

The policy victories—the sugary beverage tax and the recently passed front-of-package labels—are laudable, but they sustain a focus on behavioral change that places the burden for health solely on the individual. Are there ongoing efforts to improve the health care system? Water access? Socioeconomic and racial inequities? These are a few key aspects that merit further exploration.

El Susto is a valuable contribution to motivate deeper conversations about transnational companies and the role of government to safeguard its citizens' health. The film could be incorporated into classes that tackle issues around food access, nutrition, food justice, and even migration. The film can also be viewed as a needed call for action to push for government regulation of food marketing and of industry involvement in research and policy, both of which are significant, but often overlooked, influences on individual and community health.

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Just the Tonic: A Natural History of Tonic Water

Kim Walker and Mark Nesbitt

London: Kew, 2019

144 pp. Color and black and white illustrations. \$25 / £18 (hardcover)

The next time you sip your gin and tonic, spare a thought for Doña Francisca Henriques de Ribera, countess of Chinchón and wife of the viceroy of Peru. When the beautiful countess lay languishing and feverish on her deathbed sometime around 1630, she was given a dose of a local “fever bark” and, surprisingly, recovered. So thankful was she for this miraculous cure that, the story goes, she returned to Spain to dispense the bark to the suffering of Europe. It may all sound somewhat fanciful, but the story was enough for the Swedish botanist Linnaeus to name both the tree and the genus after the countess (although he managed to drop the first “h” in the process, so it became *Cinchona*). It is the bark of the cinchona tree, and the powerful antimalarial quinine compounds it contains, that is famously the bitter flavoring in tonic water. Of course this did not happen overnight; the history of the links between cinchona, quinine, malaria, tonic

water, and gin are much more complex and more fascinating than one might suspect, as *Just the Tonic* shows.

Like all the best books focusing on single foods or drinks, the fun is in the broader contextualization. Together, co-authors Kim Walker (student of the history of plant medicines) and Mark Nesbitt (curator of the Economic Botany Collection at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, London) open up a series of different worlds to introduce us to the history of tonic water. They explore the nature of malaria and the slow voyage of discovery that led to the understanding of its transmission. We are also treated to a natural history of the tree itself, which, from the seventeenth century, was in great demand in Europe for treating fevers of all sorts. Indeed, when the Parisian pharmacist Auguste Delondre first set eyes on a specimen in the Peruvian Andes, he remarked: “That magnificent tree. For so long I had seen it in my dreams and now it was before me” (p.11). Long before the nature and causation of malaria were understood (early in the twentieth century) and long before the workings of quinine in blocking the actions of the malaria-causing parasite in the blood were appreciated (even now not perfectly understood), cinchona and its derivative quinine were being taken as both “preservative” and treatment for malaria.

Just the Tonic brings together three strands to tell a single story, mixing well-informed historical narrative and quirky anecdote. While the first part of the book focuses on quinine and its use against malaria, the second explores the cultural history of the most popular medium for administering the drug; that is, via carbonated water. In the process, we are treated to a (very) brief history of medicinal mineral waters, the rise of “aerated” or soda waters from the late eighteenth century, and the proliferation of “restorative” and “medicinal” tonic beverages—some highly alcoholic, others directed at the temperance movement—in the nineteenth century. These drinks were promoted, variously, as preventives, cures, and convalescent remedies; as stimulants either to the appetite (aperitifs) or to the digestion (digestives); and, eventually, as medicinal “tonics” and refreshing drinks in tropical climes.

The third and final part recounts the history of gin, in particular in its combination with tonic. This is perhaps better known, but the authors nonetheless manage to relate some curious occurrences along the way, such as the technologies used in procuring the necessary ice in the pre-refrigeration age. Throughout, the authors have aimed for a “magazine” style of presentation, with short articles and even shorter text-boxes inserted at regular intervals. If the overall impression is on the erratic side, this approach does have the virtue of allowing them to cover a wide range of topics. The asides are distracting but frequently fascinating (in a frustrating sort of

way). Just as one is coming to grips with the wide array of cinchona species that nineteenth-century naturalists had to grapple with, one's attention is drawn by a small text-box on the accidental invention of the color mauve (on page 46, if you are curious). In any case, the book is beautifully produced. It abounds with magnificent and sometimes surprising illustrations, all carefully chosen, coming from the unparalleled collections of Kew Gardens and the Wellcome Collection, both in London.

