

Transforming Tastes:
M.F.K. Fisher, Julia Child, Alice Waters
and the Revision of American Food Rhetorics

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Abstract

ERIN L. BRANCH: *Transforming Tastes: M.F.K. Fisher, Julia Child, Alice Waters, and the Revision of American Food Rhetorics*

(Under the direction of Jane Danielewicz and Jordynn Jack)

Transforming Tastes: M.F.K. Fisher, Julia Child, Alice Waters, and the Revision of American Food Rhetorics examines rhetorical alternatives to the rhetorics of quantification and science that have long dominated American food discourse. In the late nineteenth century, reformers' efforts to professionalize homemaking led to the development of home economics as an academic and professional field. This new field sought legitimacy by conferring scientific status on domestic work and by persuading the public that the nation's moral health depended on women keeping house according to modern methods. Almost simultaneously, the nascent field of nutrition science began disseminating research via government-sponsored publications that offered dietary advice in the form of numbers (e.g., of servings, calories, etc.). As American food discourse became a scientific, data-driven enterprise, this field meant to empower women instead marginalized everyday women's practices by validating only knowledge acquired through legitimate institutional channels.

Three public figures-- essayist M.F.K. Fisher, cookbook author Julia Child, and activist Alice Waters--provide rhetorical alternatives to these powerful discourses of home economics and nutrition science. Fisher's writings recount her personal experiences

with food to celebrate the sensory pleasures of preparing, eating, and sharing food with loved ones. By organizing her texts around pleasure, Fisher's texts challenge received notions about the gendered nature of food-writing genres. Although Child's now-renowned books barely escaped publishing oblivion, they persuaded audiences that delicious homemade meals were within reach. Child's rhetoric thus successfully reached an American middle class that had, by midcentury, largely abandoned from-scratch cooking in favor of quick, easy, processed foods. Waters is founder of Chez Panisse Restaurant and the Edible Schoolyard and a leader of Slow Food International. Her texts draw on the manifesto genre, and mix sensory descriptions of food with calls for wholesale reform of the food system. This dissertation demonstrates that in countering dominant discourses, Fisher, Child, and Waters created rhetorical space for today's flourishing and diverse food discourses.

Acknowledgements

Anyone who has written a dissertation will tell you that as the months drag on, it can become increasingly difficult to maintain focus, and to resist the pull of hobbies, the Internet, pets, or any number of other distractions. This problem, for me, was compounded by the fact that a large portion of my dissertation research involved reading cookbooks. You might think that spending so many months reading recipes and stories about food would cause me to lose interest in cooking, but on the contrary: the hardest thing about this project was resisting the urge to walk away from the computer, pick up the book, and head to the kitchen. Sometimes, the temptation was too great. As the chapters wore on and my cookbook collection expanded, my husband, friends, and even my students were often the recipients of the literal fruits of my procrastination. I suppose there are worse reasons to delay finishing a chapter.

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Since the day I declared my intention to major in Rhetoric & Composition, the Rhetoric & Composition Writing Group at UNC has welcomed me--and my project--with open arms. I am so very grateful to Rise Applegarth, Heather Branstetter, Sarah Hallenbeck, and Chelsea Redeker for being such generous but critical readers. Their insights and feedback have shaped this project, as well as my thinking and writing, in crucial ways. I also thank them for being such good and encouraging colleagues, and for becoming such treasured friends. I also am grateful to Sarah Marsh, Kate Attkisson, and Meredith Malburne-Wade, my dearest friends and closest confidantes, whose support and general good humor have brought so much laughter and joy to the last seven years. I thank Sarah, especially, for the three things that made our exam years possible: mushroom salad, *P&P*, and the green couch.

I owe no one greater thanks than my family, especially my parents, Bill and Leslie Branch, who have made the life I now enjoy possible in all ways. I thank both of them for encouraging me from my earliest days, for never getting too upset when I stayed up late to finish a book, and for all manner of support as I completed graduate school. For all the delicious meals I have enjoyed at their house and in their company, I am grateful, for both the food and for their inspiration. I thank my brother, Jim, for keeping me grounded

and making me laugh, and I thank his daughter Sadie for reminding me that sometimes the simplest pleasures *are* the best. Since I was very small, my grandmother Alice has fostered my love of reading, and she has long been convinced that I would one day earn a PhD in English. I did not believe her until very recently, but my degree will belong to her as much as it does to me. I am so grateful to her and my grandfather for their love and belief in me. Finally, I thank my husband Lukas for everything. His steadfast faith and confidence in this project, along with just about everything else I want to undertake, sustains me, and I can't wait to see what we tackle next.

Preface

In the early stages of my dissertation process, several trusted friends and colleagues told me that I would end up writing about myself. This seemed unlikely to me; I couldn't imagine how my life would fit into what (at that point) was shaping up to be a highly theoretical project. But some months later, when I had finally arrived at a topic and had started to develop research questions, I realized that they had all been right. While I did not literally write about myself, I have noticed remarkable affinities between my own life and those of the three writers whose works I study in the following chapters.

Like my three case studies, M.F.K. Fisher, Julia Child, and Alice Waters, I grew up in a comfortable home (though not in California), and family dinners, especially on weekends and holidays, were a regular feature of my childhood. As my brother and I grew older, baseball practice (for him) and rehearsals (for me) often got in the way of those weeknight dinners. On weekends, however, my dad would drag out the biggest pot we owned, turn on the football game, and start rummaging through the refrigerator and the pantry. By dinnertime, we'd be eating one of his creations, none of which were ever bound by the rules of *recipes*. Instead, we'd dine on bean-intensive stews, soups full of (to us) unrecognizable vegetables or grains with unpronounceable names like "quinoa," or (when the Redskins were losing) chili so hot we were gulping milk and ice water for the rest of the evening.

Holidays, too, were occasions for pulling out all the culinary stops. A week or two after Thanksgiving, out of the attic would come boxes of ornaments and other decorations, along with extra cookie sheets, holiday-themed cookie tins, and an old-fashioned cookie press. For days, my brother and I would wake up to sticks of butter softening on the counter, and we would come home from school to find dozens, sometimes hundreds, of sugar-coated cookies cooling on wire racks. One whole cupboard would have to be cleared out to accommodate my mother's tins of cookies--enough to last us and usually the neighbors, too, well into January.

Despite all of this, my own interest in cooking was sporadic and confined largely to the brownies I occasionally made at my grandmother's house. As a high school student, I was far too worried about fitting into the right kind of jeans to spend much time in the kitchen. And like many 18-year-old women newly arrived at college, I fretted about gaining the "freshman fifteen," which I avoided by subsisting primarily on salad and applesauce during my first two years at Middlebury College. Things all changed in the fall of my junior year.

Like the three case studies I examine in this chapter, I traveled to France in my very early twenties. Middlebury has an extensive network of study abroad opportunities, the school in Paris being one of the most established, and studying in Paris fit my idea of what a serious student of culture and literature (as I believed myself to be) should do with herself. Like my case studies, I spent hours in Paris's museums and dutifully visited famous monuments and buildings, and like them I took classes in French language, culture, and history; in fact, Alice Waters and I attended the same branch of the Université de Paris (Paris III, or Censier-Daubenton).

And yet, like them, the real classrooms for me were not in that drab building in the Latin Quarter. It's hard to say when the moment of conversion was, but before long I had immersed myself in French culinary culture, determined to learn all I could. I was fortunate to live with a family on the outskirts of Paris, and I ate dinner with them twice weekly. These dinners were certainly my first real introduction to *la cuisine bourgeoise*, which Child had made so famous, and they were also my first real introduction to the kind of deliberate attentiveness to eating that Fisher and Waters advocate. Never will I forget the rules that govern French table culture; for example, the plate of cheese only comes around once, so you had better take what you want the first time. And never will I forget the luncheon they served when, one weekend in November, they took me with them to their weekend house in Angers. For me, that meal was a watershed moment, much like the *sole meunière* Child ate upon arrival in France, and later described as the important meal of her life. We began with some kind of country pâté and a sweet, syrupy wine called Montbazillac. The main course was roast beef of some sort, served with a red wine from my host mother's father's cellar. That wine was so old--or rather, it had so *aged*--that it had turned brown. It was, of course, delicious. We ate a spicy watercress salad afterward, and passed a plate of local cheeses with the last of the wine. Although most of the details were lost on me then (and remain lost to me now), I knew it was a pivotal moment in my gastronomical life...though for my host parents and the other guests at the table, it was a nice but fairly ordinary Sunday lunch.

I had been interested in French cooking before, but after that weekend I approached it with redoubled enthusiasm. The boulangeries, patisseries, and boucheries became my museums, and the kitchen at the Grummers' house, where I lived, became my

laboratory. I enrolled in some evening cooking classes, and spent more time trying to decipher French cookbooks (besides the language barrier, there's the Metric system to contend with!) than I did studying irregular verb conjugations. Too soon, however, my time to study abroad came to an end. I said goodbye to my host family and to the baker whose bread I was sent to buy, daily. I sold off my French textbooks to make more room for cookbooks in my backpack, and I frantically scribbled down approximated recipes for treats like my host father's *rouille*, the garlicky paste served with Provençal fish soup. I stuffed my suitcase with as many French goodies as I could reasonably expect to sneak through customs, including some cheese called *Pont L'Evêque*, the smell of which nearly knocked over my brother when he picked up my suitcase at the airport. Despite wishing I could finish the academic year in Paris, I told myself I was ready to go home, and that I wouldn't miss French food *that* much.

I was wrong. While I did not miss specific dishes terribly, I did miss French food culture terribly. My father loves to tell people that I went to France a “granola-and-yogurt eating hippie” and came back “a lot more fun.” In fact, he repeated the story when he gave a toast at my wedding, so everyone got a laugh out of the fact that, before the fall of 1999, I was no more likely to eat raw-milk cheese than I was to become a professional ballerina. Red wine tasted like paint thinner to me, and certain staples of French food (cheese, bread, butter) had been off-limits on the strict diet I tended to follow. Today, all of these items make regular appearances in our kitchen and on our table. My family and I look forward to the end of the sweltering North Carolina summers so we can make *coq au vin*, *cassoulet*, and other hearty French dishes. When my in-laws brought my husband and me a chunk of real Gruyère cheese from Switzerland, we wasted no time in grating it

over tureens of homemade French onion soup. Years ago, I taught myself to make baguettes that are certainly not as good as real French ones, but they pass muster in our house. So like many of my case studies, I continue to try to recreate the flavors I first encountered in France, with varying degrees of success.

But the most enduring lesson from my time in France is not a particular recipe or a taste for raw-milk cheese. Instead, it's the simple idea that mealtimes are an important part of the day, and the decisions we make about what we eat should be undertaken seriously. However, the general trend in the United States is to choose food that is cheap and requires little to no preparation. Our food culture and the food industry support this approach. Food in the United States remains relatively inexpensive (compared to other developed countries), and the cheapest food is often the least healthy, so there is little economic incentive to buy healthier foods. Furthermore, we're surrounded by food, in ever-larger portions, and exhortations to eat and drink (think of advertisements ordering us to "obey our thirst"). And our bodies allow for almost unlimited omnivorousness, which, as Michael Pollan demonstrates in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, means that many of us are confronted daily with dozens if not hundreds of possible food choices. My dad worked in the auto industry for a long time, and he loves to joke that you can put almost any "fuel" in the human engine, and it will run, more or less. However, if you put just half a cup of orange juice or even water in a car engine, you would do serious damage. The human body can metabolize almost any kind of food, no matter how unhealthy, and so there is no obvious physical reason, for most of us, to spend a long time thinking about what to put in our bodies. This attitude toward food--one that encourages consuming (usually) as many calories as possible as quickly as possible--is a uniquely American one,

although to some degree we are exporting it along with our fast food restaurants.

Strangely, food is everywhere in America, and yet we spend a smaller percentage of our income and certainly a smaller percentage of our time and attention on it than nearly any other population in the developed world.

Yet: in the years before I began this project in earnest, I was often struck by the increasing number of books about food that I found in bookstores, whether the second-hand bookshop in town or the big chain bookstores at the mall. The cookbook section used to be a small, poorly organized shelf in the back of the store near the do-it-yourself books about auto repair and home remodeling, but in recent years it has moved (at least in my town) to a prominent spot in the front of the store. The smattering of classics (*The Joy of Cooking*, *Betty Crocker*) and appliance cookbooks now share shelf space with a huge range of cookbooks, many affiliated with famous restaurants beyond the reach of most people's weekly food budgets (*The French Laundry Cookbook*, for example) or authored by various television personalities (Emeril Lagasse, Rachael Ray, Nigella Lawson, just to name a few). Cookbooks detailing the cuisines of far-flung places like Malaysia nestle in with books celebrating (again, in my town) Southern fare like grits and pulled pork, and there is a cookbook for every diet imaginable. And they aren't all cookbooks. There are whole shelves now devoted to food stories, food memoirs, food journalism, and histories of particular ingredients, such as Mark Kurlansky's *Salt*.

These sorts of books have long been my "fun reading." When I needed a break from exam studying, or just a book to read on the bus, I usually pulled out a book like Amanda Hesser's *Cooking for Mr. Latte* or one of Ruth Reichl's memoirs, such as *Comfort Me With Apples*. And one day, in the midst of the anxious handwringing that

accompanied my search for a dissertation topic, I thought: why not food writing? Why not explore how this strange blend of genres (cookbooks, memoirs, travel writing) has become so popular--popular enough, in fact, to prompt Christine Muhlke to coin the term “foodoir” (food writing + memoir) in a *New York Times* review of such books? Why are we (apparently) buying so many more cookbooks, even though so few of us actually cook our meals from scratch, at home, most days of the week? Why are we suddenly interested in personal narratives about food? Or in the cultural history of something as ordinary as salt? Where did this interest come from? Or, in the rhetorical terms I used to define my project: what cultural exigency is this genre responding to, and what are its rhetorical features? What are its generic antecedents? How did these authors address an audience when, until recently, there didn’t seem to be an audience to speak to?

These questions led me to my topic. I began with the assumption that there is a loosely organized set of cultural currents and trends going on right now that I gathered under the big umbrella of “food movements.” Under that big umbrella, of course, are a number of smaller camps that promote certain food behaviors and practices, such as buying all organic food, buying all locally sourced food, or making everything from scratch. These movements have several features in common, including their resistance to dominant food discourses which, in this country, tend to value low prices and high volume, and which insist that the less time we spend thinking about and preparing our food, the better. I trace these attitudes back to a constellation of discursive forces that emerged and gained prominence in the early 20th century: the rhetoric of home economics and nutrition science, as well as the advent and spectacular rise of processed and

convenience foods.¹ These discourses produced a number of positive outcomes, such as the rejection of the idea that women are responsible for *all* domestic labor; as Barbara Kingsolver writes in *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, her memoir of her family's year of local eating, "we've earned the right to forget about stupefying household busywork" (128). But these discourses also contributed to the loss, or at least de-legitimization, of culinary knowledge and encouraged people to spend less time and energy thinking about, preparing, and even eating their meals. This, Kingsolver argues, was going too far, since "kitchens where food is cooked and eaten [...] were really a good idea" (Ibid).

