Introduction

Bertram M. Gordon and Erica J. Peters

The publication of a special issue of *French Historical Studies* on French food history highlights the increased attention paid to gastronomic studies in academic circles on both sides of the Atlantic. One observer at a recent American Historical Association meeting noted that "every major publisher seems to have at least one new book on some aspect of food history."[1]

Evidence indicates a growth of interest in food history during the last generation, notably in the Anglophone world. The Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, established in 1981 along with its published proceedings, was cochaired that year by Alan Davidson, author of *The Oxford Companion to Food,* and Theodore Zeldin, a historian of France. The Association for the Study of Food and Society (ASFS) was created in 1985. It holds annual meetings and publishes the quarterly journal *Food, Culture and Society.*

In 1989 Hans-Jürgen Teuteberg of the University of Münster led the initiative to create the International Commission for Research into European Food History, which continues to sponsor conferences and publish a newsletter in English. Under the leadership of Jacques Pepin and Julia Child, Boston University established a Masters in Gastronomy program in 1994, said at the time to be the first in the United States.[2]

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[1] Donald A. Yerxa, "Beyond Logistics: Food as an Instrument of Modern Warfare," *Books and Culture*, Sept.–Oct. 2013, 30.

[2] Bob Thomas, "Julia Child, Jacques Pepin Team Up on PBS," *Seattle Times*, Sept. 7, 1994, community.seattletimes.nwsource.com/archive/?date=19940907&slug=1929179. See also Dena

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Since 2001 the University of California Press has published *Gastronomica*, a quarterly that focuses on the history and culture of food.

At the same time, non-Anglophone researchers have also developed a rich set of approaches to food history and food studies in general. The Institut Européen d'Histoire et des Cultures de l'Alimentation was founded in 2001, bringing together scholars such as Francis Chevrier, Julia Csergo, Jean-Louis Flandrin, Massimo Montanari, Jean-Robert Pitte, Jean-Pierre Poulain, Françoise Sabban, and Peter Scholliers. According to an overview published in 2012, half of the articles published in the institute's journal, *Food and History*, have been in English, 40 percent in French, and 6 percent in Italian.[3]

Students are also interested in food studies. In 2003 ASFS listed seventy-five university food studies courses, and in 2008 it named ten university food history programs in the United States, Europe, and Australia.[4] Further, the general public has also developed an interest in food history; as of 2014 the Food History News website listed fifteen culinary history organizations in the United States, Canada, and Australia.[5] In her online manual on how to do food history, Rachel Laudan lists twenty-two academic periodicals devoted to food studies.[6] Food was also the topic of at least eighteen presentations at the 2014 meeting of the American Historical Association.

The focus on food history in this issue of *French Historical Studies* mirrors this growing academic interest in food studies and raises the question of the particular case of French culinary history within the larger field. Anglophone writers have shifted over time in their appraisal of French cuisine, from scattered attacks on French food in the early modern era to the preeminence of champagne, French wines, and French haute cuisine in the nineteenth century. In *All Manners of Food* Stephen Mennell notes that medieval aristocratic cuisine styles were similar in France, Italy, and England.[7]

An early English-language reference to French cooking appeared

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Kleiman, "A University Offers Food for Thought," *New York Times*, Nov. 20, 1991, www.nytimes.com/1991/11/20/garden/a-university-offers-food-for-thought.html.

3 Peter Scholliers, "Ten Years of Food and History," *Food and History* 10, no. 2 (2012): 28–29.

4 For the 2003 course syllabi, see Jonathan Deutsch, *Teaching Food: Agriculture, Food and Society Syllabi and Course Materials Collection: A Publication of the Association for the Study of Food and Society and the Agriculture, Food and Human Values Society*, 2003 ed., June 12, 2003, cafs.landfood.ubc.ca/en/wp-content/uploads/Teaching_Food_-_Agriculture_Food_and_Society_Syllabi_2003.pdf. The 2008 ASFS Food Studies Programs list was accessed at food-culture.org/FoodStudies.html on Nov. 17, 2008, but is no longer available on this site.

5 "Resources and Links," *Food History News*, foodhistorynews.com/yellow.html (accessed Aug. 17, 2014).

6 Rachel Laudan, "Getting Started in Food History," in *A Historian's Take on Food and Food Politics*, www.rachellaudan.com/getting-started-in-food-history (accessed Aug. 17, 2014).

7 Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*, 2nd ed. (Urbana, IL, 1996), 50–51.

