

Folk 267: Food and Culture

**FEBRUARY 15: WILSON'S
"PASS THE TOFU,
PLEASE"**

Thursday's midterm

- ⦿ The basic format is
 - some multiple choice questions,
 - some fill in the blank, and
 - some short (one sentence) answers.
- ⦿ There will also be **one** short essay question (let's say, three healthy paragraphs) of a general nature relating to foodways and, specifically, culinary tourism.

Helpful hints

- ⦿ To pass: do the readings, read the notes online, attend class (travel back in time if you need to)
- ⦿ There will be a detailed “cheat” sheet on the website by the end of the day. You may print this out and bring it with you to the exam.
- ⦿ You may bring a *translation* dictionary, but remember: I want the definitions a folklorist would use

Any questions about the
assignment?

Wilson's "Pass the Tofu"

What did *you* think?

Wilson's "Pass the Tofu"

- ⊙ Ethnomimesis – the imitation of (another) culture
- ⊙ Increase in interest in international food systems stemming from
 - ... counter-culture movement in the 1960s
 - ... conspicuous consumption and consumerism of a more moneyed population
 - ... increasing health concerns of an aging population
- ⊙ In other words, Dirty hippies got old! (cf. Pilcher)

Counter-culture

- ⦿ Largely a middle-class phenomenon
- ⦿ Countercuisines arose in opposition to dominant cultural values
- ⦿ Ecological considerations:
 - Packaging, monocropping, pesticides, distribution channels
 - “With food, one could enact one’s principles three times a day and could teach others through acts of hospitality.”

Counter-culture (cont.)

- ⦿ Processed convenience foods seen as powerful symbol of dominant culture's hegemony
 - **Hegemony** – we know what this means, right?
- ⦿ Exploring / valorizing ethnic differences
 - Rediscovery of prior generations' foodways once jettisoned in favour of assimilation
 - Whitebread → *Blason populaire*
 - Movement to heavier brown breads (Hi Andrew!), etc. “allowed countercultural youth to achieve some sense of distance from mainstream culture.”

Counter-culture (cont.)

◎ Macrobiotic diet

- Principally vegetarian (lighter animal proteins permitted)
- Balanced diet
 - Yin (earthly, cold, soft, contractive)
 - Yang (heavenly, hot, dry, expansive)
- Emphasised “natural” East over “mechanized” West

Consumerism

- ⦿ As counterculture generation ages and enters workforce, countercuisines become more marketable
- ⦿ Culinary tourism
 - Associated with status display and differentiation
 - Food becomes an important sign of distinction
- ⦿ Class phenomenon of counterculture echoes as it ages
 - “I suspect that some contemporary vegetarianism is fueled by the conscious or unconscious desire for status differentiation.”

Consumerism (cont.)

- ◎ “Bobos” – bourgeois bohemians
 - Moneyed former counterculture participants
 - Showcases bohemian values such as self-expression, spontaneity, creativity
 - Conspicuous leisure of old money is déclassé
 - Prefer to display wealth in more subtle ways
 - Food, exercise, health (not listed, education / enlightenment)
 - “Even our leisure time is dedicated to self-expression and self-cultivation; even when idle, we are at work.”

Consumerism (cont.)

- ⦿ Every dollar spent on multicultural shopping is experienced as a dollar spent in resistance to global capitalism, environmental degradation, and cultural imperialism
- ⦿ Multiculturalism helps to legitimate new areas of (for?) consumption
 - (Pause for a second and think of the rise of support for folk arts. Okay, unpause.)

Consumerism (cont.)

- Many ethnic cuisines (Japanese, Chinese) have, through non-travel culinary tourism, achieved a cultural prominence that the source countries never had as tourist destinations
- “Convenience” countercuisine foods alleviate the difficulties in resourcing a counter-hegemonic diet

Health

- ◎ Appeal of many countercuisines build on emergent vernacular health paradigms
 - Balance (i.e. macrobiotic); Habitat (vegetarian); Nature (unprocessed)
 - Add to this: fetishization of an idealised female body type
 - Romanticisation of the East (Orientalism)
 - Not entirely benign: (see page 260)

Culinary tourism

- ◎ Old dirty hippies experience the other...
 - By region
 - A created “Asia”
 - By culture
 - Chinese, Japanese, Indian, etc.
 - By ethos
 - Anti-mechanized, antimodern
 - By time
 - “Ancient”
 - By socioeconomic class
 - In distinction from mainstream foods of working classes

Go away now.

- ⦿ Next class: MIDTERM!!!!!!
- ⦿ Go to the website after 2pm today and download the cheat sheet.
 - <http://tinyurl.com/folk267>