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 examine the alternative food rhetorics that helped to produce an audience for Kingsolver's book and the countless others lining bookstores shelves in the new but increasingly common "Food Studies" section. The three women who form my case studies certainly do not tell the whole story of today's various food movements. But if one can generalize, and say that a central objective of *all* the food movements is to get people to pay more attention to what they eat, then Fisher, Child, and Waters embody three components of paying more attention. Fisher enacts a purposeful relationship to food, where personal preferences dictate food choices. Child convinces American home cooks everywhere that they, too, can prepare delicious and complex meals in their own kitchens with ordinary ingredients. Waters exhorts us to investigate the origins of our food to ensure that it was produced in conditions that are environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable. Doing any one of these things, let alone all three, would surely

¹ There are other forces at work, of course, such as the so-called advances in agricultural technology that have led to overproduction of commodity crops and the subsequent to invent new foods to absorb the excess corn and soybeans, but a detailed examination of those forces is beyond the scope of this project.

constitute paying more attention to our food choices--something which dominant discourses of food and cooking almost unilaterally discourage.

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Chapter 1

Counting Calories (and Everything Else): Quantitative Discourses of Food

When it comes to food, numbers matter. We count calories, we count fat grams, and we count servings of the various food groups. Many popular diet programs, such as Weight Watchers, rely on counting operations. Indeed, numbers and statistics permeate much of our food discourse. Perhaps the most visible manifestation of our culture's reliance on a rhetoric of numbers when it comes to food choices is the ubiquitous Nutrition Facts label, found on virtually every packaged food item (including bottled water) sold in America. When the Nutrition Labeling Act was implemented in 1994, it was widely heralded as a victory in terms of educating consumers about the nutritional content (or lack thereof) in packaged foods. Proponents hoped the new labels would usher in massive changes in American eating habits, since now consumers would see, in incontrovertible numbers, just how much saturated fat was in those potato chips. Studies of the labels' efficacy have given researchers some encouraging news, such as a 2006 study published by the National Bureau for Economic Research. This report showed that, among white, non-Hispanic women who claim to read nutrition labels regularly, body weight declined slightly since 1994 (Variyam and Cawley). However, the study revealed no significant changes in body weight or Body Mass Index among any other

demographic.² Considering that the percentage of American adults (of all ages, races, and genders) who are overweight or obese climbed steadily from 1980-2004,³ not to mention the ongoing worry about an epidemic of childhood obesity, it would be difficult to argue that a discourse of quantification alone has successfully persuaded Americans to eat healthier diets or be more conscious of their nutritional choices.

One reason that this overload of nutritional data has not successfully influenced public behavior is that the dominant mode of food rhetoric is predicated on a “rational choice” model that assumes consumers will make better purchasing decisions (i.e., buy healthier foods) if they have better information. To some extent, this is true: fewer people, for instance, use lard for cooking, now that olive oil and other healthier options are widely available. Yet by and large, Americans still tend to consume a diet over-rich in calories, refined sugars, and saturated fats. Clearly, the numbers themselves have not brought about widespread dietary reform, yet numbers continue to dominate public discussion of food and nutrition. This introduction will show how the discourses of quantification operated in and influenced public discussions of food, particularly through the channels of nutrition science and home economics.

² More importantly, the study only tracked weight changes among those who claimed to use labels. Obviously, there was no way to account for those who did not use labels, or for other factors that might have influenced weight gain or loss, such as the pressure on food companies to provide healthy alternatives, given the nutrition label mandate.

³ Researchers at the Johns Hopkins School for Public Health reported an increase in adult obesity, from 13% to 32% of the population, between the 1960s and 2004. In the 2007 article analyzing this data, the authors predicted that, by 2015, 75% of American adults will be overweight; 41% will be obese (Wang and Beydoun). Encouragingly, however, a 2007 report from the Center for Disease Control indicates that the percentage of obese and overweight people has held steady since 2004--the first time since the 1976-1980 period that these numbers had *not* increased (Ogden et al).

Rhetoric scholar Jessica Muddy writes convincingly that an ideology of “nutritionism” has prevented many of us from making food choices that might, in the long run, be better for us. She describes this ideology as the set of “common sense assumptions [...] that the hidden chemical elements, and the quantities of those elements, of a food are its most important features and that understanding these hidden chemical constituents will inevitably improve our health” (16-17). That is, the omnipresence of numeric nutritional data in public discourse about food has persuaded us that the way to be “healthy” is to eat the right nutrients in the right quantities, and subsequently burn off the appropriate number of calories, to maintain a healthy weight (yet another number). Health, as far as nutrition goes, is simply a question of quantities.

Clearly, available numeric data about nutrition has not led to desired changes in public behavior, a state of affairs perhaps due to confusion about what the numbers actually mean. Nutritionist Marion Nestle observes that nutrition advice has historically been viewed as “confusing” and “controversial,” perhaps in part because the scientific data is not always presented in unambiguous terms (30). She notes, too, that “research studies [...] are subject to interpretation,” and often by stakeholders with very different objectives (30). Despite confusion and controversy, though, an emphasis on numbers and quantities still characterizes much of food discourse in this country. Scholars like Mudry and Rima Apple have examined how scientific and “objective” rhetorics of quantification have come to dominate popular food, cooking, and eating discourse in particular, almost to the exclusion of all other possible food discourses. For example, Apple points to the persuasive power that the very idea of science has, even in the absence of agreement on a

particular nutritional question.⁴ She writes in *Vitamania* that even “[w]hen scientists disagree [on appropriate levels of vitamin consumption], Americans do not stop believing in science,” and they continue to buy millions of bottles of vitamin and mineral supplements each year (Apple 12.) The very *rhetoric* of science itself gives an argument persuasive power, even if the information presented is disputed, and consumers continue to trust that scientific data offer the best prescriptions for health. However, Mudry and others have pointed out some of the serious limitations of a discourse that understands food and nutrition in purely numeric and quantitative terms. Mudry goes so far as to argue that such a discourse is a failure and is “impoverished because it feeds certain human sensibilities only: rationality, reduction, and objectivity” (3). As a remedy to this “impoverished” discourse, Mudry concludes her study with a call for the development of a discourse of taste.

I argue, however, that such a discourse already exists in the work of writers including the memoirist M.F.K. Fisher, famed cookbook author Julia Child, and restaurateur Alice Waters. This project examines these rhetorical alternatives, long overshadowed by food discourses dominated by science and quantification, and traces a genealogy of non-scientific, non-quantified food rhetorics back to the 1930s.⁵ In some sense, the dominance of scientific rhetoric in “official” and male-dominated channels,

⁴ See also Leah Ceccarelli’s article “Manufactured Scientific Controversy: Science, Rhetoric, and Public Debates” (2011).

⁵ I use this term, “genealogy,” in the Foucauldian sense, which is to say that I do not argue that there is a single point of origin for today’s food discourse. Rather, I seek to offer a more comprehensive account of something we tend to think of as lacking history; i.e., our attitudes about cooking. I want to show that contemporary attitudes were (and continue to be) shaped by a variety of discourses, each of which were more and less persuasive at particular historical moments.

like government pamphlets and university-backed research, allowed counter discourses to flourish in “unofficial” channels, such as popular media and genres typically associated with domestic, personal spaces. Such channels and genres also encouraged more women to produce different forms of knowledge about food, cooking, and eating, and even provided a kind of feminine space in which women could exercise their authority as home cooks and create a counter discourse to the prevailing masculine, scientific discourses. In fact, genres that are typically gendered “female,” such as cookbooks and personal writing, may have provided the only viable rhetorical space in which women could claim expertise based on personal experience and articulate alternative theories of food and cooking.

These counter discourses, I will argue, sought to reclaim cooking and eating as both intensely *personal* and intensely *political* activities, and *not* simply a thrice-daily necessity. As an alternative to the dominant food discourse produced by anonymous experts and institutions, writers and cooks like Fisher, Child, Waters, and others have long recommended something like Mudry’s discourse of taste which, as Mudry argues, must be one that “attends to human experience, makes the eater the sensory authority, and provides her with a space to articulate her experience and share it with others” (140-1). This project analyzes how the texts of women whose writing about food, cooking, and eating offer a rhetorical vocabulary and style for writing and talking about food—one that exists in an alternative register to the one dominated by science, quantities, and objectivity. These rhetorics privilege experiential knowledge and sensory perceptions over science-based experiments, and the social, communal, and emotional components of eating are taken seriously.

As such, they exemplify what Karlyn Kohrs Campbell identified as a “feminine style” in her 1989 landmark study *Man Cannot Speak for Her* (12). She compares the development of a feminine style of rhetoric to domestic “craft-learning,” historically the province of women, and writes that a discourse produced in such circumstances “will be personal in tone,” since “crafts are learned face-to-face from a mentor” (13). Further, such discourse “rel[ies] heavily on personal experience, anecdotes, and other examples. It will tend to be structured inductively.” Fisher, Child, and Waters, as well as contemporary counterparts like Molly Wizenberg and Amanda Hesser, usually address their readers as “peers, with recognition of authority based on experience,” and they seek to identify with their readers. Such rhetoric serves to “empower” readers by “persuading [them] that they can act effectively in the world” (Ibid). As my analyses will demonstrate, the women whose writing I study not only sought to resist the automation and depersonalization of cooking and eating practices brought about the scientific cooking movement, but they also sought to reclaim at least part of a discourse that had been largely co-opted by women who tended, often for practical reasons, to adopt rhetorical strategies usually associated with a masculine rhetoric that is “abstract, hierarchical, dominating, and oriented toward problem-solving” (Dow & Tonn 288).

Thus, I contribute to ongoing efforts in feminist rhetorical historiography to redraw the map of women’s rhetorics, particularly women’s personal writing and writing connected to domesticity. By claiming that such writing functions as a counter-discourse to scientific food discourses, I suggest that personal and domestic writing is not necessarily antithetical to scientific discourse, but rather provides a resource for alternative food rhetorics and discursive space for other voices to emerge. Finally, my

project adds a rhetorical perspective to the emerging field of food studies, which has until recently been dominated by cultural historians and anthropologists.

The writers profiled in the following chapters all adopt the conventions of various forms of personal writing (such as the memoir, personal essay, and travel writing) and food writing (such as recipes, cookbook, and domestic advice manuals) in order to advance new claims about food and cooking in relation to pleasure, culinary education, and social responsibility. These genres provide Fisher, Child, and Waters with a “safe” rhetorical space in which to elaborate their rhetorical alternatives to dominant discourses of quantification and health. This project analyzes the rhetorical practices of these writers and argues that these women became vocal, public authorities on food and cooking through appeals to the value of personal taste, everyday practice, and experiential knowledge, rather than that of science, objectivity, or expertise.

Of course, women have a long history of intervening in public discourse about food and nutrition through scientific and official channels as well. In the late nineteenth century, women made significant inroads into professional discourse about food through various reform projects and social uplift initiatives. In order to have more widespread effects, would-be reformers found that the best way to influence American food habits was to transform domestic practices into scientific methods. By the early twentieth century, women had established themselves as credible rhetors on food and cooking-related matters, and they did so primarily by adapting scientific rhetoric to what had

historically been considered “women’s” concerns, like cooking, childrearing, and housework.⁶

Despite the hyper-precision and the scientific, technical language which often characterizes official dietary recommendations, quantified dietary recommendations have become commonplace to most American eaters. As Mudry points out in the introduction to *Measured Meals*, her study of the history of nutrition communication in the United States, even the USDA’s customizable “My Pyramid,” which ostensibly allows users to develop a personalized eating plan, “does not stray from the discursive course” (2). The pyramid still offers users a set of numbers to attach to their eating habits. This almost exclusive reliance on numbers as the sole arbiters of food values is nothing new; in fact, the USDA has issued food and nutrition recommendations “in and through statistics and quantities” since its inception in 1906, and continues to do so today. In 2005, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services and the Department of Agriculture published the fifth version of *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.⁷ The executive summary of this document concludes with a bar graph indicating recommended increases and decreases in the consumption of various food groups (e.g., vegetables, fruits) and subgroups (leafy green vegetables vs. starchy vegetables), along with a separate category for “discretionary calories (solid fats and added sugars.) Not surprisingly, the chart indicates

⁶ A number of rhetorical scholars have studied the gendered dimensions of scientific rhetoric. In particular, see Evelyn Fox Keller’s *Reflections on Gender and Science* (1985) and *Secrets of Life, Secrets of Death: Essays on Language, Gender, and Science* (1992); Margaret Rossiter, *Woman Scientists in America: Before Affirmative Action, 1940-1972* (1995); Jordynn Jack, *Science on the Home Front: American Women Scientists in World War II* (2009).

⁷ The Department of Health & Human Services and the Department of Agriculture have published this document jointly every five years since 1980; the most recent iteration was published in January of 2011.

that men and women ages 31-50 should increase their consumption of whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and low-fat dairy products, and the same group should decrease, by a considerable margin, their consumption of fats and sugars.

These charts are rendered with precision; each measurement is measured as a quantity (in cups or grams) and as a percentage change from current average consumption. For example, a woman between the ages of 31 and 50 should increase her consumption of vegetables by nine-tenths of a cup per day, or about 52 per cent, but decrease her consumption of solid fats by 18 grams, or about 65 per cent. All of these numbers are based on a recommended daily intake of 1,800 calories for women.⁸

This document's intended audience consists of policymakers and other experts, and as such is fairly technical. But even the consumer-targeted "Finding Your Way to a Healthier You," the companion brochure to the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines*, offers a similarly numbers-centric approach based on the same daily caloric totals. The pamphlet instructs consumers to read labels and become educated about their own daily calorie and nutrient needs. Many sections of the pamphlet end with a warning whose power derives from yet another statistic; for instance, a daily surplus of 100 calories can eventually lead to a weight gain of 10 pounds per year, and reducing sodium consumption to less than 2,300 milligrams per day can reduce the risk of hypertension. These pieces of advice tacitly insist that, to reap health benefits from food, eaters must perform daily accounting of all this nutritional minutiae. It is little wonder that so many Americans find, as Nestle

⁸ The most recent iteration of the USDA's dietary guidelines, My Plate, takes a much looser approach to choosing foods. Instead of recommending specific quantities, the agency offers alliterative generalizations such as "Vary your veggies" and "focus on fruits." See <http://www.choosemyplate.gov>.

argued, that nutritional information is far too dense and detailed (not to mention, at times contradictory) to be practically useful.

One could find countless other pieces of dietary advice in mainstream and popular media, almost all of which will offer their wisdom in the form of some number that should be increased (one's consumption of antioxidant-rich foods, for instance) or decreased (one's intake of saturated fats). Fitness and health magazines extol the vitamin and mineral contents of the latest miracle foods (think of recent crazes over pomegranates, avocados, blueberries, or green tea), and food labels and advertisements shout out quantities like "8 grams of whole grains!" or "zero carbs!" to the consumer as she shops. In general, whether it comes from popular media or from advertising and marketing or from public health institutions like the USDA, food discourse in this country relies on numbers, quantities, and percentages. We often determine the relative health value of a food, meal, or even a whole diet by engaging in a series of counting operations and, interestingly, tend to view such operations as the *only* valid measure of a food's nutritional worth.

Yet a discourse of food that concerns itself only with that which can be quantified is limited indeed, in part because such a discourse contributes to the marginalization of ordinary cooks and their experiences by "preventing everyday citizens from contributing" to public discussions of food and nutrition (Jack 100). After all, if only experts can be trusted to make pronouncements about the health values of particular foods, and if they do so in field-specific language, then average home cooks are certainly not qualified to participate in the construction of knowledge about food or cooking.

