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The Culture of Slow Food
A Thesis Presented
by
Alice Frances Aldous-Worley
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Alice Frances Aldous-Worley

We, the thesis committee for the above candidate for the
Master of Arts degree, hereby recommend
acceptance of this thesis.

William Arens, Ph.D. - Advisor

Professor of Anthropology

Dean, International Academic Programs

David Hicks, Ph.D., Professor of Anthropology

Lauren Hale, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Public Health

This thesis is accepted by the Graduate School

Lawrence Martin

Dean of the Graduate School

Abstract of the Thesis
The Culture of Slow Food

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The United States has been living out its Puritan Protestant origin and denying the sensual enjoyment of food by eating scientifically to survive, which according to Levenstein has “bred a vague indifference to food, manifested in a tendency to eat and run, rather than to dine and savor” (Pollan 2008:54). According to many, America’s Fast Food “culture” is causing great socio-cultural, public health, economic and environmental problems (Pollan 2008; Petrini 2003). In an attempt to preserve food cultures around the world, Slow Food started as a social movement against Fast Food and the fast life that was becoming more prevalent in Italy, a culture where “meals are a central arena for the family” (Counihan 1999:49). Unsurprisingly, early in the 19th century Italian Americans successfully resisted the Americanization of their meals, making foods out of fresh ingredients from local markets or their own gardens (Levenstein 1993). The Slow Food movement is continuing the Italian tradition of cultural culinary preservation by resisting McDonaldization of the food chain.

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Union Square Greenmarket through the eyes of Geertz

Patrons slowly push through Union Square Greenmarket; there is a constant flow of people bobbing in and out of stalls, making it impossible to stop mid-stream without damming up the flow. Vendors line either side of the river of people, producers on one side back up to Union Square Park and on the other side they back up to the sidewalk on 14th Street. The Council on the Environment of New York City (CENYC) estimates that over 60,000 people a day patronize the Union Square Greenmarket during peak season (CENYC 2007).

Who visits the Greenmarket, what are they buying, and whom are they buying from? Geertz (1979:217) refers to this as clientization; “the tendency, very marked in the *suq*, for repetitive purchases of certain goods,” from certain vendors. As in the *suq* (an Arab market), patrons have built a rapport with the producers and have come to expect particular qualities from their goods, and smiling faces from the producers. The connection between producers and consumers is an important relationship that is lost in supermarkets.

In the Greenmarket, similar to the market in *Sefrou*, the producers and consumers at the markets are anything but homogenous. In the Greenmarket, some producers have been organic farming since the late 1960’s and yet others are recent Ivy League graduates, trying their hand at what can be a good and sustainable way of life. Geertz (1979:197) describes *Sefrou*’s *suq* as “tumbling chaos: hundreds of men, this one in rags, that one in silken robe, the next in some outlandish mountain costume.” In an afternoon at the Greenmarket, I encountered families with children of varying ages, well-heeled New Yorkers, old women with pushcarts, New York University students, blue-collar workers and aspiring models.

The Greenmarket is as much a spectacle, as it is a practical and inexpensive market for people to shop. There is a vast variety of apples (Idared, Winesap, Mutsu, Crispin, Braeburn, Golden Delicious, Gala, Empire, Fuji, Golden Crisp, McIntosh, Cortland, Jonagold), about half of which were organic and all of which were competitively priced, if not significantly cheaper than the supermarket. Other goods available at the Greenmarket in mid-March included: root vegetables (parsnips, beets, fingerling potatoes, celeriac, Jerusalem artichokes, black salsify), sprouts (broccoli, clover, alfalfa, radish, and sunflower), as well as onions, shallots, and hydroponically grown heirloom tomatoes and lettuce. Jams, jellies, goat cheese, goats' milk yogurt, sheep cheese, lamb, bacon, sausage, artisan breads, pastries, wines, honey, beeswax candles and potted herbs are also available.

The Greenmarket offers economic benefits to both producers and consumers; in addition to environmental benefits of buying local produce, it preserves local farmland, protects biodiversity and improves rural economies and food security in the age of globalization. Others simply state that the superior taste brought them back to the same producer week after week. The Greenmarket "brings supply crowds and demand crowds usefully together" (Geertz 1979:172). Consumers at the Greenmarket, take as long to buy food for one or two meals as one trip to the supermarket takes consumers to buy meals for a week. Shoppers at the greenmarket, cognizant of it or not, are part of the Slow Food Movement, slowly making their way through the market, taking pleasure in choosing the perfect foods for that night's dinner. They do not want to trade the taste of real foods, for supermarket convenience.

The New York City Greenmarkets started in 1976 linking producers and consumers, several times a week in Union Square and a handful of other locations. New Yorkers were tired of the pale pink hard tomatoes and rusted

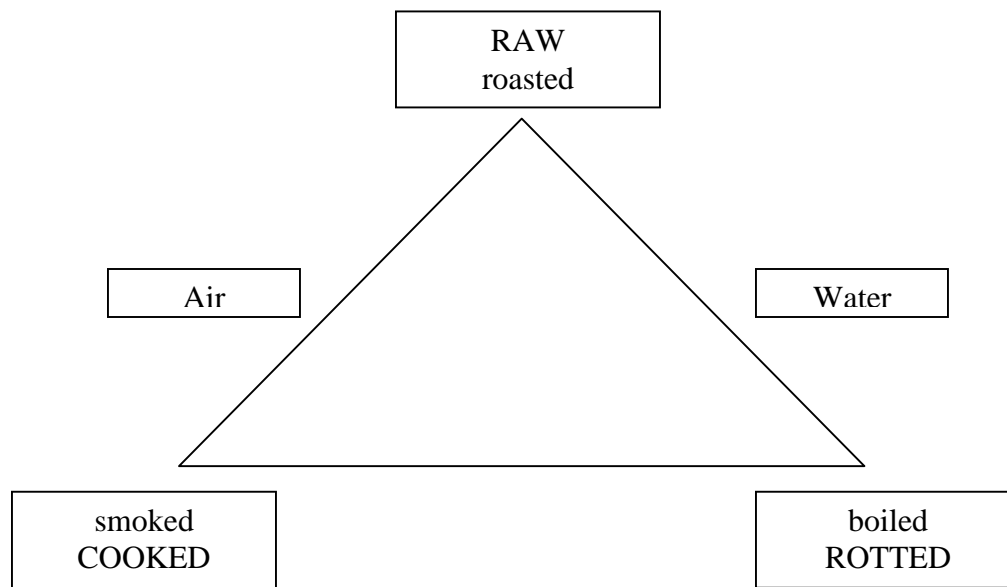
iceberg lettuce that filled produce isles (CENYC 2007). One hundred years ago, everyone in New York City shopped at local markets. Brooklyn was the largest agricultural producing county in the state (CENYC 2007). In the post-industrial revolution and before the emergence of the supermarket, farmer's markets left the mainstream and were only found in ethnic enclaves of the largest cities in *developed* countries or in *developing* countries where it is customary to frequent the market (Geertz 1979; Levenstein 1988). Farmer's markets today in the United States exist on a small scale in rural areas, but ironically, the largest farmer's market is the Union Square Green Market in New York City, one of the most developed cities in world. There are now forty-four Greenmarkets located throughout the five boroughs, sixteen of which stay open year round. Producers come to the Greenmarket from great distances all over the tri-state area, some producers travel up to 300 miles one-way. The Greenmarket prides itself on "rigorous grow your own standards" for its vendors (CENYC 2007).

In Morocco, the *suq* and the bazaar economy it imbues is symbolic of society, "it is a distinctive system of social relationships centering around the production and consumption of goods and services" (Geertz 1979:124). In the *suq* deceit is sovereign when selling high and buying low is the goal. Similarly, deceit is rampant in the United States consumer economy; however, the deceit does not occur between the producer and the consumer while bargaining in the bazaar, but rather at a supermarket between the advertiser and the consumer. Deceit is in the labeling and the packaging of goods in supermarkets, and in the prices that cannot be bargained. Bazaars originated in North Africa and the Middle East creating a bazaar economy (Geertz 1979); Supermarkets originated in the United States and exemplify its consumer economy (Levenstein 1988).

Supermarket ethnography

Sports Utility Vehicles (SUV) and runaway shopping carts barely filled the oversized parking lot. In comparison to the Union Square Greenmarket, the Stop and Shop is ghostly with far fewer consumers, all of whom going about their business in a much faster, efficient and solitary manner. Patrons pushed large shopping carts and filled them with breads that stay “fresh” for a month, TV dinners, boneless skinless chicken breasts, apples from China, carrots from California, spinach from Arizona, potatoes from Idaho, strawberries from Mexico, cashews from India, skim milk, fat-free half-and-half, hummus, Doritos, Lucky Charms, low-sodium Boars Head ham, cage-free eggs, and Kraft American cheese slices. Consumers moved rapidly purchasing fast foods; they were done in less than thirty minutes, and had enough groceries to last them for a week. The fast pace, elaborate packaging and convenience that supermarkets offer with their “one stop shopping” is symbolic of American society; a hurried society, based on efficiency, shelf life and quantity not quality.

Supermarkets have replaced “*mom and pop*” shops, and other small community grocers. However, supermarkets are not super enough for America’s consumer culture; there are warehouse supermarkets like Sam’s Club and BJ’s. Supermarkets are phasing out checkers, and implementing self-service check out lanes to cut costs. America’s insatiable need for convenience and “one stop shopping” has caused another great loss, the connection between farmers and consumers. According to Petrini (2007), this is one of the most important connections, which is evident in his use of language, referring to farmers as producers and consumers as co-producers.



