventions without considering the reasons why such foods would either be mistaken for foreign fare or would have been invented to be incorporated into it in the first place<sup>26</sup> – Gabaccia considers all cuisines which managed to cross over into the American public eye and tastebuds as constituting the development of an “American” gastronomy.

Belasco is a major figure in the study of food; in addition to his own works in the field,

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24 Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat*, 5.

25 Ibid, 9.

26 Root and de Rochemont, *Eating in America*, 277.

he has edited collected works and run academic journals that have allowed others to advance their own ideas in the field. His own works have covered a wide spread of material; his first book, *Appetite for Change*, covers the emerging counterculture of cuisine in America beginning in the 1970s, a period which is out of the time period this essay will cover. More relevant, and arguably even more important in terms of opening up the range of disciplines connected to the study of food, is *Meals to Come: A History of the Future of Food*, one of his most comprehensive works. Examining the way in which people have envisioned future methods of providing for humanity over the past two-hundred years, Belasco uses historical analysis of themes of abundance and scarcity in order to better inform debates in the present. He connects the study of food to the study of futurism, which he notes as of the 2006 publication of the book is a relatively new field.<sup>27</sup> (X) In connecting the two fields, Belasco shifts the conversation from simply a matter of how reformers used food to attempt to improve the present and instead examines how reformers, scientists, and industry approached issues of potential future food shortages, noting that “probably nothing is more frightening or far-reaching than the prospect of running out of food.”<sup>28</sup> He subsequently widens the range of cultural considerations in analyzing food by opening the possibility of concerns beyond the present. This is an important consideration; with food providing such an important element in national strategy and economic maneuvering, understanding the ideas that drive the pursuit of food is just as important as understanding the prejudices, biases and agendas that dictate the gastronomic concerns of the present.

Perhaps the largest body of work on American food history focuses on the connections between women and food. In some respects, researching food through women – or women

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27 Warren Belasco, *Meals to Come: A History of the Future of Food*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), x.

28 Ibid, vii.



through food – is almost a given. Sherrie A. Inness notes in the introduction to *Kitchen Culture in America: Popular Representations of Food, Gender and Race* that “the complex web of interrelationships among women, food, and cooking must be untangled by anyone wishing to understand American culture, whether in the 1700s or today.”<sup>29</sup> Women and food, she notes, “have been deeply connected for countless centuries.”<sup>30</sup> The woman has, in many cultures, traditionally been the household chef, responsible for most, if not all, of the menu selection and preparation of food in the house. Understanding their views, their roles, and their involvement, then, is vital both in uncovering the roles of women through the years and the ways in which cultural perceptions of food and drink have changed over the years. This approach of combining women's studies and food studies have resulted in a number of pivotal works in both fields. Shapiro's main body of work in *Perfection Salad* and other writings, as well as Inness's own book *Dinner Roles: American Women and Culinary Culture*, are primary examples of this woman-oriented approach. Vileisis's book *Kitchen Literacy* does not explicitly state in its introduction a heavy focus on women's studies, and yet women are closely interconnected with the history she develops, both in the writing of cookbooks, the purchase of food, and the subsequent process of food illiteracy that she bemoans. Both books have very clear agendas within them as far as informing and reforming peoples' views on food and the food industry.

American food history, then, has branched out and evolved into many different approaches and ideas, and continues to develop new insights even now. The study of food has evolved from simply a scientific concern to a multidisciplinary field revealing the myriad cultural influences that affect one of the most fundamental parts of human existence, the need to eat. The rituals, tastes, taboos, and agendas that inform American views on food also in their

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29 Sherrie A. Inness, “Introduction: Thinking Food/Thinking Gender,” *Kitchen Culture in America: Popular Representations of Food, Gender, and Race*, ed. Sherri A. Inness, (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2001), 3

30 Ibid, 6

own ways reflect American views on everything else, from change to foreign ethnicities and etiquette. The field continues to grow.

That said, in-depth analysis of cuisine as seen in the World Fairs is nearly non-existent. There are almost no academic books that focus primarily on this subject, and only a select few essays broach the subject with any depth, and typically focus primarily on the fairs that occurred after 1930. Belasco's *Meals to Come* covers the World Fairs in some depth, primarily due to the focus within those fairs upon ideas of modernization and the future of Western civilization, but focuses primarily on food as it relates to the larger thesis of futurism in ideas about food presented by official organizations. Shorter essays such as Gwen Kay's "Seeing the Fair the FDA Way: The 1933 Century of Progress Exposition" and Eve Jochowitz's "Feasting on the Future" discuss food issues as presented by government and commercial forces at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair and 1939 New York World's Fair respectively, but again, largely focus on the official presentations and little on the ground concerns. Otherwise very few essays delve much into the culinary discoveries, explorations and restrictions displayed in these grand megaevents. Again, the subject seems to be primarily of the interest of non-academic writers; Pamela J. Vaccaro, for example, wrote *Beyond the Ice Cream Cone: The Whole Scoop on Food at the 1904 World's Fair*, an exploration of the food available to the attendants of the St. Louis Louisiana Purchase Exposition. The internet also provides useful resources for food research, such the University of Buffalo Libraries' in-depth analysis of the food available at the Pan-American Exposition in 1901. In general, however, the focus has been primarily on other technological advancements put forth by the fairs, as well as the various racial and nationalist ideas the fairs have presented, while leaving the subject of food and gastronomy to the realm of historical curiosity. Considering the importance of food to the development of culture and progress, as illustrated in the many works already written about food history, this seems to be an

unfortunate gap in knowledge.

Even more lacking is an analysis on the ground forces at work in regards to food and culture. A World's Fair, obviously, cannot reflect the grand entirety of the American population, especially when taking into consideration elements such as cost and transportation that made attending the fair prohibitive to lower classes. However, focusing too much on the official and corporate lines risks obscuring the reality that the thousands of fair-goers faced once they left those exhibits and needed to feed themselves. Subsequently, in my research, I focused not just on the larger, educational and nationalistic exhibits, which were primarily aimed at influencing ideas, but also on sources and passages that discussed the more mundane elements. The guidebooks, for example, often included recommendations for restaurants and street food for visitors, and both the details of what they ate and what the books had to say about the food can reveal a lot about what constituted “normal” eating.

Also, nearly every World Fair had an official cookbook or two it used as a souvenir for visitors, which focused more on finding ways for visitors to prepare their food rather than lofty ideas on how they would obtain it. Despite the best efforts of food processors, these cookbooks frequently, with a few exceptions, relied primarily on regular, non-branded ingredients. While many of these books had their own promotional goals, the bulk of the text in each focuses on the act of cooking, and less on selling a message. Simply looking at the recipes, how they're written and what ingredients they use, can reveal a great deal about the palate of the writer and the intended audience. Because of this, the cookbooks are some of the best sources for cutting through the idealism of the fairs and focusing more on the actual consumption of food in the household.

With food history rapidly expanding as a field, we must consider all different avenues of research in order to gain the fullest picture of what constitutes our beliefs in one we eat. Donald

Worster stated – and Nicolaas Mink elaborated – that the study of food “begins in the belly.”<sup>31</sup> Although specifically referring to environmental history in the original context, it still provides an important context for understanding culturally how to approach our investigations into diet and consumption. We can understand how food is produced, but without understanding why it was produced and how it was consumed, our knowledge will remain woefully incomplete.

### **Dining in the White City: The 1893 Columbian Exposition**

America, approaching the eve of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, was already a country in flux, embroiled in the process of modernization and industrialization. The rural ideal was slowly giving way to urban modernity; increasingly, more and more people moved to the cities with their promises of industrial work and away from the farmland, and with that move came changes in living and thinking. Food and eating was no exception to this massive upheaval; the increasing disconnect from farm and country resulted in drastically different ideas and banks of knowledge about food than had previously existed. Regionalism still existed, but as technology allowed foods to be carried farther and farther away from their points of origin, the regions were increasingly coming to blur together. Ideas on food varied from class to class, but regardless, the culinary portrait at the end of the Nineteenth Century was drastically different from that at its beginning.

For the upper class, an embrace of the gastronomic ideals of the French meant increased interest in culinary betterment – but only insofar as how to prepare things the French way. The notion of an American culinary heritage was disparaged. An article as early as 1850 in the Burlington Free Press, as an example, lamented about the overemphasis on “good plain cooks,”

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<sup>31</sup> Mink, “It Begins in the Belly,” 312

and emphasized the need to teach young women better the principles of cooking, stating that “it is no very bold assertion that were such a knowing and judicious supervision generally exercised, the stomach diseases under which half our nation is said to groan, would be materially abated.”<sup>32</sup> The English style of cooking which predominated American culinary habits was increasingly seen as unpalatable in comparison to the superiority of other foreign cuisines; the same article quotes from another source a writer who stated that “The true difference between English and foreign cookery is just this: in preparing butcher's meat for the table, the aim of foreign cookery is to make it tender, of English to make it hard.” American cuisine, which followed in this tradition, was seen as poorly prepared and, in an issue that would continue to recur as the American culinary viewpoint began to shift and change throughout the Industrial Revolution, was accused of causing stomach upset. Gastronomy, it seems, was impossible for Americans to attain unless they evolved and adopted French and European cooking styles.

For the middle class, meanwhile, increased anxieties about emulating the culinary habits and traditions of the upper classes combined with the lack of access towards high quality, English-speaking servants meant finding new ways of accommodating both the luxurious meals necessary to establish one's position as a member of the middle class and the lack of fiduciary access to the same. In addition, reformers, placing the blame of most of societal woes on the increasing lack of knowledge among middle class women on matters of housework and cooking, began to push a program of domestic education on women in hopes of improving society through better housework. This became especially true after failed attempts for similar reforms of the lower class, of whom popular thought at the time concluded that their reduced circumstances could be alleviated by teaching them how to be more economical and thrifty with the food they

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32 “A Good Plain Cook,” *Burlington Free Press*, August 9, 1850.  
<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84023127/1850-08-09/ed-1/seq-1/>

bought and ate rather than by increasing their income. The turn of the century, in other words, was a very complicated time to be a diner in the middle class.

Not only urban shift, but also the very technologies ushered in by the Industrial Revolution resulted in changing cultural perspectives on food, cookery, and production. One reflection in this was an overall belief in the value of growth and increased production. As David F. Burg notes, “increasing production, employment, and income became the measures of community success, and personal riches the mark of individual achievement.<sup>33</sup>” In other words, the growth of excess was considered to be not only a matter of personal betterment, but also cultural superiority; a successful business man of the time could be considered “a genuine American hero.<sup>34</sup>” The value of technological development, then, was the ever-increasing capacity of industry to provide the productive increase demanded by the contemporary – and, as the industrial revolution pushed people towards the cities, increasingly urban – American.

The production of food was in no way exempt from this process. In spite of an increasing shift from a rural, agrarian society to the urban industrial complex, agriculture too was involved in the increasing mechanization and industrialization of the country. The capacity for technology to increase agricultural gains became not only beneficial, but morally appropriate; only through pushing gains and increasing land use could the food problems of the world be solved. More specifically, only Western technology could solve global hunger through the expansion and intensification of agriculture, an idea as deeply tied to the ethnocentric beliefs of America and the Western world as any given imperialist notions of the day.<sup>35</sup>

The industry of food processing was also beginning to grow and develop in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century. One historian, Nancy F. Koehn, estimates that total output in the food

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33 David F. Burg, *Chicago's White City of 1893* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 7.

34 Burg, 6.

35 Warren Belasco, *Meals to Come: A History of the Future of Food* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 28

processing industry increased by 1500 percent between 1859 and 1899.<sup>36</sup> Businesses and products which have become household names in the modern era such as Heinz and Nabisco were founded, developed and expanded. In short, as Bruce Kraig notes, the roots of the modern system of food production and distribution – and, one might add, commodification – can be traced to the advances in technology brought about by the Industrial Revolution as much as any other aspect of life in the Twenty-First Century.<sup>37</sup>

Chicago, in particular, had heavy stakes in the agricultural revolution that accompanied the industrialization of America. As a city whose rise in fortunes came primarily from its industrialization, and as a center of agricultural machinery, grain and meat processing, and brewing and culinary diversity, Chicago's stakes in the foodways of America were high. From a local standpoint, then, honoring agriculture and its bounty was a logical idea for an exhibit at the World's Fair; by promoting the scientific advances made in agriculture and food production, Chicago's position as a city integral to the national interests of America would be cemented in the American popular imagination.

