**Immigration Across the Disciplines**

**Week 4 Notes**

**Questions**

I had always assumed myself that “Italian” food was authentic. Was the modification of food the result of needing to assimilate? I know it was mentioned elsewhere that they gave up baking traditional bread because they didn’t have the ovens for it; was this the main reason?

**Italian America (Food)**

Traditional (true) Italian food was adapted by immigrants.

Ingredients that were rare or expensive in the homeland were cheap and easy to come by in the US.

Food became a symbol of status (NEVER to be insulted).

Especially tomato sauce, which resulted from tomatoes being brought from the Americas in the 1500s.

When US trade bans allowed truly traditional ingredients to be sent from the homeland, Italian-American food made a shift to more true and traditional menus, allowing them to justify an increase in prices and a change in style.

Another shift, back toward early years of Italian-American life, began in the late 1980s.

An indication of a sort of sub-culture?

**Gastropolis: Preface**

In cities across the US, food has become a sort of identifier for the city (including what kind of immigrant cultures thrived there).

In NYC, cultures from all over the world have brought with them unique cuisines, which have been remade and recombined to produce a culturally unique experience.

**Food Voice**: the choices of what to eat or what not to eat, ingredients, how the ingredients are procured, etc. all tell about an individual’s/family’s cultural & personal identity.

**The Empire of Food (Asian)**

Queens is poor and destitute compared to Manhattan (the poor cousin), but it contains a rich diversity of cultural treats.

Asians in the US are very closely linked to food (think of sterotypes about eating dogs, cats, etc.).

Smell serves as a way to divide areas…different smells depending on what food is being cooked.

**Woodside**

Even in ethnic restaurants, the quality of food changed.

Ethnic/cultural food becomes a rare treat for holidays or perhaps weekend outings.

**Flushing**

Many Asian Americans have begun to blur cultural and ethnic lines, sampling Asian foods not originiating from their cultural homeland.

p. 103—food does not solve racial and cultural prejudices, but it does help to begin the process of reducing and erasing them.

**Jackson Heights**

**Culinary translation**: modifying ethnic cuisines in order to cater to a broader clientele, especially whatever is considered the “mainstream”

**Hawkers & Gawkers (Peddling & Markets)**

**Early Public Markets**

Beginning in colonial times, markets where farmers and Native Americans traded goods with settles were common.

The growth of cities (Amsterdam) expanded public markets, which were tied up in political and cultural disputes.

**Stationary Pushcart Market**

As the city’s population became more dense (immigration and migration), people set up stationary carts to peddle from (became open-air markets).

As the economy tightened, it became more and more common for women and children to have their own carts, trying desperately to support their families.

Corruption and bribery was rampant in all areas of the pushcart business🡪commissions developed to regulate this

**The Great Depression**

Having to seek government assistance was seen as the ultimate humiliation, so many more families turned to pushcarts to avoid this, though only barely.

**Fighting Against Pushcarts**

Merchants considered pushcarts a nuisance and unfair competition.

Although Mayor LaGuardia tried to remove all peddlers from the streets and place them in indoor markets, the venture was largely unsuccessful.

Many peddlers could not afford indoor stalls, resulting in increasing unemployment.

Citizenship became a requirement, removing many peddlers from their meager employment.

The job was too time consuming for most to learn the language or undergo the other necessary processes.

Many felt that the pushcarts had been a cultural and historical part of the city and resisted their removal.

Women especially disliked the change, and would refuse to use more contemporary markets/stores.

**The Impact of Change**

Though they had fought to remove the pushcarts, businesses noticed a drastic decline in their own trade once they WERE removed.

The administration continued to seek change, now focusing on merchants.

Peddling has returned as a viable option of employment, especially for immigrants.

**From the big Bagel to the Big Roti? (Jewish)**

NYC boasts a broad range of eating options, from those only affordable by the very rich to those that almost anyone can afford.

**Food Icons of NYC**

Foods such as egg creams, bagels, deli, cheesecake, knishes and hot dogs arrived from Europe with immigrants and were adapted mainly by Jews, eventually abandoning their roots and becoming iconic.

Eventually descendants embraced the foods that had become less ethnic, losing some of their cultural identity but empowering the identity of NYC. 🡪 3 phases

1. Genesis of Lower East Side.
   1. Mass immigration of the 1920s; Jews were not defined by food (no symbolic meaning)
2. Exodus to suburbs.
   1. Successful Jews moved out of the city to the suburbs; food that was eaten in tenement housing was abandoned as part of an old lifestyle (negative symbols; customs they wanted to shed)
3. Return to Upper West Side
   1. A subset of affluent Jews moved back to NYC, initiating *Aliyah*, a return to Jewish culture, including the foods they had previously shunned (rebirth; reattachment to a lost cultural identity)

The foods that were abandoned were updated.

Politics, are, and pop culture gave foods ever greater status as icons.

Ethnic status symbols were no longer a threat after the Jews became more assimilated, and they could thus embrace them again without fear of remaining outsiders.

The hot dog is one exception; before phase 2, it had already become mainstream, so Jews took it with them.

**Cooking Up Heritage in Harlem**

**Historicizing Harlem**

Even at the time blacks began their migration, Harlem was already populated by various immigrant groups.

Food was a key way in which they enforced physical boundaries of their neighborhoods (culture) and held onto some of the culture from their homelands.

Early blacks in Harlem (before the migration) were only connected to food as wage earners, often to restaurants or establishments that had little to do with their own cultural background.

When southern blacks migrated, they greatly upset the existing balance and were not always welcome.

The presence of blacks in Harlem was not only migrants from the south, but also immigrant blacks from other countries.

A subtle shift occurred as the black population from the south continued to build in Harlem; grocers began to carry goods common and known to these migrants to attract their business (first case of introducing southern food on a larger scale).

Following this, restaurants began to advertise what would become “soul food.”

**Heritage Tourism**

Heritage became the way in which a region/neighborhood was marketed, whether it had ever actually been that way or not🡪exaggeration, etc.

Therefore, because of the Harlem Renaissance, the modern Harlem is seen through a lens🡪immigrant culture is almost nonexistent, and black culture (especially southern) is emphasized and exaggerated.

Even restaurants that combine cuisines from differing cultures are not advertised by the heritage project