(Levi-Strauss 1997:34)

Levi-Strauss' Culinary Triangle

One of Levi-Strauss' influential works in the sphere of dietary culture is his development of the Culinary Triangle. In general the triangle suggests that the further a food is removed from the source; the more processes involved between the food supply and its destination, the more cultured and thus valued the final product. Levi-Strauss' structural analysis makes sense when considering all the technologies that are involved in the preparation, preservation or transportation of food today. However, under a closer lens, when the culinary triangle is applied to the United States present-day dietary culture, its relevance is unclear and demands reexamination. The culinary triangle, if applied literally, is not consistent with the perception of the American fast food diet. Most foods in the United States today are processed. Accordingly, processed food has nearly become synonymous with the less cultured which is in contradiction to Strauss' triangle and to the more cultured health-conscious Americans who choose less processed food. One then is

left with the impression that either eating more closely to nature is unrefined or that the culinary triangle is irrelevant to our society as it is. Alternatively, perhaps we need to think about the triangle differently.

The Culinary Triangle is a way of structurally organizing food preparation into more or less cultured and more or less elaborated. Each corner of the triangle corresponds with a method of preparing food: raw, cooked and rotten. The process of cooking is cultural and the process of rotting is natural. In the triangle, each method of cooking is associated with nature or culture, elaborated or unelaborated. Roasted meat is considered “Raw” because it is cooked rapidly and unevenly over fire leaving parts of the meat uncooked or rare. Meats that are boiled are “Rotten” because the quality of a meat that you would boil is lower; boiling meat destroys the flesh like rotting. Boiling meat is metaphorically associated with rotting meat. Smoked meat is “Cooked”; it is the most esteemed, laborious and therefore cultural way of cooking meat. Smoking meat like boiling meat requires a receptacle making it increasingly cultural.

According to Levi-Strauss (1997), foods that are less cultured are eaten in the home with the family or served as a first course; these foods comprise the “Endo-cuisine.” “Formerly in France, boiled chicken was for the family meal, while roasted meat was for the banquet (and marked its culminating point, served as it was after the boiled meats and vegetables of the first course, and accompanied by “extraordinary fruits” such as melons, oranges, olives and capers)” (Levi-Strauss 1997:30). People cook less elaborate meals at home for their family. Subsequently the kind of foods that are eaten at home are less cultured, and, a group of foods that I will refer to as comfort foods; such as chicken soup, beef stew or meals without meat but which are still boiled like pasta. Meats in endo-cuisine are ‘boiled’ not smoked or roasted and since the process of boiling is one of putrefaction and denigration, it is ‘rotten’ and not fit

to serve to non-family members. Lesser cuts of meat are used because they are closer to the 'rotten' state initially and are not fit to be smoked or roasted, but can be boiled with additional ingredients to mask the quality of the meat. Comfort foods, which imply an emotional aspect to eating, are also only for the family and lesser cuts of meat are served at home to family; these are the kinds of meat that you would only want to boil or mask with seasoning and vegetables. In addition to boiled meats as indicated in the Culinary Triangle, there are many other dishes that are meant only to be cooked and consumed at home with family members.

Foods eaten outside of the home with non-family members- according to Levi-Strauss- are either roasted or smoked; they are more cultured and therefore appropriate for guests. For example, smoked fish requires a great level of elaboration and is the most 'cooked' inferring that it is culturally refined and sophisticated. Exo-cuisine is comprised of foods you eat outside of the home unless you are serving guests. These are the foods that restaurants generally serve, which include items such as fine cuts of steak and seafood with very elaborate side dishes and desserts. At a restaurant, meat is cooked to the consumers taste: black and blue, rare, medium rare and well done, which all clearly fit into the roasted (raw) category. Parts of the meat are cooked while other parts of it remain uncooked. Meat in such a manner is refined in nature; it is the ultimate in cultural sophistication; yet based upon its cooking process- according to the Culinary Triangle- it is less elaborated than boiled meat. In contemporary America, frying, which could possibly be the most important form of cooking, is not incorporated in the Culinary Triangle.

However, it is discussed briefly at the end of *The Culinary Triangle* and left at "a more complex transformation will be necessary to introduce the category of the fried" (Levi-Strauss 1997:34). Where do the present day Fast Food diet and the Slow Food diet fit in the framework of the Culinary Triangle?

American diet on the Culinary Triangle

America has never had a strong food culture (Pollan 2006). According to Levi Strauss' notions of unelaborated vs. elaborated and nature vs. culture the American diet has become extremely elaborated and cultured by human intervention along every step of the way (1997). The American diet is based on nutritionism. Food and the simple joys of cooking, making, sharing and eating real food have been reduced to the mere nutrients and chemicals that compose the food.

Real food does not last on shelves for weeks, months or even years. Real food is unprocessed; it does not contain artificial flavors, flavor enhancers, artificial colors or sweeteners. Food anxiety is extremely high in the United States, the fattest nation in the world (Rozin 2003). Americans have become so nutrient crazed that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV (DSM IV) is considering adding a new (cultural) eating disorder, Orthorexia, an unhealthy obsession with eating healthfully (Catalina Zamora et al 2005). *Healthy* Americans read all the nutrient ingredients on packaged food and only eat *low-fat, cholesterol-free, low-calorie* etc... however, they are still not healthy. What the United States has found through years of perfectly engineering food to be low-fat and have all the right nutrients is that the rates of the top killers, heart disease, cancer, and diabetes have increased at a steady pace.

Americans sit in front of the television alone with a bag of fat-free potato chips, dipping them in fat free dip, and wondering how the French eat cheese, meat and drink wine yet remain slender and healthy. Eating "healthy" contrary to what we believe can be worse for our health than eating socially or for pleasure. Also, consider that gas stations make more on 'food' and cigarettes than they do

on gas (Pollan 2008). For a gas-guzzling nation, that is a lot of junk food and cigarettes.

When foods are only understood in terms of nutrients, as are all the processed foods in supermarkets today, food that is unhealthy can be labeled as low-fat, or low-cholesterol. Consumers have been tricked into thinking they are eating healthy and doing the right thing but they just keep gaining weight. Another example is the “fat-free” label on items that are pure sugar, like many artificially colored candies that stock the shelves of convenience stores, supermarket check out aisles, and movie theatre snack counters.

When the American diet is literally applied to the culinary triangle the vast majority of foods most Americans eat are highly cultured because they are so highly processed; there is human interaction every step of the way. However, there is a contingency of American society that is not subscribing to the fast food diet, but rather the slow food diet.

Slow food diet on the culinary triangle

Today eating healthy means eating closer to nature, which is the dietary response to the obesity epidemic caused by America’s fast food culture. The Slow Food movement is a counter to fast food and advocates food being as fresh and close to the source as possible, in its natural state. By linking producers and co-producers, the Slow Food movement is attempting to bridge the gap between where food is grown and when it reaches the plate. The natural state can be elaborated upon and become cultural through cooking processes, but the food should retain its original flavor. “Localvore” is a new term used to describe people who only eat foods grown within a close radius of where they live. Eating

food as close to nature, fresh, local and unadulterated as possible would be considered uncultured through the lens of the culinary triangle. Conversely, in the United States today it is more ‘cultured’ to be health conscious—eating fresh foods—which is in opposition to what is considered cultured on the culinary triangle. So how then do we reconcile the American diet and the Slow Food diet within the framework of the culinary triangle?

Paradox

According to Levi-Strauss, “the art of cooking is not located entirely on the side of culture,” however it is precisely the art of cooking that makes food more or less cultured in American society today (1997:33). I take this one-step further and suggest that it is not just the food that becomes cultured through the “art of cooking” but the person consuming the food. The Culinary arts are a multi-million dollar industry that caters to the gastronomically ‘cultured’ individual. By consuming a cultural product, the person becomes more cultural and therefore more cultured themselves.

There has been a paradigm shift in our perception of what foods are ‘cultured.’ Now people who are more gastronomically ‘cultured’ eat foods that are fresh and as close to nature as possible, where the gastronomically ‘uncultured’ consume highly processed foods. However, in terms of the culinary triangle these processed foods would be highly elaborated and cultural. If, then, according to the Culinary Triangle, the further away a food gets from its source, the more cultured it is, it would seem that perceptions have changed, and that maybe it is time to reexamine the culinary triangle. Perhaps in considering the American cuisine the Culinary Triangle is no longer relevant.

United States Department of Agriculture Food Guide Pyramid

The food pyramid is a diagram created by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) offering guidelines on what to eat and how much to eat from each food group. Unlike the Culinary Triangle, the food pyramid addresses all the major food groups (grains, vegetables, fruits, oils, milk, meat and beans) not just meat. It is recommended that Americans eat less from the meat and oils than from the other pyramid groups (Harvard University 2007). The culinary triangle only examines meat and the processes by which it is cooked in order to culturally determine under what circumstances and to whom you serve meat (Levi-Strauss 1997). The pyramid is a personal guideline and suggests nothing of cooking, except that oils are to be consumed in moderation inferring that frying foods is not recommended. As previously discussed it is difficult to constructively look at the Culinary Triangle in terms of the American diet, when the most common form of cooking, frying, is not included on the triangle.