At the same time, however, Chicago also needed to establish itself as something more than just a lowbrow, urban representation of a rural way of life. In spite of its wealth and prestige, the city could not, in the words of Erik Larson, “shake the widespread perception that Chicago was a secondary city that preferred butchered hogs to Beethoven.”<sup>38</sup> The city needed to establish itself as something more than just a dirty, industrial city. And with the World's Fair being held as a method of proving global superiority – not to mention being viewed as in direct

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36 Nancy F. Koehn, “Henry Heinz and Brand Creation in the Late Nineteenth Century: Making Markets for Processed Food” in *Business History Review* 73(3), 350

37 Bruce Kraig, “Favorite Dishes and the History of American Cookbooks” in *Favorite Dishes: a Columbian Autograph Souvenir Cookery Book* ed. By Carrie V. Shuman (1893; reprint, Champaign: University of Illinois, 2001), xli.

38 Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair That Changed America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 16

competition with the great Paris Exposition of 1889, which had established a new high point in World Fairs that had to be trumped by whichever city held the honor of hosting the 1893 Fair.<sup>39</sup> The burden of representing the entire country in its best light rested on Chicago's ability to elevate itself from this crude, unrefined image.

Thus, the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, designed as a celebration of the 400 year anniversary of Columbus's discovery of the New World, was designed in order to promote the Western idealized notion of civilization. The heavy reliance on neocolonial architecture, plus the image of purity called forth through the pure white coloration of the buildings (thus the name The White City), was all designed by the city's local architects to elicit this vision of a city at the peak of development, a Western utopia in direct contrast to the “Black City” which was Chicago. If this “low-brow” city was able to produce a World's Fair which could impress even other countries with its class and refinement, its image would be boosted considerably.

The Agricultural building served as the main plaza for the Exposition's presentation of food, although the Horticultural building served a similar purpose. As in everything else at the fair, the building's design carried heavily Eurocentric themes; one historian of the fair went so far as to describe it as “one of the most aggressively Roman structures of the fair.”<sup>40</sup> The Rand McNally guide to the fair described the building as “the more scholarly and refined” building in contrast to its nearest neighbor, the Machinery Building. If analyzed as a deliberate design choice, a valid interpretation of this arrangement would be an intent to glorify Chicago's historical and industrial connection to agriculture while simultaneously promoting the refined, sophisticated portrait the city aimed to construct for itself.<sup>41</sup>

The main portal to the building was known as the Temple of Ceres – in other words, the

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39 John E. Findling, *Chicago's Great World Fairs* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 6

40 Stanley Appelbaum, *The Chicago World's Fair of 1893* (New York: Dover Publications, 1980), 28

41 Rand McNally, *A Week at the Fair: Illustrating the Exhibits and Wonders of the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1893) 76



most important entrance to the building was dedicated to a Greco-Roman Goddess of Agriculture.<sup>42</sup> The theme of abundance is prevalent in the artwork illustrating an abundance of crops native to America,<sup>43</sup> and in the myriad of enormous displays of food. Ontario, for instance, chose to emphasize their role in cheese production not merely by displaying the variant cheeses, but by one particular display: an eleven-ton cheese, made by a man named J.A. Ruddick from Perth with the assistance of several different cheese producers in Ontario, and one he was “exceedingly proud of.”<sup>44</sup> This, in conjunction with other similarly enormous displays of culinary artisanship such as the chocolate Venus De Milo and Californian prune sculpture, shows that size was just as important in the promotion of a country and its foods as bounty.<sup>45</sup> Belasco likens these displays to similar displays at smaller, more local agricultural fairs, noting “that evolutionary progress would gradually increase the size of everything was a staple of classic futurism.”<sup>46</sup> Being able to grow large crops, like being able to grow greater expanses of them, were in other words visions of a future of plenty brought about by agricultural science. The capacity to utilize this bounty in clever, aesthetically pleasing ways, furthermore, was a display of civilization; the combination of art with food in these fashions display a sense of mastery over the natural world that would not otherwise be obvious simply by displaying the foods by themselves. So great is the bounty of these various lands that they have enough both to feed the general population and still, say, create a miniature corn palace.<sup>47</sup>

With the abundance of crops came a celebration of the technology that enhanced the yield. The *Official Guide to the World's Columbian Exposition* paid particular attention to the

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42 Burg, 158

43 McNally, 120

44 Truman, Major Ben C. *History of the World's Fair; Being a Complete Description of the World's Columbian Exposition From Its Inception*. 1893, 267.

45 Belasco, *Meals to Come*, 155; McNally, *A Week at the Fair*, 126; John Joseph Flinn, *Official Guide to the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: The Columbian Guide Company, 1893), 132.

46 Belasco, 154

47 Truman, 269.

displays of agricultural experimentation stations and machinery.<sup>48</sup> Though the decorations may evoke mythological origins to the bountiful plenty provided by the farms of America, the people responsible for the exhibits at the Agricultural Building made a point through these displays that science, not superstition or primitive methodology, provided food for Americans, and would only provide more food yet as the population began to expand. These great advances in the production of food were thus emblematic of the greater progress of humanity towards civilization, and towards a scientific future in which all humans everywhere could be fed sufficiently.

Indeed, science was at the center of the government's display of food. A series of scholarly documents were produced during the course of the fair, although they were not published until a good eight years afterwards. These works sought, according to W. O. Atwater, to ensure that “the influence of the Exposition to be permanent, to continue long after the Fair is done and these buildings are gone.”<sup>49</sup> Atwater's wanted to analyze the various foods and, subsequently, produce a document intended to educate the American populace on the nutritional value of the foods they ate. Of particular note in his mission statement, however, is the objective of “how they can obtain the most and best nutriment at the lowest cost.” By “they,” and based upon conclusions made by other food history writers studying this era, the most logical conclusion is that the report is aimed primarily at encouraging lower classes to eat the healthiest they could within their budgets. This coincides with popular belief among middle class reformers that the poor should, rather than receive an increase in cost of living expenses, learn how to be smarter about the food they consumed and to “live within their means” instead.

Furthermore, his document reflects the biases that existed in scientific understanding of

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48 Flinn, 49-51.

49 Professor W. O. Atwater, “Preliminary Report of Investigation of Foods Exhibited at the World's Fair,” *Report of the Committee on Awards of the World's Columbian Commission: Special Reports Upon Special Subjects or Groups, Vol. I* (Washington: Government's Printing Office, 1901), 499.

nutrition at the time, and in particular Atwater's focus on the necessity of protein in the American diet. For a start, he focuses exclusively on meat, arguing that other studies were already being performed in regards to vegetables and dairy products, noting that “the meats are much more variable in composition and nutritive value than either dairy products or vegetable foods.”<sup>50</sup> This is an interesting comment considering modern understanding of fruits and vegetables. However, Atwater maintained a belief that protein was the most valuable nutrient, arguing that because of its multiple roles as “flesh formers” and fuel for the body, its role clearly trumped any other nutrient. This was before vitamins and minerals were fully understood, as well as the dangers of overeating fat and carbohydrates – both of which Atwater argues in this document as being vital for being “economizers or protectors of protein.” How fitting, then, for him to perform such a study during a World's Fair set in one of the predominant cities in meat production and distribution, where presentations of meat products would be just as bountiful as that of fruits and grain.

Significantly, however, while the exhibits flaunted the bounty of American farmlands, close examination reveals a disconnect between the natural world that provided the food and the intended urban audience of the fair. The shift from rural to urban life made knowledge that had once been taken for granted foreign. As a result, while previous generations would have possessed general, if not scientifically specific, knowledge on the nature of seasonal growth, production, and environmental considerations, the exhibits of crops at the fair, by the rules of the exhibition, had to provide all of this information as part of the exhibits, ranging from simple, obvious data such as the name of the crop to more specific farming concerns such as soil type and farming methods.<sup>51</sup> Such information would only be considered educational and interesting

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50 Atwater, 501

51 Flinn, 50

to those who had not had firsthand experience with cultivating and growing the crop themselves. This illustrates as well the effects of improved modes of transportation upon food knowledge; the fact that said crops could be transported from hundreds of miles away necessitated the provision of information by the exhibitors so that people understood exactly what food they were viewing.

While the Agricultural Building flaunted the bounties of nature brought on by the development of new farming technology, it also demonstrated the increasing shift in American culinary thought from a focus on the natural to a focus on the manufactured. The 1893 Expo carries various food-related milestones, particularly as the first place where classic processed American food staples such as Cracker Jacks and Shredded Wheat were first introduced to the American public.<sup>52</sup> However, Belasco is quick to point out that while these foods may have been indicative of the later market, by themselves they “simply expanded on foods and tastes already well known.”<sup>53</sup> In other words, the origins are there, but the push towards synthetic foods as opposed simply to new uses of foods found in nature had not yet developed. That said, even if they did utilize natural products, they are still processed by factories rather than created fresh. In that respect, they are representative of the increasing length of the chain between the producers and the consumers; rather than buying, say, the wheat in a bundle and producing shredded wheat in the home, the new urban consumer in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century would instead buy the product produced by a company that had bought the wheat and prepared the product for them – and indeed, as Americans were increasingly prodded towards trusting the expertise of food industries, this became the preferred method. Considering however much a part of the American culinary fabric both of these foods eventually came, the significance of their premieres cannot be completely ignored. They are made from nature, and yet they themselves are not

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52 Larson, 5

53 Belasco, 161

natural foods, nor are they homemade.

Furthermore, evidence exists in the guidebooks of a concentrated effort to promote forms of food that had previously been regarded as unnatural. The *Official Guide to the World's Columbian Exposition* put out by The Columbian Guide Company, for example, specifically notes canned goods as part of the myriad of horticultural displays for vegetables. Displays of canned goods, for example, may seem odd to a modern reader used to seeing them on store shelves, especially in a section of the fair purportedly dedicated towards the cultivation of natural crops. To the fair-going populace in the midst of massive paradigm shifts, however, presenting the canned good as something worth marveling at and examining indicates an attempt on the part of the fair to legitimize its use. Vileisis, in deconstructing the process which resulted in the decrease of innate knowledge on food and its natural origins, notes that cans were initially held in suspicion because of the way they hid their contents, stating that “Not being able to see, smell, or touch what was inside a can until it was home made it impossible for shoppers to determine the quality of its contents using traditional and sensuous cues.”<sup>54</sup> In other words, the inability to use traditional knowledge on how to determine the quality of food made cans a dicey prospect for shoppers at first. With the presentation of these cans in such an aesthetically pleasing and organized fashion, however, the exhibit seems to invite the viewer to trust the products within, and subsequently trust those who manufactured them. Connecting them to the natural world by having them prominently displayed in the Agricultural Building, a building dedicated to the natural production of food and the triumph of science over nature's restricting elements, only further reassures a culture worried about the contaminating effects of urban life.

We gain, then, a better sense of the national vision of feeding the populace as presented by the fair – or at least the Agricultural Department. With a focus on increased production,

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54 Vileisis, 77

hygiene, and health, the most prominent official displays illustrate a straightforward agenda of food as a method of subsistence rather than a means of enjoyment. Analyzing the Midway, however, provides a different philosophy of food in the form of the myriad of restaurants found in the various “national villages.” In these little recreations of various parts of the world, cuisine becomes a method of travel, a way for otherwise landlocked residents of America to visit distant locales without leaving the White City. Furthermore, the cuisines offered by these “villages” were not simply safe, comfortable dishes, but in fact offered some of the most dramatically unusual fare of the fair.

The Rand McNally Guide, for example, has this to say about the Swedish Restaurant:

Its architecture represents a tavern in Southern Sweden, and the structure, cooking, and bill of fare are thoroughly Swedish. Guests may here enjoy, if they can, smoked reindeer, baby sausages, craw-fish tails, raw “delikatess,” herring, fried stromming, smoked goose breast, reindeer tongues, and “graflax,” a conglomeration that no one but a Swede has ever yet succeeded in eating. Swedish “brannvin,” a potato whisky, is there to wash down this bill of fare, which in addition to the articles named includes, of course, many common to the tables of all people.<sup>55</sup>

The writing suggests a sense of daring, urging adventurous visitors to the fair to try foods that would otherwise clash with American tastes. The restaurant, notably, offers an out in the form of food “common to the tables of all people,” but the most detailed portion of this writeup focuses on the unusual meats offered by the Swedes. By suggesting to the reader to try and eat foods that “no one by a Swede has ever yet succeeded in eating,” the guide indicates that by consuming these foods, the fair-goer can, however briefly, be “Swedish.” In this case, nutrition and cost does not enter into the pleasure of food. To be fair, based on the wry analysis of the cuisine, the guide is not certain that taste comes into the equation either, but the point remains that this is a solid illustration of food as something other than a political or moral platform.