More particularly, this virtually wholesale adoption of scientific, objective, expert rhetoric as the effective mode through which to achieve public recognition and validation of homemaking skills had the predictable consequence of marginalizing everyday women's forms of knowledge and expertise. As Jordynn Jack argues in *Science on the Home Front*, discourses of scientism, objectivity, and expertise, codified in the genres of scientific study (most notably the research article), were inherently unfriendly to the experience and knowledge of women (Jack 2-5, 9). Unless they adopted a masculine scientific rhetoric, women's contributions were effectively sidelined in public (or at least scientific) discourse about food and nutrition. Thus ordinary women's knowledge and expertise about domestic tasks like cooking was largely trivialized and treated as irrelevant to participation in civic and artistic forums.

Those on the "quantification" side (home economists, nutrition experts, and professionals in other related fields) relied on the rhetoric and tropes of scientific and expert discourse to promote a standardized rhetoric, one that advocated a "one size fits all" approach to cooking and eating. Such a view denies the connections between food and place, food and community, and food and cultural heritage, and refuses to allow for different food habits among different populations or social groups.

With all the problems enumerated above, it may seem surprising that quantitative and scientific discourses have reached such wide audiences and seem to have been so persuasive. In the next section, I will trace the emergence and rise to prominence of these scientific and quantitative discourses and suggest some reasons for the rhetorical successes. In the process, I will also be describing the discursive context within which proponents of alternative rhetorics of food and eating also positioned themselves. The

argument certainly centered on how one should cook and eat, but at stake were larger questions about what kinds of evidence “counted,” who could claim expertise in domestic affairs, and how.

Origins of the Discourse of Quantification: The Emergence of Home Economics

The discourse of quantification as it relates to food grew out of sustained efforts in the late 19th century to reform American society generally, but some of the most far-reaching and lasting reforms concentrated on domestic affairs like nutrition and household sanitation. Much of the impetus behind the home economics movement itself was rooted in Progressive Era projects aimed at improving conditions for workers in (mostly) poor, urban areas. Skeptical of the health value “Old World” culinary habits and food choices, reformers initially targeted immigrant and working-class neighborhoods. Reform efforts quickly spread to include middle-class neighborhoods, especially once reformers and activists had begun to consolidate their influence in institutions like universities and government agencies. The activists behind these reforms, says food historian Harvey Levenstein, “had more long-term impact on the daily lives of most Americans than any of their progressive colleagues” (1980, 370). Would-be reformers sought to systematize and even professionalize homemaking by turning household work (including cooking) into scientific processes, and the application of scientific principles to the study of food led quickly to “scientific” cooking and eating, and to what we now call nutrition science. As generalized social uplift programs relied increasingly on scientific research as justification for their activities, the discourse of quantification became both increasingly rigid and increasingly persuasive.

Food reformers based many of their reform ideas on chemical research primarily being conducted in Germany, where chemists were recommending that food “be selected on the basis of its components” (371). If reformers ever had trouble convincing audiences that standardized practices were better than family- or community-specific ones, it was usually owing to a lack of shared vocabulary or shared body of accepted evidence. Rapidly advancing discourses of science and quantification provided this vocabulary: one that described food in “components” allowed reformers to tell consumers what was good for them in fairly unambiguous terms.

So persuasive were these discourses that by the middle of the twentieth century, home economists and nutrition experts had successfully used quantified discourse to claim expertise over decision-making about food, and they had begun to bolster their credibility by linking themselves to institutional authority in the form of home economics departments and government agencies. In the process, everyday discourses and practices shared among family members (such as traditional holiday dishes or family recipes) were devalued in favor of scientific discourses and techniques that had been developed in laboratories and university extension programs. The shared languages, genres, and ways of thinking and talking about food within families or communities were overshadowed by the rhetoric of a standardized American diet. The charts, graphs, and instructions produced by professional home economists encouraged American homemakers to produce meals according to so-called “expert” methods, rather than according to the methods shared within their families and communities, or even according to the ingredients that were locally available. While the overt aims of these projects may simply have been to promote healthier eating habits in underserved populations or just to

advocate a healthier lifestyle, published documents reveal that there was also a concerted effort, on the part of home economists, to actively discourage women and their families from indulging in personal tastes. In this discouragement I locate the origins of the most troubling consequences of the discourse of quantification: the depersonalization of cooking and eating and the marginalization of decentralized forms of knowledge and everyday practices.

Ellen Swallow Richards, widely regarded as the founder of home economics, succinctly summarized the attitude of professional home economists toward personal desires in an article published in 1900. She wrote that a family's food preferences boiled down to a "weakness for the flavor produced by [one's] own kitchen bacteria" (Richards 206). Richards thus characterized having personal preferences as some sort of inadequacy or failure,⁹ and linked them with a lack of kitchen sanitation, which was a key rhetorical tool in the home economists' agenda for domestic reform. Individual food preferences, then, were both immoral and unclean. And the focus was not simply on reforming individual kitchen practices, but potentially reinventing the entire culture of home cooking and in a sense rendering it obsolete. Some other reformers "advocated for homes in which there were no kitchens," and the writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman dreamed of a future society wherein cooking would be fully centralized, with a single kitchen (and

⁹ The link between food and morality (or the lack of it) is nothing new in American culture. As Jordynn Jack writes, "[i]n the United States, [Margaret] Mead suggested, children are taught to associate food with morality: they are rewarded with the 'wrong' foods (sweets or treats) for eating the 'right' foods; if they do not eat the 'right' foods, children are threatened with missing dessert" (Jack 117-18). Further, Laura Shapiro writes "[t]he recuperative powers of a scientific diet were often imagined to be moral as well as physical" (153). Historian Glenna Matthews claims that "[i]n effect, [domestic feminism] empowered women by enabling them to claim moral superiority" (Matthews 90).

presumably a single scientifically trained cook) for an entire housing complex or apartment building (Elias 35).¹⁰ Above all, scientific methods for food preparation, whether for average home kitchens or the extreme versions envisioned by people like Gilman, de-emphasized personal preferences and even agency in favor of uniform standards of food preparation and consumption.

These methods and views became ever more widespread as home economics grew in influence and prestige. University departments of home economics began attracting more and more majors each year, and the field eventually became one of the first university disciplines in which women could hold the position of professor.¹¹ Having once achieved this “expert” status, women home economists could position themselves as uniquely qualified to spearhead public efforts to reform the home and cooking through classroom teaching, laboratory experiments, community outreach programs, and extension projects. In the next section, I treat more specifically the rhetoric that emerged from these fields once they had established themselves in institutional and authoritative contexts.

¹⁰ Most widely recognized as the author of “The Yellow Wallpaper” and other stories, Gilman was also an accomplished sociologist whose views were fairly radical for her time. In her 1898 study *Women and Economics*, she argued cogently that all domestic tasks (cooking, cleaning, child-rearing) should be turned over to professionals in those so that women who wanted to could work outside the home.

¹¹ It is worth noting, however, that many women home economists, including Caroline Hunt, Isabel Bevier, and Ellen Swallow Richards encountered serious obstacles in their academic careers. Despite completing the required work, some were not awarded the PhD. Or despite having a PhD, others were never granted official titles or tenure.

Home Economics: Discourses of Science and Standards

Home economics pioneer Ellen Swallow Richards claimed in 1872 to consider housework a “privilege,” and these sorts of claims were a preliminary step in encouraging women to see their domestic work as essential to the physical and moral health of their families and to that of the nation as a whole. As historian Glenna Matthews points out, however, Richards and her fellow domestic reformers nonetheless believed firmly that in order to establish the new field as a legitimate mode of scientific inquiry and themselves as trustworthy authorities, “the most important step was to distance themselves from that lowly amateur, the housewife” (150). Drawing on workplace binaries like “professional” and “amateur” helped home economists to establish categories and ranks that authorized them (trained experts) to make certain pronouncements,¹² such as Isabel Bevier’s (1860-1942) assertion that young women could not rely on familial or community-based knowledge. She claimed instead that such women needed to be “trained” in “all those rules of thrift and economy that will make any domestic task easy and pleasant” (17). Such training, most home economists felt, would eliminate the dangerous tendency to rely on untested theories of household management or those associated with family or tradition. Christine Frederick (1883-1970), a consulting editor for various women’s magazines from 1912-1948 and author of *Selling Mrs. Consumer* (1929), accused female consumers of being too susceptible to appeals to their emotions when it came to making purchasing decisions (57-9).¹³ In order to position themselves as experts, identify a

¹² As Dow & Tonn and others have noted, “hierarchical” logic is one feature of the male-dominated scientific rhetoric that home economists adopted.

¹³ See also Janice Williams Rutherford’s comprehensive study of Frederick’s influence: *Selling Mrs. Consumer: Christine Frederick and the Rise of Household Efficiency* (2003).

social ill that their expertise could correct, and make their research findings appeal to scientists and policy makers, women home economists had to imply that the average homemaker had nothing to add. They implied, too, that ordinary homemakers were too easily misled by feelings and opinions without basis (so they claimed) in fact. Such a homemaker had rather to be educated by professionals who had, presumably, overcome such weaknesses.

By championing professional, scientific, laboratory-centered training as the only viable means of learning domestic skills, home economists succeeded in elevating their field to the status of an academic discipline. In the process, they dismissed other modes of learning, such as traditional (face-to-face, mother-to-daughter) and experiential modes. But by relegating non-expert homemakers to the unenlightened margins, they not only secured their own credibility but they also created for themselves a ready audience, theoretically in need of education. Since knowledge shared among women in families was no longer considered sufficient for modern, efficient homemaking, women were encouraged to take courses in cooking and home sanitation, and to read periodicals and listen to radio shows that offered similarly edifying tips and training. As historian Megan J. Elias points out in *Stir It Up*, university departments of home economics offered courses that taught students, essentially, marketing strategies: students learned to produce articles and radio spots that would disseminate professional advice on household management (73). The focus on widespread communication suggests that reaching and persuading a public audience has always been a key part of the home economics mission. Indeed, by transforming everyday practices into scientific practices, elevating certain trained experts to positions of social and educational prestige, and by purposefully

promulgating their ideas, home economists created both exigency (a dearth of professional, scientific information) and audience (average homemakers who needed professional training.) Yet despite its avowed aims to (ultimately) *raise* the social status of the female homemaker, the push to professionalization had some decidedly unfeminist consequences.

Quantitative Rhetorics Prevail: Some Consequences for Women

Since home economics came of age alongside movements for woman suffrage, a tension always existed between the latter movement, which seemed to be pushing women *out* of the house and into positions of greater civic responsibility and social visibility, and the former, which seemed not only to encourage them to stay home, but also denigrated most of what women already knew about homemaking. In such a cultural context, the claim that homemaking (even according to modern methods) was somehow liberating must have seemed tenuous at best. Home economists resolved this tension by claiming that training in home economics would prepare women *both* for future careers as homemakers and in fields they might be expected to enter, such as hospitality work or education or nursing. They adapted a version of the nineteenth century “angel in the house” for a modern, industrial economy. Now, women homemakers were cast as the chief executives in the business of the home, and endowed with certain kinds of knowledge and expertise—provided, of course, that they followed scientific methodologies.¹⁴

¹⁴ See also Gail Lippincott’s “Experimenting at Home: Writing for the Nineteenth Century Domestic Workplace, published in *Technical Communication Quarterly* 6.4

In addition to the language of science and expertise, then, home economists added the language of industry by writing recipes and providing cooking instruction that was “businesslike and to the point” (Shapiro 107). Examples of such language abound in early 20th century cookbooks; ironically, the hyper-precision and concision of such recipes may have made them difficult for inexperienced cooks to follow. For example, here is a recipe from the *Twentieth Century Home Cookbook* (1905) titled simply “To Prepare Slaw”:

One-half head of good cabbage, chopped finely, the yolks of two eggs, beat and put in a little vinegar, salt and pepper to taste; boil thick and pour over the slaw.

(177)

Inexperienced cooks might have difficulty determining whether the yolks should be added to the cabbage before or after adding the seasonings, and they would certainly have to fill in gaps to understand directions like “boil thick.” So despite their intention to render cooking a straightforward, scientific process whose results were as reliable as laboratory experiments, the actual language of the recipes may have merely further convinced home cooks that they were ill-equipped to feed their families.

Furthermore, the values of industry—speed, efficiency, and uniformity of product—were adopted as values for the home (180). Home economists’ vision, in fact, sounds more like a business plan: they sought to produce “perfectly efficient households run by women trained to the task and completely fulfilled in their work” (Elias 9).¹⁵

(1997): 365-381, and her “Rhetorical Chemistry,” published in *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 17.1 (January 2003): 10-50.

¹⁵ There is an interesting insistence, throughout much home economics literature on “fulfillment.” Home economists seemed determined to persuade women that their methods would provide emotional satisfaction when in fact the opposite seems to have been true. The de-personalization of domestic practices seems instead to have alienated women from domestic work.

Doing so required meticulous attention to details as small as the number of steps between, for instance, a stove and a pantry. Christine Frederick, in her book *The New Housekeeping* (1918), lamented the steps wasted in “roomy kitchens”: she wonders “how many women are making a grand total of thirty-six steps every time they hang up an egg beater?” (47). She organized all kitchen tasks into two groups: the *preparation* and the *clearing away* of a meal, and recommends that women store all the equipment for each group of tasks together, so as to increase kitchen efficiency. Like-minded home economists drew up elaborate charts for the organization of furniture and appliances in kitchens so as to minimize wasted movement.

Conveniently enough, American businesses were eager to support the efficiency goals of home economics, especially the industries most connected to the home, such as those that sold cleaning supplies, small appliances, or packaged foods. Hand-held mixers and irons, for instance, and foods like Jell-O, packaged bread, and canned soup enjoyed enormous sales. For some home economists, the focus began to shift from altering women’s production habits to altering their consumptions. For instance, in *Selling Mrs. Consumer*, Christine Frederick argues that the real power in terms of changing American eating and cooking habits will derive from American women’s *buying* patterns.¹⁶ She suggests if reformers really wanted to change domestic practices, they needed to influence household purchasing decisions. Her argument implies that the American homemaker had, by the book’s publication in 1929, been re-imagined: no longer described as an active *producer* of a clean home, healthy meals, and a happy family, the

¹⁶ This text is something of a sociological study. Frederick calls for more research into women’s purchasing habits and also offers a portrait of the typical American housewife-as-consumer.

American homemaker was described as a comparatively passive *consumer*.¹⁷ Instead of shaping her family's daily life through her active homemaking, she was believed to shape her family's and even her nation's character and health through her shopping. Although her choices were still (supposedly) informed by scientific knowledge, home economics and industry together re-described homemaking as a series of judicious purchases, rather than a set of skilled practices.¹⁸

Even the skilled practices that were taught tended to be abstracted from the actual materiality of food preparation. Home economists had always worked closely with and sometimes even managed various cooking schools designed to educate home cooks, such as the Boston Cooking School, and extension services like Richards' ill-fated project, the New England Kitchen.¹⁹ At such institutions, students ostensibly learned the latest and

¹⁷ Ruth Schwartz Cowan provides a fascinating alternative view on this topic in her book *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (1983). Cowan argues that in reality households are still units of production, only now they produce intangibles like transportation to grocery stores and workplaces, and that tools that improve efficiency (like vacuum cleaners) have led to a rise in household standards of cleanliness. We spend *more* time cleaning the carpets than we would if we had to haul them out to a clothesline to be beaten with a broom. The net result is more time spent on tasks that, individually, are easier and quicker, but in the aggregate, take more time.