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in a published work, *A Proper Newe Booke of Cokerye*, in 1545, with a recipe for a tart made "after the Frenche Fashyan."[8] The publication of La Varenne's *Cuisinier François* in 1651 was followed two years later by an English translation, *The French Cook*, arguably the first rendition of a French cookbook into English. *The French Cook* included French terms such as *à la daube* and *à la mode*, suggesting that Anglophones were adopting a new vocabulary along with new techniques.[9] The second half of the seventeenth century saw the translation of more French cookbooks. Samuel Pepys, among others, was known to prefer French cuisine, but English-language commentaries on French foods were not always favorable.[10] Three English "gentlemen" who traveled in France in September 1701, for instance, complained that breakfast "à la Française" was merely "a crust of bread and a glass of wine."[11]

An emerging eighteenth-century fashion for French foods among the urban affluent in the Anglophone countries was combined with an occasional preference expressed for "the roast beef of old England." This was especially marked during the revolutionary period with scornful references to France's onions, snails, and watery *soupe maigre*. The London-based *Gentlemen's Magazine* responded to the increase in Parisian restaurants in the 1790s by grumbling that "a French cook can disguise his manufacture so artfully, that it is sometimes impossible to conjecture what the raw material could be."[12]

In 1825 Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin published his *Physiologie du goût*, which spurred interest in gastronomy as a science and increased France's culinary reputation. At the time the concept of the restaurant as a public dining place of value equal to or greater than a private salon was only just emerging.[13] An article published three years later noted the increase in the numbers of French chefs coming to work in England,

[8] Catherine Frances Frere, ed., *A Proper Newe Booke of Cokerye* (Cambridge, 1913), 45, quoted in Roy Schreiber, "Samuel Pepys and His Cookbooks," *Art and Food*, www.londonfoodfilmfiesta.co.uk/Literature%20Main/Pepys.htm (accessed Sept. 10, 2013). A digitized version of *A Proper Newe Booke of Cokerye* is available on www.uni-giessen.de/gloning/tx/bookecok.htm (accessed Sept. 10, 2013).

[9] "Continental Cookery," in *Recipes for Domesticity: Cookery, Household Management, and the Notion of Expertise*, in Web Exhibits—Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/webexhibits/recipes/continentalcookery.html (accessed Sept. 10, 2013). See also Peter Brears et al., *A Taste of History: 10,000 Years of Food in Britain* (London, 1993), 183.

[10] Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 89. For English ambivalence about French haute cuisine, see also Amy B. Trubek, *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession* (Philadelphia, 2000), 60–63. For Pepys, see Schreiber, "Samuel Pepys and His Cookbooks."

[11] "Descriptive Journal of a Tour Taken by Three Gentlemen in the Last Year of the Reign of King William III. (1701), from London to Paris, by Way of Calais, and Back through Normandy and Dieppe," *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jan. 1819, 29.

[12] "A Trip to Paris," *Gentleman's Magazine*, Nov. 1797, 909–10.

[13] See Honoré Blanc, *Le guide des dineurs ou statistique des principaux restaurans de Paris* (1815; repr. Paris, 1985).

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a sign of the rising prestige of French cuisine.[14] Similarly, French chefs won influential positions in the United States, as exemplified by the establishment of Delmonico's restaurant in New York in 1833. Menus from leading American hotel restaurants during the first half of the nineteenth century, such as the Tremont House in Boston, also show the increased prestige of French gastronomy. With technological developments lowering the cost of printing, the restaurant menu itself had become a souvenir, often a way to remember a special night out.[15] By the early twentieth century the French government also intervened to promote French food through the *appellation d'origine contrôlée,* as in the case of Roquefort cheese in 1925.

From the late nineteenth century through the 1970s, French culinary preeminence in the Anglophone world surfaced in the writings of M. F. K. Fisher, Samuel Chamberlain, A. J. Liebling, André Simon, and many others, along with Julia Child's popularization of French food in the United States. The appearance of French culinary terms in American articles listed in the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* shows the impact of the automobile in making French regions more accessible to American tourists. Brittany appears in the title of a culinary article in 1926, Normandy in 1933, Provence in 1950, Alsace and "Bordelaise" in 1957, and the Basques in 1959. *Cassoulet* first appears in a title in 1961; Marseilles, with respect to *bouillabaisse,* in 1962; and *quiche Lorraine* in 1964.

There is a dramatic increase in *Reader's Guide* listings for French under "cookery" in the 1950s and early 1960s that corresponds to the appearance of the jumbo jet and increased tourism, including the university junior year abroad, with peaks in the 1970s. A relative decline in the 1980s and thereafter indicates shifts toward other cuisines, notably a *nouvelle* or California-Mediterranean style, illustrated in books such as Patric Kuh's *Last Days of Haute Cuisine: The Coming of Age of American Restaurants* (2001) and Michael Steinberger's *Au Revoir to All That: Food, Wine, and the End of France* (2009). This new culinary approach still uses French terms, as exemplified in the name *nouvelle cuisine* itself.[16] Cover images of French food items for *Gourmet Magazine,* from its inception in 1941 through its demise in 2009, peaked in the 1960s, and the magazine's proportion of French restaurant reviews declined in the 1980s. In 1991 a *Newsweek* article by Laura Shapiro, "An American Revolution,"

14 "Gastronomy.—Ude, Jarrin, Mrs Glasse," *Blackwood's Magazine,* Jan.–June 1828, 589.