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55 McNally, 168

The safe foods offered by the guide in these restaurants also provide a subtle look at the food enjoyed by the average American, the comfort foods eaten in case they find their courage fleeing in the face of more ethnic cuisine. This is most notable in the description of the fair located in the Chinese Village, in which the familiar is used to punctuate the exotic:

The restaurant is conducted upon both the American and Mongolian plans, and fried chicken, ham sandwiches, etc., will alternate with Chinese fruits, preserves, shark's fins, bird's nest soup, and similar delicacies. The tea garden shows a fine collection of teas, some priced at \$100 per pound, and requiring but a few leaves to make a full pot of tea.<sup>56</sup>

Clearly in this example, the ham sandwiches and fried chicken are meant to be the “American” offerings, a safe haven in a sea of strange, potentially unpalatable foods. The offer of alternatives, in this case, is much more pointed than it was in the example of the Swedish restaurant. Compared to consuming shark fins and birds' nests, the notion of eating fried chicken and ham sandwiches, to an American raised on such fare, would seem to provide an easy out, a relief for those who find the food of the Chinese too “exotic.” Add to this the high price of the proffered teas, and suddenly Chinese food seems forbidding, a high hurdle only those with a sense of adventure – and a large pocketbook – can ever hope to enjoy. For those who do manage to overcome these obstacles, however, the offered cuisine provides a glimpse at a foreign culture, a chance to eat as they eat. Just as eating Swedish cuisine allows the consumer to be Swedish, eating Chinese food provides the ability to become Chinese – at least over the course of dinner.

The restaurants, however, were primarily for the sake of people who could afford them. The fair still provided “safe” food for the unadventurous, although, as an article in the New York Times railing angrily at the price of “stale sandwiches, tough donuts, and indifferent coffee” suggests, much of this aimed simply to nourish rather than to please the palate. (Note that, in all fairness, the article reads more bitterly than necessary, suggesting that the situation may have

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56 McNally, 232

been exaggerated considering that New York had lost the bid for the Exposition.) According to one estimate, approximately 300,000 people a day ate lunch on the fairgrounds, with the rest of the visitors choosing to eat outside of the park before they paid for admission. Furthermore, in the same account, approximately one-third of the fairgoers chose to bring picnic lunches rather than pay for what was probably mediocre food. Though we may never get a fully accurate picture of what these lunches contained, the writer providing these statistics had his own solid idea of what they would contain: "boxes and baskets containing sandwiches, pickles, pie, cake, and other articles of food generally contained in a well supplied picnic repast." Certainly nothing like the foreign cuisine offered at the restaurants, but perhaps a better gauge of the sort of food the average white American would rather feed themselves at the time.

Cultural comparison through food was prevalent throughout the fair, and not simply in the restaurants. Food, in fact, could just as easily be used to judge other cultures as it could be used to enrich one's own. Typically, these comparisons emphasized the primitive nature of the other culture in opposition to Anglo-American cuisine with its nutrients, protein, and other enlightened dietary elements which made it a far superior diet in their eyes. This trend can be observed in general in America at this point in time, but the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition had a particularly unique point of comparison in the form of the Javanese village in the Midway Plaisance. Largely a curiosity for the fair goers, the Javanese village fascinated academics and the public alike, prompting observations to their behavior such as:

Nothing can be more perfectly entrancing to the female mind than to see a characteristic little family group seated upon the veranda of a bamboo house, in the cool of the evening, enjoying the common meal. "How perfectly cute!" they say, as they watch a little brown-skinned mite of a child poking its tiny fingers into the common bowl of rice, and "cooing" with all the pleasure of an infant as it succeeds in catching a morsel of the toothsome food.<sup>57</sup>

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57 Truman, 565-566



The writer is condescending, later calling the Javanese a “free and untrammelled race,” as if unconcerned with the graver considerations that civilization brings to bear on people. Indeed, the way in which the writer describes the child eating could easily be used to describe an ape eating in the same way, with the child's awkward motions and joyful reaction at “catching” food; the child is not even given the dignity of an identifying sex. The notion of eating with the hands rather than with assistive tools only further adds to the image of the Javanese child as primitive, especially when taken into consideration the amount of ritual and ornamentation went into eating during this period of time.<sup>58</sup>

Interestingly, the fairgoers were not the only ones making observations about the eating habits of the Javanese. The same essay of Atwater's that proclaims the value of understanding the nutritive values of meat also included a section which provided an in-depth analysis of the food consumed in the same Javanese village, as part of an overall analysis of the sort of food consumed in the Midway Plaisance. It is a particularly fascinating section, actually, not only for its lack of value judgments – at no point does Atwater show any sort of disdain for the sort of food being eaten by the Javanese – but for a surprising amount of respect which is not similarly reflected in the travel guides. “Indeed,” he notes, “their intellectual and social status was not appreciated by visitors, many of whom regarded them as little else than curiosities.”<sup>59</sup> He does, however, take care to note that even the men only partake in some of the lighter duties necessary for maintaining the village, and the women partaking in hardly any strenuous activity at all. This observation could be interpreted as establishing that the Javanese diet is possible only in the sense that they are not doing hard enough work to require the amount of fuel Atwater saw as necessary for the American worker.

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58 For more on this, see Susan Williams, *Savory Suppers and Fashionable Feasts: Dining in Victorian America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996).

59 Atwater, 534

In all of these reflections of food, one element has yet to be considered, yet it may be one of the most central elements to consider in regards to any consideration of food and culture. That factor, quite simply, is women. Women were charged, through domestic work and cooking, with preventing everything from malnutrition to moral collapse. Furthermore, women of the period developed interest in creating a separate but equal sphere of professional scientific research. With these developments, women provided both displays of highly deliberate attempts at secular reform and a subtle illustration of the state of American cookery at that point in time. The former represented itself in the form of the New England Kitchen, the work of Ellen Richards and the burgeoning study of domestic science, later to become home economics. The latter, meanwhile, presented in the form of what would prove to be a relatively common artifact in all subsequent world fairs as well: the official cookbook, a tome distributed by the heads of the Women's Building at the fair as a method both of promoting the fair and themselves. This book, *Favorite Dishes*, shows a number of shifts, tastes and ideas in the nature of cookery that are just as important to note in considering the full picture of food's story at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition as the flashy displays of chocolate statues and the many exciting examples of foreign cuisine. In particular, while the New England Kitchen is an example of women's attempt at national manipulation of the American diet, the cookbook represents the ways in which local and regional foodways continued to exist even in the midst of pressures to reform.

*Favorite Dishes* can, and has been, interpreted as a text designed as a promotion of women more than it is a promotion of the traditional art of cooking. Indeed, the introduction text explains the purpose of the cookbook as “an additional avenue for women to provide the necessary funds to pay the expenses of a visit to the Exposition.<sup>60</sup>” Regardless, the book is just as much about the food as it is about the women who contributed to it. The first few pages focus

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60 Shuman, *Favorite Dishes*, 3

on the best preparation of commercial drinks such as tea and coffee. The recipe list runs through bread, soup, fish, shellfish, sauces, meats, sweetbreads, poultry, game, vegetables, eggs, salad, doughnuts and fritters, preserves, pickles and catsup, cheese, pies, pudding, cake, cookies, desserts, ice cream, candy, punch, beverages, and finally an old-fashioned idea known as a chafing dish, an order which Bruce Kraig in his essay written for the 2001 publication of the book emulates the order of European-style feasts.<sup>61</sup> Each recipe includes the signature of the woman who donated it. The recipes themselves are fairly rudimentary; some of them do not go any further than a simple list of ingredients and steps. However, those which do include personal notes by the authors are wont to use a folksy, conversational style which provides a personal touch to their contributions. One contributor, a Mrs. Rosine Ryan, notes of her recipe for Ham Toast that “among the happy recollections of my childhood, luncheon Ham Toast stands out temptingly clear. It was my mother's own, and I give it in preference to several others that occur to me.”<sup>62</sup> Another woman, a Mrs. Schuyler Colfax, admits that she took her recipe for sweetbread croquettes from another printed source, but notes that “as it is the best one that I have ever tried, I send it.”<sup>63</sup>

The cookbook is very much a product of its time. There are recipes contained within for things such as terrapin and sweetbreads, items which have fallen out of favor with modern American palates, although they are still consumed as delicacies. (Terrapin, in particular, is considered rather politically incorrect in the wake of increased environmental awareness and the passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1966.) It is also a product of the class of women providing the recipes themselves. Kraig notes that “There are several underlying presuppositions in... the book itself. These have to do with the nature of household arrangements among

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61 Kraig, lii

62 Shuman, *Favorite Dishes*, 23

63 Shuman, *Favorite Dishes*, 66.

America's well-to-do, class divisions, family and local traditions, commonality of experiences among women, availability of ingredients, and, as mentioned above, cooking technology.”<sup>64</sup> We cannot forget, in other words, that this text is predominantly a product of upper class women with firm ideas about the best ways to promote the agendas of women, with class-based assumptions about female experience that perhaps is not reflected so much within the greater tapestry of American women. As if to establish this, one recipe for Sauce Mousseline includes an almost bragging note about how the recipe had been given to the contributor by the chef of Prince Jerome Bonaparte; certainly, very few lower class women could boast such a source.<sup>65</sup> This does not mean, however, that it should be discounted, as it does provide insight into the sort of recipes valued by women of that economic bracket at that particular point in time. Furthermore, placed into context next to the Fair itself, there are a number of ways in which it does not fit in closely with the industrialization of food.

Elements of the cookbook are firmly lodged within the domestic science movement of the 1890s. The style of the recipes lies somewhere between the imprecise style of recipe writing from the earlier days of cookbook writing and the mathematically precise, impersonal style of later cookbooks. Furthermore, the last section features recipes which require the use of chafing dishes, a style of cooking considered ideal by adherents to domestic scientists owing to the minimal need to actually touch the food being prepared. Laura Shapiro, in writing about the advent of domestic science, notes that “by far the most popular dishes in cooking-school classes and public demonstrations were the ones that emphasized a highly recognizable femininity and put up a firm aesthetic barrier around the food.”<sup>66</sup> Chafing dishes, by allowing a woman to cook without having to interact with the food as much as traditional recipes, would therefore have

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64 Kraig, L

65 Shuman, 53

66 Laura Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), 102

been an appealing methodology. That said, the way in which it is sequestered at the back of the book makes its inclusion almost more of a concession than an endorsement. Perhaps this is simply because these dishes do not fit in as easily into the traditional style of meal the book's format represents, but the point remains that the method of cooking embraced by domestic scientists as ideal is clearly more of an afterthought to the women in charge of producing the book.

In fact, the domestic science movement itself had its representative at the Fair properly, though not in the Women's Building itself. The Massachusetts display included a model of the New England Kitchen, an idea of the domestic science movement intended to promote hygienic, healthy cooking through what the creator, Ellen Richards, envisioned as “a cooking laboratory where rigorous experimentation would lead domestic scientists to the discovery of infallible methods for preparing the most inexpensive and nutritious dishes.<sup>67</sup>” This method of thinking about food, however, prioritized health over flavor. It called for, in other words, an absolute standardization of food preparation that prioritized a scientific ideal of health over individual tastes. Subsequently, the women who created this display provided a competing vision of foodways to the ones presented in the cookbook, where if the women did not themselves actually devise the recipes – and, in many cases, did not even cook any of them by themselves – they did at least reflect the diversity of cuisine better than the New England Kitchen would have even desired to do.

Furthermore, when comparing the nature of the New England Kitchen with the cookbook as a cultural object, the cookbook accounts much more for basic culinary literacy. The cookbook was, according to Ann Vileisis, a development of the market, as more women began to buy ingredients rather than grow them, and while this may have resulted in a reduction in firsthand

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67 Shapiro, 148

knowledge of food and foodsheds, at least still required some basic knowledge in order to decide on the best quality of food.<sup>68</sup> The New England Kitchen, conversely, believed not only in the production of a standardized type of food such as soup and stew, but also encouraged those who visited to take that which was prepared at the kitchen home with them rather than learning how to make it themselves.<sup>69</sup> It contains an inherent belief in the inability of the American consumer to cook the healthiest, best choices for themselves, and is arguably much more in favor of the standardized sort of food processing turn of the century industry brought with it. The cookbook, meanwhile, does not argue outright against the use of prepackaged foods – several recipes ask for flour, which by the time of the cookbook was wildly available pre-processed in markets -- but neither does it explicitly condone it. As recipes acquired through tradition and cultural exchange rather than devised through scientific development, they argue by their nature a continued reliance on inherited knowledge of flavors and ingredients – a foodway constructed through local and regional ideas, in other words.

The format of the book is, as stated before, European in its arrangement of recipe sections. That said, some of the recipes contributed are distinctly regional in character. Recipes for gumbo and okra soup can be found, and the aforementioned terrapins recipe is listed as “Maryland Terrapins.”<sup>70</sup> A couple recipes stand out among all the others. The recipes provided by Senora Don Manuel Chaves are the only recipes in the book written in Spanish rather than English. Translated, the recipes are rather perfunctory, but their presence is notable for their unusual foreignness in a cookbook otherwise dominated by European tastes and ideals. Kraig notes the recipe in particular as being evidence of “ethnic foods and foodways entering the

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68 Ann Vileisis, *Kitchen Literacy: How We Lost Knowledge of Where Food Comes From and Why We Need to Get It Back* (Washington: Island Press, 2008), 31-33.