Introduction

The United States is living out its Puritan Protestant origin and denying the sensual enjoyment of food by eating scientifically to survive, which according to Levenstein has “bred a vague indifference to food, manifested in a tendency to eat and run, rather than to dine and savor” (Pollan 2008:54). America’s culinary culture was solidified when Kellogg, one of the most influential nutritionists of his time stated, “the decline of a nation commences when gourmandizing begins” (Levenstein 1988:93).

Americans have never had a healthy relationship with food, and “the context in which a food is eaten can be nearly as important as the food itself” (Pollan 2008:174). Americans are still trying to scientifically figure out *how and what to eat* when all they need to do is eat real, whole foods. Americans did not like the way immigrants mixed their foods, blurring the lines of what was served together and adding many spices was incongruous with an American meal (Pollan 2008). How a person eats is integral to their cultural identity; Americanization of all new immigrants was the goal, therefore removing traditional foods was essential. Immigrants were used to cooking, eating and sharing food with pleasure—as it should be—but in America where food had been pared down to the nutrient content, food had become devoid of pleasure (Mintz 2006).

Americans without contest had sacrificed taste for their perceived health. “Our personal health cannot be divorced from the health of the entire food web,” (Pollan 2008:103). “Many traditional culinary practices are the products of a kind of *biocultural* evolution, the ingenuity of which modern science occasionally figures out long after the fact” (Pollan 2008:174). People who eat traditional diets are much healthier, because traditional foods are based regionally and seasonally and are not heavily processed.

According to many, America's Fast Food "culture" is causing great socio-cultural, public health, economic and environmental problems (Pollan 2008; Petrini 2003). America's small-scale farmers are being forced out of business by large-scale agro industries who can afford to produce food using cheap labor and methods that are adverse to both the environment and human health (Evans and Howell 2003). Most Americans no longer cook their own food, let alone eat healthy meals or gather for dinner as a family. They eat alone, at their desk, in the car, or in front of the television, missing what some consider the integral socialization and pleasure that takes place in sharing a home cooked meal (Pollan 2008).

American cuisine is now generally based on processed and fast foods. By the time these substances reach the plate they have been put in a variety of receptacles with various liquids passed along conveyer belts, assembled and packaged by robots only to be reconstituted at home in another receptacle and then served. According to Levi Strauss' (1997) notions of unelaborated vs. elaborated and nature vs. culture, the American diet has become extremely elaborated and cultured by human intervention.

Slow Food Culture

When I was a child, my parents bought a conventional apple orchard. One of my earliest memories of the orchard was my mother taking us from the farm when my father was spraying pesticides. Although only five years old, it struck me that we had to leave our farm while my dad was spraying because our home was located in the middle of the orchard. How was it okay to eat the fruit he was spraying? It was not long before my parents started the arduous process to

become certified organic. During those three transitional years, although only using organic sprays and fertilizers, we were not allowed to sell our fruit as organic because there were residual chemicals in the soil. An organic inspector would come to our orchard periodically to collect fruit and soil samples for testing.

I came by my passion for food and wine naturally. Raised on an organic orchard in the Pacific Northwest, we grew apples, apricots, cherries, grapes, nectarines, peaches, walnuts and had a small apiary for pollinating the trees. The better part of the summer and fall seasons were spent harvesting, attending local farmers markets, and just as importantly preparing (and eating) all the wonderful fresh foods we had grown. The fruit that was not sold at markets was traded to a local organic winery, canned, dried, or used for pressing cider. We raised our own chickens, most other meats and dairy products we got from our neighbors: beef and cow's milk from the Forsberg's, lamb from the Abeid's, venison from Uncle Duane, fish from Uncle Dan and goat cheese from the Misterly's. Miraculously, most of the neighborhood still exists in the same sustainable microcosm that I grew up in; so, it is no surprise that the old neighborhood has set up a Convivia the *Slow Food Upper Columbia*. The neighborhood is now very involved with the Slow Food movement; for them, the movement does not offer new ideologies, but rather serves as a network of motivated like-minded people.

On my most recent visit home, we went for dessert at Rick and Lora Lee Misterly's place, founders of Quillisascut Cheese Company, which has grown considerably since my childhood. The Quillisascut Cheese Company now houses the Quillisascut Farm School of the Domestic Arts, which offers classes including: Farm Culinary 101 Sustainable Kitchen to Bastyr University students, Introduction to Small Acreage Sustainable Farming, Developing a Food Culture and Sense of Place, and a Farm to Table course for chefs. The goal of the farm

school is creating connections between eaters and farmers for a more sustainable future. Connecting chefs with local farmers and their products supports the local economy, preserves the environment and provides the freshest food possible (Misterly 2007). “I have argued that what is given up that is most important when food supplies are no longer integrated with kin groups, communities, and regions concerns the loss of that rich texture of daily social interaction that underlies and sustains the production, processing, local distribution, and consumption of food” (Mintz 2006:9).

Real Food Summit

At the Yale Summit on Real Food (a collaboration of the “Food Project” in Boston, the Yale Sustainable Food Project, and the Brown Sustainable Food Initiative), over 150 students from 47 colleges and universities all over the Northeast assembled to talk about “real” food – food that nurtures people and the earth. Together with faculty, administrators, NGO leaders, activists, and professionals, students envisioned a future where institutions of higher education adopt the ideology of fair and sustainable food on their campuses (Real Food Summit, November 3, 2007).

The summit was part of the “Real Food Challenge,” an innovative national campaign launched by the Food Project and its associates, whose purpose is to revolutionize college and university food systems. As part of that endeavor, the summit intended to provide students with tangible strategies on how to integrate sustainable practices at their schools and build a network to share resources, information, and support. It was an opportunity for students to have their voices

heard, have their concerns validated, and form effective strategies for employing positive change at their schools (Real Food Summit, November 3, 2007).

Through a sequence of meetings and a panel on institutional dining, students were educated on a series of issues including fair trade, Slow Food, college gardens, and farm worker's rights. Particular importance was given to strategies, which will increase the acquisition of local and sustainable food by university dining services. At the end of the weekend, students drafted the *Real Food Declaration*, a document outlining student principles, values and expectations regarding just and sustainable practices on their campus'.

Institutions of higher learning have a powerful impact on their students and surrounding communities. By virtue of their educational missions, community-building potential, and purchasing power, colleges and universities have a unique responsibility to act as models for the rest of society, and to cultivate socially responsible students as citizens and leaders. To address the world's most pressing questions regarding the environment, health, education, labor, culture, and the global economy, we must consider the food we eat, how it is produced, and how its producers are treated. While many schools have taken strides to address the wide-ranging implications of food production and consumption, there is still much more work to be done. We, the undersigned, call on leaders in higher education to follow these guiding principles and to lead our nation towards a more just, sustainable, and healthy food system for all (Real Food Summit November 3, 2007).

The *Real Food Declaration* was established as a useful instrument for students to communicate their vision to administrators and increase enthusiasm to attract more people to the movement. It was clear that the students were passionate about these issues and ready to tackle the challenges they face on their campuses. In the words of one, "The push for real food is bigger than I thought; not only can we

rework the systems, but I feel that we will after this summit” (Real Food Summit, November 3, 2007).

The take-home lesson from the Real Food Summit was that institutional dining should be centered on seasonality and prioritizing food that is grown on sustainable farms. When food has to travel great distances, it should be certified organic and fair trade. Additionally, campus-wide composting and recycling programs should be employed to reduce rubbish on all campuses (Real Food Summit, November 3, 2007).

Real food is fresh, pure, delicious and healthier for co-producers, producers and for the land producing it. The real price of processed food is far too great. Inexpensive food masks grave costs including ruining the environment, harm to human health, unsanitary labor conditions, disproportionate access to food, and contribution to climate change. Producers and workers deserve just pay and humane labor conditions. Real food waste is non-toxic so it can be composted and used as fertilizer for agricultural lands instead of polluting waterways or adding to landfills (Real Food Summit, November 3, 2007).

The fact that colleges and universities spend over \$4 billion a year on food, gives them tremendous buying power, which could be leveraged to influence the market positively. Colleges and universities should illuminate the dynamic relationships between real food, the environment, health, culture and the global economy. More educational opportunities, college farms and gardens, and more agricultural and food related extramural activities would aid in realizing this objective. An institution’s footprint is not only calculated by its operations, but also by the excellence of the edification, it conveys to its students. Stewardship and a sense of accountability begin with an individual connection to place, which can be fulfilled through studying, working, and eating from the land inhabited. College graduates need to be prepared to make dynamic, culturally and

environmentally cognizant choices about food daily for the remainder of their lives--as individuals, family members, administration officials, health care providers, and community and business leaders. Institutions of higher education should develop reliable and varied relationships with local farmers, and the larger community. This rapport with the community will aid in sustaining local economies and protect and develop diverse, fruitful landscapes, encourage fair resource distribution, and increase access to real food for everyone (Real Food Summit, November 3, 2007).

Agricultural land and rural farming communities in the United States are vanishing rapidly. Increasingly, a few select corporations are controlling American's ability to feed themselves in agreement with their ethical values. Consumers have the right to know exactly what they are eating and where the food is coming from. The strength and ecological balance of our whole food structure relies on the quality of the cultural, environmental, and economic relationships that unite us (Real Food Summit, November 3, 2007). Equal access to healthy food is a basic human right (United Nations. General Assembly. 1949).

