

Folk 267: Food and Culture

**MARCH 8: SECOND
ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW
AND LLOYD'S
“CINCINNATI CHILI”**

Fieldwork Assignment

- ① Conduct a short *ethnographic exercise* in which you observe and participate in a *food event*, documenting as much of the process as you are able through fieldnotes, subsequent interviews with participants, photography, etc.

... which means

⦿ Ethnographic

- A description based on first-hand experience: you actually go to and participate in the event, to describe what this particular event was like

⦿ Food event

- Any occasion at which food is part of the activities, whether as primary focus or as part of a larger complex of operations
 - Examples?

The essay

- ◎ An essay will provide a synthesis of your research, in which you should
 - describe the food event from conception to culmination,
 - locate it within the larger food repertoire of the particular group and the group's socio-cultural tradition, and
 - relate it to other cultural performances.

Remember

- Don't generalise: don't do it from memory. Go somewhere and look at a specific event
- Students should consult and cite the relevant literature for analogous food performances in different contexts.
- Anticipated length: 5-7 pages doublespaced (exclusive of bibliography).

Remember

- Hospitality and Tourism students may not use the “Evening of Food and Wine” as the site for their fieldwork project, irrespective of whether you are currently in the course responsible for it, have been in the past, or will be in the future.

PANCAKE TUESDAY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Lloyd's "The Cincinnati Chili Complex"

What did you think of it?



His point

- ⦿ Want and lack of options are not what keep food traditions alive
- ⦿ Which is the same thing as saying easy access to a wide swathe of food options do not necessarily lead to the demise of food traditions
- ⦿ “Associations and identities” with food, food habits, and food events are crucial to food choice and maintenance
- ⦿ New foods can also accrue these associations and identities

Cincinnati Chili

- ⦿ Seasoned beef in tomato sauce w/ onions, garlic, Worcestershire, and a range of spices
 - Cinnamon most distinct and essential among them
- ⦿ Typically served over spaghetti (2-way), with grated yellow cheese (3-way), onions (4-way), and kidney beans (5-way)
 - Local grammar for ordering variations
- ⦿ Also as “cheese coney” (bun, hot dog, chili, onions, cheese, side of oyster crackers)

Where available

- 65 chain chili parlours (comprising 4 chains), individually owned chili parlours, non-speciality restaurants, and private homes
- “Most precise and mechanised” in the chains
- Prepared at one central location and distributed to stores
- See <http://skylinechili.com/menu.pdf>

Secret recipe?

- ⦿ Each parlour and chain has own variation
 - Varies much more by level of hotness – intensity of flavours - than absolute taste
- ⦿ Centralization of chain production allows for continued “secrecy”
- ⦿ However, frequent preparation in the home precludes the absoluteness of “secrecy”
- ⦿ More a matter of restaurant / chain / regional pride

Favourite

- “For many Cincinnatians the best chili is determined not by criteria of authenticity, secrecy, or spiciness but by considerations of habit or childhood remembrance. A significant number of my informants felt that the best chili was that which happened to have been served either at the parlor around the corner from where they were raised, or at a downtown parlor where chili meals were part of the family ritual of a regular Saturday’s shopping trip.”

Individual parlors

- Claims to superiority based on individualized, smaller batches, greater attention, etc.
- Parlors also serve as meeting-places, like neighborhood grocery, beauty parlor, barbershop, or tavern

General discussion

- Whereas most regional foods derive from local plants, animals, etc.
Cincinnati chili began as commercial enterprise
- Entered into the domestic and regional sense of place over time
- Despite “ethnic” origins, not considered an “ethnic” food

Go away now. Eat a pancake.

- Next class, Newton's "The Jell-O Syndrome"
- Available through
 - <http://tinyurl.com/folk267>
 - It is best to access it on campus, otherwise you'll be having to log in through the library and find it again