¹⁸ The success of this shift, perhaps, is lamented in contemporary calls for a re-invigoration of homemaking, such as Shannon Hayes's *Radical Homemakers*, which I discuss elsewhere in this chapter and in the Conclusion. Such calls decry the "extractive" economy that promises happiness and fulfillment according to what one *buys*, rather than what one *makes*.

¹⁹ The New England Kitchen was the brainchild of Ellen Swallow Richards. First opened in 1890, the NEK offered a Progressive Era version of takeout meals, wherein families (particularly immigrant or working class families) could purchase scientifically prepared, nutritious, and (supposedly) low-cost meals. Richards also intended for the Kitchens (a branch was in operation briefly in New York City, funded by Andrew Carnegie) to offer nutrition instruction for these same families. A combination of funding problems and waning public interest led to the closure of all the Kitchens before the end of the century.

most scientific modes of food production, but “the messy and pedestrian task of handling food was relegated to a remote corner of the school’s curriculum” (Shapiro 44). Instead, students learned the scientific principles behind cooking phenomena such as, for instance, why flour will thicken a sauce when heated. The chemistry and physics of cooking were emphasized over practical skills and techniques, further persuading students of home economics that knowledge of the scientific theory behind cooking was more important than practical experience actually cooking. Theory, too, was viewed as the bedrock of good cooking--not practice.

The rhetoric of instruction changed, too, as home economics gained influence. When Fannie Farmer became principal of the Boston Cooking School in 1891, she insisted on the exact measurements (a level cup, a level teaspoon, etc.) that are still considered characteristic of “good” and reliable recipes. Until her death in 1915, Farmer taught her students (and the millions who bought her cookbooks) to follow instructions to the letter and approach cooking with the exactitude of a lab technician. As proof, the first two chapters of her 1896 cookbook are filled with tables and charts full of scientific data such as the macronutrient composition of cheese, the chemical compounds for various acids, and a description of the heat required for cooking as “molecular motion” (Farmer, 14, 17). Farmer’s writing contains an odd mixture of scientific jargon, such as the paragraph explaining that cocoa and coffee contain “*theobromine*,” an “active principle [that] is almost identical with theine and caffeine” (44), and almost condescendingly specific instructions, such as the instruction to use a towel when drying wet ingredients (505). Such specificity on both counts was surely designed to edify readers and reinforce

See Harvey Levenstein, “The New England Kitchen and the Origins of Modern American Eating Habits” (1980) for a fuller discussion.

the cookbook authors' credibility as experts, but also to eliminate chance and "luck" in the kitchen.²⁰ In any case, notes historian Laura Shapiro, "fledgling cooks" who sought instruction from institutes like the Boston Cooking School were not to consult "their instincts, their sense of taste, or their imaginations" (85). Science was to be the ultimate arbiter of a food's worth.

The home economists sought tirelessly to persuade Americans that scientifically prepared foods were superior to "homemade" ones in both taste and nutrition. Those who preferred the "homemade" way of doing things were simply dismissed as uneducated. For example, in a series of tests undertaken in Boston in 1900, home economists attempted to prove that meals made of ready made, packaged foods both tasted better and cost less than "homemade" meals. The tasters, however, always preferred the homemade version, which ended up costing less, too. Undaunted, the home economists commented in the published report that the lack of a "common and accepted 'standard' of what really good bread is" was to blame (qtd. in Shapiro 199). If the tasters had actually been educated about "good bread," they implied, they would have preferred the packaged version.

A number of extension projects, including the New England Kitchen, sponsored these sorts of tasting panels, but as Levenstein notes, the reformers "seem to have made no concessions at all to the tastes and cooking methods" of their would-be customers, but continued in their dogged efforts to persuade the public to buy foods "scientifically"

²⁰ Farmer was allegedly infuriated by the idea that luck could have anything to do with one's cooking successes. This attitude stands in sharp contrast to those espoused by figures I will discuss later, including MFK Fisher and Julia Child, both of whom often celebrated their good luck at happening upon some delicious item, or a new restaurant, or a new kitchen technique.

proven to be healthier (384). Levenstein speculates that, had they made a few such concessions, the working classes would have been less likely to have embraced junk foods like hot dogs, hamburgers, and pizza so whole-heartedly in the coming decades (384). Examples like this show how masterful home economists were at interpreting research findings so as to create exigencies. If the public did not respond or behave according to their scientific recommendations, such aberrations indicated a gap in public knowledge that home economists could fill.²¹

So complete was the hold of science over food that by the 1950s recipes like “Perfection Salad” came to epitomize the kind of regulated cooking the home economists sought to make widespread. A strange-sounding concoction of shredded vegetables suspended in a tomato-flavored gelatin, “perfection salad” was, in Shapiro’s words, “a salad at last in control of itself” (94).²² This example reveals the degree to which the dominant rhetorics of food emphasized tidiness, nutrition, efficiency, and value—not taste, texture, or comfort value. They held firm to the idea that, with the proper training and correct, quantified information, personal inclinations for different flavorings or seasonings could be overcome (Elias 31, Shapiro 161).

²¹ One could argue, though, that such a response violates some basic principles of scientific inquiry; namely, that if an experiment disproves a hypothesis, then the hypothesis (i.e., the public will prefer pre-packaged foods) is probably wrong. Instead, home economists just invented new experiments until one proved their hypothesis.

²² Shapiro describes, several times, recipes that seem to view anything spilling or dripping as an abhorrence. Instead, all foods were to be placed in appropriate receptacles, whether they were tableware or other food items. One such recipe calls for the cook to hollow out marshmallows and stuff them with raisins; others instruct cooks to hollow out a vessel, such as a tomato or an avocado, before filling it with chicken salad or a similarly messy concoction. Gelatin was, in this instance, something of a miracle food, since almost anything could be made to hold whatever shape the cook desired.

There were other social objectives behind the push to standardize American cooking and eating habits besides a belief in the nutritional superiority of scientific cooking methods. Home economists' faith in culinary regimentation fueled the "persistent dream of a nutritional democracy with all Americans eating and flourishing in the same way," even if achieving that dream required "the subordination of taste and texture, [an] emphasis on appearance, [and] flavors that were blunt or nonexistent" (Shapiro 215). Recipe success often (supposedly) hinged on the cook's use of nationally recognized brands of packaged foods (such as Jell-O or Campbell's condensed soups).²³ Following these instructions exactly would, presumably, lead to predictable, reliable results, which served not only the goal of transforming cooking skills into scientific methods, but also this secondary goal of a "nutritional democracy" where foods produced in New England were comparable or (better yet) identical to those produced in the South, the Midwest, on the West coast. While working to ensure equal access to quality food is certainly a laudable goal, such a project also ensured that regional and local traditions were discounted in favor of uniform methods and approaches that were, eventually, reified in national public policy.

Joining Forces: The Standardization of Food Practices and Public Policy

The alliance between domestic science and public policy was precisely what Ellen Richards had wished for when she aimed to put, as rhetorician Gail Lippincott writes,

²³ The packaged food industry had gone into overdrive during World War II, primarily to provide rations to soldiers stationed in places where food storage and cooking were difficult. Like many industries, the packaged food industry had to convert back to solely consumer goods production after the war, which meant that, once wartime rationing ended, American supermarkets offered more canned and packaged goods than ever before.

“the art of cooking on a scientific basis in order to create the first known food standards” (27). The merging of scientific data and federal guidelines was the perfect blend of expertise, objectivity, and national standardization. The rhetoric discussed above—with its reliance on language of expertise, quantification, precision, efficiency, and standardization—laid the groundwork for a rhetoric of food and eating that was scientific and objective but also exclusionary and limited. Cooking, notes historian Mary Drake McFeely, was described as the province of experts, “something one studied, trusting the advice of an expert over one’s individual judgment” (35). The onslaught of expert, scientific advice about food preparation and consumption became a hegemonic rhetoric which, while its real impact in home kitchens would be difficult to assess, certainly argued powerfully for the valorization of efficiency, reliability, and (chemically determined) nutritional value.

Home economists recognized from the beginning that reaching and persuading public audiences would always be crucial to their success, and events in the early twentieth century gave them more opportunities to extend their influence. For instance, as government agencies like the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration, and others scrambled to provide relief to families suffering from Depression-era and wartime food shortages, home economists were happy to step in and provide advice about economizing and preserving food. In the wake of the failure of projects like the New England Kitchen, home economists sought large platforms for their ideas, and the government provided such a platform. Struggling families, no doubt, would have been eager to learn how to stretch their food dollars in such difficult times. Home economists were also vocal supporters of Victory Gardens during World War II, as

scholar Amy Bentley demonstrates in *Eating For Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity*. The alliance between home economics and the government led to the grandest public stage for scientific discourses of food and cooking, and in the early twentieth century the federal government became a “center for food research and dissemination of nutritional information” (Levenstein 381-2).

In the early twentieth century the government began issuing “quantities of advice, recommendations, and rules” including the USDA’s 1917 pamphlet “How to Select Foods,” a 1933 revision of this pamphlet, and of course the Recommended Daily Allowances, which were first published in 1941 (McFeely 72-3). While tracing the precise impact of these documents (on shopping or eating habits, for instance) is beyond the scope of this project, the rhetoric of all of them relies similarly on numeric data, and eating healthfully becomes a federally-sanctioned matter of counting calories, fat grams, macronutrients, vitamins, and minerals. Such a rhetoric forms the foundation for an obsession with food’s *quantities*, rather than its qualities, or what Mudry calls nutritionism.

Mudry notes that the rise of nutrition as a science led to a food culture wherein “judging food is no longer a question of flavor, taste, region, sensation, or season, but instead it is now a function of comparisons, charts, counting, and analyzing” (15).²⁴ The scientific research on which this objective approach to eating is based stem from the early convictions among home economists and nutritionists that “an enumerated diet was somehow better than a diet that relied on the whims of human hunger, the ambiguity of

²⁴ We see continued evidence of this quantified view’s apparent persuasiveness (and public acceptance) everywhere, from the ubiquitous nutrition labels to the popular 100-calorie snack packages to products like Pepsi One and Coke Zero.

the appetite, and the imprecision of the palate” (76). This drive to quantify food led to some bizarre experiments, including chemist Wilbur Olin Atwater’s experiments in the 1880s using a “room calorimeter” to measure caloric intake and output by essentially incarcerating subjects in a specially outfitted room for several days (Mudry 34-37).

Perhaps the most attractive feature of this discourse of quantification was that it simply leveled the culinary field. The development of food and diet standards, which Ellen Swallow Richards initially had seen as a democratizing influence, created supposedly factual criteria against which any dish, meal, or diet could be compared to any other. While some foods were objectively healthier than others (fresh vegetables versus potato chips, for instance), this leveling allowed for more than simply the comparison of vitamin content or calories. It also allowed home economists interested in a “nutritional democracy” to advance a rhetoric of an “American” cuisine by claiming that certain foreign dishes were less healthy than the standard American “balanced meal” of meat, potatoes, and boiled vegetables.²⁵ Many home economists shared the (dubious) belief that “combined” foods like stews and casseroles were inherently less healthy than “separate” foods. It is worth noting, too, that scientific cooks often recommended cooking vegetables for so long that any nutritional value they had would be destroyed

²⁵ The stews popular among immigrants from Ireland and Eastern Europe (who were particularly numerous in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century) were a particular target of scorn. Home economists also sought to encourage working class families to decrease meat consumption in order to save money. Many workers, however, saw better and plentiful food as a reward for a hard day’s work—and a benefit of having emigrated from the Old World, where meat was prohibitively expensive, to the New, where it was relatively plentiful and cheap.

long before they were consumed.²⁶ Fannie Farmer, for instance, recommends boiling peas for up to 60 minutes (33).

By midcentury, home economics and nutrition science were firmly established as disciplines, and the associated discourses argued for the re-assignment of cooking from the realm of the arts to the realm of the sciences. After all, if the rigid following of a sequence of steps and the diligent measuring and counting of ingredients led to predictable, nutritious results, and if those results could be evaluated based on adherence to those steps, then deviations from the standard could only be the result of the cook's error or lack of education. And, best of all, the federal government supported and reinforced their efforts through the publication and dissemination of documents that ensured a receptive audience.

Thus, home economics and nutrition science ensured their own relevance rhetorically: they positioned home cooks as uneducated and cast cooking as a set of scientific processes that only experts could understand, two strategies which installed them in positions of authority and education. By reducing foods to their chemical properties and by suggesting that their methods were more economical and efficient,

²⁶ There were plenty of dubious nutritional claims in circulation. Because nutrition science was still in its infancy, and because researchers had not discovered most micronutrients, they made recommendations that seem laughable to us now. For instance, since most fruits and vegetables reduced to carbohydrates (sugars) and water in the laboratory, researchers recommended eating sweets instead. There was more concentrated sugar (and hence calories) in a sweet like candy or a dessert than in an apple—and it was cheaper to eat baked goods or candies than fresh produce. It is worth noting, too, that the nutritional problems plaguing Americans in the late 19th and early 20th century were not the same as those we see today. Most of those who suffered then from diet-related problems were victims of simple undernourishment, and so eating cheap, calorie-dense foods made sense: after all, a poor family can get more nutritional energy, per dollar, from a few pounds of flour or potatoes than they can from a few pounds of lettuce. Today, we see the opposite problem: diseases related to excess caloric intake (though not necessarily adequate nutrients).

home economists and nutritionists guaranteed themselves both objects of study (new foods, new recipes, new diets) and an ever-renewable audience. After all, since people would always have to eat, most would do the majority of their eating at home and many would be interested in advice about saving time and money. Their advice became particularly persuasive when it came packaged in a pamphlet published by the federal government. In the process, however, the discourse of home economics marginalized the very women whose work it initially purported to dignify. Its approach to the kitchen, as McFeely points out, “denied or abstracted the immediacy of food and cooking, removed it to a distance from the world of human relationships” (49-50). Most disturbingly, it gave the public permission to hand over decision-making power about food and eating to anonymous experts unfamiliar with familial and local circumstances.

What I have tried to describe above is a condensed history of the changing public discourse of food and cooking in the early twentieth century, primarily through the rhetorical interventions of two nascent discourses, home economics and nutrition science. The rhetorical efficacy of women like Ellen Swallow Richards, Isabel Bevier, and Christine Frederick, and later women like Lydia J. Roberts and Hazel Steibeling, lay in their collective ability to persuade American home cooks that what they were doing was actually far more complicated than just getting dinner on the table. Decisions about which foods to buy and how to prepare them took on profound cultural and moral significance, since to choose poorly meant not only that one had not properly absorbed available information, but also that one was shirking one’s civic and moral duty to family (and even country) by not providing a healthy, balanced, *modern* diet.

Scientists and officials had secured their status as credible authorities and continued to insist that salient information about the food was the kind described in numbers, that ordinary people needed to heed professional advice about feeding themselves and their families, and that whether or not something actually *tasted* good or fed an appetite other than the purely physiological one was an irrelevant and outdated concern. Although writers like journalist Clementine Paddleford in her columns for *This Week* magazine and the many writers employed by the Works Progress Administration's "America Eats" project still described and celebrated some of the "melting pot" qualities of midcentury American gastronomy, such voices were generally overwhelmed by more "official" discourse. Indeed, the rhetoric emerging from governmental and scientific institutions exerted a relentless pressure on citizens to eliminate dietary diversity and adopt a uniform standard of cooking and eating.