In the closing remarks of the Real Food Summit, participants were reminded that as active members of society, they needed to start a conversation between campus and community stakeholders. Students must set determined goals that elucidate the need for immediate education and food system modification, including changing institutional purchasing practices and policies. In addition, students must implement accountability procedures so that colleges and universities can frequently review their progress. According to the rhetoric from the Real Food Challenge, a commitment must be made to creating a renewed, just, and sustainable food system, on campus and beyond. In other words, "we need a world where everyone can eat food that truly nourishes them, their communities, and the earth" (Real Food Summit, November 3, 2007).

Returning home from my instructive weekend at the Summit on Real Food, I realized that this was the kind of fervor and passion necessary to change ideologies, legislation and behavior. Furthermore, what I had just experienced was the Slow Food movement in motion. I imagine this was what Carlo Petrini envisioned, when he initiated the Slow Food movement in Italy in 1989 in contrast to Fast Food and the fast life that was becoming more prevalent in his country (Petrini 2003). The students at the Summit on Real Food- products of the Fast Food Nation- were resisting their fast food culture as Petrini and his friends had two decades earlier and Italian Americans had a century earlier.

Italian Americans resist

“Italo-Americans were becoming the only one of the ‘new,’ post-1880’s immigrants who not only retained much of their culinary heritage but substantially influenced that of main stream America as well” (Levenstein 1993:30). During the First World War, Herbert Hoover was head of the Food Administration (FA). Hoover encouraged Americans to eat less, use wheat and butter substitutes, consume meatless meals, and not to forget potatoes are always available. Middle-class Americans were the most devoted to following the FA guidelines, abstaining from certain foods as a form of patriotism (Levenstein 1988). The FA used other wartime food propaganda, for example “Lick the plate and lick the Kaiser,” and “Spaghetti food of our ally” (Levenstein 1988:141). During the great depression, macaroni was advertised as an inexpensive yet, healthy way to make a complete meal (Levenstein 1993).

It is not surprising then that Italians, known for their food culture and a country where “meals are a central arena for the family, one of the domains through which domestic ties attain their strength” (Counihan 1999:49) had successfully resisted the Americanization of their meals (Levenstein 1993). Italian American’s success was due in part to the incorporation of Italian American food into American’s diets, specifically spaghetti with tomato sauce (Levenstein 1993). During the 1930s, Italian restaurants were the most popular, if not the only ethnic restaurants. The food bore little resemblance to Italian or Italian American food. The spaghetti and tomato sauce recipes that were served in restaurants and appeared in Good Housekeeping and American Cookery consisted of overcooked pasta with tomato sauce, which occasionally included green pepper or Worcestershire sauce. To avoid an overly powerful tomato flavor, sometimes flour was added to the spaghetti sauce (Levenstein 1993). Garlic, the main

seasoning in spaghetti sauce today, was never used in America's early version of spaghetti sauce. According to Levenstein, "garlic was a particular embarrassment in a culture with a real phobia about it" (1993:29).

During the Second World War, the food administration was given a new face, the face of Uncle Sam, and a new name the War Food Administration (WFA). The WFA aimed to set their policies apart from their predecessors who emphasized substituting and minimizing certain foods, by rather focusing on advocating "nutritionally beneficial" foods, with long shelf lives, like Heinz Ketchup and candy bars for energy. Ketchup was even recommended for use as spaghetti sauce. One ad, superimposed over an image of Uncle Sam, reads "U.S. needs US strong. Eat nutritional food: Canned shrimp helps make us strong" (Levenstein 1993:118).

Italian Americans maintained their culinary autonomy in the United States throughout the various Food Administration policies. Italian Americans refused to assimilate their culinary practices, continuing to make foods out of fresh ingredients from local markets or their own gardens (Levenstein 1993). In August of 2007, I spent several weeks in Florence, Italy where I attended the *Mercato Centrale* nearly daily. The market was filled with local farmers selling fresh fruits, vegetables, artisan cheeses, olive oil, bread, and wine. There were also butchers and fishmongers as well as the local citizenry buying groceries for a day or two. This was what Italian Americans were holding on to, their taste of the "Old World."

History of the Slow Food Movement

In 1986 *Arcigola* (*Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana* supported by the Italian left), the forerunner to the Slow food movement was founded in Bra, Italy with sixty-two founding members (Petrini 2005). In 1989, the Slow Food movement wrote its manifesto; delegates from fifteen countries gathered in Paris, France and signed the manifesto making it an official organization (Petrini 2003). The Slow Food movement rose from the ire created by McDonalds opening a franchise next to Rome's *Piazza Spagna*. Carlo Petrini and friends, then members of *Arcigola* armed themselves with *penne* and held a peaceful pasta protest (Petrini 2003). Italian Americans were able to resist Americanization of their dinner tables in the first half of the 20th century, but now Italians were faced with Americanization at home in Italy (Levenstein 1993). Petrini, like many others, was outraged with the golden arches and everything that they signified: capitalism, fast food, and the homogenization of food cultures. Although the Slow Food movement took off faster than their snail emblem might suggest, McDonalds still stands next to Rome's *Piazza Spagna* as a constant reminder of Americanization and the continuous battle Petrini faces.

The Slow Food movement is now multinational; there are *convivias* in over one hundred countries working to protect local and endangered foods (animals and plants) and the farmers who produce them. The aim of the eco-gastronomic movement is to keep agriculture small-scale, local, sustainable and by doing so preserving the quality and flavor of the food. *Convivia* members work to link producers and co-producers, protect the environment and traditional foods and recipes. Local *convivias* are in charge of implementing Slow Taste education in schools. *Convivia* members meet with experts, authors and producers who then can inform the public (Petrini 2003).

Through educating children and adults on where food comes from, when it is in season, as well as the satisfaction of sharing good food and wine together, the Slow Food movement is making people cognizant of the pleasures forgotten in the fast-paced world (Petrini 2006). The movement's motto is *Good, Clean and Fair* 'good' as in it is fresh and delicious, 'clean' as in it was grown in an ecologically friendly and farmer friendly way and 'fair' as in the workers are treated justly and paid equitably. Local artisan food has a long cultural history with the land that it grows on and the people that produce and eat it; when foods are not grown on small-scale farms, they are devoid of flavor and nutrients (Mintz 2006).

Slow food teaches the *right to taste* by raising awareness of the pleasures of eating and sharing a meal. An important part of socialization happens at the table. Food is central to all aspects of human interaction. It is one of the first places children learn to socialize and share (Mintz 2006). However, family meals are increasingly less common in America's fast paced lives; people no longer cook at home or eat together. Americans eat alone which means they tend to eat more, eat junk food and miss the socialization at the table. In fact, some families do not find it necessary to have dining room tables anymore. Americans spend money on couches or televisions rather than on a dining room table because family dinners have become so infrequent in the Fast Food Nation (Schlosser 2002). The Slow Food movement is a direct shot at the fast-paced life necessary for American capitalism and the gluttony it has fashioned.

America's curious food history

America has never been known for its cuisine, and historically has maintained an un-holistic view of food (Levenstein 1988). Americans, eating food purely for the nutrients, started analyzing food's chemical makeups, ingredients were isolated, demonized and pitted against each an other. Once an evil ingredient is eradicated from the diet, chemists discover a new super ingredient and another villain is born. According to Levenstein, this is evident in the "American tradition of food faddism" (1988:85).

Gyorgy Scrinis (2002) termed this cultural food practice "nutritionism;" health and nutrition are central to the process of eating as opposed to pleasure, food is analyzed and nutrients isolated providing new health claims for the food processors. Americans (seemingly) enjoy the highly processed fast food that is the result of *nutritionism*; however, food is consumed so rapidly, there is barely time to taste it (Mintz 2006). America's convenience foods have become so highly refined and processed that pests are no longer interested in this low nutrient junk food (Scrinis 2002).

All foods start out whole, it is only with processing and adulteration—culture—that whole foods are stripped of nutrients. In 1870, mechanized rollers replaced stones for grinding wheat into flour and by 1880 mechanized grinders had replaced all stone grinders throughout the United States and Europe (Pollan 2008). Prior to the invention of the roller, Americans only consumed whole grain breads. Refined white flour was the first fast food, marking the beginning of a cultural culinary explosion. The next gauge of culture was polished rice; removing every ounce of healthful nutrients leaving the rice glistening white. White rice and white bread symbolized "purity" and "goodness"; which, initially only the middle and upper class could afford. Processing was elaborate, expensive

and highly cultured; however, the notion that white rice and white bread were “pure” and “good” did not last long (Pollan 2008).

With the widespread consumption of refined flour products followed outbreaks of pellagra and beriberi, both caused by Vitamin B deficiencies a nutrient found in unrefined flour (Levenstein 1988). As a result, in the 1930’s millers were ordered to add Vitamin B, paradoxically to replace the Vitamin B that was naturally present in whole grain products. This was the first of many additive nutrients millers would be ordered to add to refined white flour. This is why today the ingredients label indicates enriched flour, followed by a long list of nutrients. Even with millers replacing all the nutrients they had stripped out of the grains through refining, people were still suffering from nutrient deficiencies (Levenstein 1988).

Real whole foods act synergistically, by creating complete proteins and aiding in digestion (Jacobs and Tapsell 2007). Foods are more than the sum of their parts, unfortunately “big money has always been in processing foods, not selling them whole” and making money is at the heart of a thriving capitalist country (Pollan 2008:111). Sugar became readily available on the market at the same time as refined white flour aiding in the demise of American’s health. Type II diabetes and other chronic diseases associated with refined sugar and enriched bleached white flour were becoming more prevalent (Pollan 2008).

