

food and culture

a reader

third edition

edited by
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Foreword

People ask me: Why do you write about food, and eating and drinking? Why don't you write about the struggle for power and security, and about love, the way others do?

They ask it accusingly, as if I were somehow gross, unfaithful to the honor of my craft.

The easiest answer is to say that, like most other humans, I am hungry. But there is more than that. It seems to me that our three basic needs, for food and security and love, are so mixed and mingled and entwined that we cannot straightly think of one without the others. So it happens that when I write of hunger, I am really writing about love and the hunger for it . . . and warmth and richness and fine reality of hunger satisfied . . . and it is all one.

I tell about myself, and how I ate bread on a lasting hillside, or drank red wine in a room now blown to bits, and it happens without my willing it that I am telling too about the people with me then, and their other deeper needs for love and happiness.

There is food in the bowl, and more often than not, because of what honesty I have, there is nourishment in the heart, to feed the wilder, more insistent hungers. We must eat. If, in the face of that dread fact, we can find other nourishment, and tolerance and compassion for it, we'll be no less full of human dignity.

There is a communion of more than our bodies when bread is broken and wine drunk. And that is my answer, when people ask me: Why do you write about hunger, and not wars or love?

M. F. K. Fisher
The Gastronomical Me,
originally published 1943

Preface to the Third Edition

In this third edition of *Food and Culture: A Reader*, our aim mirrors that of the previous two editions: to provide a comprehensive introduction to the field that contains classic foundational pieces, a range of outstanding articles reflecting diverse perspectives and topics, and cutting edge new work. This task has become more challenging with each edition as the field has exploded over the sixteen years since the first edition appeared in 1997. To include new work and keep the *Reader* current and lively, we had to omit some pieces that we love, but we hope that the new articles will excite our readers and more than make up for what we dropped.

In this new edition, we have kept almost all of the foundational pieces but cut the article by De Certeau and Giard to include a selection from Pierre Bourdieu. We have modified the section on food consumption and the body by reducing the number of articles on anorexia nervosa, expanding the focus on obesity, and including more diverse approaches to the body. This edition of the *Reader* maintains a broad geographical and multicultural coverage with articles on Euro-Americans, African Americans, and Latinos as well as on Japanese, Greek, Italian, Thai, South Asian, native American, Mexican, and Chinese food cultures. It continues to explore enduring topics of food and gender, consumption and meaning, globalization, and political economy, but introduces new topics with articles on farmers' markets, community food security, the complexities of the organic food market, democracy and food justice, cooking skill and its meanings, gender in food television, and packaged foods in the South Asian diaspora.

Since the first edition of the book, we have been privileged to participate in the creation of the sumptuous covers. From the multihued noodles and fruit of the first edition, to the sensuous chocolate dessert and colorful spices of the second, we have endeavored to combine foods like fish and tomatoes with culturally constructed products like sandwiches. We chose the Thai fruit and vegetable carving for this edition's cover to underscore the skill and effort involved in transforming foods into edible works of art, and the important place of the visual aspects of food in the anthropology of the senses.

We are pleased to publish this third edition not only in standard book format but also as an electronic book. For instructors who adopt the book in courses, we have also prepared test questions which are available on the book's website. We have tried to pay more attention to temporal context in this edition, giving the original date of publication at the beginning of each article, to draw more attention to the scholarly context in which these papers were written.

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