These homogenizing and quantifying discourses have at least one other terrible consequence: because they have so persuasively argued that only trained experts are qualified to make pronouncements about food and nutrition, many people no longer approach cooking and eating with any sort of intellectual seriousness or intentionality. Mudry, Apple, Shapiro and others write convincingly that the discourse of quantification and the scientization of home cooking has prevented many of us from making food choices that might, in the long run, be better for us: choices that respond to personal tastes, hungers of culinary traditions. Given the astronomical increase in the number of overweight and obese people in this country, not to mention the staggering incidence of diabetes, heart conditions, and other diet-related diseases, it is clear that the discourse of quantification (and the rational choice model on which it is predicated) has not succeeded

in convincing the American eater to choose foods more wisely, although it has certainly been the dominant food discourse.

Where We Are Now: The Demise of Quantitative Rhetorics?

Yet this dominance may be waning. We see evidence everywhere today of an emerging and rapidly growing public interest in all things food-related. What *Newsweek* reporters Linda Bird Francke, Scott Sullivan, and Seth Goldschlager identified in 1975 as a “new wave” of interest in food has burgeoned into something of a tsunami. Food preparation has become a form of entertainment, as evidenced by the popularity of the Food Network on cable television and the explosion of glossy food-related magazines. The rapidly increasing number of farmers’ markets in this country (from 1,755 in 1994 to 7,175 in 2011)²⁷ and specialty grocery stores like Whole Foods testifies to a surge of interest in alternative modes of food production and commerce, especially in the wake of increasing research into dangers posed by the hormones and chemicals used in industrial agriculture. The government, too, has gotten involved, but from the other side: food enthusiasts everywhere heralded the dawn of a new era when First Lady Michelle Obama planted a vegetable garden at the White House—the first time a First Lady has done such a thing since Eleanor Roosevelt. When Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack tore up a stretch of sidewalk near the Department of Agriculture to plant a garden, and Kathleen Merrigan, a longtime advocate of natural and organic foods, became Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, food enthusiasts took these events as positive signs that this administration might be more receptive than previous ones to genuine food industry reform.

²⁷ The U.S. Department of Agriculture publishes a National Directory of Farmer’s Markets annually.

Of course, there is no single food movement, as Samuel Fromartz (*Organic, Inc.*), David Kamp (*The United States of Arugula*), Sandor Ellix Katz (*The Revolution Will Not Be Microwaved*), Michael Pollan (*The Omnivore's Dilemma, In Defense of Food*), and others have pointed out. Instead, there are multiple movements whose concerns range from animal rights to environmental sustainability to public health to maintaining historical and cultural traditions. These movements have not tended to originate with big monolithic entities (like the federal government), but rather to emanate out of particular concerns or to arise out of particular people's passions. It is only recently that *enough* of these smaller movements have emerged and coalesced into something of a critical mass, and the collective hum of these alternative discourses is audible to a widespread audience. Instead of just a discourse of quantification, today's multi-faceted food discourse draws on many of the same ideas put forth by the alternative rhetorics whose origins I will discuss in the following chapters.

For instance, proponents of organic farming tend to make environmentally-based arguments about how organic farmers are better stewards of the land *and* provide healthier food, since consumers are not ingesting the pesticides and herbicides used in conventional agriculture. The Locavore movement tends to rely on the topoi of sustainability and seasonality: they argue that such food is better for the environment because it isn't shipped long distances or treated with ethylene gas so as to *appear* ripe, and of course it tastes better, since flavors develop as produce ripens naturally in the fields. Furthermore, discourses of individuality and tradition characterize the Slow Food movement, which aims to preserve family and ethnic culinary traditions. Advocates from all of these movements emphasize a kind of gastronomical *kairos*: the right foods are

those that are available and ripe at the appropriate time (season) and place. Furthermore, the personal nature of eating and cooking has become an important component for this new rhetoric of food. One's *personal* relationship to food has become paramount in the articulation of new forms of food discourse, rather than information handed down from experts.²⁸ Additionally, these alternative rhetorics call for a more purposeful and educated approach to food and cooking, and decry food consumption habits that do not take such factors as the environmental impact of industrial farming, the economic well-being of farmers, or even something as simple as the *taste* of the food itself. Finally, these rhetorics all advocate buying and consuming food that itself has a kind of *ethos*, which is to say that food itself can achieve a kind of credibility based on where and how it was grown, who grew it, where one bought it, how one prepares it.

Large changes have taken place, just in the last several decades, largely as a result of work done through smaller channels: through local organizations like farmer's markets and community-sponsored agriculture, through materials created and distributed by non-experts without political power or wide visibility, and through the combined persuasive power of countless books, websites, blogs, magazine articles, and other popular media. So much non-expert, largely personal writing about one's relationship to food, eating, and cooking now constitutes a political force in its own right, primarily because such writing can and does influence everyday practices like grocery shopping, home

²⁸ Of course, one can only cultivate this personal, purposeful relationship to food in a culture where varied foods are widely available, and even then it may only be possible for those with sufficient financial means to choose foods for reasons other than simple survival. Proponents of these movements (especially the more organized ones, like Slow Food, which I take up in Chapter 4) are often accused of being elitist, and of ignoring the economic realities that compel many people to buy cheap, mass-produced, and arguably less healthy food.

gardening, and daily meal preparation—arguably more than policy documents or published research findings. Most of us are more likely to take a hint from a blog we follow or a writer we enjoy than we are to look up the “official” word from a government or laboratory.²⁹

Despite the continued prevalence of scientific and objective food rhetoric, twentieth century women writers, many of whom would have been the average homemakers whose knowledge and expertise was devalued by the rhetoric of home economics, have steadily made inroads in popular discourse about food. Writers like M.F.K. Fisher, Julia Child, and Alice Waters have adapted the genres of personal and culinary writing, long considered “safe” spaces for women writers, and created rhetorical space in which to describe a new practice and approach to cooking and eating—one defined by artistic inventiveness and political purpose.

These women ventured into different arenas and have enjoyed very different public careers, but I do not claim that the women whose writings I have chosen to study are “representative,” nor that they are very different, in material circumstances, from their home economics predecessors. All three of my principle case studies are (or were) white women, born into circumstances of relative privilege. They each had the opportunity to live abroad in France, either as students or as the partners of men whose careers (and paychecks) allowed their wives to pursue their own interests. Each would argue that her culinary sensibilities were profoundly shaped by these experiences and by having had the

²⁹ One notable exception might be university extension services, which are blends of university/lab expertise and local focus.

time and resources to shop, cook, and eat well while overseas.³⁰ Certainly, this study does not attempt to capture American food culture in any sort of comprehensive way.

However, these women reached enormous audiences, considering the relative obscurity from which they each emerged and the challenges that Fisher and Child, in particular, faced as women pursuing public careers in midcentury America. Furthermore, all three have been published in mainstream media and appeared on national television and radio programs. They are among the most cited and referenced culinary authorities in the country, and their writings provide some of the most cogent and salient alternatives to the scientific and technical rhetorics that dominated early twentieth century food discourse. I have chosen to study Fisher, Child, and Waters, to the exclusion of other worthy contributors, because their works most effectively resisted that scientific and technical rhetoric and, I argue, most profoundly shaped contemporary food discourse.

In the next three chapters, I will show how each of these women offered an alternative to the scientific and objective discourse of quantification. Drawing on personal experience and conviction, their texts sought to persuade American readers to re-evaluate their relationship to food by taking ownership over the entire process: from demanding high-quality ingredients to cooking in practical, meaningful ways to eating meals that satisfied personal hungers and contributed to bodily *and* emotional health.

In Chapter 2, I examine the autobiographical and culinary writings of M.F.K. Fisher, still widely considered the “grande dame” of American culinary letters. Fisher focuses throughout her extensive oeuvre on what she calls “hungers”—the personal and

³⁰ M.F.K. Fisher makes frequent reference, in her published works, to the relative poverty she and her first husband experienced while living in Dijon. But there is also ample evidence in her letters, for instance, that her parents frequently offered financial support to the young couple.

idiosyncratic desire for food that is all tangled up with our desires for security and love. As evidence, she argues for the significance and profundity of sharing food with others—an aspect of mealtimes that was largely ignored by the home economists. But as Fisher famously wrote, “[t]here is a communion of more than our bodies when bread is broken and wine is drunk” (353). She makes clear her lifelong conviction that sharing a meal with another is not an event to be taken lightly or for granted, but rather an experience to be savored just as much as the food itself. She argues that culinary choices should be determined by what one wants in a given moment, rather than by what scientists or so-called experts might say is nutritionally appropriate. Many reviewers have credited Fisher with “inventing” the genre of food writing, but few define the genre, or analyze how Fisher adapted it for her own rhetorical purposes. She combined some of the instructional quality of the home economists with the unabashed pleasure in eating exemplified by French gourmands like Brillat-Savarin and Curnonsky, which led some readers to believe a man had written her books. Yet her deeply contextualized and personal anecdotes, most of which focus on food prepared and eaten at home, suggest a “feminine” style. In this chapter, I show how Fisher’s food writing blurs distinctions between “masculine” and “feminine” writing about food and creates a space for a more kairotic rhetoric of food that is organized around pleasure and self-education.

Chapter 3 considers the books and television shows authored by or featuring Julia Child, the woman who, many have claimed, single-handedly changed the way Americans cook. This chapter investigates that claim by exploring how Child used her books and television show to constitute an audience for an entirely new approach to food. The woman who became perhaps the most celebrated American culinary personality was

famously naïve about food when she married the worldly diplomat Paul Child and moved with him to France after World War II. After completing courses at the famed Cordon Bleu Institute in Paris, however, Child discovered not only a talent and passion for cooking, but eventually an equally impressive talent and passion for sharing her knowledge and experience with others. Her renowned cookbooks and the long-running PBS show *The French Chef* are evidence of her lifelong dedication to providing ordinary Americans with the recipes and techniques necessary to prepare classic French dishes in their home kitchens--without professional training. Her fearlessly ambitious “do-it-yourself” approach to cooking has inspired countless home cooks and given them the confidence to tackle *haute cuisine* without ever taking a class.

Child’s approach, even more so than Fisher’s was completely out of sync with mainstream food culture in the late 1950s, which advocated prepared or processed foods, appliance-based cooking, and shortcuts of every variety. Yet Child drew on her own experience as a relative latecomer to cooking, as well as her own slow and methodical acquisition of expertise, to appeal to her newly constituted audiences. The rhetoric of her published works combines some of the (admittedly) useful precision and technical language that characterized scientific cooking, but Child’s discourse is also one of fun and empowerment—one that views the home kitchen as a site of creativity and personal expression, not simply the factory in which officially endorsed recipes are replicated without variation, *ad infinitum*.

Chapter 4 analyzes the rhetoric of what might broadly be called the Locavore Movement, but takes Alice Waters and her famed Berkeley restaurant, Chez Panisse, as its principle case study. Waters, like Fisher and Child, was inspired by the food traditions

she experienced during a lengthy sojourn in France, and sought to recreate for her friends back in Berkeley the kind of careful attention to ingredients and thoughtful engagement with eating that she observed in Paris. While the home economists envisioned a “nutritional democracy” where all Americans could eat the same things no matter where they lived, Alice Waters and her cohort (which includes Carlos Petrini, the famous founder of the Slow Food International movement) seek precisely the opposite. They instead advocate eating locally and seasonally, in support of local farmers and artisans, and believe that such practices serve as a valuable anchor to time and place. Waters’ restaurant was among the first in the country to publish the origins of various menu items, and to consider the farmers who provided the restaurant’s foods as equal partners in the enterprise. Because Waters has been integrally involved in the Slow Food USA movement and has become a visible advocate of nutritional reform for children through her Edible Schoolyard project, this chapter takes up the political dimensions of the new food rhetoric more explicitly than the others. Emphasizing the political overtones of what she does, Waters often calls her work a “delicious revolution.” Indeed, the rhetoric surrounding Waters’s causes is a curious blend of sensory appeals and highly politically charged calls to action. This chapter analyzes how Waters and like-minded advocates combine such seemingly antithetical rhetorical strategies.

The conclusion offers a more comprehensive view of alternative food rhetorics today, as they are presented in the personal accounts of women who have reclaimed their home kitchens (and gardens) as sites for political and social activism. In this section, I consider contemporary food rhetoric as a kind of composite discourse, one that draws on the discourse of scientific cooking and the discourse of the culinary arts; one that

emphasizes health and taste; one that values information but also personal preferences. This chapter will examine several contemporary examples of culinary memoirs, each of which make use of multiple food discourses. I will discuss Molly Wizenberg's *A Homemade Life*, Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, and Shannon Hayes' *Radical Homemakers*, and suggest that, as varied as these contemporary iterations of re-personalized relationships to food can be, all draw on the themes skillfully developed in the writings of Fisher, Child, and Waters. Thus, these contemporary writers continue to contribute to a food rhetoric that valorizes taste, desire, empowerment, and location, as opposed to quantification, objectivity, or reproducibility.

I claim that each of the women studied herein responded effectively to the dominant discourses about food and cooking in their respective cultural moments by proposing real alternative discourses. By tracing the rhetorical genealogy of these alternative discourses, I thereby re-examine a doubly-marginalized women's rhetoric: a rhetoric marginalized as non-expert discourse written by women, and marginalized for its opposition to dominant discourses of science and quantification. In so doing, I hope to propose that we already have at our disposal a number of effective rhetorical tools, strategies, and vocabularies for resisting a discourse of quantification, and for pushing toward genuine, lasting, meaningful changes in the way we cook and eat.

Chapter 2

Gendered Genres:

M.F.K. Fisher's Food Writing and the Rhetoric of Desire

...gradually the fingers so long conditioned to hate sticky and slippery and generally “nasty” textures understand the satin of a fresh mushroom and the velvet of a peach. It seems strange that all this has to be taught. It should come from a natural awareness. But our culture is increasingly unnatural. We have been pushed out of focus, and it is often costly and painful to get in again...

M.F.K. Fisher, “Learn to Touch...to Smell...to Taste” (1972)

M.F.K. Fisher is “an adequately equivocal name for someone who did not write about the pleasures of the table in correctly female and home economics fashion.”

Fisher, qtd. in Reardon (2004)

The first epigraph above encapsulates some of the key features of M.F.K. Fisher's outlook on food. First, an individual must slowly *learn* to appreciate the different features of foods, including the varied textures referenced here. Second, they often must overcome ingrained assumptions about what is “nasty” or unappealing, and such a process can be tedious and difficult. Finally, they must develop a gastronomical sensibility that is primarily based on experiential knowledge and sensory perceptions, rather than on intellection or scientific data. The second epigraph tells us much about the historical and social context in which Fisher's work first appeared. Gene Saxton and the other editors at Harper & Row, who had published her first book, *Serve it Forth* (1937),

were astonished to discover that M.F.K. Fisher was not the “bookish Oxford don” they had expected, but rather an “attractive” and stylish woman (Reardon 2004 92). Indeed, in Fisher’s later accounts of the meeting, Saxton assured her that “no woman could possibly have written *Serve it Forth*” (Fisher, *Dubious Honors*, 134). Of course, she *had* written the book that celebrated the pleasures of food--a book redeemed, according to one *New York Times* reviewer, by “Mrs. Fisher’s hearty masculine gusto” (Thompson). From these two epigraphs, then, we see that some of the defining features of Fisher’s writing--a focus on pleasure and practical education--are the very features that set her writing at odds with mainstream culinary writing by women.