At the turn of the 19th century, animal protein was considered integral to good health; however, John Harvey Kellogg did not agree. In response to the abundance of animal protein in the diet, Kellogg built a sanitarium in Battle Creek, Michigan where patients ate mainly low fat carbohydrates and received yogurt enemas to improve their health (Levenstein 1988). Kellogg believed that his high carbohydrate low animal protein diet would curb masturbation, a believed cause of blindness. Kellogg knew that meat contained bacteria and

thought this bacterium would rot in the intestines, so he advocated for a vegetarian diet (Levenstein 1988). At the same time scientists were creating baby formula, trying to synthesize ingredients in the mothers' milk, but despite all efforts babies fed on infant formula never fared as well as babies fed mothers' milk (Pollan 2008).

Dr. Weston Price, an American dentist in the early 1930s, believed that diet affected health. To prove his theory, he traveled around the world studying people's diets and concluded "modern civilization had sacrificed much of the quality of its food in the interests of the quantity and shelf life" (Pollan 2008:97). Processing food removes nutrients and taste, but preserves food for a long time. Simultaneously industrial agriculture gained momentum and Dr. Price saw a vast decline in the health of his patient's teeth, which further led him to believe that soil quality was related to food quality, which was directly related to human health. Price had proven that eating fresh local produce and meat from animals raised in natural environments with good soil led to better overall health (Price 2006).

In England at the same time agronomist Sir Albert Howard, who was probably the father of organic farming, was speaking out against the industrialization of agriculture (Pollan 2008). Farmers were starting to use fertilizers with synthetic nitrogen, and he believed that using such harsh chemicals would deplete the soil, produce a less nutrient rich plant or animal and provide less nutritious food for humans. Howard viewed people, animals and plants as living together in an ecosystem with intricate relationships to each other so that if one of the relationships was not healthy the other two would suffer. He feared that industrial agriculture would ruin the delicate balance of nature (Pollan 2008).

In the United States Dr. Price also brought an ecological understanding to what was happening with the industrialization of the food system. Industrial food

had broken the food chain, food products could go further when they were processed, however there were not as many nutrients and not nearly the taste—fruits, vegetables and meats were coming from stressed soils—worse than tasteless the effects were evident on the health of the nation. The industrialization of the food chain resulted in nutrient depleted soils, foods and people. Dr. Price resolved that “the human animal is adapted to and apparently can thrive on an extraordinary range of different diets, but the western diet, however you define it, does not seem to be one of them” (Pollan 2008:100).

Unfortunately, Dr. Price’s iconoclastic ideas were too novel for a nation in the throws of the Great Depression; then when his book *Nutrition and Physical Denigration* came out the United States was engaged in World War II (WWII)—Dr. Price was an anachronism. His book was not popularized, because now the public was counting on the Industrial Revolution to save them. By the time the war was over industrial agriculture was in full swing, left over munitions were turned into synthetic fertilizers and nerve gas was tested for use as a pesticide. The industrialization of food focused on producing as much as possible at the lowest price; “any connections between farming, nutrition, food and health were either ignored or then covered up with nutrition additives” (Pollan 2008:111).

Western diseases rapidly increased post WWII, and short on their heels was the business of western medicine—there was an answer to everything. Industrial agriculture continued replacing small, organic and artisan farms with large agribusinesses. Food prices were low and quantity was high—at the cost of nutrients (health) and taste. It was not until the late 1960s that organic farming gained momentum as part of the counterculture against materialism, and the cultural and political norms of the time; organic farming was the answer to America’s broken food chain.

In the late-1800s, Oleomargarine was advertised as real butter. Consumers unwilling to eat this imitation passed laws in five states requiring that all butter imitations be dyed pink so that consumers could see the difference between the real and fake substance. Although the *Imitation* law was highly contested by the food industry, in 1938 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) passed legislation requiring that the word imitation appear on any food product that was not the “real food.” With immense pressure from the booming food industry in 1973, the FDA repealed the 1938 *imitation* ruling (Pollan 2008). The new ruling stated that if a food product contained the same nutrients as the original, it did not have to be labeled as an imitation. This opened the floodgates for a nutritionism-based convenience food-minded culture. Then came an onslaught of low-fat foods, saturated fat was replaced with hydrogenated oils. Food was redefined as the sum of its parts; whole food was isolated into its chemical compounds and put back together at the cost of American’s health (Pollan 2008). Processed food is highly cultured on the culinary triangle and highly unhealthy.

Margarine is the best example of a *faux* food once touted to be superior to the original—butter. The FDA, approved margarine based on nutritionism. Margarine had less saturated fat because the oils were hydrogenised unlike butter. When, in fact the hydrogenising process in margarine created trans-fats, causing an increase in cancer and heart disease (Scrinis 2002). Margarine now claims to be “trans-fats free,” but what has replaced trans-fats?

In 1977, the FDA established a set of dietary goals; accordingly, processed food began adding *health* claims to their packages, for instance: *fat-free, low fat, high-fiber, and no-cholesterol* (Pollan 2008). Consequently, ingredients tripled including an array of unpronounceable adulterants that were allegedly beneficial or at least presumed to not be harmful. By the end of the 1970s, refined foods had reached every tabletop, and the meat industry was now under analysis for its

nutrient content (Pollan 2008). Industrial farmers, at the mercy of the market, started breeding leaner cows and pigs as pork morphed into *the other white meat* because it was now low-fat and subsequently tasteless. Beef was extra lean and had no trace of marbling either, which provides its flavor (Mintz 2006).

All the major diseases including heart disease, diabetes and cancer have been attributed to a diet high in refined carbohydrates and high fructose corn syrup (Petrini 2007). In 1968, the McGovern committee was commissioned to “stop hunger” by creating food stamps. However, what they found is that people were for the most part overnourished. The McGovern Committee suggested that the FDA warn against eating too much meat. The meat industry would not go for it, so in the end they narrowed it down to a single nutrient, fat, and instead warned people about eating too much (Pollan 2008).

In the past thirty years, processed and fast foods have left Americans fatter, sicker and yet undernourished (Schlosser 2002). Processed food has pushed “real” old-fashioned food i.e. pot roast, meat loaf, potatoes, home-baked breads and fresh vegetables right off our plates and undermined traditional foods and common sense. Over two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese and the incidence of Type II Diabetes has been steadily increasing at a rate of five percent annually since 1900 (Pollan 2008). Western diseases are wreaking havoc on Americans, who suffer from high rates of cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Often the hardest hit are new immigrants to America, whose bodies are not used to consuming so much refined processed food. As is the case when American food goes to other countries, it has the same negative affect. The industrialization of food has taken a great toll on not only Americans, but also anywhere that the insidious highly processed foods and fast foods have taken hold (Pollan 2008).

Globalization of the food chain

America forged ahead as the capitalist world super power, outsourcing every commodity possible and removing itself (not all people willingly) so far from the food chain that Americans often do not know what real food looks like, tastes like or where it comes from. There are concerns now about food safety, because food comes from so far away it is nearly impossible to trace where it came from, especially when it comes from outside of the United States. Different countries have varying food standards for certified organic and what is allowed in processed foods. Most recently, pets were dying from pet food made in China and then there was a recall on toothpaste. Not to mention the whole industry of non-comestibles made in China that have trace amounts of lead and other toxic chemicals. With surmounting product safety issues in foods and non-comestibles items from China it is increasingly difficult to trust the organic seal from China that is more and more prevalent on the foods we eat.

In a consumer culture, challenging the Wal-Mart mindset is difficult. Globalization of food commodities in the United States raises questions about the safety and security of the food system. If there was a war, if borders were closed, or there was a hike in the price of oil, America's food production system would come to a halt. It is precarious to put all your eggs in one basket and then ship that basket thousands of miles away. Not only does it create vulnerability in the market but in questions of food safety. It is hard to tell a culture that is abiding by the rules of consumer capitalism that their agricultural policies are increasing their susceptibility to mass environmental, economic, health and social devastation.

Now in order for fruits and vegetables to reach their final destination, which is often half way around the world, produce is picked long before maturation, the point at which fruit is at its peak flavor. At the peak of ripeness,

nutrients are highly concentrated; evolutionarily this was when the fruit would emit a delicious smell enticing its eater, which proved to be an effective symbiotic relationship for millennia (Pollan 2008). However, with industrialization and globalization of agriculture two things have happened; fruit is picked increasingly green and never actually ripens to the point of maturation and our senses have been tricked by all the artificial scents, flavor enhancers and sweeteners (Mintz 2006). Industrialized produce picked early for mechanized harvesting and better travel, is green. The green fruit such as: bananas, tomatoes and avocados are gassed with Ethylene to ripen them once the produce reaches the warehouse before it is taken to the supermarkets (Jenkins 2000). Eighty percent of tomatoes in the United States are *ripened* with Ethylene. Surprisingly, there are more nutrients in canned tomatoes than in fresh tomatoes because they are harvested when the fruit is riper (Pollan 2008).

Fruit in its unripe green stage can last for up to ten weeks in low-oxygen storage and then be gassed and sent to the supermarket (Jenkins 2000). The western diet is full of food additives and flavor enhancers that lie to our senses. When food travels long distances and sits on shelves for years without going bad the product can be sold for less than fresh food that requires special storage and spoils rather quickly. Processed foods are comprised of ingredients from all over the world making it difficult to trace the food's origin. Americans have removed themselves so far from the food system that they are in danger of critical food safety issues.