69 Shapiro, 148

70 *Favorite Dishes*, 43

mainstream.<sup>71</sup>” It is definitely curious that no effort was made to translate them, and one of them in fact seems to have been misspelled in the process of entering the recipe into the cookbook. (The recipe for Pollo con Arroz calls for a “cobolla” rather than “cebolla,” which would be Spanish for “onion;” this indicates either a lack of knowledge in the language or a lack of desire to proofread the recipe.). If anything, the nature of this recipe simply cements the personal nature of the cookbook; presented as is, with an assumption of audience, the recipe becomes part of a dialogue about food.

In the end, *Favorite Dishes*, while perhaps still rooted in old-fashioned ideas of recipe writing, sharing, and presentation, does not provide a great deal of conflict with the Fair itself, aside from the ways in which it contradicted the New England Kitchen. However, it does provide insight to a much more personal, regionalized view of food. The Fair itself, outside of its main displays, showed similar regional options; chili, for example, first gained national interest at the fair.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, we can observe the formation of trends both in the broader presentation of the fair and in the cookbook that will be important to take into consideration farther down the line, with the desire to feed the multitudes increasingly coming into conflict with individual tastes.

The World's Columbian Exposition promoted visions of great bounty, and a future of enlightened, healthier eating. Underlying these grand visions, a smaller picture of growing ethnic culinary diversification manifested in the form of the various foreign restaurants, hinting at future integration of other cultures' cuisines into the American palate even as tied as they were to racial prejudices. Despite this influx of new ideas and tastes, however, concessionaires and visitors alike still gravitated towards the familiar flavors and treats, whether it be ham

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71 Kraig, lxi

72 Megan J. Elias, *Food in the United States, 1890-1945* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2009), 3.

sandwiches or roasted nuts. That so many of the fairgoers chose to bring their own food rather than pay the exorbitant prices for food at the fair indicates that for the most part, fantastic new cuisines were largely for those who could afford it, or had an adventurous streak. Furthermore, for most fair-goers, ideas were simply ideas. They could get a take-home container of tomato soup from the New England Kitchen, but the later failure of the Kitchen to take off as a successful national trend shows that most people went right back to their normal picnic lunches afterwards. Finally, the cookbook shows that while new ideas are good for promoting a fair, the best choice to sell a cookbook is to rely on the tried and true. In short, what the public thought about food and what they were being taught to think about it did not perfectly align.

At the same time, however, the divide was not yet as obvious between the old ways and the new. The 1893 fair showed hints at the ideas that would later develop into a full-fledged food industry based on science and reduction of kitchen labor, but most foods were still recognizably natural. The New England Kitchen is the only real indication of a shift towards discouraging home cooking in favor of ready-made products in the form of its emphasis on homogeneity over bold but unhealthy traditional cooking. As we shall see, however, as food processing became a larger industry and science began to reveal more secrets about the nature of food, the divide between the nostalgic and the future became much wider.

### **1899-1915: The World's Columbian Exposition Elaborated**

The years between 1893 and 1939 saw a progression of other World Fairs take place in America, which in turn saw various food ideas and products introduced to the populace. For the most part, the fairs immediately preceding the World's Columbian Exposition continued to develop and propagate the ideas put forth in that fair. Only the Chicago's World Fair of 1933 introduced the beginning of a different set of ideals, which would be presented even more



sharply at the 1939 World's Fair in New York. Still, the three simultaneous notions of experimentation, homogenization, and industrialization of the American cuisine can be seen developing with each new snapshot the fairs provided.

Hygiene continued to be a recurrent and developing theme throughout the world fairs as concerns over food fraud and adulteration began to mount at the turn of the century, with the apex of concerns being the release of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, a famous piece of socialist muckraking whose vivid descriptions of the horrors of the meat industry culminated in the creation of the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906. These hygiene exhibits continued to be a regular feature at World Fairs. Even before the passage of this act, talks and displays at World Fairs indicated building support for better hygienic practices in the handling of food. The 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exhibition in St. Louis boasted a speaking exhibit from the Public Health Group which included discussions on food and drug inspection so that people could be better educated on the subject.<sup>73</sup> Likewise, an exhibit at the 1901 Pan-American Exhibition was dedicated to the analysis of foods, illustrating the dangers of food preservatives as a form of adulteration to the point that “the strawberry part of this delectable compound apparently exists in the imagination alone.”<sup>74</sup> As more and more cases of food scandals began to emerge, and as processed foods became increasingly detached from the natural world, anxieties appeared for the average American about what was safe to eat, and these displays at the World Fairs illustrate this in forums that were accessible to the wider fair-going public.

Hygiene was not only a central concern in the minds of most Americans but, as many

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73 Claude Hazeltine Wetmore, *Out of a Fleur-De-Lis: The History, Romance, and Biography of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition*, (Boston: W.A. Wilde, 1903), 328

74 "Some Medical Aspects of the Pan-American Exposition," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* vol. 145-4 (July 25, 1901), 106

major food processors discovered, could also serve as a highly effective form of advertisement. In some cases, hygienic considerations became a necessity in order to reestablish public confidence in common staples. For example, at the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exhibition, an exhibit was planned to demonstrate to fair-goers safe, sanitary milk production and distribution, an important consideration in light of previous scandals involving “swill milk,” or milk produced from cows fed on the waste products of beer production.<sup>75</sup> An article in the *American Food Journal* prior to the fair emphasized the importance of using the fair as a method of educating and reassuring consumers, noting that “the dairyman needs help and encouragement, and our laws operate to protect him as well as the consumer.”<sup>76</sup> Even without fully knowing the wider national picture in regards to milk, such a statement illustrates the degree to which the bonds of trust between distributors and consumers had been shattered as a result of poor-quality milk; only by letting the public in on the process could they be reassured that their milk was perfectly safe. This sort of display continued to be a constant element of fairs, especially as processed foods became more and more predominant. This will become especially obvious by 1939, as well be expanded on later.

New technologies for cooking were also promoted at the fairs. The Pan-American Exposition, for example, aimed to educate people about the application of electricity to cooking, much as it aimed to educate in the use of electricity in pretty much all elements of life. Specifically, it aimed to correct the notion that electricity would be somehow unable to be utilized in cooking, with one guide claiming that “a large amount of inferior apparatus was placed on the market, which, not proving satisfactory when purchased by the people, has given a

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75 Bee Wilson, *Swindled: The Dark History of Food Fraud, from Poisoned Candy to Counterfeit Coffee* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 154-163.

76 J.Q. Emory, “President's Annual Address: Association State and National Food and Dairy Departments, Denver, August 24, 1909,” *American Food Journal* 4-9 (Sept 15, 1909), 43

wrong idea as to the service and usefulness of the electric current in this field.”<sup>77</sup> Displays thus aimed to reassure the public that, in fact, the application of electricity to cooking was the way of the future. Refrigeration technology was also a common display at earlier fairs, indicating its increasing necessity as food production, distribution and storage evolved and expanded. As one example, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904 included among its displays demonstrations by meat packing plants of the value of refrigeration in their work,<sup>78</sup> and one book looking back on the fair years later proclaimed, slightly awkwardly, that “refrigeration has made the whole world a market for any section the quality of the yield of which raises it into general demand. The prosperity of some regions is almost as dependent upon refrigeration as that of others is upon irrigation.”<sup>79</sup> In other words, refrigeration changed the nature of food distribution by drastically reconfiguring the network of distribution. For areas which primarily produced quick-spoiling foods such as meat, this technology provided a new economic lease on life. Given the industry-changing qualities of cold storage technology, it is hardly any wonder that producers took advantage of the fairs to promote the latest advances.

In considering additions to the American diet, special attention should be paid to the 1901 Pan-American Exposition which, unlike most of the other fairs, contained a specific exhibit dedicated towards the presentation of new foods. Opportunities for new tastes presented themselves, particularly at the fairs, and some people leaped to the call. An article written about the Pan-American Exposition of 1901 in an issue of *American Cookery* highlights the numerous different aspect of culinary experimentation presented at the fairs. Much as to be expected of the era, the writer lauds the educational value of the fair, especially for women. “What nobler

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77 ed. Mark Bennett, *The Pan-American Exposition And How to See It: A Complete Art Souvenir* (Buffalo: The Goff Company, 1901), 30

78 David R. Francis, *The Universal Exposition of 1904* (St. Louis: Louisiana Purchase Exposition Company, 1913), 457

79 Ibid, 450

occupation for her activities can a young woman find than the mastery of the art of human brain, bone, and muscle building?” the article proclaims, espousing the beliefs of the New Nutritionists. Unlike her peers, however, the writer displays an interest in what she describes as the “education of the palate,” and to that end is quite positive about the new foods display even if she does not find all of the discoveries to be to her tastes. The article demonstrates, contrary to popular belief about the reformers and cooks of the day, a healthy interest in diversification of the table, with an interest in discovering new foods that had heretofore been unknown in the Western world. The writer encourages the reader of the article to drink mate tea many times until they develop a taste for it, and bemoans the “too often tasteless cooking” in America which she feels would be greatly improved by the use of peppers. In encouraging the adoption of these new crops, the writer encourages innovation in American cooking.

New processed foods also premiered at the fair, although the writer of the article shows a distinct distaste for them. Instant coffee is dismissed as poor stuff compared to naturally percolated coffee and, in a notably racist statement, she states that while Aunt Jemima's pancakes are good, they lack authenticity due to Jemima “living in the North so long that she has lost all the characteristics of the genuine negro.”<sup>80</sup> Later, both pancake mix and instant coffee would become fairly standard products on American shelves, but during the Pan-American Exposition, the transition from the more natural foods of the late nineteenth century to the glut of processed foods that would eventually come to dominate by the 1930s was still underway. Some, like the author of the article, still preferred products more closely connected to nature than the premade goods.

The concern the writer shows over “health breads” represents a very real element of

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80 L.O. Harris, “New Foods at the Pan-American Exposition,” *The Boston Cooking-School Magazine* June-July VI(1), 106-108.

culinary culture at the turn of the century, as an increasing number of fad diets began to take hold in light of increasing awareness of nutrition and concerns over stomach conditions like “dyspepsia.” An early World's Fair mainstay, in fact, existed partly as a method of preventing this most feared of stomach conditions. Shredded Wheat, which first made its debut at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, continued to maintain a presence at later fairs, especially as its advertising revolved around its life-changing ability to improve health and energy. Despite becoming a well known and still commonly eaten product today, the pitch used to promote it sounds like something more akin to a modern day equivalent of fad diets such as South Beach and Atkins, claiming that “wheat properly cooked contains food in the right proportion for every one of the different elements composing the human body, thus doing away with the necessity of man's bothering to measure out two cups of nerve to one cup of muscle, etc., every time he fed.”<sup>81</sup> Claims like these were fairly common back in the day; a guidebook to the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition includes a number of ads which make similar claims towards improving the health of whoever should buy and consume their product, such as the following advertisement for Grape Nuts:

A tired woman with nervous indigestion and a brain "too weary to think" was told by another who had been through the same experience that the whole trouble was lack of true rebuilding food.

She began on GRAPE-NUTS and in 10 days the Phosphates and nourishing elements in the famous food had restored her to strength completely, so that the nervous trouble disappeared entirely and the brain "could think" as hard and successfully as required.

"There's a reason" for GRAPENUTS.<sup>82</sup>

Nervousness, indigestion, and other ailments of urban living could, according to the advertisement, be cured simply by eating Grape Nuts. Note that flavor, something that seems

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<sup>81</sup> “Some 'Shredded Wheat' Methods,” *Printer's Ink: A Journal for Advertisers* 23-2 (April 13, 1898), 3

<sup>82</sup> John Brisben Walker, *The World's Fair* (Cosmopolitan Publishing, 1904), books.google.com

like it should be a primary thing to advertise when it comes to food, is not even an issue in this advertisement.

Nutrition was not, of course, simply an advertising gimmick. The scientific analysis of nutrition was a constant show at World Fairs, and evolved as peoples' bank of knowledge grew. We have already analyzed Atwater's belief in the value of protein. Indeed, his ideas appeared again in 1904 as a display in the form of a laboratory designed to precisely measure the nutritional value of beef via heat units.<sup>83</sup> Nutritional understanding continued to evolve beyond this rudimentary view of protein, fat and carbohydrates. Once vitamins and nutrients became established part of scientific canon, they began to make appearances in the fairs as well. They became well and truly integrated into the promotion and advertising of food by the 1934 Chicago World Fair, which featured among its many wonders the process of irradiating milk to increase its Vitamin D content.<sup>84</sup> This trend, as will be seen later, continued right on through the 1939 New York World's Fair.