In this chapter, I use Fisher’s texts as a case study to examine how and why food writing genres were gendered in the early and mid-twentieth century. Most food writing--manuals, cookbooks, nutrition guidelines--were scientific and technical and largely gendered “male.” Fisher’s writing, despite some readers’ skepticism that a woman could have written it, is personal, anecdotal, and contextualized--all characteristics associated with genres we usually gender “female.” I argue that Fisher’s texts function as alternative rhetorics of food and eating because they effectively mix both “masculine” and “feminine” rhetorical qualities and are, in effect, double-voiced. Fisher can draw on multiple discourses, including the more scientific, “masculine” ones, such as nutrition science, as well as more feminine ones like memoir and travel writing. Additionally, this hybrid discourse allows her to speak to multiple audiences: both those interested in cooking how-to guides and those interested in stories about personal experiences with food. By destabilizing the division between masculine and feminine food rhetorics,

Fisher subverts readers' expectations and creates a space for her own brand of food-writing.

In the decades surrounding World War II in particular, most women who wrote about food did so to promote commercial products, to encourage patriotism, or to describe foodways from different cultures. This writing rarely considered the author's personal experiences to be relevant to the purpose of the writing, which almost always sought to influence its audience's consumption choices. For example, food conglomerate General Mills popularized the "Betty Crocker" character.³¹ Betty Crocker became famous as a radio "personality" and as the "author" of a spate of cookbooks, all touting General Mills foods; many of these cookbooks topped nonfiction bestseller lists well into the 1960s. Other women, led by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, championed Victory Gardens and other home food production and preservation methods in order to save more food for the troops abroad. Still more women, such as journalist Clementine Paddleford and those women employed by the WPA project "America Eats!", traveled the country collecting culinary lore and recipes, some of which was published in women's magazines or local newspapers.³² Still, even this sort of writing, which approached foodways from a vaguely

³¹ There was never an actual person called Betty Crocker, nor did any real person ever "model" the Betty Crocker image that appeared on boxes and labels. Rather, she was "invented" by home economist Marjorie Husted for the Washburn Crosby Company, a milling company which eventually became part of General Mills. The character was originally imagined as a reassuring but expert voice who could answer customer questions about various food products via letters or a long-running radio show. The first Betty Crocker cookbook (1950) was written by Agnes White Tizard, a nutritionist. See Susan Marks, *Finding Betty Crocker: The Secret Life of America's First Lady of Food* (2005).

³² Paddleford was a famous exception; her articles were primarily published in the *Herald Tribune* and in her 1960 volume *How America Eats*. See Kelly Alexander and Cynthia

anthropological perspective, was not personal: the authors recorded and published what they observed, but they rarely described the actual embodied experience of eating or cooking. Instead, the role of the author as eater or taster was obscured by her role as a reporter. Even those women who specifically wrote about personal experiences, in the form of autobiography or memoir, rarely dwelt on food experiences, and cookbooks and domestic guides such as Mrs. Frances Carruthers' *Twentieth Century Home Cooking* were valued precisely because they did *not* include personal details. As such, they provided no rhetorical space to acknowledge or talk about women's hungers or for the sensory experience of eating foods.

Furthermore, personal experience and anecdotal evidence were simply not considered sufficient sources of credibility; rather, an author like Mrs. Carruthers is described, on the title page of her book, as "the Celebrated Authority on the Science and Art of Cooking" (5). Indeed, one might locate some of the persuasive power of home economics rhetorics in that there was so little rhetorical competition; there were not popular or widespread alternative discourses of food and cooking. Nineteenth century views about women and food still dominated American attitudes about female appetite, which is to say that women were presumed *not* to have appetites, at least not any to which they would admit.³³ The home economics movement, despite tireless efforts to increase public respect for homemaking, had done little to dislodge the idea that women should be

Harris, *Hometown Appetites: The Story of Clementine Paddleford, the Forgotten Food Writer Who Chronicled How America Ate*.

³³ A number of scholars have explored the connection between morality and female appetites or, more accurately, the denial thereof. See Walter Vandereycken's *From Fasting Saints to Anorexic Girls: The History of Self-Starvation*; Anna K. Silver's *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*, and Matra Robinson's *Starving in the Silences*.

in charge of buying and preparing, but not eating or desiring, food. These discourses, both of which denied the reality of the female appetite (in all senses of the word) provided no vocabularies for talking about, writing about, or even acknowledging women's hungers.

Fisher's books, with their frank discussion of appetite, were unique for their time, especially for a woman to have written, and nothing in her early years suggested such a career path.³⁴ Fisher was born on July 3, 1908 in Albion, Michigan. The eldest of four children born to Rex and Edith Kennedy, she spent most of her childhood in affluent Whittier, California, where her father was editor of the local newspaper. In 1929, she moved with her first husband, Al Fisher, to France. During the three years they spent in Dijon, Fisher began what became a lifelong process of gastronomic learning. Her first book, *Serve it Forth* (1937), includes several essays describing events from her time in France, although she documents the experience most fully in *Long Ago in France* (1992). Over her five-decade career, she published more than twenty books, most of which are inspired by personal experience, including her three marriages, repeated long sojourns in France, and her near-constant struggle to make ends meet as a woman writer and single mother. Her gastronomical books argue for the importance of developing an artistic, intelligent, and purposeful approach to cooking and eating, and they are the focus of this chapter.

³⁴ Several scholars, including Alice McLean and Joan Reardon, have suggested that Fisher's preoccupation with food is simply a front for talking about sexual desire. While evidence for such a claim abounds, Fisher's oft-quoted claim that "love and the hunger for it, and warmth and the love of it and hunger for it [...] is all one" contradicts such a facile reading, since it suggests that *each* of the three is equally important--not that one can just substitute for another (*GM* 3).

Although her popularity has steadily increased in recent decades, as evidenced by continued reprints of her books, she was something of an anomaly when she began publishing in 1937. She possessed no credentials as either writer or cook, and initial small runs and slow sales of her books suggest that publishers and the public weren't sure what to make of such passionate and prolific writing about the pleasures of table. One reviewer noted the uncategorizable quality of Fisher's writing, saying "It is true that this book contains 140 recipes, but the heart of her matter is sound attitudes rather than lists of particulars." Yet the genres she chose and the rhetorical strategies she employed allowed her to develop a rhetoric of desire--a viable and qualitative alternative rhetoric to the quantitative rhetorics discussed in Chapter 1.

Fisher offers a new vocabulary that allows for the discussion of women's (and men's, for that matter) hungers, one that engages readers in a process of rhetorical self-education. She relies on three key topoi, which I will discuss in further detail below, to structure this new rhetoric of desire: pleasure, practical education, and an attention to the timeliness of food and eating that I call *gastronomical kairos*. These rhetorical and generic strategies allow her to articulate her theory of cooking and eating as socially significant activities and avoids some of the pitfalls associated with the scientific and quantitative rhetorics discussed in Chapter 1; namely, a denial of the personal. Crucially, too, these strategies allow her to challenge accepted notions about the gendered nature of food writing genres. In the following section, I examine how Fisher's rhetoric of desire combines the features of both "feminine" and "masculine" food writing genres..

Gender, Genre, Style

Like the texts of home economics and domestic science experts, Fisher's texts have educative aims. However, she offers a *descriptive*, rather than prescriptive, discourse of food. Instead of a discourse of quantification that values only the nutritional components of food, Fisher provides a qualitative one that values the holistic experience of preparing, eating, and enjoying food, whether alone or in company. Whereas home economists believed useful education in cooking and eating could only happen in the context of a classroom or laboratory, Fisher believed such an education had to occur in ordinary contexts like home kitchens or while visiting friends. If domestic scientists were concerned that the public was generally ignorant about proper methods for sanitation and cooking, Fisher espoused a common-sense philosophy and believed cooking methods should suit the personally desired outcome. Gastronomical education, according to Fisher, encompassed far more than studying impersonal subjects like nutrition or mastering a set of culinary techniques in the absence of any real cooking exigency or hunger. She valued experiential learning and was convinced that "gastronomical growth" would bring with it "knowledge and perception of a hundred other things, but mainly of ourselves" (Fisher, *How to Cook a Wolf* 350). In other words, learning about food and cooking was simply one part of identity formation and human interaction. Sensory engagement, suggested by the word "perception," was crucial. She objected strongly to a food culture that taught people (overtly or implicitly) to ignore, suppress, or deny their individual hungers in favor of an arbitrary standard of diet or propriety. She writes, with a hint of pity, of those who "feel an impatience for the demands of their bodies, and who try [...] to deafen [them]selves to the voices of [their] various hungers" (350).

Conversely, her rhetoric encourages readers to listen to their own physical and spiritual needs, to understand their tastes and preferences, and to seek ways of satisfying those hungers in purposeful, thoughtful, and creative ways. As such, she offers her readers an alternative rhetorical education.

Fisher accomplishes these rhetorical goals partly through the adoption of what many critics have called a “feminine style.” As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell defined it, a feminine style will “rel[y] heavily on personal experience, anecdotes, and other examples. It will tend to be structured inductively [...] and efforts will be made to create identification with the experiences of the audience and those described by the reader” (Campbell 13). This identification can be “facilitated by common values and shared experience” (13-14). Although Campbell is careful to note that there is “nothing inevitably or necessarily female” about what she describes, she claims that this style “has been congenial to women because of the acculturation of female speakers and audiences” and it “reflects the learning experiences of women” (14). Such a style is at odds with a “masculine style” that tends to value abstraction and whose primary aim is “problem-solving;” this was the style usually adopted by home economists (Dow & Tonn 288).

Competing food discourses in the early and mid-twentieth century functioned as something of a battleground for working out the dynamics between food and gender, in part because strict binaries about which gender produced which discourse were breaking down. Although home economists usually employed a masculinized and scientific style so as to gain credibility, that style was feminized insofar as home economists were almost exclusively female. Only male writers, at this point, had produced food discourses that emphasized pleasure or taste or desire, but Fisher’s writing started to alter that landscape,

since her foregrounding of pleasure and taste led some to describe her writing as masculine. In Fisher, then, we are compelled to abandon a dichotomous assessment of gender and food genres, and instead consider that food writing could be multiple: both masculinized and feminized. Fisher's style is informal but learned, conversational but not chatty, and generous but not patronizing. She typically recounts anecdotes from her childhood, examples from her everyday life, and a running commentary on how her tastes and preferences have changed, but she also includes recipes and technical advice on cooking and even nutrition.

As Fisher seemed to be employing a new and mixed modality of food writing (one that is both masculinized and feminized), so too does she employ a hybrid genre. None of her books could be categorized strictly as a memoir; few proceed in chronological fashion, and almost all of her books are organized in such a way that autobiographical essays are interspersed with essays musing on contemporary topics or more recent events. As such, she seems committed to re-organizing and re-presenting her life experiences in a way that serves multiple purposes, including providing her experiences as models for readers and revealing her own evolving gastronomical identity. We must not assume that the voice telling the story in Fisher's books is *really* Fisher in a transparent way, but rather we should consider the voice to be a "narrating I," or an agent of discourse (Lionnet 193). This "narrating I" is the version of the self that Fisher created for the purpose of this text; it is not necessarily coterminous with Fisher-the-person. As the writer, Fisher selects and articulates the elements of "experiential history linked to the story [s]he is telling" (Smith & Watson 60). The emphasis on *selection* is important; we (as readers) only see what Fisher chooses to let us see. Her writing, even the most

autobiographical, should not be considered a straightforward recording of her experiences, but rather a carefully selected and rearranged interpretation of those experiences.

Despite the potential for obscuring of real person behind these texts, the “narrating I” in Fisher’s texts remains remarkably accessible, and life-writing genres allow her to “speak” to her readers in a way that more technical or formal genres might not. For instance, she can recount her culinary triumphs and failures, which no doubt endears her to her readers, while home economists could not risk damaging their credibility by admitting to kitchen failures. Furthermore, Fisher is under far less pressure to suggest that her methods are foolproof (they are not presented within the confines of a technical manual like a cookbook) or that her experience is or should be generalizable. By analyzing the specifics of her own experiences, she can (inductively) draw conclusions about the trajectory of her own life and possibly those in similar circumstances, but Fisher is reluctant to make sweeping claims about the relevance of her own experiences. Even when she does generalize, she tends to do so guardedly; for example, at the conclusion of the famous essay “Borderlands,” she writes “there must be someone, though, who knows what I mean. Perhaps everyone does, because of his own secret eatings” (*Serve it Forth* 28). Fisher often gestures to the reader in this way, as if to encourage her to reflect on her own experiences to see whether Fisher’s story has any resonance. Life-writing allows for this sort of ambivalence.

Life-writing also allows Fisher to account for changes in her personal tastes and desires; acknowledging that such tastes do and even *should* change is an important feature of Fisher’s gastronomical texts. According to one definition, life-writing genres

are “historically situated practice[s] of self-representation” and they may “expand[] to include *how* one has become who he or she is at a given moment in an ongoing process of reflection” (Smith & Watson 14, 1). Many readers have commented on Fisher’s habit of “revising” her own life experiences. Her life, at least as it appears in her books, was a continual process of self-creation: one reviewer of Joan Reardon’s biography of Fisher, *Poet of the Appetites*, noted the extent to which Fisher’s texts record her “constant re-imagining of her own life” (Martinovich para. 8). Her sustained interest in revisiting and re-interpreting episodes from her past demonstrates her conviction not only that experience is a worthwhile teacher, but also that the learning continues long past the event itself. Fisher often revised her works extensively when they were reissued, and these revisions include remarks on her changing attitudes toward food and cooking, certainly, but also toward her family, her marriages, and her career. The revisions are published as bracketed comments in the revised editions of the books collected in *The Art of Eating* (first published in 1954) and they demonstrate the degree to which she viewed her identity as what she called a “writing cook and cooking writer” as malleable--really, a work constantly in progress (*With Bold Knife and Fork* 176).³⁵ She often comments on her changing perspective; for example, one bracketed comment in *How to Cook a Wolf* (1942; revised in 1951) notes that “‘the last war’ means something different now. I was thirty-ish when I wrote this, thinking of 1917 and thereabouts” (195). She comments upon and corrects her writing style, calling one original description of a cake a

³⁵ In fact, she even seems to have viewed her life as a work of *art*, subject to outright change. When consulted about publishing Fisher’s letters, her younger sister Nora claimed that Fisher sometimes so altered events, in her published works, as to render them fictional. Her nephew Sean claimed that she “embroiders the facts to the point where what she ends up with is virtually fiction” (qtd. in Martinovich para. 7).

“wonderful example of understatement!” and frequently questions her original choice of words (205). And she willingly revises seemingly confident assertions; after writing in 1942 that “a meal eaten by yourself is not so much an event as the automatic carrying out of a physical function,” she writes in the 1951 revisions that she “now disagree[s] completely with this” statement (252). Life-writing genres, particularly if one has the opportunity to revise them, offer ample rhetorical space for this sort of self-reflection and revision.

These revisions, I argue, are overt examples of Fisher’s general tendency toward self-critique and reassessment. But since Fisher is also interested in offering her changing approach to cooking and eating as a model to her readers, the portraits of her “past selves” are equally instructive as her “older and wiser” version. They also further differentiate her rhetorical style and genre choices from those of the home economists, who favored a static, rule-bound approach that did not allow for changes in personal preferences. Likewise, the genres home economists tended to employ were far more technical and impersonal; it would have been hard to detect a personal voice behind the text. What Smith and Watson call the “narrated I,” then, or that “protagonist of the narrative” is that self that Fisher re-members (in the sense of both “recalling” and “reassembling”) in her text (60). Fisher’s remembrances are not, as noted above, photographic or transparent accounts of her past. While her memories may form the “raw material” for later essays, she rearranges the details from a specific point of view, with a specific purpose in mind, within the context of her current rhetorical situation (i.e., writing a book).

