

foods, of culinary memories remade in new geographies and new social, economic, and religious circumstances) (p.85).

A recurring theme in the book is the politics of food in Puerto Rico. The two essays dedicated to the Luis Muñoz Marín era—characterized among many events by the establishment of the *estado libre asociado* or the commonwealth status and the drafting of the constitution of Puerto Rico—look at the development of Puerto Rican foodways from the 1950s. In them Ortiz Cuadra explores instances that defined public and private lives and spaces; case studies include the first lady, educator, and writer Inés María Mendoza’s experience as a cookbook writer, as well as the development of the *muñocista* supermarket and its relation to the current discontent with the food system. The closing essays highlight the contemporary Puerto Rican foodscape, from the fast-food industry in the archipelago, to a critique of the current state of the restaurant business, to the trend of food trucks in the San Juan metropolitan area.

The book concludes with a selection of historical recipes that range from a nineteenth-century recipe, *Majarete criollo* (Sweet cream of corn), to a 2019 recipe for *Gnocchi de batata* (Sweet potato gnocchi) that provides a commentary on such recipes from the author’s primary sources and emphasizes their historical affective economy.

With this book Cruz Miguel Ortiz Cuadra continues to pave the way for the study of food in Puerto Rico and invites scholars, home cooks, chefs, writers, and farmworkers to think about the historical, economic, and political conditions through which food appears at our table. A shortcoming in this book is the absence of other geopolitical spaces of the Caribbean. By centering Puerto Rico, Ortiz Cuadra reproduces the ideas of cultural ownership and national cuisines that contribute to the idea of Caribbean isolation instead of an archipelagic approach. Nonetheless, this absence indicates the much-needed work to be done and dialogues to be had on the place of the Caribbean within the field of food studies, a discussion that can contribute much to understanding colonialism, neocolonialism, race, subjecthood, and capital.

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When Banana Ruled

Mathilde Damoiseil, director

Icarus Films, 2017. Released 2018

52 mins. DVD; streaming on Docuseek2

When Banana Ruled recounts the story of the United Fruit Company (UFC) as the birth of the modern multinational corporation. The film (perhaps more aptly, “When Banana Men Ruled”) centers on the figures of Minor Cooper Keith of UFC, Samuel Zemurray of Cuyamel Fruit Company, and PR propagandist Edward Bernays, who at the turn of the twentieth century, through their industrial ambitions and marketing schemes, guided the company’s various exploits in Central America and the Caribbean. Following their careers, viewers come to understand how the banana’s transformation into the ubiquitous and beloved commodity it is today was made possible only through histories of land eviction, tax evasion, labor rights suppression, racial and ethnic divisions, and support from authoritarian regimes. By the end of the documentary, the banana is forever recast in the eyes of viewers as “a simple fruit that was capable of conquering an empire,” a trope in commodity histories that is overused precisely because it is effective (Robbins 2005). Audiences will likely come away thinking that they will never look at bananas in the same way again. That they will nevertheless continue consuming the popular yellow fruit attests to the complexities of global consumerism that are at the film’s core.

UFC’s voluminous archives have inspired food scholarship for decades, and the robust literature on bananas in the Americas makes it difficult for a historical film such as this one to provide an original contribution. That said, for well-versed food scholars and public audiences alike, it will be gratifying to see the colorful montage of visuals—from archival footage and photography, telegrams, and letters, to vintage advertisements, film clips, and television cartoons—presented in chronological fashion and guided by accessible narration. Mathilde Damoiseil stitches these materials together with intentionality, often alternating scenes of overflowing grocery stores and glitzy dance hall routines in the United States with footage of railways and dirt roads lined with barefoot laborers in the Central Americas. A giddy, rhythmic soundtrack of son Cubano, “mambo blanco” pastiche, and 1940s swing brings images of economic and political strife into even starker relief. The contrasts are jarring in the way that they should be. Interviews with a business historian, an economist, and a business philosopher add conceptual depth to the narrative, but come at the expense of

grassroots voices, already underrepresented in the archival footage that constitutes the bulk of the film.

When *Banana Ruled* is a fruitful resource for introducing students to the opacities of long-distance food systems, and for stimulating debate on the promises and ills of global capitalism, although the film's unabashed critique of American multinationals will likely strike some as too one-sided. As a visual companion, it will give life to readings that might otherwise feel distant from students' everyday lives. Instructors should note that much of the footage remains unlabeled, which may paint a somewhat placeless and timeless image of the "banana republics." Viewing the film alongside Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg's volume *Banana Wars* (2003) would help give historical and geographic specificity to what might come across as UFC's totally homogenizing grasp. Moreover, the spread of Panama disease (aka "banana wilt") as a parable of an empire "rotting from the inside" will raise important questions about the logic of infinite accumulation in a world of finite resources. Environmental histories by John Soluri (2005) and Steve Marquardt (2001) would enrich understanding of how the commercial extinction of the Gros Michel banana became the Achilles' heel to a business model that seemed impervious to consequence.

For younger audiences who may have never seen a banana commercial on television, postwar clips of the half-banana, half-woman Chiquita Banana cartoon, as well as various other ads touting the culinary versatility of the "fruit of American dreams," will surely be provocative. This reviewer's personal favorite is Dole's 1974 commercial, which features a femme fatale figure dancing on her own on a dark stage, banana in hand. Playing in the background is Pink Floyd's "The Great Gig in the Sky," a signature of 1970s counterculture repurposed to promote the largest fruit conglomerate in the world. The ad encapsulates the film's broader message about consumer advertising's many prestidigitations. This plot line reaches its dark climax when audiences learn of UFC's collusion with the CIA in the violent ouster of pro-land reform Guatemalan president Jacobo Árbenz (in office: 1951–54), and of Bernays's role in twisting public opinion on the matter with the use of Cold War rhetoric. Altogether, these scenes remind us that consumer demand is never a given but rather historically created, and often in line with broader politico-cultural agendas.

When *Banana Ruled* rushes to its conclusion after scenes of Fidel Castro's Cuba, the death of Zemurray, and the rebranding of UFC, curiously leaving audiences with the impression that empires die with their charismatic leaders. Fortunately, Damoiseil's documentary joins a list of others that expand on ongoing issues mentioned only briefly at the

film's conclusion. *Banana Land: Blood, Bullets & Poison* by Jason Glaser and Diego Lopez (2014) documents the persistent violences of the paramilitary and the overreliance on chemicals. Frederik Gertten's controversial *BANANAS!** (2009) and its sequel, *Big Boys Gone Bananas!** (2011), recounts the transnational struggle against pesticide poisoning from the trenches. Finally, a lesser-known Japanese-language documentary, *The Bitter Reality behind Sweet Bananas (Amai Banana no Nigai Genjitsu)* by the Pacific Asia Resource Center (Murakami 2018), presents a rare example of an alternative banana trade network in the Philippines, a form of "social and solidarity economics" to which the current film briefly gestures. Indeed, in many parts of the world the banana continues to rule, and its story is very much unfinished.

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Stirrings: How Activist New Yorkers Ignited a Movement for Food Justice

Lana Dee Povitz

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019

360 pp. Illustrations. \$90.00 (hardcover); \$29.95 (paper); \$22.99 (eBook)

Stirrings, Lana Dee Povitz's study of food activism in New York City in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, is an extraordinary achievement. At the core of the book are four rich and vivid case studies of food-focused organizing. It begins with the United Bronx Parents, an anti-poverty organization of largely African American and Puerto Rican parents who agitated to improve school lunches in the South Bronx and ended up