Thousands of species of plants and animals are endangered due to the monoculture of agribusiness, which has chosen plants based upon their sturdiness, yields and ability to hybridize—the most industrious species are then patented. It is important to have sturdy plants to survive mechanized picking, packing, shipping and shelf life (Petrini 2007). Monoculture farming has taken over the

great diversity of plants and animals that used to populate America's small-scale farms. One hundred years ago, the average Iowa farmer raised over twelve different species of animals and plants, now they only raise two: corn and soybeans. This is reflected in American's poor diets and health, where more than five sweeteners come from corn. The Farm Bill subsidizes two-thirds of the calories Americans eat (Pollan 2008). Corn and soy are the industrial products of agribusiness that have exhausted the land by squeezing every last calorie out of the soil by planting enormous crops, which can be sold at low prices and yet lack nutrients. For example, three apples now provide the same amount of iron that one apple provided seventy years ago (Halweil 2007). According to Brian Halweil (2007), it is the nutritional equivalent of inflation, in order to get the same amount of nutrients we have to eat twice as much. Plants grown with chemical fertilizers are nutritionally inferior to their organically grown counterparts.

In an attempt to continually increase quantity, food quality has suffered greatly. Dairy cows have tripled their production since 1950, and as expected, there are nowhere near the nutrients that used to be found in milk, only additives. America's food system set itself up to produce and sell at the cost of its nation's health (Pollan 2008).

In the mid-seventies there was a drastic increase in food prices, responding to the price hike, the Nixon administration implemented the Cheap Food Policy, which worked just like the Farm Bill. Soy, wheat and corn producers were encouraged to produce as much as they possibly could and in return would be subsidized for the surplus of calories they supplied. Americans now consume 300 more calories a day than they did in 1985. The extra calories come in the form of sugar from corn, refined grains and fat (Pollan 2008). This glut of low-nutrient food created an overweight, undernourished country, as children were stricken with rickets and other nutrient deficient diseases long thought cured. Although

Americans were consuming 300 more calories, they were not from the right foods, 20 percent of children and 32 percent adults were not getting their daily-required values of fruits and vegetables (Pollan 2008).

Industrial grains have a decreased level of Omega 3 and an increased level of Omega 6, which aid in the chronic diseases associated with the western diet. This is ruining food cultures across the world. Nutritionism has undermined traditional and local foods, which have superior flavor and nutritional qualities (Pollan 2008). Cultured food became America's food culture as Americans *drank the Kool-Aid* of nutritionism.

Environment

“Naturalness here is related not to the intrinsic characteristics of the product, but rather to the methods of production and of transport: a product is clean if it respects the earth and environment, if it does not pollute, if it does not waste or overuse natural resources during its journey from the field to the table” (Petrini 2007:28). From the planting of the seed to the final product purchased by consumers, the process must be sustainable. The Slow food movement defends biodiversity through the Ark of Taste and at *Terra Madre*. The Ark of Taste preserves and records food traditions that are rapidly disappearing due to globalization, agri-business, mono cropping and hybridization. The Ark of Taste documents traditional foods, saves and archives seeds and protects small-scale farms. Cheese has its own consortium, *Slow Cheese*, which lobbied to allow for non-pasteurized cheese arguing that it was sanitary when produced by small-scale artisans (Petrini 2007).

“In an attempt to produce food on a mass scale at minimal cost, the environment is suffering greatly from leaching of soil” as the result of mono-cropping and pesticide use, which leaves land fallow after a few short years. The chemicals that erode the soil contaminate ground water and cause health problems for humans and animals that consume the water” (Feenstra, University of California Davis 1997). Buying organic is one way to lessen the eco-footprint. However, big industry caught onto organic farming, planted massive organic farms, and started importing organics. So now, when buying organic produce or meat in the store, the chances are it has traveled further than its conventional cousin has (Pollan 2008). Buying local is the best way to avoid jet-lagged food and reduce the eco-footprint.

The Slow Food movement organized *Terra Madre*, an international meeting comprised of farmers, food producers, academics, and chefs from around the world held biennially in Turin, Italy. The goal of *Terra Madre* is to preserve traditional sustainable food cultures that are threatened by the homogenization of agri-business and cheap imitations. According to Petrini (2001), less than 30 percent of plants provide 95 percent of the world's nutrition. Mono-cropping is a major problem that has arisen out of agribusiness; 300,000 plant species have gone extinct in the past century and America has lost 93 percent of its agro-products and Europe 85 percent. Soils that are not leached and polluted produce foods that "have superior sensory characteristics" (Petrini 2007:128). When the processing of products is limited and done sanitarly, the air is not polluted helping to keep the ecosystem in balance.

The *Farm Bill* is literally killing Americans with—subsidized corn, soy and wheat products—misleadingly lowering the cost of processed food (Pollan 2008). Fruits and vegetables are considered "specialty crops" so therefore they are not eligible for subsidies, making fresh food appear more expensive than processed food containing soy, wheat and corn (Pollan 2008). The food products made from the subsidized commodities are the same foods causing America's obesity epidemic (Pollan 2008). Farm subsidies are given to agribusinesses as incentives to grow as much as possible without concern for quality or a need in the market. Agribusiness is unsustainable economically and environmentally. According to Altieri, in order to change the devastating pattern of agribusiness "the main task is to promote sustainable agriculture; a development program which is environmentally healthy and economically affordable" (Petrini 2007:132).

Health

Health claims could be easily added to packaged foods, which were far from healthy. However, real food such as fruits and vegetables that were legitimately packed with nutrients did not have packages to promote the health claims. Just as it is today, the booming business of processed nutrition was good for the producers but bad for consumers. The rapid rise in obesity in the United States correlates with the Nixon administration's cheap food policy and agricultural changes of 1980. The price of sweeteners and fats has dropped 20 percent since 1980 and the price of produce has increased 40 percent (Pollan 2008).

Convenience foods and fast foods, made predominantly from sweeteners and fats, gave a huge boost to the industry and American's waistbands. The wide spread availability of fast and convenience foods lead to a twelve pound increase in the weight of the average American since 1980 (Schlosser 2002). Fast food outside of the home was not enough; Americans now consumed fast food inside the home too, mediated by a microwave. In 1980, only 10 percent of the population in the United States had a microwave; by 1999, 83 percent were "nuking" their food (Cutler et al 2003).

The bulk of calories that added to the American diet are from snacks and fast foods (Schlosser 2002). Food marketing created a niche industry of foods to eat alone and on the move, because eating in these situations is mindless causing consumers to eat more. It takes the brain 20 minutes to register that the stomach is full, Americans finish eating in half that time never giving the body a chance to say, "stop eating you are full" (Pollan 2008). Eating slowly allows the body to register satiety and time for the person to enjoy the food and the company. Eating

fresh and whole foods, takes longer than eating processed and refined foods, this allows the time necessary for the body to register that it is full (Pollan 2008).

Consuming healthy and whole foods is often considered elitist, sophisticated (high-culture) and reserved for middle and upper class Americans. However, eating whole foods is less a matter of economics and more a matter of priority and availability. The average American home has increased the dollars spent on technology through the years while simultaneously decreasing dollars spent on food cooked in the home (Pollan 2008). Americans have increased the number of household televisions, and television channels as well as adding on cell phones for the whole family. Americans spend less on food than any other industrialized country. Consequently, health costs have soared since 1960 when 17.5 percent of American's income was spent on food and only 5.2 percent on health care to present day where Americans spend 9.9 percent of their income on food and 16 percent on health care (Pollan 2008).

Something to squawk about

Although diets rich in fruits and vegetables reduce the risk of dying, Americans get most of their calories from processed foods and meat. The average American eats 200 pounds of meat a year. It is said, "you are what you eat," but with industrialization of agriculture, it goes one-step further. You are not only what you eat, but you are also what you eat eats; a menagerie of antibiotics, animal byproducts, corn, soy and wheat, not at all the natural diet of cows, pigs, chickens or humans. Most chickens found in the supermarket today are a hybrid Cornish cross and most turkeys are broad breasted whites--both birds chosen for

their breast size—are sometimes so top heavy they have difficulty walking (Pollan 2008).

Recently, I was buying eggs at the supermarket, and while you can now buy *cage free*, *all natural*, *organic* and *omega 3* eggs, they all boasted 100 percent grain and soy fed chickens; chickens are supposed to roam freely to eat grass, worms, insects and only be supplemented with grain. Neither grain nor soy should be the sole diet for poultry that are as a result suffering from human western diseases.

A kernel of truth

Processing food is an industry based on shelf life and concentrating energy. An extreme example of concentrated energy is high fructose corn syrup, which laces nearly every processed food. High fructose corn syrup is not only a sweetener; it helps breads brown, stops spoilage, and makes cookies chewy. The increased consumption of high fructose corn syrup, ubiquitous in the American diet, has led to the present obesity epidemic. Since food processors in the United States switched to high fructose corn syrup in the 1970s there has been a steady increase in childhood obesity. Consequently, children and juveniles are frequently now diagnosed with Type II diabetes, which used to be called adult-onset diabetes because it only affected adults. Type II diabetes is presently affecting America's youth at such an alarming rate, it is predicted that the current generation of children will have shorter life expectancies than their parents (Olshansky et al. 2005). Aside from obesity-related diabetes, Miller et al. (2006) "discovered a link between marked obesity in toddlers and lower IQ scores, cognitive delays and

brain lesions similar to those seen in Alzheimer's disease patients." The United States is in the midst of a fast food induced obesity epidemic (Schlosser 2002).