Returning to the subject of new cuisines, the display at the 1901 World's Fair provides evidence of foreign and manufactured foods being introduced to a wider American population. Equally fascinating, however, are the American foods whose invention can be attributed to urban legend rather than fact, and for that, few fairs can compete with the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition. At times cited as the origin points of ice cream, iced tea, hot dogs, hamburgers, Dr. Pepper, and cotton candy, the 1904 World's Fair stands out as a mythological beginning for so much of the food considered essential to the outdoor and fair-going experience of modern American life. This is especially striking in light of the fact that most of these claims have evidence disproving the fair's role, yet are still discussed and disputed to this day. Iced tea, for

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83 Walker, *The World's Fair*, 505

84 *The Official Guide Book of the World's Fair of 1934* (Chicago: Cuneo Press, 1934), 44

example, has been credited in the past as originating at the fair, the invention of an Englishman named Richard Blechynden, who supposedly devised the drink after constantly having to discard pots of hot tea in the midst of a blazing hot fair.<sup>85</sup> This story is one that is quickly debunked by any given tea company one can find on the internet, with evidence of it originating some time earlier, at least as early as 1890. However, it was reported as fact at least as late as 1969, and the fact the story still persists even as a source of discussion rather than as fact highlights its staying power. In fact, the only culinary invention that the St. Louis World Fair is still credited for is the invention of the ice cream cone, and even that lacks a solid origin story as several different people have claimed responsibility for the idea.

It is hard to pinpoint precisely why this fair among all of them that should have gained the reputation it has for its impact on the culinary fabric of America, but the best explanation that can be given is that it was simply in the right place at the right time. Many of the foods that the fair theoretically introduced had begun to appear and develop in the United States within the past ten to twenty years. This gave them time to increase their distribution network and to be introduced at numerous other large celebrations before them; the hamburger, for instance, also had the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition claim responsibility for its invention. The processed nature of many of these foods also indicates that they had the benefit of increasing social acceptance of such foods as not only safe to eat, but desirable, although it would still be two years before the Meat Inspection Act would begin regulating hygienic conditions in meat processing plants, and the Pure Food and Drug Act would begin to require more informative labeling. But perhaps the most important thing to take into consideration is the venue itself; as a World Fair, the international implications of introducing American food to the wider public would have been greater.

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85 Howard Bailey, "The Summer St. Louis Played It Cool," *Mankind* 2:2 (1969), 76

The souvenir cookbook continued to be a regular staple of World Fairs after the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Every fair had at least one or more cookbooks distributed as souvenir for fair-goers. The purpose and design of these cookbooks varied over the years as agendas shifted. Whereas earlier texts resembled the womens' instructional guides that were standard during the late 1800s and early 1900s, later books simply provided recipes, and some even were used as advertisements for single producers with displays at the fair rather than as an endorsement of the fair and the city as a whole. As to why cookbooks were such a popular item for use as a souvenir, the most likely explanation is that compared to a simple souvenir guide, a cookbook would remain useful and timeless, and thus would be quite attractive as both as a reminder of the fair experience and as something that would not simply date itself as soon as the fair was over. More specifically, only a few people would care to look at a standard guide for a closed fair over and over again, but everybody needs to eat.

Some of the cookbooks functioned primarily as a form of advertisement more than anything else. All World Fair cookbooks were, in their own way, methods of promotion in one way or another, although what they aimed to promote varied from text to text. The most blatant examples of this motivation can be found in both the cookbooks distributed for the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle in 1909 and a cookbook distributed for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 that focused almost entirely on salmon. Both books have clear goals beyond simple education of the reader on recipes and cookery. Even these books, however, can provide insights.

The *AYPE Souvenir Cook Book*, distributed by the Citizen's Bank of Georgetown, functions as a cookbook, but the messages it spreads in its introduction and in the myriad of advertisements scattered throughout the text serve more as a method of promoting Seattle itself than it does of food. In fact, aside from a poem lauding the importance of cooks at the beginning



– which itself had already appeared at least as early as an earlier cookbook put out at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition – the main bulk of non-culinary text is almost laughably bare of any interest in discussing food and cooking itself. Instead, the chief goal of the cookbook is to serve as a souvenir, and to remind the reader of the many business and resources in the Seattle area through the advertisements and gushing endorsement of the area, as seen in this excerpt:

This is a great country. It is vast in extent, rich in resources and full of promise. It has a wonderfully fertile and productive soil, splendid forests of valuable timber, extensive deposits of useful minerals, the greatest fisheries in the world, splendid rivers, lakes and inland seas, and the grandest mountains upon the American continent.<sup>86</sup>

The image painted is of an area rich in bounty, tying it very closely to the message of plenty which was often seen in the fairs prior to 1920. That said, it is not specifically a message of plenty in food, judging by the way it mentions mining and timber in the same breath as fisheries and farmland. In many respects, the cookbook is less of an education in cooking and more of an education about Seattle itself. The cookbook is simply a vehicle to help further promote the cause of increasing commerce and promoting the city.

The cuisine found within its pages is otherwise comparatively unadventurous. Comprised primarily of British-style cooking, and heavy on meat and fish, this cookbook aimed primarily at the sort of white, middle class audience such cuisine typically appealed to. Vegetables are typically boiled, as they usually are in British cuisine, and only in a couple instances such as stewed asparagus and scalloped tomatoes are they served in any other way; they are most certainly never eaten raw. Some recipes are very much a product of their times. For example, two recipes for pigeon highlight an ingredient which is not commonly found in modern American cookbooks. And a few signs of foreign cuisine pop up throughout the book, mostly in the form of the fashionable French cuisine and curries. Only one recipe, a recipe for

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86 Citizen's Bank of Georgetown, *AYPE Souvenir Cook Book 1909* (Seattle: 1909.), 8.

succotash, can be distinctly identified as American in origin. The cookbook is, overall, a very safe text, which is perhaps appropriate for something which aimed more towards promoting the city rather than promoting tastes. That these recipes were considered the safe choices at all, however, provides a good glimpse at the standard cuisine of the average White American at this period of time.

The Salmon Cookbook distributed during the 1915 Pan-Pacific Fair is equally self-serving – at no point in the cookbook does it actually bother to mention the very fair at which it was distributed -- but is a much better reflection of changing food trends. Rather than focusing on a variety of different cuisines, the cookbook serves primarily as a promotion for canned salmon. In other words, it is a cookbook primarily designed to sell processed food, and makes absolutely no secret of this fact, as seen by its introductory page:

Canned salmon is one of the most important, nutritious and appetizing. Its culinary advantages are numerous and exceedingly valuable. It may be eaten in so many different ways that it readily adapts itself to the requirements of the breakfast, luncheon, dinner or supper, and gives seasonable variety to the meal. It is always ready for immediate use when the unexpected visitor happens in at meal time, or may be made to fill the most elaborate demands of a full course dinner. Canned Salmon is especially suited for picnic and outing lunches, and is invaluable for camp life.<sup>87</sup>

It utilizes many of the ideas and concepts which appealed to the average American at the time: utility and ease of use, with an appeal to its health value as well as a proclamation of containing “as much protein as lamb chops or beefsteak.” The creators of the cookbook clearly aimed to appeal to as broad a swath of middle class consumers as it could by targeting the various concerns that had arisen as a result of the impact of industrialization and urbanization on the American populace. It even proclaimed that canned salmon was a good camp food, indicating increased interest in outdoor recreation. The producers of the cookbook clearly wanted to ensure that canned salmon became a regular part of the American diet, to the point

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<sup>87</sup> *Salmon Cookbook: How to Eat Canned Salmon*, (San Francisco: 1915), 5

where the book even includes helpful instructions at the beginning on how to open the can and extract the contents with the greatest efficiency, reassuring the reader that the process is not at all complicated. That they chose the Pan-Pacific Exposition as their primary platform of distributing the text shows just how important the Fair was as a method of getting advertisement out to a wider audience.

One important point of observation in comparing the various cookbooks is seeing the shift in writing styles over the years from the casual, homely prose of earlier texts to the more perfunctory and condensed recipes that constitute most modern cookbooks. This is most pointedly obvious when comparing the cookbook distributed at the 1904 Louisiana Exposition and the other, non-salmon related cookbook distributed at the Pan-Pacific Exposition. The 1904 cookbook still carries an informal air to its writing, as if it is gently guiding rather than dictating. A typical example of this sort of writing can be found in the book's recipe for horseradish sauce:

Put a half-pint of milk or cream in a double boiler. Rub together a tablespoonful of butter, and an even tablespoonful of flour, then stir them into the boiling milk, add one ounce of young horse-radish, finely grated, a half-teaspoonful of salt, and a half-teaspoonful of sugar.

This is exceedingly nice to serve with boiled, fresh or salt fish.<sup>88</sup>

Comparatively, a recipe for a sweet rose sauce from New Zealand in the Pan-Pacific cookbook reads as thus:

Wash a beet, boil it with the rind of a lemon in three cups of water for twenty minutes; then strain. The liquid should be a beautiful red. Return it to the saucepan with a pound of sugar and juice of a lemon. Boil fifteen minutes, add two teaspoons of vanilla and pour into bottles. Cork tightly.<sup>89</sup>

In comparison to the former recipe, the latter is much more precise and concise, splurging little on language in favor of laying out the recipe in its most precise form. “Teaspoonfuls” are now “teaspoons,” and no utilization suggestions are provided. There is a descriptor, but it is used only

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<sup>88</sup> S. T. Rorer, *World's Fair Souvenir Cookbook* (Philadelphia: Arnold and Company, 1904) 64

<sup>89</sup> L. L. McLaren, *Pan-Pacific Cookbook*, (San Francisco: Blair-Murdock, 1915; Reprint, Vintage Cocktail Books, 2008), 131

as a method of describing the appearance of something, and not as a subjective suggestion.

Between the year of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition and the year of the Pan-Pacific Exposition, cookbooks had clearly become much more streamlined, becoming less guides for life and more simple cooking instructions. To further highlight the difference in intention, the 1904 cookbook provides a number of helpful tips for women on what to look for when buying meat, how to ensure that pastry came out flaky rather than pasty, and other helpful tips for around the kitchen. In contrast, the 1915 cookbook served simply as a method of allowing the chef to prepare “international” dishes, and assumes that the reader already knows these things well enough to be able to improvise. In other words, by simply glimpsing at these texts and considering the years they came out, the evolution of American recipes and the development of culinary language is put into greater focus.

However, perhaps the most fascinating cookbook of the lot in regards to understanding the trend of American cookery diversification versus the wider trend of homogenization is the previously mentioned Pan-Pacific Exposition Cookbook. Unlike all of the previous texts, this cookbook holds an interesting distinction: the cuisines it represents actually illustrate a world cuisine, rather than simply the preferred Anglo-American cuisine that appeared in previous texts. They contained occasional nods to French cuisine, as well as the occasional weak curry and Italian dish, all in concurrence with established “safe foods” and ideals of cookery that held with the New Nutritionists' notions of food economy and health. This cookbook, however, deliberately aimed towards a diversification of tastes. “In our cosmopolitan San Francisco we have singular opportunities of varying the monotony of our meals,” the writer comments in the introduction, as if chastising the prioritizing of Anglo-American foods over all others in the

planning of diets.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, these words, in boasting of its citizens a more worldly and diverse mindset, indicate a shift already beginning to occur within the metropolitan areas – and, in particular, the San Francisco area which the cookbook and the fair were aiming to promote – . It also highlights an interest in cuisines beyond the standard American staples, suggesting a shift away from the conservative nature of early American cooking towards a more worldly approach.

This is not to say, however, that the cookbook is not a baby step. Although its chief selling point is its cosmopolitan nature, it also carries with it a philosophy that essentially boils down to “all cultures cook with the same ingredients.” Or, as the author explains, “It is no less remarkable that in cookery as in folklore striking resemblances can be found in races remoted from each other in space, origin and language.” In short, while it purports to provide a greater amount of variety from all over the globe, it actually lacks adventurousness by sticking predominantly to tried and true ingredients, with perhaps a few slight deviations in the form of pineapple juice to indicate more “foreign” cuisine. However, the point remains that even as unexciting and unauthentic as these recipes seem by modern standards, the cookbook reflects an active effort to promote foreign cuisine to a larger audience. Offered as a souvenir as it is, this is an important point, as it highlights that slowly but surely, Americans were beginning to open up to the possibility of eating outside of the Anglo-American paradigm.