15 The New York Public Library had an estimated twenty-five thousand to fifty thousand menus in its collection in 1986. See Bertram M. Gordon, "Researching Popular Culture—Archival Sources in Europe and America: An Address to the First International Working Conference on Resources for Culinary Research at the New York Public Library," Mar. 8, 1986.

16 See R. A. de Groot, "French Cooking Is Dead—the New French Cooking Is Born," *Esquire,* June 1975, 131; and Jacques Pepin, "La Nouvelle Cuisine: Is It Truly New?," *House Beautiful,* Jan. 1976, 66.

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argued that “our love affair with French food is over, done in by new passion for our own chefs and ingredients.” Shapiro added, however, that for “the animated faces, the buzz of conversation, the clusters of friends lingering for hours,” one still had to go to Paris to dine.[17]

The intensity of that “love affair” may have ended, but the effects linger on. As Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson has shown, French promoters have argued persuasively that “French cuisine and culture are central to what it means to be civilized” and that the French have a particular talent for taking everyone else’s ingredients and dishes and transforming them “into an unquestionably French product.”[18] Even as today’s food world pays less attention to French haute cuisine, the history of French food is still a prominent field in food studies. Scholars continue to debate whether the country’s Catholicism made food more sacred by analogy with ingestion of the host along with the blessing of an indulgent clergy (as suggested by Jean-Pierre Poulain and Jean-Robert Pitte) or whether French secularism encouraged the rise of gastronomy and culinary sensualism, as Ferguson argues. Most researchers see the French state playing a key role, protecting and promoting French food products in Europe and around the world.[19]

Food history, as is evident from studies of France and elsewhere, lets scholars explore large historical questions from a perspective that is immediate and personal for the actors involved. People’s hunger for any kind of food under conditions of deprivation or for more appetizing dishes when times are better provides a new angle from which to view questions of nationalism, global networks, gender, race, ethnicity, and class. Food history also throws a new light on historians’ standard periodization, as people’s dietary options and preferences change on a different time scale than do political regimes.[20] Each article in this special issue illuminates these sorts of questions.

Julia Landweber’s article on the French adoption of coffee as a beverage and ingredient sets out the fascinating story of how seventeenth-century French consumers began to learn about and appreciate this new taste. In so doing, she provides a wealth of insight into European attitudes toward the Ottoman Empire, French willful ignorance about

17 Laura Shapiro, “An American Revolution,” *Newsweek*, Dec. 16, 1991, 54–56.

18 Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Word of Mouth: What We Talk about When We Talk about Food* (Berkeley, CA, 2014), 6–7.

19 Jean-Pierre Poulain, “French Gastronomy, French Gastronomies,” in *Culinary Cultures of Europe: Identity, Diversity, and Dialogue*, ed. Darra Goldstein and Kathrin Merkle (Strasbourg, 2005), 157–70; Jean-Robert Pitte, “Is Gourmandism a Sin in France?,” in *French Gastronomy: The History and Geography of a Passion* (New York, 2002), 33–68; Ferguson, *Word of Mouth*, 12–13.

20 Peter Scholliers, “Twenty-Five Years of Studying *un Phénomène Social Total*: Food History Writing on Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” *Food, Culture and Society* 10, no. 3 (2007): 461.

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products coming from their own slave colonies, and changing attitudes toward alcohol in society. Landweber's article also teases out the interplay between embracing one's coffee-fueled sexuality and displacing one's sexual desire onto racialized others. When a French woman lounged in Turkish robes, sipping her coffee, was she displaying her sexual nature or only playing at being sexual by dressing up in a harem costume, or was she precariously balanced between those positions?

Philippe Meyzie's careful analysis of the early promotion of *terroir* in the eighteenth century shows how producers, consumers, and distributors began to associate a food product's provenance with its quality. Here we see how commercial interests fanned early signs of interest in a region's reputation into more than a passing fashion. Rather than assume in a nostalgic vein that the foods we now connect with a particular region have remained the same for centuries, Meyzie historicizes the process of the identification of product with place. Consumers' insecurity over the distances food traveled via the country's developing infrastructure (long before the eras of the railroad or the airplane) led to a desire for reassurance about the food's quality. Beyond providing a historical perspective on the highly valorized and marketed term *terroir,* Meyzie reveals the social aspirations of an emerging bourgeoisie. These rising elites found *terroir* a straightforward guide to imitating aristocratic taste in gifts and hospitality. The standard periodization of French history also comes into question: from the perspective of commercial networks, the French Revolution no longer seems like a bright line separating the ancien régime from modern France.