Darwin's theory of evolution presumes the *survival of the fittest*, not, the fattest or the fastest. In evolutionary terms, the western diet is hindering the survival of the humans who consume it. Of course, there is always western medicine to reverse the negative effects of the western diet and increase longevity. A new study found that patients with Type II diabetes were able to lose more weight and in some instances *cure* their diabetes by having weight loss surgery, as opposed to instituting a diet and exercise regimen. "The operation used in the study, adjustable gastric banding, is performed through small slits and loops a band around the top of the stomach to cinch it into a small pouch so that people eat less and yet feel full" (Grady 2008). Western medicine has intervened again, however eventually Americans will also have to exercise self-control.

My beef

Industrial agriculture has not just affected plants; animals too have been altered to meet the needs of industry and an insatiable protein hungry public. Feedlot animals are raised on top of one another and given antibiotics to stay alive just long enough to make it to the slaughterhouse (Schlosser 2002). Feedlots produce gross amounts of industrial waste that cannot even be used as fertilizer because it is too contaminated. Accordingly, the United States produces some of the most inexpensive beef in the world, providing cheap meat for fast food joints that are ubiquitous on the American landscape (Pollan 2008).

In *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair (1971) brought to light the unsanitary conditions of the meat packing industry in Chicago at the turn of the 19th century.

Similarly, in the 21st century, Eric Schlosser (2002) uncovered the unclean conditions of the meat packing industry. However, poor factory conditions continue and increasingly the animals are unsafe and unsanitary before they enter the slaughterhouses. As evident by the largest beef recall in history, February 17, 2008, the USDA recalled 143 million pounds of beef. The slaughterhouse was charged with inhumanely treating sick downed cows and then processing them for meat. It is against the law to slaughter downer cows, because they are more likely to pose a public health risk (Martin 2008). Aside from their diet of antibiotics and growth hormones, cows have been fed other cows- resulting in Mad Cow Disease- and grains. The latter seems innocuous, and possibly even preferable according to some packaging which advertises “100 percent grain fed beef.” However, feeding cattle grain lowers the omega fatty acids in bovine stomachs promoting the growth of Escherichia coli, which can be then transmitted to humans (Diez-Gonzalez et al 1998). Frederick Kirschenmann (2006), Director, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa State University and organic farmer said “human health cannot be maintained apart from eating healthy nutritious food, which requires healthy soil, clean water and healthy plants and animals; it’s all connected, and in much of the industrial food system those connections have been disrupted with consequences that we are just beginning to glimpse, let alone understand.”

Economy

“The case against speed starts with the economy” (Honore 2004:5). Modern consumer capitalism has fueled agribusiness and industry to the demise of the nation’s health. Instead of advocating for dietary changes, to prevent chronic western diseases the drug industry and western medicine monopolized on America’s sickness and built a multibillion-dollar industry in response. “Fast food may be good business for the health care industry, the cost to society—an estimated \$250 billion a year in diet-related health care costs and rising rapidly—cannot be sustained indefinitely” (Pollan 2008:136). One in three Americans born in 2000 will develop Type II diabetes, increasing their medical costs to \$12,000 a year compared to \$2,500 for an individual without diabetes (Narayan et al 2003). Eighty percent of these cases could be prevented with diet and exercise, however “apparently it is easier, or at least a lot more profitable, to change a disease of civilization into a lifestyle than it is to change the way a civilization eats” (Pollan 2008:136). Just as Weston Price observed in the 1930s, wherever the western diet is present there is a marked increase in chronic diseases. In the 21st century, Type II diabetes has become a major global public health issue (Pollan 2008).

There are nutritionists, working around the clock to figure out the next miracle nutrient to stop aging and prevent diabetes. The only way to avoid western diseases is to avoid the western diet completely—not just a single nutrient. This is not an easy proposition when fast and processed food have infiltrated every corner of American culture including health institutions which offer an array of fast, processed and convenience foods for its patients.

In many developing countries, traditional farmers have been forced to give up their once diversified indigenous crops to produce a single hybridized crop. Mono-cropping requires additional pesticides and crops are more vulnerable

because they are not indigenous species (Pollan 2008). The region most affected by mono-cropping is India where “Since 1997, more than 25,000 farmers have committed suicide, many drinking the chemical that was supposed to make their crops more, not less, productive” (Heeter 2005). Farmers, who used to have self-sustaining farms, now have a single marginal crop, which leads to mineral deficiencies, malnutrition, obesity and sometimes death.

Grains are effective and fruitful in agribusiness and the economic markets because they are hardy--perfect for agri-capitalism. In addition, the continued neglect of the living and working conditions for farm laborers and increased costs of production are all results of the monoculture of agribusiness (Feenstra, University of California Davis, 1997). The above practices are subsidized by the United States government through the Farm Bill, which is supported by American tax dollars.

American Food Culture

Aside from the negative physical health affects of eating processed and fast food alone, there are also socio-cultural ramifications of eating alone (Mintz 2006). Studies have shown that people eat less when eating together and learn better manners because there are enforced social norms. However, in the United States, the land of “Drive-Thru’s,” among 18 to 25 year olds one fifth of their entire eating takes place in the car. Due to the large amount of time Americans spend eating in the car, vehicles now come equipped with large cup holders and consoles with coolers (Pollan 2008).

The advent of the TV dinner in the 1950’s is a distinct part of American fast food culture. During the fifties TV’s were becoming more mainstream, so the food industry created a food product specifically for eating in front of the TV—TV dinners. The Chairman of the Board of General Foods, “credited the food industry’s research and development effort with making possible the enormous processing plants and their time-and-labor-saving output of the best eating the world has ever seen” (Levenstein 1993:117). When TV dinners were popularized in the 1950’s, they were simple, straightforward American favorites, including Salisbury steak, fried chicken and roast turkey with gravy. “Longer shelf-lives, more processing, precooking, and packaging all had one great justification: to liberate ‘Mrs. Consumer’ from the drudgery of the kitchen” (Levenstein 1993:108). TV dinners not only liberated ‘Mrs. Consumer’ but ‘Mr. Consumer’ and the ‘Consumer’ children from sitting around the dinner table and sharing a meal.

Today most families eat together a reported three to four times a week; however, it is arguable what is considered eating together. Studies have shown that a family dinner in the United States now consists of each family member

preparing (putting in microwave) and eating something different not necessarily at the same time or even in the same room (Pollan 2008). Family members are each eating their own meals and there is no sharing or talking necessary, so the television does the talking for the family meal instead. This scenario is eerily reminiscent of life in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. According to Mary Douglas (1999:236), "meals require a table, a seating order, restriction on movement and on alternative occupations." No other activities are allowed, not even knitting or grabbing for the Sunday newspaper at breakfast—just imagine standing eating a TV dinner, talking on a cell phone with the radio and television on, an American family could only be so lucky to be sitting around a table and have someone grab for the Sunday Times (Douglas 1999). In addition, according to Douglas, meals require the use of a utensil, how about eating a hamburger and fries while driving and talking on the phone! Consistent with Douglas (1999) Americans never actually eat a proper *meal*.

The French eat fewer calories but enjoy them much more than Americans (Rozin 2003). In America, this is known as the French Paradox, the French eat cheese, red meats (foods high in saturated fat), and drink wine, yet remain healthy and slender, while Americans eat low-fat, low-carb, low-cholesterol processed food, wash it down with diet Coke and are unhealthy and increasingly obese. "Just seven percent of French adults are obese, as compared with twenty-two percent of Americans, and the mortality rate from heart disease is significantly lower in France" (Rozin 2003:452). Serving sizes are considerably smaller in France; the French savor their food, rather than eat on the run. Studies have shown that Americans are entirely out of touch with their bodies, they do not stop eating until the plate is clean, the bag is empty or the television show is over. Americans respond to external cues rather than internal cues of satiety. Portion size in the United States has always been grossly large and yet Americans eat

everything on their plate and then order dessert. When portions are not gargantuan, Americans feel they have not gotten their money's worth, because food does not have the value in the United States as it does in other industrialized countries (Rozin 2003).

According to Marion Nestle (2002), a nutritionist at New York University and member of the Slow Food USA advisory board, the problem with nutritionism is that it takes the nutrient out of the context of the whole food, the whole food out of the context of eating habits and the eating habits out of the context of the culture. In Italy, eating is a complete experience of all the senses; it is not a sum of its parts but a sum of the whole meal (Counihan 2004). Half of the money spent on food in the United States is spent on prepared food outside of the home (Pollan 2008). Rozin (2003) did a study comparing French and American responses to the image of a chocolate cake. The Americans unanimously answered "guilt" and the French answered "celebration," Americans cannot even enjoy a piece of cake (Rozin 2003). "So this is what putting science, and scientism, in charge of the American diet has gotten us: anxiety and confusion about even the most basic questions of food and health, and a steadily diminishing ability to enjoy one of the great pleasures of life without guilt or neurosis" (Pollan 2008:80).