One of the great benefits of looking at these intermediary fairs is that they are better illustrative of the incremental way in which ideas change and develop over time. Views on hygiene and health become more refined, resulting in increased focus on the subjects at subsequent fairs – and also the tools of advertising campaigns by the growing food industry. Science and cookery would become more integrated with the development of new technologies in preservation and preparation. New foods would be introduced, some of which would become

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90 McLaren, *The Pan-Pacific Cookbook*, 3

regular American staples. The cookbook evolved, becoming more utilitarian, but also more cosmopolitan. Combining the fairs between 1893 and 1915 illustrates best the ways in which ideas evolve rather than spring fully formed spontaneously. However, after 1915, there would be a large gap between Fairs – and what emerged on the other side of that gap was a much more dramatic shift away from the bounty of nature and closer to the bounty of science.

### **The Food of the Future: 1933 Century of Progress Exposition and the 1939 New York World's Fair**

The period from 1915 to 1933 saw no new World Fairs in America. In that period, however, new research and new ideas about food were discovered and cultivated. If the fairs that occurred between 1893 and 1915 illustrate a gradual development of the concepts and philosophies that were displayed at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, the 1933-1934 Chicago's World Fair – perhaps appropriately, considering their previous world's fair was such a point of inspiration – can be seen as the seed for ideas which would later be displayed at the much more well known World's Fair of 1939 in New York.

Following the 1893 Fair, ideas about the best way in which to feed a hungry populace began to change as the promises of agricultural bounty failed to pan out as expected. The US Population, for one, began to expand farther and faster than had been previously expected, without an equivalent progress in production of crops to compensate. Instead, increasingly, synthetic food was touted as the way to solve hunger. As if listening to the calls of the proponents of the New England Kitchen, the discovery of the basic building blocks of nutrition led to the promotion of “fortification,” something which food processors would more than willingly align. Genetic engineering also aided in advancing the expansion of agriculture further

than through simple machinery – which led to the ironic situation beginning in the 1920s where too much surplus ruined American farmers through overproduction. Ideas began to develop over a range of different extremes, from a more organic method through the USDA's advocacy of organic, subsistence-based farming to notions of eliminating farming altogether in favor of synthetic forms of agriculture such as self-replicating meat, an extreme mostly proposed by British heads of state.<sup>91</sup> Primarily, however, the policy of promoting mechanization took primacy.

This shift from the primacy of agriculture to the primacy of food processing was already presenting itself as early as the 1933 Chicago Century of Progress Exposition. Traditional elements of the older World Fairs were still present; an Agricultural and Foods Building provided the central location for displays of food and beverages. The change from an Agricultural Building to an Agricultural and Foods Building, however, is significant, as it indicates that the two are no longer considered equivalent. Before, food was accepted as deriving from agriculture. In the new culture of processed foods and “nutrient fortification,” however, food increasingly became detached from its natural state. Thus, a distinction between the two became mandatory.

Furthermore, large displays of crops and giant food sculptures were no longer the main attractions as they had been at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. The displays instead reflected the way in which the food industry had evolved, with displays on canning, sugar and breakfast food manufacture, and other displays which better illustrated a society in which processed food reigned supreme. In fact, perhaps owing to offering corporations free space for their pavilions, the 1933 World's Fair began to see a number of displays dedicated solely to single products such as Coca Cola and Wonder Bread, something which would later become the

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91 Belasco, 28-37

standard form of display at the 1939 World's Fair. In other words, the celebration of food moved away from the fields and into the factories. People no longer turned to the farmer, but instead to the scientists and processors for sustenance.

Perhaps part of this shift can be attributed to the extraordinary national crisis during which both this fair and the 1939 New York World's Fair took place. The circumstances around the Century of Progress Exposition of 1933 and the 1939 World's Fair were considerably different than they had been around the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Both fairs had taken place during periods of economic recession; however, the 1939 Fair came at the tail end of that unprecedented period known as the Depression. Furthermore, food processing and nutritional information had come a long way from their still rudimentary forms at the turn of the Nineteenth Century. Proteins and fats were out of vogue; the big nutrients to focus on were vitamins and minerals. Eating on a national scale was becoming increasingly more focused on “homestyle” cooking, providing the same sort of comfort foods across the country through restaurants such as Howard Johnson's.<sup>92</sup>

The leadup to the opening of the 1939 World's Fair included a veritable bevy of articles on the development process. Anticipation was high for the fair in the city, and nothing reflects that better than the amount of coverage the New York Times provided even prior to the Fair's opening. Articles appeared regularly dedicated to various milestones in the fair's development, and ads regularly invited people to visit their company's displays at the Fair. Clearly, a lot was riding on it, both for the city and for those companies paying good money to use the fair as a platform to advertise their own goods to the public.

Among these articles were two major supplements. The first one, released about a month

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<sup>92</sup> Harvey Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 52



before the fair, included a series of essays from well-respected intellectuals and leaders which, much like the New York World's Fair itself, looked to the future of the country. As such, a few words about food and agriculture were almost to be expected, even as the farms faded out of sight for a good percentage of the urban population. The belief in the potential of agriculture and the desires to promote its cultivation had not gone away altogether, of course. An essay written by Henry Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture at the time, best represented this optimism, lauding the improvements from colonial days in the yields of the average farmer, touting a five-fold increase in yields in “our first 100 years,” and predicting an even further increase over the next fifty.<sup>93</sup> However, other essays contained within the same supplement present a more ambivalent view of the farms, with one writer noting an inevitable pull of people from the farms and a shift to solely commercial agriculture. The debate over the future of food was clearly as active as ever, with one side predicting the continuation of the traditional farm life and the other seeing its obsolescence in favor of more efficient and larger industrialized farms. Considering the trials and tribulations farmers had faced over the 1930s with such disasters as the drought that resulted in the Dust Bowl, some cynicism about the individual farmer's future was understandable.

When the 1939 New York World's Fair rolled around, it maintained the same optimistic view of the future as its predecessors, but the manner in which it saw the future differed drastically, including its view of food. Perhaps the most noteworthy difference between the way food was presented at the 1893 through 1915 fairs and the 1939 World Fairs was that the 1939 Fair no longer kept all of the displays under a single roof. Rather, various corporations set up their own buildings in an area demarcated as “The Food Zone.” Given free reign to design their own buildings and displays, the resulting conglomerate of buildings created a much more eclectic display than the stately white building that had been the repository of ideas about food

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93 Henry Wallace, “A New Day For the Farm,” *New York Times*, March 5, 1939, AS8

during the 1893 Exposition. In fact, by calling it “The Food Zone,” the word “agriculture” had been almost abandoned altogether, shifting the mental imagery of the fairgoer away from the notion of the farmer as the source of their food and more towards the producers themselves. The word has not completely disappeared. However, by consigning it to a single small road on the grounds called “Agricultural Row,” the term became a mere background detail even though the fair's Focal Exhibit for food happened to be located on a building that lay along it. To compound the issue, aside from a single wheat field grown and cultivated specifically for display at the fair, raw farm produce was no longer considered worthy of display. Rather, most of the displays were designed by food companies to reassure and educate the public on how their food was processed, not grown. The idea of agricultural plenty was still present in the form of murals, and in the occasional display of farm technology. But the focal exhibit itself was firmly placed within the modern vision of food science and processing, with visions of vitamins and minerals scattered throughout as symbolic of man's progress.<sup>94</sup>

The goal of the exhibit, clearly, was to educate; as Eve Jochnowitz notes, internal memos within the fair “show that the fair's planners did not think the typical American was all that smart.”<sup>95</sup> With so many of the displays in the Food Zone maintained by corporations with an interest in promoting their products, it does not take much to realize that at least in part, the education the average fair-goer would receive would be why buying Wonder Bread, Borden Milk, and Coca Cola would be within their best interests. This heavy corporate push towards the purchase of food commodities versus the knowledge of ingredients fits in well with Vileisis's assessment of the decreasing culinary knowledge of American consumers, “a silent accord that

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94 Author Unknown, *Official Guide Book of the New York World's Fair 1939* (New York: Exposition Publications, 1939), 103

95 Eve Jochnowitz, “Feasting on the Future: Foods of the World of Tomorrow at the New York World's Fair of 1939-40” in *Performance Research* 3-1 (January 1999), 111

might best be called a covenant of ignorance.”<sup>96</sup> Entrusting the corporations to know what food was best for the consumer required willingly giving up the desire and ability to make such decisions for oneself.

No food at the fair, perhaps, better represented this belief in the future of food than the hot dog, a food *The New Yorker* predicted was “undoubtedly going to be the staple ration”<sup>97</sup> for the fair-goers. Considered to be a truly American meat, the Swift Hot Dog display at the Fair intended to establish the hot dog's position as a futuristic food on top of its already established position as a mainstay of public events.<sup>98</sup> Displaying itself as an example to other meat-packers, it highlighted a completely automated process which required little to no human contact. It displayed a food that was meant to signify the future of food; convenient in its pre-cooked nature,<sup>99</sup> with a minimum of preparation required. It also required that the consumer have an innate trust in the manufacturer; like all sausages, the hot dog is a form of processed meat, the precise contents of which are not commonly known. A food which came out consistently the same size, shape and flavor, made through modern American science and with a manufacturer guarantee that this was, in fact, the best method of producing meat would not have been out of place in the New England Kitchen of fifty years prior. If its presentation at the fair wasn't enough to solidify in the American mind its centrality as the emblematic American food, the fact that President Roosevelt incorporated them into a menu served to King George VI himself at Hyde Park later that year is proof enough of how highly regarded it was as part of the cuisine.

However, while the hot dog may exemplify this shift, it was far from the only example. The Borden exhibit advertised the “Dairy World of Tomorrow,” in which all cows were milked

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96 Vileisis, 171

97 “Hot-Dog School,” *The New Yorker*, May 6, 1939, 16.

98 Roger Horowitz, *Putting Meat on the American Table: Taste, Technology, Transformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2006), 76

99 Horowitz, 78

through mechanization rather than by hand.<sup>100</sup> The Wagner Baking Corporation enticed visitors to watch “how a modern pie-making machine and rotary oven turn out tempting, golden-brown pies,”<sup>101</sup> invoking the tastes of homemade baking without the unnecessary and unhygienic man-handling traditionally required. The one true display of agriculture in action, the wheat field at the Continental Baking Company, was advertised almost as a relic, being “the only wheat field sown and cultivated in New York City in 68 years.”<sup>102</sup> The food of the future was presented today, and the familiar figures of the farmer and the chef were nowhere to be seen.

Fairgoers were well-prepared for this section of the fair, to boot. Magazines and newspapers alike included advertisements from many of these major corporations encouraging visitors to swing by their booths. Their ads often reflected the statements they made at the fair themselves. A Swift ad, for example, lauded the nutritional value of meat, as well as its low price and the reduction of labor time afforded by how fast it cooked. An ad for Borden, meanwhile, told a whimsical story of a cow making her way to the World's Fair. The continuing story of Elsie, the Borden Cow, was designed to insinuate that the cows that would be seen at the fair were not only well-treated, but actively enjoyed their circumstances. “What fun!” she says, when told that she'll be milked on a merry-go-round at the Borden exhibit.<sup>103</sup> The world Borden envisions in the advertisement is one where the animals are happy, people are happy, and the food they process is good for everybody, which is essentially the same message they established through their whimsical approach to the fair – along with, as David Gelernter recreates in his semi-fictionalized portrayal of the fair, a reassuring image of sanitation and technological advancement through its mechanized methods and white walls.<sup>104</sup>

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100 *Official Guide Book of the New York World's Fair 1939*, 107-109.

101 *Ibid*, 111.

102 *Ibid*, 109

103 “-- But You Promised Me a Meadow!” *Life*, June 5, 1939, 29

104 David Gelernter, *1939: The Lost World of the Fair*, (New York: Avon Books, 1995), 108.

One category of cooks, however, still continued to be in the forefront of consideration, and that was women. By 1939, the science of home economics had developed into a minor industry, with magazines such as *Good Housekeeping*, with its authoritative-sounding Good Housekeeping Institute, helping women keep on top of all of the new innovations in cooking technology. Issues prior to the World's Fair encouraged women to come visit the Institute-approved display showing “the kitchens of tomorrow.” These kitchens were highly streamlined, with labor-saving devices such as dishwashers, and a more effective layout of cabinetry that was intended to simplify the work of cooking. The future, according to this vision, was going to be tidy, neat, and much easier on the woman than the old days where everything was done by hand. Of course, it would be hygienic as well.

A few carry-overs from the old days existed, of course. Themes of quantity still persisted here and there; a 30,000 gallon cask of wine, for example, was announced as an upcoming display at the fair in the February 27, 1939 issue of the *New York Times*. However, images of agricultural and culinary plenty were mostly contained to artistic displays. One of the crowning exhibits at the Focal Exhibit utilized images of enormous pieces of food in a surrealistic display of bejeweled avocados climbing mountains and flying lobsters, all contained within a 60 foot egg.<sup>105</sup> Instead of agricultural bounty, however the displays are that of nutritional bounty, with the jewels representing nutrients, and the lobsters representing the ability to get fresh fish anywhere in the country. Quantity no longer mattered as much as quality.