—David Gentilcore, *Ca' Foscari University of Venice*

Black Food Geographies: Race, Self-Reliance, and Food Access in Washington, D.C.

Ashanté M. Reese

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019
184 pp. Illustrations. \$90.00 (hardcover); \$22.95 (paper);
\$21.99 (eBook)

For more than a century, Black Americans have protested, marched, and campaigned for civil rights and equal protection under the law; in response, the US government has falteringly, piecemeal, doled out the rights of full citizenship. Concurrently, criminal, legal, and geospatial laws and systems have worked to patrol and control Black lives in the United States. These realities are not divorced from questions of food access—they are, in fact, central to them. How have Black Americans persisted, and developed foodways, within this context of pervasive state-led anti-Blackness? Ashanté Reese explores this question, what she calls making “ways out of no way” (p.9), in her ethnography, *Black Food Geographies: Race, Self-Reliance, and Food Access in Washington, D.C.*

Reese offers an important re-centering for the field of food studies—too often, our conversations ignore how food access is only one concern among many priorities in eaters' lives; and moreover, that many eaters' lives are shaped by systemic racism. *Black Food Geographies* explores, with care and nuance, the narratives of community members in Deanwood—a historically low-income, African American neighborhood in northeast Washington, D.C. Reese draws on participant observation, twenty-five interviews, and one focus group with Deanwood residents, asking: “How do we see, read, and document their food lives within, alongside, and against the food inequities anti-Blackness produces?” (p.4).

The narratives contained within *Black Food Geographies* remind us, as Reese states, that “food justice is fundamentally about racial justice” (p.11). Anti-Blackness has shaped neighborhoods, urban geography, and our economic system in profound ways; we would be mistaken to try to explore

questions of hunger and food access without examining the ways that anti-Blackness impacts the food system and the places in which eaters live. For Deanwood residents, foodways and food entrepreneurship were built within and in defiance of pervasive residential segregation and white control of urban space. One result is pride in, and emphasis on, self-reliance—understood here as ensuring not just individual gain but community resilience. This context has shaped a sort of moral food economy in Deanwood. While I wish the racialized nuance of this conscious capitalism that Black Deanwood residents engage in had been teased out a bit more, particularly in relation to narratives about Jewish- and Asian-owned groceries in the neighborhood, there is still plenty for the reader to chew on.

Black Food Geographies spotlights the vibrancy of neighborhoods labeled “food deserts.” This is an important corrective at a time when urban communities of color—particularly Black neighborhoods—are discussed as economic drains, areas of lack, ill-health, and crime. Aside from the obvious violence involved in these dismissals of humanity, Deanwood resident narratives demonstrate how this lens is inaccurate and can lead to inappropriate food access interventions. In chapter 1, Reese documents the development of Deanwood's food system, and the changes this community witnessed over the course of the twentieth century. In the 1940s, Deanwood's foodscape was reflective of its residents' experience with Deep South Agrarianism—these agricultural skills were repurposed as tools for communal self-sufficiency in their new homes. Home gardens, small farms, independently owned dry goods stores and butchers dotted Deanwood's landscape. Hucksters—entrepreneurs who sold produce or prepared food from homes or carts—were a community fixture. The second half of the century brought supermarkets to Deanwood. The arrival of Safeway challenged this informal economy of trading and bartering, and signaled the end of huckstering and many Black-owned grocery outlets. Today, much policy work and activism surrounding urban food access involves a narrow focus on attracting and retaining grocery stores. Deanwood is exemplary of how this myopic focus obscures larger questions of how sites of food access are also embedded in local social relationships; how food acquisition is often a part of community cohesion; and how large grocery chains might not holistically address community needs.

When presenting Deanwood resident narratives, Reese creates space for the messiness of ideology—this, to my eye, is an important contribution to food studies. Many scholars, myself included, can be guilty of attempting to wrangle human experience into cleanly separated boxes and linear narratives. Reese resists that urge, making this book a useful