America's small-scale farms are rapidly going extinct from agribusiness within the United States and internationally where the food is produced cheaply; worker's rights are ignored all for the bottom line resulting in mass disintegration of economies in once thriving rural communities (Halweil 2002 & Counihan 1999). Small-scale farmers cannot compete with industrial agribusiness because they are not subsidized by the government. In Wenatchee, Washington, the Apple Capital of the World, many farmers were forced to sell or cut their orchards down and sell the land to developers because they are no longer able to compete with

the global apple market in China (Evans and Howell 2003). America's agricultural policies need to give more support to local and artisan farmers. It is a sad day when there are more people incarcerated in the United States than there are farmers (Pollan 2006).

It is no wonder that American children do not know which meat comes from which animal or how different fruits or vegetables grow, because by the time they eat the food it is so far from the farm that it has lost its history, taste and nutrients. By speeding up their lives with cultural consumer capitalism Americans have accordingly accelerated every other aspect of their lives; food is made to eat on the run, nuke in the microwave or prepare in under five minutes. Life in the fast lane does not allow for shopping, preparing, cooking, or sitting down and socializing over a meal. "Food is a powerful channel for communication and a means to establish connection and create obligation" (Counihan 1999:48). This may be one of the greatest losses of tradition in the United States creating some of the largest gains--in weight.

Historically people purchased food locally, cooked together and shared recipes from family and friends. In America's fast-paced culture, there is not enough time, and or priority is not given to preparation of the food, but rather solely to making money. With consumer faith in monetary success, America has created a culture of overweight, highly medicated, workaholics. By making price the bottom line America has marginalized its small-scale farmers by favoring big monoculture producers and foreign producers whose products are cheaper. With capital gain as the ultimate goal, the pace of life has speed up necessitating fast and convenience foods, resulting in a physically and mentally sick nation. This is evident in the incidence of morbid obesity and the increased use of anti-depressants, anti-anxiety medications, stimulants and sleeping pills (Honore

2004). Americans brought on a rash of new chronic western diseases, which can all be self diagnosed in one evening of watching television.

The best way to support sustainable agriculture is eating locally grown fresh foods. Buying local food is often preferable to buying organic food. When food distributors buy locally and direct it makes a huge impact on the local economy. The Massachusetts Department of Agriculture is working to get all their school districts to buy food from local farmers and a number of the schools and universities are now doing so. The Massachusetts Department of Agriculture came up with a list of ten reasons to buy locally: “locally grown food tastes and looks better, local food supports local families, local food builds trust, local food builds communities, local food preserves open spaces, local food keeps taxes down, local food benefits the environment and wildlife, local food makes a lighter carbon footprint, local food preserves genetic diversity, local food is an investment in our future” (Massachusetts Department of Agriculture 2007).

Increasingly local and high-end restaurants are noticing the fervor surrounding locally grown foods and foods with identities. Restaurants are acknowledging that where a food comes from corresponds with freshness, taste and marketability, which is evident on menus that list the farms and farms’ locations. Alice Waters was a pioneer in what she refers to as the *Delicious Revolution*, giving farmers a face, foods identities and people delicious fresh food. Waters’ restaurant Chez Panisse emphasizes eating in season--farm fresh fruits and veggies are only available for a window of time--by changing the menu daily based upon what is at peak ripeness and flavor. Through buying and serving organic and local producers, Waters is part of a whole chain of events that goes all the way back to the farm (Hamilton 2003). The implications are not just cultural but political— the world revolves around food.

Waters changed fine dining when she opened Chez Panisse in 1971 and since then she has been serving delicious real food. Gourmet Magazine ranked Chez Panisse as the best restaurant in the United States in 2001. Waters firmly believes that feeding people is a form of communication and that experiences at the table open your senses. The concept of Chez Panisse was simple; Waters wanted to make fresh, seasonal, delicious real food. Since Chez Panisse opened its doors in 1971, Waters has given lectures, produced a documentary and established the Edible Schoolyard project (Hamilton 2003).

In 2003 when the Slow Food movement was established in the United States, it was with the guidance of Waters, who was named Vice President of Slow Food International. The Edible Schoolyard gives children the experience of gardening, eating fresh produce and educates them about where food comes from and how to make healthy food choices (Hamilton 2003). Similarly, Slow Food has a taste education program that brings Slow Food into schools, plants gardens, and educates children about food choices. By creating gardens in vacant lots near schools, and bringing children into the kitchen, Slow Food Education is teaching the health benefits of real food. Slow Food Education helps bridge the disconnect between what kids are eating, how it was prepared, and where it comes from., Children are making food choices that will affect the rest of their lives. In 2003 Carlo Petrini (2008) established the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Italy. The first of its kind, the University offers multidisciplinary courses giving students a “comprehensive and multidisciplinary knowledge of food culture, science and first-hand experience of production processes and regions.”

Salone del Gusto is held annually in Italy to join producers and co-producers with the aim of preserving local and traditional foods. Bringing people closer to the food they consume removes cultural processing of the food but increases social interaction. Therefore, making the process more cultural and yet

the product less elaborated. By linking producers and co-producers, the Slow Food movement is closing the distance between where food is grown and when it reaches the plate (Petrini 2003).

Slow Cities is an offshoot of Slow Food and uses the same principles; promoting sustainability, tradition, seasonality and local growth. Slow Cities offer alternative grass roots development, which is European by design (Mayer and Knox 2006). Slow Cities focus on the environment, economy and equity through promoting sustainability and conviviality improving urban living and quality of life. Slow Cities advocate for sustainable urban development as opposed to the McDonaldization or Wal-Martization of communities that has happened in American suburbia. Making it necessary to drive everywhere, McDonaldization and Wal-Martization promotes inequality. However, it seems highly unlikely that an American city would become a *Slow City* (Knox 2005).

Conclusion

Italian Americans were able to resist the strong force of Americanization a century ago, without a global movement on their side. The Slow Food movement has the ability to resist the McDonaldization of the food chain. In the United States, farmer's markets have more than doubled in the past 10 years to more than 4,000 markets nation wide. There are a number of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms and gardens that provide fresh foods weekly (Pollan 2008). The closer a food is to its source, it follows that the food will be fresher, tastier and healthier. Food produced on small-scale farms does not require the same amount of pesticides that large agribusiness farms do because the food they are growing does not have to travel half way around the world and last for months. Small farmers are not subsidized so they inherently have a larger stake in the land and in the product they are selling you—when business is more personal the quality of the product has higher value to the producer and the consumer (Pollan 2008).

The present American diet is the most drastic dietary change, in humans, since the advent of agriculture, 10,000 years ago; which marked a great stride in civilization and paradoxically a great decline in health (Pollan 2008). Similarly, the modern American diet has created a host of nutrient deficient chronic diseases. Denis Burkitt an English doctor stationed in Africa during WWII who coined the term “western diseases” suggested the only way out of the health mess that the west had gotten itself into was to go back to the diets of our ancestors. This may seem radical, but even our most recent ancestors did not eat processed and fast foods and subsequently did not suffer from a multitude of unavoidable ailments in order to have food last on shelves longer (Pollan 2008).

Our ancestors ate whole foods, and they knew where their food came from, because not knowing posed great health risks. The concept of whole foods is not a novel idea from the past; there are many industrialized countries that have not succumbed to the monoculture of agribusiness giving up quality for quantity. Other industrialized countries have also maintained stricter standards, concerning pesticides, fertilizers and identifying where food comes from (Pollan 2008). America needs a Farm Bill that has public health in mind and returns small-scale farmers back to their land, animals back to their pastures and out of the unsanitary animal gulags they presently live and die in.

“It is no coincidence that the fastest nations are also often the fattest” consumerism rewards gluttony (Honore 2004:7). In a culture of fast food in the fast lane, to be slow is to be inefficient, sluggish (like Slow Food’s snail mascot), time consuming, dawdling, drawn out, lingering and a waste of time. In the workplace, speed is equated with efficiency and a good work ethic, even when the integrity of the work suffers from lack of attention to detail and poor quality. American’s love affair with speed is evident in every facet of their lives; fast is synonymous with quick, speedy, rapid, swift, express, high-speed, prompt, immediate, and expeditious, which all equal more money and money is the measure of all success.

In countries where a national culinary culture is more rooted and palpable, foods are a large part of a culture’s long history and the foods subsequently change little over time. A culture’s relationship to food evolves over centuries and is influenced by religion and the economy. America’s fast food culture was born out of the Protestant work ethic, which gave "moral sanction to profit making through hard work, organization, and rational calculation" (Yankelovich, 1981:247). Through industrialization and hard work, America very efficiently sped up every process of the food chain, as if humans were machines and it was

only necessary to eat food to keep them going; there was a complete disassociation between food and pleasure. According to Weber (1976), the zeitgeist of the United States is best captured in Benjamin Franklin's writings on efficiency in work, careful use of time, and denial of pleasure. America's melting pot was full of ethnic cuisines, but the Puritan Protestant cook served up a fast food culture.

Levi-Strauss (1997) said, "thus we can hope to discover for each specific case how the cooking of a society is a language in which it unconsciously translates its structure—or else resigns itself, still unconsciously, to revealing its contradictions." America's Protestant roots and consumer capitalist society are translated in America's processed and fast foods. "We are enslaved by speed and have all succumbed to the same insidious virus: Fast life, which disrupts our habits, pervades the privacy of our homes and forces us to eat Fast Foods" (Petrini 2003:5). It is time to get out of the rat race that has consumed America's food culture, and go forth in a gradual, unhurried, deliberate, leisurely manner before we rapidly speed to our gluttonous graves.

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