Thus, her “practice of self-representation” is a contingent one, and it takes into account her changing tastes as she ages. Fisher seems less and less interested in desserts, for instance, as she grows older. When describing a conversation with a “noted home economist” about the proper way to make brownies, Fisher admits drily to the reader that “in [her] progress toward the pap and pabulum of senility [she] would rather do several other unpleasant things than eat one” (*WBKaF* 278). And of jellyrolls, for instance, a favorite childhood treat, she claims not have “tasted one since [she] was ten, much less had any interest in putting one together” (*GM* 365). She even argues, contrary to the home economists, that adjusting eating habits is not only more satisfying, but is essential for good health. In her 1937 essay “When a Man is Small,” she writes that we “hasten our own dyspeptic doom [when we try] to eat and drink as we did when we were twenty” (*SiF* 9). In a sense, then, Fisher’s composition process reflects the process of her changing gastronomical sensibilities. By admitting to, responding to, and even reveling in changes in her personal taste, Fisher subtly denounces a food rhetoric that suggests one’s tastes should be determined by external factors, such as nutrition advice, or that they should be static.

Fisher’s works, however, are not all personal accounts. Some readers and scholars have even credited her with “inventing” the genre of culinary writing.³⁶ Such an assertion seems dubious, especially in light of assertions from genre theorists like Amy

³⁶ For instance, Anne Zimmerman (in her biography of Fisher, *An Extravagant Hunger*) and Molly O’Neill (in a *New York Times* obituary of Fisher) both claim that Fisher “invented” or “created” the genre of culinary writing. The genre itself is probably too capacious for a single originator or even definition, though a number of scholars have tried. See Lynn Z. Bloom’s article in the March 2008 special issue of *College English* “Consuming Prose: The Delectable Rhetoric of Food Writing” or Susan J. Leonardi’s 1989 *PMLA* article “Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster à la Riseholme, and Key Lime Pie.”

Devitt and Anis Bawarshi that genres are sites of social action and that “beginnings [of genres] take place in the middle of things,” which is to say that no one can really “invent” a genre without establishing a rhetorical context, much of which will be external to the writer (Bawarshi 3). Instead, a writer can situate herself within an existing genre and modify it to suit her particular rhetorical aims. Then, the interaction between writer, context, and text becomes “reciprocal” (Devitt 31). Fisher’s work can more properly be classified not as a brand new genre unto itself, but rather as a hybrid of all those genres in which it participates, including memoir, travel writing, culinary history, and cookbooks. Instead of arguing that Fisher’s writing belongs to (let alone invented) a single genre, I assume that Fisher’s use of a wide variety of rhetorical and generic strategies helps to reflect her philosophy of eating; namely that all food-related activities are (or should be) context-specific, and the meaning we attach to those activities is largely personal.

Fisher’s writing--personal, anecdotal, and contextualized--provides a rhetorical alternative to the impersonal and abstracted rhetoric of home economics and scientific cooking. Her famous assertion that “[t]here is a communion of more than our bodies when bread is broken and wine drunk” refutes the home economics commonplace that eating is simply a matter of refueling the body (*GM* 353). Understanding that deeper communion is what led her to write “about hunger, not wars or love.” For Fisher, hunger refers to a complex matrix of desires that can very encompass all kinds of hungers. “Our three basic needs,” she claims, “for food and security and love, are so mixed and entwined that we cannot straightly think of one without the others.” When she writes about food, she also is writing about “love and the hunger for it, and warmth and the love of it and hunger for it [...] and it is all one” (*Ibid*). Hunger cannot be divorced from

emotions. Preparing a technically correct recipe might satisfy the body's physical caloric needs, but such a dish will not necessarily respond to our desires for warmth, love, or companionship. The rhetoric of home economics effectively silenced discussions of food's capacity to provide anything other than nutritional value, and Fisher wants to reinvigorate these discussions.

To do so, Fisher never claims expert status. She relies on her own extensive reading in culinary history and, most importantly, her own experience. She writes often of the importance of committing oneself to the "pleasant task of educating [one's] palate," and much of her culinary writing is the narration of her own palate education (*SiF* 11). This fact alone suggests that, for Fisher, the authority on such matters as what to eat and when to eat it rests not with science or any other so-called expert discourses, but rather simply with a serious exploration and articulation of personal tastes. Despite her considerable learning and wide-ranging experience, she never foists her own preferences on readers or suggests (à la home economists) that her way is "right" or even desirable for anyone else. She recommends that readers learn what foods they actually *like*, not what foods they should eat for reasons other than the pleasure food can offer. Of preferring to make and eat tarts rather than pies, she says simply "I like them. Other people do, too" (*WBKaF* 271). In the next section, I explore pleasure as the first of the three key topoi in Fisher's argument for a qualitative rhetoric of cooking and eating.

Pleasures Repressed and Irrepressible

By bringing enjoyment to the fore, Fisher reconnects the body to the mind and offers a rhetoric of embodied practices that values individuality and pleasure. For

example, she claims that vegetables are a “physical pleasure to buy and clean and prepare, and then cook and serve forth.” Furthermore, she writes, “I love their colors, and odors, and the feel of them” (*WBKaF* 164). She finds enjoyment in vegetables as they are, without culinary trickery or fancy preparations, such as the “perfection salad” and other dishes described in Chapter 1, whose main appeal seems to be in their *not* resembling actual vegetables. The inclusion of descriptions rich with sensory detail, declarations of the pleasure she takes in preparing and eating food, and the inclusion of stories from her childhood are all strategies Fisher employs to round out her rhetoric of desire.

To set up the conflict between the denial and the satiation of hungers and desires, Fisher draws on childhood anecdotes to dramatize two different perspectives on food. One of these was the perspective held by her maternal grandmother, who lived with the family from 1912 until her death in 1920, and “oddly seems to have been connected with whatever infantine gastronomy [Fisher] knew” (*GM* 360). Grandmother Holbrook, whose “despotic bowels” dictated much of the Kennedy family’s diet during Fisher’s childhood, seems to have embodied the quantified, scientific food discourses against which Fisher later rebels (366). Fisher retells a number of events from her childhood involving Grandmother Holbrook in part to point out the foibles of making dietary choices solely based on advice from anonymous and distant nutritional experts. Furthermore, Fisher rarely presents Grandmother Holbrook in a sympathetic light; indeed, she seems to have been a strict and unloving woman governed by a kind of rabid asceticism. By painting her grandmother in those tones, Fisher suggests to readers that those who consistently deny themselves the pleasures of food are miserable people.

Grandmother Holbrook spent considerable time in various sanitarium, including the famed Battle Creek Sanitarium, a center once closely associated with the home economics and reform efforts.³⁷ She approached cooking “with that almost joyfully stern bowing to duty typical of religious women,” and imposed a kind of culinary austerity on the family. Grandmother Holbrook’s dietary rules limited menus to such fare as soda crackers steamed with hot milk, stewed tomatoes, and “watery lettuce³⁸,” adorned with her grandmother’s boiled dressing, that passed for salad under her grandmother’s watch. Boiled dressing, in fact, becomes almost emblematic, throughout Fisher’s oeuvre, of bad scientific cooking. A terrible-sounding “thin paste” made from boiling cider vinegar and flour together until “done,” the dressing lacks both flavor and a pleasing texture, and its preparation is characteristic of the kind of inattention and insensitivity to ingredients that Fisher rejects (*WBKaF* 99). In fact, she dismisses the recipe as a kind of unfortunate historical relic, saying she does not recommend it “for anything but a passing thought” (100). Presumably her grandmother preferred it for reasons of health and economy (the ingredients, after all, were low-fat and quite inexpensive), but little else can be said in its favor.

Just as bad as the food itself, though, were Grandmother’s Holbrook’s strictures against commenting on food. According to Fisher, her grandmother believed that “food

³⁷ Battle Creek Sanitarium was the project of John Harvey and W.H. Kellogg. Among other treatments, patients at the sanitarium ate nutrient-dense cereals and underwent frequent enemas to cleanse the digestive system. Although Fisher mercilessly critiques Grandmother Holbrook’s dining preferences, there is some evidence, in Fisher’s texts, that her grandmother was, at times, genuinely ill.

³⁸ Fisher would become a lifelong devotee of composed salads and lettuces dressed with good olive oil, but her grandmother dismissed such concoctions as “roughage” and “a French idea” (*GM* 100).

should be consumed without comment of any kind but above all without sign of praise of enjoyment” (*GM* 361). Presumably this was not difficult when Grandmother Holbrook was more or less in charge of planning meals, but occasionally circumstances warranted protest. Like many middle-class families in the early 20th century, the Kennedys employed a cook. Usually, this cook submitted to Grandmother Holbrook’s requirements, but one cook, Ora, was less pliant. If Grandmother Holbrook represents the dour, unpleasant facets of scientific cooking, Ora represents the joy and pleasure to be found in cooking, eating, and sharing food. Ora spent just a short time with the family, but Fisher’s extensive treatment of her short employment suggests that Ora profoundly affected her family. Moreover, Ora’s epicurean approach to cooking serves rhetorically as a counterweight to Grandmother Holbrook’s asceticism.

Ora, Fisher writes, “loved to cook, the way some people love to pray, or dance, or fight” (360). Her cooking displayed resourcefulness and creativity, two other qualities Fisher’s later writing will celebrate. She “did things to ‘plain good food’ that made it exciting and new and delightful” (*Ibid*). For example, Fisher discovers that “freshly minced herbs” can transform even the plainest fare into something delicious, and that pretty foods, such as “carrots in thin curls and toasts in crescents[,] are infinitely more appetizing than in thick chunks and squares” (*Ibid*). Ora’s cooking awakens Fisher to the idea that the gustatory and aesthetic pleasures of eating are as important as its physiological necessity. Fisher and her younger sister Anne delighted in Ora’s creations, and exclaimed over the “beautiful” and “good” dishes. These outbursts embarrassed their mother, who explained that it was “unseemly for little children to make comments about food” (361). Especially, we can assume, when such little children are female and ought to

be adopting their grandmother's culinary asceticism. Meanwhile, though, Fisher and her sister continued to share "silent glances of mutual bliss," along with (at least in Fisher's case) an increased consciousness of the possibilities of the table" (Ibid). Grandmother Holbrook's response was to worry over grocery costs (which did not increase) and the girls' health (which improved); when these worries failed to result in Ora's dismissal, she content herself with dour pronouncements about how one should "eat [food] humbly and without sinful pleasure" (Ibid).

Ora's tenure in the Kennedy household was short-lived,³⁹ but it made a lasting impression. From her, Fisher learned some practical techniques, such as that "meat hashed with a knife is better than meat mauled in a food chopper, and that care and attention to details can improve almost any dish" (361). Since her grandmother's bland fare required no comment, to even acknowledge the superior flavors of Ora's cooking was a task to which Fisher's grandmother's food rhetoric was simply inadequate. Although Ora herself does not give Fisher much of a vocabulary for talking or writing about all the pleasures food can provide, her cooking motivates Fisher's search for such a vocabulary. She provides a strong and generally positive counter-example to Fisher's grandmother, not only because she was a superior cook but also because she *enjoyed* it. During the early years of Fisher's life, her mother was largely occupied with childbearing and nursing, and so her grandmother and the various cooks the family hired served as her primary models for approaches to cooking and eating. Her grandmother and Ora in

³⁹ In fact, her tenure ended dramatically when, after a few weeks, Ora failed to return from her usual Sunday off. The family soon discovered that she had used her beloved "French knife" (the same one she used to prepare all of the delicious meals) to murder and dismember her mother, before taking her own life. Fisher presents this rather shocking event with little fanfare, as if reluctant to give credence to her grandmother's theory that taking pleasure in food was both corrupt and corrupting.

particular function, rhetorically, as two culinary poles: one characterized by ascetic detachment, and the other by almost hedonism.

The introduction of better-tasting food allows Fisher to articulate her theory of cooking and eating as socially significant activities, which she develops in detail in *The Gastronomical Me* (1943). She argues that shared meals offered a “communion of more than our bodies” (*GM* 353). In the essay “A Thing Shared,” Fisher relates a childhood journey to her Great-Aunt-Maggie’s ranch. The purpose of the visit was for Fisher’s mother to help with the summer canning, but Fisher’s most vivid memory belongs to the journey home. Her mother stayed behind to continue helping relatives, leaving Rex Kennedy to drive Fisher and Anne back to Whittier. On the way home, the trio stopped to eat at a roadside stand. Fisher claims not to remember much of what they ate, except for “a big round peach pie, still warm from [the] oven” and a jar of fresh cream (358).

Fisher acknowledges that part of the food’s appeal is its freshness (the peaches were “picked that noon”), but the real significance of the meal lay in Fisher’s recognition, for the first time, of “food as something beautiful *to be shared with people* instead of thrice-daily necessity,” as the home economists and her grandmother would have had it (*Ibid*, my emphasis). The actual components of the meal matter little in comparison to what the experience showed her about how a shared meal can encourage closeness. “That night,” says Fisher, “I not only saw my Father for the first time as a person. I saw the golden hills and the live oaks as clearly as I have ever seen them since, and I saw the dimples in my little sister’s fat hands in a way that still moves me because of the first time” (*Ibid*). Food, and the sharing of it, functions as a lens through which Fisher can articulate her surroundings and her relationships with a new clarity, perhaps because they

are so tied to a physical, material reality. By constantly positioning herself as an agent within this narrative (the repeated “I saw”), Fisher reminds us that the significant element of such experiences is the recognition of her changing attitude toward sharing meals with others. Unlike the food writing discussed in Chapter 1 which sought to eliminate any trace of the personal or idiosyncratic, Fisher insists upon it, and encourages us to position ourselves similarly--as an active participant in our gastronomic activities, rather than a passive observer or recipient.

This sort of narrative moment is typical of Fisher’s work, and characteristic of what Dana Andersen calls a “constitutive anecdote” in his 2007 book *Identity’s Strategy: Rhetorical Selves in Conversion*. Such an anecdote is not a “faithful description of something *as it is*,” but rather it offers a “description of *how it is declared to be that way*” (41, emphasis original). Andersen is interested in how authors “define themselves ‘in terms of’ the various scenes in which they place themselves” (46). We see, in moments like this from Fisher, that the power of her account lies not in the details (she can’t even remember what else they ate), but rather in how she describes the moment as one that effected a change in her--her self-conception (as well as her conception of her father and sister) shifted in this moment. Although Andersen’s case studies are primarily subjects who have undergone religious conversion, we can see some shared elements of a conversion experience in this and many other of Fisher’s personal narratives (as well as in the writings of Julia Child and Alice Waters, which I will explore in later chapters). The “converted” Fisher is more aware of and sensitive to potentially poignant moments, and this heightened awareness helps her to be more receptive to the pleasure such moments can produce. In sharing this conversion experience with readers, Fisher can

emphasize the most salient details and arrange them in a way that reveals all of the positive outcomes of a more deliberate and attentive approach to food, such as improved family relationships and deepened friendships.