The rise of restaurants for workers in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Paris is addressed from two different angles in this collection. Martin Bruegel compares French rhetoric about a *repas normal* with the more affordable but barely adequate lunches workers often consumed. Bruegel's work allows the reader to see not a monolithic working class but, rather, gradations: an older male artisan enjoying several courses at a *restaurant à prix fixe*; a younger man making do with just a hearty soup at a *bouillon* establishment; a seamstress having a thin soup, bread, and cheese at a *crèmerie*; or poor workers of either sex trying to satisfy their hunger with fried tripe, fried potatoes, or a bowl of soup from a street vendor.

Patricia Tilburg looks at cultural attitudes toward *midinettes,* the working women who survived on street food for lunch or sometimes had a minimal restaurant meal when times were better. Tilburg shows that French popular culture romanticized these women and their meager meals, reading a modern sense of sophistication into those small portions. At the same time, popular representations suggested that these women could be tempted by better food into a dalliance with a man

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from a higher social class, shedding their limited expectations along the way and, they hoped, raising their social status. Both Tilburg and Bruegel highlight moments when workers were perceived as choosing pleasure over austere adherence to factory discipline. Pastries, cherries, pickles, or fries—these foods were for fun, not just sustenance. Tilburg stresses that the *midinette* was imagined to be poor but not interested in politics. Indeed, popular images of these working women did not necessarily correspond to reality. The imagined *midinette* character was content with the world as it was, while actual garment workers turned to strike actions to increase their wages. The lunch world of Parisian workers was clearly far removed from the post–Brillat-Savarin restaurants that so influenced the Anglophone idea of French restaurants.[21]

Kenneth Mouré's article on black market restaurants in Paris during the Second World War demonstrates how people of different social situations experienced wartime food shortages in occupied France. The Pétain government had to struggle to maintain its legitimacy, given the evidence of extreme inequities. German forces and wealthy French businessmen and war profiteers ate luxurious restaurant meals, even as most Parisians had to stand in long lines for inadequate rations. Food studies offer an excellent opportunity to analyze the politics behind wartime deprivation, as well as provide a clear picture of how much less the wealthy may be impacted by a country's hard times. Mouré also problematizes the usual periodization of the war, since rationing and price controls put in place under the German occupation continued after the Liberation.

All the articles also ground our understanding of France's place in the world. Coffee became one of the products the French brought to other countries, such as Vietnam, where a French-inspired coffee culture is one of the few positive associations with the colonial period. Likewise, *terroir* may have started as a promotional tool within France, but before long French wine, cheeses, and foie gras were marketed abroad with the same earthy rhetoric. Since the 1970s the promotional language of *terroir* has even been adopted by farmers outside France. Turn-of-the-twentieth-century worker restaurants represented a different side of Paris from fine dining establishments, but by the interwar period Anglophone travelers found the prix fixe menus appealing. The "bouillon restaurant" opened by Frédéric and Camille Chartier in 1896 was classified as a *monument historique* in 1989; it now boasts a website in English and long lines of tourists waiting to get in. At the other end of the dining spectrum, access to Paris's most exclusive restau-

[21] Rebecca L. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 2000), 219–26, 242.

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rants became a trophy first seized by German forces in 1940 and then claimed by the Americans in 1944. The view from outside France shines a light refracting the history of French cuisine and revealing new facets.

Awareness of the many ways in which culinary history opens deeper understandings of social and cultural history, shown in the growing number of academic programs, courses, and writings on the subject, is also evidenced by the decision of *French Historical Studies* to devote a special issue to food. The five articles published here were selected from more than two dozen submissions. Chronologically, most of the original submissions focused on the modern period, defined as starting at the end of the Middle Ages. Using the periodization that *French Historical Studies* employs for its Recent Articles on French History listings, three of the submissions could be classified under "General and Miscellaneous," two under "Ancient and Medieval," seven under "1500–1774," one under "Revolutionary Period and Napoléon," eight under "Third Republic," and six under "1940 to the Present." Food studies sometimes challenge these standard divisions of research and may suggest broad issues that mattered more than politics for ordinary people. Thematically, the articles submitted and published represent a view of French food history that extends far beyond haute cuisine. The editors appreciate the good work of all the authors and hope that this special issue will open the door to heightened discussion of how food history elucidates French history in future pages of *French Historical Studies.*

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