

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

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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

addition to qualitative methods and writing seminars. The book is at its best when presenting these contradictory ideologies, bifurcated by class and generational differences—pride for Deanwood’s singular Black-owned corner store even though few participants regularly shop there; residents blaming themselves for the subpar produce offered at Safeway; nostalgic imaginaries of a tight-knit self-reliant Black community that young Deanwood residents extol but never actually experienced. These narratives paint a full picture of Deanwood; *Black Food Geographies* is a beautiful example of the complexity, nuance, and vibrancy that ethnography can produce.

It is vital to center BIPOC voices in discussions of food access, community development, and urban inequality. When we do so, we are reminded that questions of food inequity in these communities are inextricable from broader policies and ideologies that inflict violence on Black and brown communities. This is foregrounded powerfully at the end of the text, when Reese discusses the murder of Caylor, one of her research participants. She writes that his life “tottered at the intersections of food justice, economic justice, and racial justice as a formerly incarcerated Black man who was trying to reform his life . . . sometimes unable to meet the needs of his family” (p.136). Food was just one of myriad concerns that shaped his life. Reese asks: “Where do we go when we put food in the context of Black liberation?” (p.137). For food studies scholars, eaters, and local food systems advocates eager to learn about how to walk in allyship with this question, *Black Food Geographies* is a perfect start.

—Chhaya Kolavalli, independent scholar

*De los plátanos de Oller a los Food Trucks: Comida, alimentación y cocina puertorriqueña en ensayos y recetas*  
Cruz Miguel Ortiz Cuadra

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*De los plátanos de Oller a los Food Trucks: Comida, alimentación y cocina puertorriqueña en ensayos y recetas* (From Oller’s plantains to food trucks: Food, eating, and Puerto Rican cuisine in essays and recipes) is a collection of essays and a brief historical cookbook that thinks through the place of food in the study of social history, economics, and politics in Puerto Rico. As Cruz Miguel Ortiz Cuadra shows, the Caribbean has been absent from discussions around food sovereignty, race, and identity even though it was the work on sugar cane and the plantation economy—conducted by Sidney Mintz—that paved the way for the field of food studies. As a sugar historian, Ortiz Cuadra documents the history of

food in Puerto Rico in *Eating Puerto Rico: A History of Food, Culture, and Identity*, published in Spanish (2006) and English (2013). This new book continues this journey, with thirteen essays that each follow one dish, food, or cultural text. It privileges a historical, social, and cultural reading exercise that explores eating and cooking practices in Puerto Rico through paintings and cookbooks, political figures and food policy, and food geographies that consist of supermarkets, popular food kiosks, restaurants, and food trucks. The book is in Spanish and all translations for the purpose of this review are my own.

The first essay analyses Francisco Oller’s painting *El velorio* (The Wake) (1893) and studies the positionality of pork, corn, plantain, and rice in the painting to question notions of labor, production, and the civilizing project of the nation through these staple foods. Similarly, essays like “La historia, el cerdo y el ‘cajne’e puerco” (History, pork, and “pork meat”), “Ínsula grasa” (Fritter isle), and “La pana de pepita y el durián” (Jackfruit and durian) emphasize the historical conditions and the historiography of foods like pork meat, fried foods, and jackfruit, a curiosity that also questions the relation between a past and a present of these foods.

“Cocine a gusto: El recetario de la modernidad” (Puerto Rican dishes: Modernity’s forgotten cookbook) is perhaps the first essay in the study of food in Puerto Rico that focuses on modern cookbooks—it inaugurates the study of the cookbook in Puerto Rico beyond strictly its function as a historic document and brings it into the field of cultural anthropology and cultural studies. In it, Ortiz Cuadra follows the place of the cookbook in the field of food studies and the three main currents in which it is studied: in the scientific realm, as a writing of history, and through the intimacy of the kitchen.

Throughout the book, Ortiz Cuadra reminds us of the influences that make up Puerto Rican cuisine—indigenous Taíno, Iberian, and African cultures—and explores the different results of this blend. This is a common trope when studying food and culture in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. Nonetheless, Ortiz Cuadra is more interested in the place of the African diaspora in our understanding of Puerto Rican cuisine as a mestizo culinary culture. For instance, in the essay “Saber haciendo: La cocina costera en la vitrina” (To know while doing: Coastal cuisine in the shopfront), Ortiz Cuadra sees Puerto Rican cuisine as a diasporic cuisine: “fruto de éxodos constantes, de idas y vueltas de gente y alimentos, de memorias culinarias rehechas en nuevas geografías y nuevas circunstancias sociales, económicas y religiosas” (fruit of constant exodus, roundtrips of peoples and