All of this, of course, illustrates how food was presented officially. However, people always need to eat, and the New York World's Fair was happy to provide – even if, as with every other fair, before it, the standard complaints of high food prices emerged very shortly after its

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105 *Official Guide Book of the New York World's Fair*, 105.

opening.<sup>106</sup> This commonality between the two fairs illustrates one of the most common issues about megaevents in that the monopolization of the audience meant greater difficulty in controlling prices of concessions, although steps were taken after these complaints emerged to make things more affordable for the general public. These price complaints resulted, much as with the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, in a number of visitors providing their own lunches rather than indulging in the expensive food sold on the grounds. For those who did decide to forgo the lunch box, however, there were plenty of culinary experiences to go around.

The Food Zone itself had options, naturally, in the form of restaurants attached to the exhibits. There were also free samples of which an enterprising fairgoer could take advantage. A light-hearted article in the July 3, 1939 issue of *Life* magazine tells the story of Joseph Mullaly, who they dub “The Fair's No. 1 Gate-crasher.”<sup>107</sup> In it, he takes advantage of various free services provided at the fair. Of note, several photos suggest Mullaly surviving entirely on samples such as free breakfast coffee, free spaghetti and soup, and free desserts as provided by the various corporations. The article suggests, therefore, that by taking advantage of the ways in which these companies advertised and promoted their products, one could make their way through the fair without having to pay a cent. The foods he eats, furthermore, provide some insight into popular cuisine at the time; coffee and soup are to be somewhat expected, but spaghetti was a relatively new food integrated into the American diet, a favorite owing to its relative low cost, and the “Danish dessert” further suggests the integration of certain foreign foods. (As an amusing side note, somebody did eventually take offense to the implication that someone was so able to game the system and indicate that the article may have been a gag – but it was a worker for Associated British and Irish Railways, who mostly took offense at the notion

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106 “Poland's Pavilion is Opened at Fair,” *New York Times*, May 4 1939

107 “Gate-Crasher Finds Fair Inexpensive Place to Live,” *Life*, July 3, 1939, 68-69.

their guards allowed Mr. Mullaly to slip past them and sleep in a train stationed at the Fair.)<sup>108</sup>

The foreign pavilions had their fair share of restaurants as well. One of the foreign pavilions was even located in the Food Zone itself, the Swedish Building, indicating that food was a central part of their presentation. Notably, these restaurants were reviewed in publications such as *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*, much as if they were simply normal restaurants opening up in any other part of the city rather than temporary plazas which would disappear along with the fair. However, in looking through articles on foreign restaurants, there is actually less diversity of cuisine to be seen on an intercontinental level than at the 1893 Fair. Asian cuisines are notably absent, and the restaurants which are seen come primarily from European and Eastern European countries. French cuisine is, as to be expected, represented, with a comment by the *New Yorker* that the restaurant “is probably just about as fine a restaurant as you will find outside of Paris.”<sup>109</sup> There are also Hungarian and Russian Restaurants and, congruous to the Good Neighbor policy America took up in relations with South America, Brazilian and Venezuelan restaurants are mentioned as well. But there is no indication in any of these articles that anything like Japanese or Chinese food is present. The Japanese have, in the past, never provided a restaurant, although they would usually have a tea house and tea ceremonies, and the 1939 World's Fair was not excluded from this. However, the lack of Chinese food has a simple explanation: China, quite simply, did not have a presence. Considering what it was going through at the time with its conflicts with Japan, this is perhaps understandable, but considering that the Japanese and the Chinese were among the main East Asian countries with connections at the time to America, it makes for a noticeable gap in the otherwise “worldly” fare of the fair.

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108 C.M. Turner, “Unjustified Criticism,” *Life*, July 31, 1939, 3.

109 “Around the Fair: Restaurants,” *New Yorker*, May 29, 1939, 44

Even without the international offerings, however, there was plenty of cheaper fare to go around, of which the official guide is happy to list for the sake of the reader:

Stand operators offer hamburgers, frankfurters, and other sandwiches, Orange Crush and non-carbonated citrus fruit drinks, Coca-Cola and other carbonated beverages, root beer; dairy stands sell ice cream, malted drinks, buttermilk, chocolate milk and chocolate drinks, and milk; salt water taffy, popcorn, and the other things that go along with amusement – all inspected daily for quality and freshness, and all at standard prices.<sup>110</sup>

Several things can be observed in this list: One, the usage of brand names to describe drinks shows the degree to which these beverages were identified with these companies, and the degree to which they were integrated into a normal view of what ought to be served at an amusement center. There is a much heavier focus on processed foods for consumption than seen previously, with frankfurters and hamburgers, ice cream and chocolate milk. Worth pointing out is how much the refreshment list highlights how much of the standard concessions were handled by corporate companies. Coca-Cola, featured prominently in the list, had its own display at the fair, called Refreshment at the Fair Inc., which included “the Bottling Plant of Tomorrow.” And if there is an unusually heavy emphasis on dairy products, Borden can be thanked for that particular element, since it provided all the dairy products at the fair. Saying that it was simply standard for it to be served consistently across the grounds is underestimating the companies' commercial intent; clearly, the fair was just as much a means of distributing, selling, and more importantly naturalizing product to a larger audience.<sup>111</sup> Finally, as everything else served at the fair, the guide calmly reassures the public that the food is all checked daily for quality and freshness so that the fair-goer need not fear potential contamination.

Overall, the most obvious themes of the fair and food are obvious: healthy, hygienic, easy, and brought to you by the most trusted companies. The restaurants provide alternative

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110 *Official Guide to the New York World's Fair, 22-23*

111 *Ibid, 105*



options, at least, but these often remained out of reach of the lower income brackets. Taking all of these elements into account, then, the existence of a book such as the *New York World's Fair Cook Book* can be seen as almost an anomaly. There are elements to it that are just as much a product of the domestic science movement as the promotion of food building blocks – it is, after all, written firmly in the Fannie Farmer fashion of precise measurements and heat that was firmly cemented as the standard by the 1930s. But mention of scientific culinary building blocks such as calories are notably absent from its pages. The cookbook is clearly not meant to provide the most balanced nutrients for the consumer, nor is it an advertisement for the myriad of processed foods which could be found readily available in the food zone. It is first and foremost a book about enjoying food in all its forms, and advertises in its pages a culinary landscape much more diverse than the homogenous visions of the myriad of processed food exhibits the corporate interests at the fair displayed as the future of food.

From the start, a number of different things mark the *New York World's Fair Cook Book* as different from its 1893 counterpart. For a start, it is not, like *Favorite Dishes*, a community style cookbook; rather, it is all the work of one man, Crosby Gaige. There is not a lot that can be found about the man himself, aside from the fact that he was apparently a theatrical producer with a gourmand's sensibility.<sup>112</sup> His love of food is certainly obvious; for one thing, he actually wrote two texts for the fair, one of which detailed the various restaurants which could be found on the fair grounds. The other, of course, was the cookbook which, in addition to providing recipes, also contains a great deal of research which belies an interest in food on a whole rather than simply as something to eat. He does not forget the source of his food either; his preface is a testimony to the “progenitors of a nation's food supply<sup>113</sup>” lauding the fairs provided by “farm

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112 Gerald Martin Bordman and Thomas S. Hischak, *The Oxford Companion to American Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): 250. Books.google.com

113 Crosby Gaige, *New York World's Fair Cook Book: The American Kitchen* (New York: Doubleday, Doran

wives and villagers of the day.” Even the Native Americans get a nod in his “acknowledgment to the first Native American cookery,” in which he pays tribute to the contribution of corn provided by the myriad of Native tribes first contacted by the Europeans. Gaige's cookbook, unlike most of the other cookbooks which remained primarily in the present, makes constant connections to the American past. In fact, the cookbook is all about traditions and the dissemination of foodways. He considers, for example, the spread of recipes from their original origin points to various areas of the country, noting that “in the journey [each recipe] was modified or renamed, or both.<sup>114</sup>” He consults food historians and preservationists for a number of his recipes. It is a nostalgic text, to be sure, which is ironic considering its distribution in a fair that primarily celebrated the future. But perhaps reminding his readers of what came before in a setting where it was so easy to forget was part of Gaige's goals.

Gaige's approach to food is vastly different from that of the women of the 1893 World's Fair. Their cookbook, in many ways emblematic of the nature of the domestic science movement, treated cooking as a means to an end, a method of raising funds for the sake of aiding female attendance to the fair, and not necessarily a deliberate method of celebrating food. As has been seen previously, there are elements of the previous book which still embraced some of the food trends displayed at the fair itself. In contrast, Gaige's book appears to reject the ideas of the 1939 Fair's Food Zone outright. Good food, with effort taken to prepare it, is lauded over the fast, convenient and artificial cuisines advocated by the various corporate displays at the fair; hot dogs and processed foods have no place within the text (with, apparently, the exception of American cheese). Gaige's vision of a national American cuisine embraces the regional and local dishes found throughout the country rather than the national vision of plenty through food

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& Company, 1939), vii  
 114 Gaige, *New York World's Fair Cook Book*, 1

processing espoused at the Fair.

The book also contains a greater diversity in its choice of recipes than the ladies of 1893 presented. Granted, their cookbook had several recipes of Mexican origin, as seen by the presence of Senora Don Manuel Chaves's contributions. Gaige, however, goes even further than this, including recipes for beef sukiyaki and “Chinese omelets”<sup>115</sup> from the Pacific states, chile con carne and taquitos from the Southwest.<sup>116</sup> Ingredients are more diverse and adventurous; curry powder makes more appearances in different capacities, as well as other ingredients outside of the British repertoire like oyster liquor, frogs legs, green peppers, and tabasco sauce. He even brings greater attention in his introduction to the “distinguished restaurants set up, staffed and operated by foreign exhibitors, with their native dishes superbly cooked by native chefs,”<sup>117</sup> noting them before the American restaurants as if to draw the reader's attention to the diversity of choices present on the Fair's grounds besides what was readily available to him or her already. His choice of recipes reveals an increasing ethnic culinary diversity within the various regions of the United States which are simply not present in the older cookbook. Gaige clearly appreciated good food of all sorts.

More importantly, however, Gaige does something none of the cookbooks from the previous fairs did, and that's to celebrate the little regional oddities. Rather than organizing by type of recipe as was done in the 1893 cookbook, he organizes the recipes into regions. Rather than the short, perfunctory recipes that liberally dotted the community cookbook of the Women's Building employees, or even the earlier attempt at multicultural cuisine seen in the Pan-Pacific Exposition's cookbook, he waxes eloquent about the cuisines of every area of the country, and even some of the American territories such as Puerto Rico. He writes, for example on the

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115 Ibid, 156.

116 Ibid, 143.

117 Ibid, vii.

Southern dish known as “Burgoo,” a southern stew, of which he notes that “When it is Derby Day in Kentucky and sometimes at horse sales, political rallies and at other important outdoor events, 'Kentucky Burgoo' is the feature.”<sup>118</sup> In short, in a period of time where people were thinking about and aggressively advertising the future of food as processed and scientifically tweaked to provide the greatest amount of nutrients, Gaige is actively engaging in and encouraging the recipes of the past to continue to be created and celebrated.

Gaige's approach is in touch with a recurring issue around the 1930s about the loss of regional foodways. No project illustrates this concern better than the “America Eats” project assigned to workers in the Federal Writer's Project of the Works Progress Association, a government-funded attempt to chronicle the old foodways of America. This project, an attempt to chronicle patterns of eating and regional culinary quirks, was one of the last projects to come out of the Works Progress Association. It came too late, tragically; the program was already drastically shrinking as more and more authors began to bail out in favor of promoting their own careers. To make matters worse, most regions missed the project's deadline of the end of Thanksgiving Week of 1941 – and before any reorganization could occur, Pearl Harbor was bombed, signaling the start of America's entry into World War II and tolling the death knell of the WPA. As a result, the project was never finished and published, and most of these documents never saw the light of day until very recently, appearing in books such as Mark Kurlansky's *The Food of a Younger Land*.

The project was part of an ongoing project by the director, Kathleen Kellock, to truly examine America and what it meant to be American in the style of popular European guides known as Baedeker guides.<sup>119</sup> Beyond simply analysis, however, was an underlying awareness

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118 Gaige, 90

119 Mark Kurlansky, “Introduction,” *The Food of a Younger Land* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009), 13

of the looming changes in American customs. The industrialization of food exemplified at both the 1934 Chicago World Fair and the 1939 New York World's Fair highlighted the endangered status of regional culinary rituals and recipes.<sup>120</sup> Fearing the disappearance of these old traditions from American historical awareness due to increasingly homogenized and nationalized approaches towards food, these people worked to preserve the old ways through experiencing and writing about these quirky, highly localized phenomena. It is hard to say precisely how much Gaige himself engaged in these traditions, but the amount of effort he goes to write about and laud their existence indicates that he had just as much concern about them fading away as the people behind the America Eats project.

