

Folk 267: Food and Culture

**MARCH 29: DIANE TYE'S  
CH. 5 "TASTING THE  
PAST" AND OVERVIEW**

What did *you* think of it?

# The legacy of her baking

- In jeopardy
- In part, store-bought treats far more normative than homemade
  - Widespread availability, shift in connotations of store-bought, and expectations of female labour to no longer be restricted to the domestic sphere
- But far more a consequence of individual responses to the legacy of family dynamics
- Food a form of memory, and an aid to remembering

# Diane (elder daughter)

- Selective reproduction of mother's repertoire
- A form of nostalgia and personal commemoration
- Not for entertaining but for family, especially extended family get-togethers
  - The food we share is a physical reminder that she lives in us and continues to be a part of the family.

# Diane (cont.)

- ⦿ Making “tasty” food a continuation of role inherited from mother, how family sees her and how she sees herself
- ⦿ A “natural” inheritance as elder daughter: partial claim of mother’s authority
  - Given role? Or taken?
- ⦿ For *herself*
  - Above all, making my mother’s food is an act of self-nurturing. Tasting a cookie, I am a child again watching my mother bake.

# Henry (husband/father)

- Given proclaimed low priority for food, does not reproduce wife's cooking/baking
- Does continue their shared practice of making strawberry jam in June
- Makes modification of pumpkin pie from Jack O'Lantern (using premade crusts)
- For Henry, the absence of food is very much the absence of structure, of the rhythms of the day, week, seasons, year
- Partial reproduction of Laurene's cooking (and continuation of food scheduling) helps to assuage that absence

# Mark (brother, son)

- Reproduces none of the tastes: does not bake
- Like Henry, food memories more often associated with the kind of consumption (restaurants) than with specific foods
- Demonstrates “familialist ideology that holds women accountable for their families’ happiness.”

# Cathy (second daughter, middle child, deaf child)

- ◎ Memories of childhood more complex
  - Sense of exclusion by culture of the primacy of orality in family communications
- ◎ Husband expected reproduction of his mother's food
- ◎ Food choice a recognised site of contestation in families
- ◎ For the most part, Cathy chooses not to remember

# Dilemma

- ⦿ How does one commemorate the life of a beloved ancestor through reproduction of her creative food making without invoking a nostalgia for the conditions that created the context for those foods?
- ⦿ Echoes through the entire course when one speaks of “folk foods” ethnic foods, traditional foods, often born from want and oppression

# Overview

- Traces the life history of one woman in terms of her baking
- Baking was a central activity, yet not one she either defined herself by, or was significantly recognized for, or found satisfaction from
- Her baking was occasioned by and expected from her various social roles: wife, mother, member of her (church) community, wife of the minister

# Overview (cont.)

- The types of baking (what was baked) were also conditioned by these social roles: “comfortable” food for home; “dainty” food for guests
- The networks formed by these social roles became the source for the recipes: she could in turn both pass them along and receive them

# Overview (cont.)

- ⦿ Despite baking (and, oddly, because baking) was expected from her, she was able to use it in a subversive way, creating opportunities through it for making time for herself, for friendship, for the creation of a “third place” away from her home roles and her public roles
- ⦿ Her children and her widower find complex meanings from the legacy of her baking

# Reminder

- ◎ Specifically for BHTM students:
  - Thursday's class is the same day as the Evening of Food and Wine.
  - Please try to attend class that day, but if you can't, the film we will be watching is available for viewing online.
  - The link will be on the webpage.

# Go away now

- Next class,
- Film: *Hamburger and Dolma*
- **Assignments Due**