

Folk 267: Food and Culture

**FEBRUARY 10: BENTLEY'S  
“FROM CULINARY OTHER TO  
MAINSTREAM AMERICA”**

# Two things

- Once again, Rudy will not be on the midterm next week, but I encourage you to peruse it.
- I was told at the end of Tuesday's class that the bookstore was out of *Culinary Tourism*. I did not know this.
  - The bookstore said they are on their way.
  - Since then, *Snowpocalypse III: The Reckoning*, so presumably no movement

# And two more things...

- ⦿ Notes will be up on the web page by the end of the day for everything up to today.
- ⦿ A reminder, for those who joined us late, that, contrary to the syllabus, the exam is now next Thursday, and the first assignment is due on March 1<sup>st</sup>, as per the class's wishes

# Pilcher's "From Culinary Other..."

- What do you think?

# Pilcher's "From Culinary Other..."

- ⦿ At one point: "[Texas] Anglos considered Mexican food so bad that they said wild animals would not scavenge on Mexican dead bodies." (Montaño)
- ⦿ What happens when
  - ... the "exotic" becomes the "familiar"?
  - ... the "inedible" the "edible"?
  - ... the "unpalatable" the "palatable"?
- ⦿ And how?

# Three ways to consider Southwestern cuisine

- ⦿ Dominance: embracing of food juxtaposed with increasing hostility toward Mexico indicates culinary neutralization and cultural domination
- ⦿ Resistance: S/W cuisine provides a means of ownership, self-identity: sites of resistance to the dominant culture
- ⦿ Negotiation: mutual participation in foodways and syncretic cuisine allows for foray into greater mutual understanding

# What is Southwest cuisine?

- Offspring of Native American and Mexican foodstuffs, flavours, and cooking techniques, and European-American elements
- Cuisine of the border States, with regional variation
  - California: avocado and sprouts
  - Arizona/Sonora: fry bread and mutton stew
  - New Mexico: green chiles and blue corn
  - Tex-Mex: Chili, nachos, barbecue

# Ubiquity of Chili

- Competitions throughout U.S.
- Available as garnish on Hot Dog carts
- cf. Lloyd's "Cincinnati Chili" (which we read in a few weeks)



# Reasons for growth of S/W cuisine

- Increased immigration from regions with chilies as part of their cuisine (Latin America, Caribbean, Asia); growing Latino population; shift to California as arbiter of cultural tastes
- Inexpensive and pleasant food adapted for American tastes (similarity to already-acclimated Italian food)

# Reasons (cont.)

- Masculine appeal – simplicity, outdoors, sports, *danger*
- Evocation of a romanticised, sanitised West and Southwest

## Processes of growth

- Reframing of food context and preparation
- Recipe adaptation

# Food as domination

- Historic efforts to “Americanise” Mexican-American foodways
- Framing of new “Southwest” cuisine as “different from” (through naming, in addition to recipe adaptation) seeks to neutralise Mexican power
- Shifts “otherness” from cultural to regional

# Food as resistance

- ⦿ Retention of originating food influences can be embraced by originating peoples, even within the new constructed cuisine
- ⦿ Ongoing participation in originating cuisine alongside the new
  - *Tamaleada* Tamale-making → female ritual
  - *Carne asada* Barbecue → male ritual

# Food as negotiation

- Precisely the syncretic nature of Southwestern food confirms the ongoing re-creation of a new area
- *La Frontera* (the Frontier) as contested site
- Foodways allows for a presentation of that negotiated space

# Go away now.

- For next class: Wilson's "Pass the Tofu"
- We will have a brief midterm review as well