This goes to highlight, perhaps, one of the most important elements of the book: it is, first and foremost, a celebration of American cookery. Certainly, it includes multiethnic recipes, but in classifying them as being part of various American regional cuisines rather than being foreign fare – he categorizes, for example, most of the Chinese cuisine included in the book under the Pacific Coast States even as he accurately identifies their primary source as being from the Cantonese<sup>121</sup> – Gaige chooses to include these dishes in the overall category of American culinary tradition rather than simply as external elements imported in by immigrants. This is an absolutely vital distinction in light of later works on food which attempted to argue that the existence of foreign cuisine representing a failure of integration rather than indicative of its presence.<sup>122</sup> Gaige's text can be seen as an early rejection of the view of American cuisine as purely processed, as well as a celebration of the newly evolved form of American cookery. If it feels less like a World's Fair text and more like an American text, this notion can be explained somewhat by the way in which Gaige's America encompasses the world in its recipe choices.

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120 Kurlansky, 16

121 Gaige, 153

122 Again, see Root and de Rochemont, *Eating in America*.

The conflict of ideas between modernity and cuisine are not strictly limited to this cookbook. This dialogue is also reflected in an article within the same supplement in which Henry Wallace touted the advancements of agricultural technology. Written by Oscar Tschirky, the Maitre d'Hotel for the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, it seeks to reassure the “epicure.” Like Gaige, his essay celebrates the regional cuisine of the United States, comparing it favorably to other foreign cuisines. He too touts the power of modern technology, boasting greater amounts of food, greater diversity in the American diet, and a decrease in the cost of food for the American consumer. However, his article is first and foremost a celebration of the creativity of cuisine that can be expressed through the use of food, not in the building blocks which are intended to make the nation healthier. Particularly telling is the following statement he makes in regards to some of the ideas about food of the future:

I do not think the future development of food – whether served within or without the home – will mean any radical change in the method of preparation or consumption of food. I have no sympathy with those who predict a fantastic diet of pills and compressed victuals for the people of tomorrow. The whole evolution of food is against it. Such methods would indeed mean that we were going back to the old idea of eating to live.<sup>123</sup>

Tschirky's comments come to the heart of the conflict highlighted between the New York World's Fair and the culinary vision of the cookbook: namely, a conflict between perceptions of food as a necessity of life versus the concept of food as pleasure. Tschirky, far from seeing a homogenous yet healthy means of sustenance as the future, sees it as a form of regression, instead proclaiming that it is the development of culinary sophistication that highlights evolution. The cookbook becomes a tacit reminder to the World's Fair attendee to remember that food is meant to be savored and enjoyed even as he or she learns about its building blocks.

No previous fair illustrated the divide between the goals of the food industry and the everyday home chef greater than the 1939 World's Fair. With greater control over their own

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123 Oscar Tschirky, “Promise for the Epicure” *New York Times*, March 5, 1939.

exhibits, as well as exclusive distribution rights for many of the fair's concessions, the 1939 World's Fair officially promoted a future of food that placed more control in the hands of the industry than in the home chef. The displays of the fair aimed to reassure the public that hygienic, healthy food could be best provided by trustworthy brands, and that the future lay in processed food prepared in the factories and delivered to grocery store shelves. However, whereas in 1893 the cooks and gourmands largely coexisted with the scientists and producers without tacit acknowledgment of each other, the New York World's Fair showed signs of an increasing conflict between food lovers and food providers. Gourmands like Gaige and Tschirky indicate the presence of a culture which still believed in the primacy of living to eat rather than eating to live. There is no denying the fact that many of the names seen at the Fair would go on to become household brands; Wonder Bread and Coca-Cola, for instance, are still regarded as all-American staples. However, it would not be until the 1950s that pre-packaged foods would gain any leeway into the lives of home cooks. Until that time, as hygienic and futuristic as machine-made "homebaked" pies were, pre-packaged and pre-prepared food could not beat the dominance of good old-fashioned home baking.<sup>124</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As the curtain fell on the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, thousands of visitors had already been exposed to new technologies, grandiose visions, and exotic culinary sensations they might never have borne witness to had they never attended. Fairgoers walked away with a vision of the future of their diets both complex and complimentary. Full of bounty, but emphasizing

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124 Of course, this development goes beyond the scope of this thesis. That said, for more information on the efforts of food processors to encourage pre-packaged food over home cooking, see Laura Shapiro's *Something From the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950s America* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

moderation and frugality, the populace could rest assured that the food producers of America would keep them fed in the healthiest fashion possible. They took with them also fantastic journeys around the culinary globe, while simultaneously taking comfort in the superiority and comfort of the foods they knew and cherished. Some women may have even gone home with new cookbooks provided by women of means which provided them ways of feeding their own families in tasty new ways. For many, the seeds of change in understanding food had been planted.

These seeds continued to grow and be cultivated by each subsequent fair. Ideas grew in and out of vogue as the dominant vision of agriculture as the world's providers eventually gave way to science and industry, with their hygienic, cost-effective and nutritionally enriched foods of the future. Technologies such as refrigeration helped to develop these fledgling industries, eventually turning many companies into vast corporations. Even if the world could not grow its way out of hunger, it could at least solve the problem via the technology of food processing.

Slowly, foreign cuisines became less foreign. Though the changes were slow in coming, people increasingly became familiar with new diets, from Chinese to Indian to even non-English and French European nations. Their tastes in foreign fare may seem tepid by modern standards, but they were still present and ripe for development, especially in the latter half of the twentieth century as people rejected processed foods in favor of the old-fashioned ways of home cookery, and as America slowly began to acknowledge how multicultural it actually was. Even earlier than that, however, cosmopolitan gourmards such as Crosby Gaige began to encourage incorporating foreign cuisine into the American diet.

The Food Zone of the 1939 New York World's Fair may have looked drastically different from the Agricultural Building of the 1893 World's Columbian exposition, but it still carried its legacy. Even without giant corn palaces, the merging of science and food, the emphasis on



hygienic preparation, the presence of ethnic restaurants reviewed in local magazine articles, and the devoted few who insisted that home-cooked, traditional meals still had a place in American society were all products of ideas that were present in all the fairs that came before it. The future of food was not so much a revolutionary vision as it was an evolutionary one, with each new advance in nutrition and production, each new introduction to the wider world and its food, and even the stubborn maintenance of regional foodways developed on as time passed. As World War II loomed over the American landscape, America's diet became both more distinctively American and more homogenous, following earlier trends.

Although the 1939 World's Fair is far from the last one to take place in this country, the notion of a megaevent such as these giant expositions has long since fallen out of favor in light of their lack of profitability. We still see their influences in theme parks such as Disneyland, but the era of the big fair as an avenue of general national and corporate promotion is largely a thing of the past.<sup>125</sup> Their visions of the future, however, are still present with us today. Technology that was considered advanced has improved and become standard, unquestioned parts of American life. Some ideas continue to be developed, while others have been ruled obsolete. Nutrition science has become highly developed since the rough early days of fats, carbohydrates and proteins. The corporatization of the food industry has become much more developed and monolithic. The most prominent ideas of the World Fairs have become the most prominent in our day and age.

Yet as we have seen, quieter ideas managed to survive and proliferate into modern thinking as well. Foreign cuisine is more popular than ever, and cookbooks still encourage the

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125 Which is not to say that large expositions do not still occur fairly regularly in this country; trade expositions for example, or expositions based around specific hobbies. However, they are primarily focused around specialized interests. In general, however, World Fairs are considered too high of a risk, and the last World Fair on American soil was Expo '86 in Vancouver. Maurice Roche's book *Mega Events and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000) shows a list of which fairs functioned at a profit and which at a loss on page 43 up to the 1970 Osaka Fair.

preparation of healthy food that goes beyond the standardized, processed fare that has been pushed heavily on the American public, especially in the wake of movements beginning in the 1960s that rejected the food processors in favor of a push towards organic home cooking. Despite the best wishes of the domestic scientists of the turn of the twentieth century, flavor has not gone away, and people still continue to enjoy a wide variety of foods.

In short, as each fair came and went, an increasingly complex interrelationship between consumers and producers played out. At the heart of these developments lay the question of who could claim the right to provide Americans with their meals. Science claimed authority through establishing technological solutions to food, whether it be increasing the bounty of the fields or creating food in a laboratory. This science was then appropriated by reformers and food processors alike, attempting to form a national concept of food that fit into their own agendas. Despite all this, however, cooks continued to cook, people continued to eat the foods they wanted, and the final say on what went on the table ultimately lay in the hands of home cooks and the restaurants of gourmands.

Yet all of these trends informed each other and created a larger tapestry. Science made its way into kitchens through new technologies such as electric stoves and refrigerators, which in turn promoted new innovations in cooking. The New England Kitchen, for example, may have failed as a movement, but it did introduce the early form of the slow-cooker, which would later go on to become a household staple. Foreign foods and spices gradually worked their way into the culinary foodways of Americans to the point where nobody would think one way or another about a man eating free samples of spaghetti to avoid paying for food, and where a cookbook could proudly proclaim sukiyaki as an integrated part of the cuisine of the West. We may not like to acknowledge the corporate influence on our diets, but foods like hot dogs, Coca-Cola and tomato ketchup are considered such staples of the American diet that people rarely bother to

think of why that would be the case. Not every idea presented at the fairs would go on to become integral parts of American thinking on food – we would never, for example, embrace the prioritizing of health over flavor these days, and bird's nest soup continues to largely be a delicacy than a regular restaurant staple – but the fairs still introduced many concepts which largely go unquestioned in today's culinary world.

In looking at these trends, however, we cannot forget the importance privilege plays in the ability to choose what and how we eat. With the cookbooks, for example, the ambitions and sentiments of Gaige and others like him are certainly well-intentioned, even as the women who prepared *Favorite Dishes* in 1893 and the woman who aimed to diversify diets in 1915 had their own desires on how to use cooking to better others. Something to bear in mind, however, is that these books were often prepared by people in higher socioeconomic brackets, and that not everybody could afford to live the lifestyles these cookbooks advocated. The women who put together the 1893 cookbook were all members of the committee that organized the Woman's Building, and Crosby Gaige was a prominent figure in the theater. They therefore have assumptions about access and time use that may not be universally true for people of all classes. We could say, in other words, that while the cookbooks highlight the foodways of America, proper access to them are limited somewhat by class. Certainly, the increased level of production mentioned by Tschirky increases access towards some foods, but the cookbook includes certain types of foods such as, again, terrapin, as well as abalone and goat, which lower classes may never expect to have access.

These class issues continue to be an issue today as well. Reports continue to circulate about the lack of access of the urban poor towards healthy, fresh food, forcing them to turn towards unhealthy avenues such as fast and processed foods. Not everybody has the choice on which dietary trend to follow. Money is, in the end, a chief facilitator of choice when it comes to

food, and those who lack money often are forced to take the cheapest and least healthy ways out. In fact, in some regards the situation is worse in modern times than they were around 1893, where reformers struggled with the lower classes because they enjoyed greater access to more expensive cuts of meat, and were willing to pay extra money to eat the ways they felt comfortable. These days, many people lack even those options.

Race continues to be an issue as well, closely tied into issues of class. We judge people by their ability to provide healthy meals to their families. However, minorities continue to be underprivileged, living in low income areas with poor access to healthy food. This problem is reflected in such points as, for example, how African American women have the highest levels of obesity among American women.<sup>126</sup> Statistics such as these can be reflections both of socioeconomic and cultural factors which are poorly reflected on a whole in analyzing food trends. World fairs in particular, as seen with the Javanese during the 1893 World's Fair, had heavy racial undertones in nearly every element of the fair, and to neglect that element completely is to leave out an important part of the puzzle. More than anything, the materials looked at primarily targeted a presumed White audience, leaving further avenues for investigation.

Still, in looking at how we approached food in these specific points in time, we can better understand how our modern understanding of our relationship with food developed. The attitudes, ideas, marketing, and tastes in food seen in the past still inform the eating and shopping habits of the present. Enriching may not have the same authoritative sound to it anymore, for example, but it still occurs, and people are still willing to choose enriched foods over raw foods that have the same ingredients. We still eat in foreign restaurants as a means of experiencing

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126 Office of Minority Health, *Obesity and African Americans*, <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/content.aspx?ID=6456> (Accessed July 16, 2012)

other countries. And our cookbooks look very different, but they still help teach people to cook foreign and familiar foods alike. The fairs of the past presented ideas that informed the ways of the present, and will continue to inform our own futures.

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