Fisher does not limit her pleasure in food to sharing a meal with others, but includes her pleasure in preparing food, too. As a child, “evidently [she] loved to cook,” and she eagerly offered to prepare meals for her family members. While she claims not to “remember ever learning anything,” she does credit her mother with having “taught [her] several things” (*GM* 365). Such a statement seems, on its face, to be contradictory, but Fisher is probably simply noting the difference between the pedantic methods of home economists and scientific cooking teachers and her mother’s more casual approach in which she taught Fisher things, but “without making them into lessons” (*Ibid*). Moreover, Fisher claims not to “hear Mother’s voice saying to [her], ‘Now this is a teaspoon, and this is the way you sift flour, and warm eggs won’t make mayonnaise.’” Rather, cooking was just an everyday activity that one picked up by observation, participation, and practice, not by adherence to rules drilled into one while attending a specialized school. Indeed, Fisher’s apparently informal culinary education as a child bears little resemblance to formal cooking instruction of that era, most of which was informed by the likes of Fannie Farmer, famously fastidious about *level* measurements. As a counter to this more technical approach to cooking, Fisher suggests that learning to cook be a pleasurable, shared experience among family members, where people feel free to experiment and figure out what they most enjoy.

Having begun to enjoy cooking, Fisher often prepared whole dinners for her family, before she was even a teenager, usually with great success. Fisher includes some

culinary disasters, though, in order to promote identification among readers who may have felt alienated by the über-correctness of scientific cooking manuals or who may have been skeptical of Fisher's generally successful early attempts at cooking. Her recounting of these two disasters underlines her insistence that cooking be both creative and fun--even if the pursuit of those ends results in mediocre food or, as in the case of the first dish Fisher ever made for her mother, "pure poison." When Fisher was eleven, her mother gave birth to David, her fourth and last child. To speed her recovery, Fisher made her mother a pudding, a "little round white shuddering milky thing" that she "could not stand to present [...] in its naked state to her convalescing mother (364). So she adorned the pudding with blackberries from the backyard, and the pudding's "cool perfection leaped into sudden prettiness." Unfortunately, the berries produced a terrible allergic reaction in her mother, but "in spite of the despair," Fisher with her mother's assessment that she had created "the loveliest pudding" (364-5). This experience confirms for Fisher (and by extension, for readers) the idea that the intention behind the preparation of a dish sometimes matters more than the results themselves.

Fisher recounts one another culinary disaster, this one served to her sister Anne, which demonstrates that unbridled creativity and improvisation in the kitchen do not always produce tasty or even edible results. Despite having become an avid cookbook reader, Fisher was seldom content to just follow a recipe; she always sought to "improve on what [she] had read." One evening, having been left in charge of preparing dinner for her sister while her parents went out, Fisher eagerly prepares her version of a recipe for "Hindu Eggs." When she sees how pale and "boringly white" the curry-flavored sauce looks when she follows the directions, Fisher decides to adjust the seasoning herself. She

makes the sauce “richly darker with probably five tablespoons of the exotic powder” (366). Needless to say, the mixture proves inedibly hot, though she and Anne suffer through as much as they can manage. Her burned lips, though, pain Fisher less than the “cold [...] new knowledge that I had been stupid” (366). Such a humbling experience reminds Fisher that cooking is not *all* artistry and creativity, and so she begins to learn which rules she must follow when cooking, and which she can break. This balanced approach--a mixture of individualism, artistry, and pragmatism--characterize Fisher’s later, more mature cooking philosophy. Further, this approach again suggests to readers that they need not follow cookbook instructions or dietary advice *to the letter*, but rather that they should experiment enough to start trusting their own experience and instincts in the kitchen.

The recounting of these two debacles, though, serves an important rhetorical function. Not only does it help Fisher create identification with readers (after all, who has not experienced a similar kitchen failure?), but by sharing such potentially embarrassing information, Fisher lets readers know that she is fallible in the kitchen, too. The emphasis, in home economics and scientific cooking discourse, on rigid correctness and strict adherence to rules can come across as intimidating and even discouraging. Writing in a narrative form offers Fisher the rhetorical space to talk through these anecdotes, giving a full context and reassuring readers that even the most accomplished cooks turn out some terrible food now and then. She shows that learning to cook is, like developing a gastronomical sensibility, a matter of trying out a new strategy, figuring out what works, revising the strategy, and trying again. These strategies allow Fisher to present herself as knowledgeable and experienced and hence worth listening to, but they also

reveal that her knowledge and expertise has been hard-won, and only won through trial and error. This sort of *ethos*, along with Fisher's generally self-deprecating tone, seems likely to attract more readers than the *ethos* established in home economics and scientific cooking texts, which presented the expert as infallible and unapproachable.

After Grandmother Holbrook's passing in 1920, the family moved to a ranch outside of Whittier, and their eating habits changed dramatically. These anecdotes and personal narratives contribute to Fisher's rhetoric of desire since the retelling of this portion of her childhood both reinforces the idea that Grandmother Holbrook's eating habits led only to unhappiness. The apparent happiness of her family during these years attests to the power of tastier food. Fisher suggests that acknowledging one's hungers and sating them appropriately (not through the wan substitutes of soda crackers or boiled dressing) leads to personal as well as familial happiness and empowerment. During their first year at the Ranch,⁴⁰ Fisher's mother indulged in an "orgy of baking" and Fisher herself churns butter and makes mayonnaise, and the family in general eats as if to make up for the years of dietary restraint under Grandmother Holbrook's watch.

Furthermore, Fisher suggests in this section that cooking for one's family *can* be a source of pride and empowerment, even without proper training; she thus begins to reclaim cooking as a creative, productive site for women. Over time, as Fisher takes over more and more responsibility in the kitchen, her family began to "take it for granted that [she] would step into the kitchen at the drop of a hat" (367). She begins to derive a sense of power from cooking for her family; she learns that "the stove, the bins, the cupboards" can constitute "an inviolable throne room." Though age and experience temper this

⁴⁰ The Ranch is always capitalized in Fisher's books, though as far as I can tell it had no other official name.

attitude, Fisher concludes this section of her culinary education still avowing that “one of the pleasantest emotions is to know that I, I with my brain and my hands, have nourished my beloved few, that I have concocted a stew or a story, a rarity of a plan dish, to sustain them truly against the hungers of the world” (Ibid). As a child she delighted in showing off, but as an adult she recognizes that feeding others’ hungers involves her “brain and her hands;” in other words, cooking well is both an intellectual activity and an embodied practice. It requires mental acuity and manual dexterity, artistry and mechanical skill, and in the end what matters most is that those she feeds are pleased. With this statement, Fisher continues to position herself in opposition to home economists who valued food preparation based only on its nutritional value and the technical precision of the recipe. Further, she implies that home cooking, even if learned through trial and error or with family members (as opposed to trained experts) does require intelligence and thoughtfulness. Home economists, of course, had argued that learning cooking at home or on one’s own would perpetuate bad habits and practices uninformed by modern science. Finally, the word “truly” also suggests that real, lasting sustenance is not just a question of fulfilling physiological needs, but rather involves emotional satisfaction of a sort that technical cooking proficiency cannot provide.

Fisher’s childhood narratives make the point that cooking and eating cannot simply be reduced to techniques and procedures, and one cannot consider only the mechanical aspects of cooking, or simply the nutritional benefits of certain foods. Both pursuits require the practical application of knowledge, in this case knowledge of cooking techniques but also knowledge of eaters’ (which one might consider the cook’s “audience”) preferences and desires. In a sense, Fisher’s approach to eating and cooking

can be described as a kind of *techne* or craft--the middle ground she seeks between *haute cuisine* (pure art) and scientific cooking (pure *episteme*). Thus, I argue in the following section that a topos of *practical self-education* serves as another node in Fisher's rhetoric of desire. After all, desire for Fisher is not simply an uncomplicated, aimless physical need, but rather desire is the multifaceted hunger described above; it is a composite of our hunger for food, for security, for love. The topos of practical self-education grounds Fisher's argument that the appeasement of such hunger requires a thoughtful, systematic approach that satisfies empirically, emotionally, and intellectually, and that is grounded within the self.

Practical Self-Education: Learning the Craft of Cooking (and Eating, too)

Fisher claims that developing gastronomical intelligence is a serious undertaking that may require the re-examination of assumptions and habits held perhaps since childhood. In a sense then, what she offers in *How to Cook a Wolf* and in *Long Ago in France*, two books that showcase her own gastronomical education and argue for the possible coexistence of deprivation and pleasure, is a rhetorical re-education. She notes the flaws in the "pedagogy" of home economics and scientific cooking, and advocates instead a kind of individualized education project. She recommends that we ask ourselves whether our food habits and preferences "are not built on what [we] may have been taught when [we] were young and unthinking," rather than on convictions we came to hold through experience and deliberation (*HtCaW* 271). No matter what we conclude, "each person must evolve his own system of eating as much as possible of what he wants and needs" (276). While anyone *can* develop and enhance her gastronomic intelligence,

doing so requires dedication, perseverance, and above all thought. Thus the gastronomic education she offers is not only a new way of thinking about and conceptualizing food, but also a new set of embodied practices.

In an echo of her exhortation that we appreciate the food we eat, she urges instilling these habits early, going so far as to say that a “child should be encouraged, not discouraged as so many are, to look at what he eats, and to think about it” (321). Perhaps lamenting her own late start at gastronomical education, she recommends that children be taught to *respect* food, since it is “a sinful waste of human thought and energy and deep delight, to teach little children to pretend that they should not care of mention what they eat” (322). She concludes *How to Cook a Wolf* with a statement of the simple fact that “we must eat to live,” so “we might as well do it with grace and gusto” (350). The topos of practical self-education, which she both advocates and models in her gastronomical books, provides a line of argument through which Fisher can encourage her readers, quite simply, to think deliberately and carefully about what foods they want, and why. With this “gastronomical growth,” she promises, “will come, inevitably, knowledge and perception of a hundred other things, but mainly of ourselves” (Ibid). For a writer concerned with elaborating a rhetoric of desire--ways of talking and writing about what she wants--such self-knowledge is indispensable.

Even as a child, Fisher recognized that aesthetics can contribute powerfully to the pleasure food can offer, as the pudding example (however disastrously) illustrates. Many of her essays concentrate on the beauty of foods in their natural states or the delights of simple, uncomplicated preparations. She also extols the virtues of simple cooking and of variations on themes, such as the multitude of oyster stews she describes in *Consider the*

Oyster (1941),⁴¹ or her mother's applesauce, which was "the best" solely because she stirred "a plump lump of honest butter"⁴² into the mixture, thus adding a "rich Victorian touch" (*An Alphabet for Gourmets* 63). For those who resist eating a lot of chopped vegetables, she writes "your best procedure is one of experimentation," and follows this recommendation with half a dozen variations on vegetable soups (220-2). In the following chapter she gives only several of apparently "countless economical ways to prepare canned fish," but insists again that personal taste should govern which of these ways one should employ (225.) Throughout the entire book, she offers ideas for using up leftovers and for economizing, such as saving the juices from canned goods and repurposing them as vegetable stock.⁴³ In general, Fisher wants foods to speak for themselves, which they can do when the cook gives care and attention to highlighting their natural characteristics. Not only do such preparations increase the pleasure offered by the food itself, but they also save the cook the cook a lot of time and trouble.

Fisher's examples of these apparently simple recipes counter the precise and technical recipes emerging from scientific cooking schools and proliferating in women's

⁴¹ These stews consist almost exclusively of oysters cooked in milk and their own liquor, with a touch of butter and maybe salt stirred in at the last minute, and then the soup is served with simple crackers. Fisher seems constantly on the lookout for the simplest way of extracting the most flavor possible.

⁴² "Honest" is a word that frequently recurs in Fisher's writing, and underlines her conviction that simple, relatively unadorned food is best. It also seems to be a jab at processed, prepared, or ersatz foods (like margarine) that were becoming increasingly popular in midcentury America.

⁴³ Yet unlike the home economists' recommendations, which consist largely making strange substitutions, such as using bread crumbs to stretch scrambled eggs, or adding a cup of puffed cereal to three eggs so as to "have food for four people [...at least three of whom, I feel impelled to add, you dislike intensely and hope never to see again]" (201; brackets indicate Fisher's revisions).

magazines. She sprinkles recipes and culinary hints liberally throughout most of her books, but *How to Cook a Wolf* develops the topos of practical self-education most explicitly. Published in 1942, the book is more of a cookbook than any of her others, and its original stated purpose was to offer time- and money-saving recipes and tips for home cooks enduring the Great Depression. Certainly, many such books and recipes were published to help struggling families, but Fisher's is different because, despite the hardships, she still "wrote about food as a necessity as well as a pleasure, and was not too precise about recipes" (Reardon 2004, 146). The book's completion and publication were delayed owing to Fisher's second husband's illness and eventual suicide, but *How to Cook a Wolf* remains one of Fisher's strongest arguments for combining pleasure and pragmatism in the kitchen.

Fisher refused to be precise about ingredients; characteristic amounts for her include "a little sherry" or a "generous mixed handful" of herbs. Her imprecision functions rhetorically as encouragement to her readers to decide for themselves how much seasoning is appropriate, and is typical of her approach, in this book, to offer suggestions rather than dictate procedure. Every chapter provides how-to advice, but Fisher uses the second-person pronoun almost exclusively throughout the book, as though to create the illusion of a conversation between friends rather than the handing down of advice from an expert. The book approaches the seriousness of Depression Era and wartime shortages with a spirit of fun and adventure. In fact, she seems to find the constraints an incentive to creativity and resourcefulness--two traits that she values in a

cook.⁴⁴ More seriously, she also argues that deprivation teaches us to be more careful about the foods we buy and eat. She writes that this newfound appreciation is “good, for there can be no more shameful carelessness than with the food we eat for life itself” (*HtCaW* 188). The goal of the book, she writes, is to teach her readers “how better to exist,” regardless of economic conditions (*Ibid*).

In order to impart this lesson, Fisher advocates a different kind of balance than do home economists. She states, unequivocally, “one of the stupidest things in an earnest but stupid school of culinary thought is that each of the three daily meals should be ‘balanced’” (189). She argues that such meals, despite their balance, generally make the fewest people happy because they attempt to cover all the nutritional bases, so to speak, but pay not attention to the eater’s tastes or preferences at a particular moment. They are entirely divorced from context, both in terms of the eater’s emotional and material circumstances. She notes, too, the increased work that providing “balanced” meals creates for “family cooks” who are “whipping themselves and their budgets to the bone” in a dogged effort to conform to dietary recommendations from experts. Even her acknowledgement of the seductive powers of “exciting names” like “riboflavin [and] monosodium glutamate” along with “solemn exhortations of ‘food editors’ of all the slick magazines we read to improve ourselves” drips with sarcasm (*Ibid*). Although she herself may read those “slick magazines,” she disdains the idea that an understanding of food, at the molecular level, is the criteria for self-improvement, at least according to women’s magazines.

⁴⁴ Of course, one could also see this apparently light-hearted view of genuine deprivation as further evidence of Fisher’s elitism and relative insulation from the true horrors of the Depression.

Fisher recognizes, in other words, an exigency: she recognizes that there is a demand, probably mostly among women homemakers, for information about how best to feed a family within budgetary constraints. Rather than attempting a one-size-fits-all model for cooking and eating, though, Fisher encourages readers to create personalized eating and cooking plans *within* their own budgetary constraints. She rejects (having tried it herself) the idea that “balanced meals” are budget-friendly (192) and worse, the deadly monotony of the meals suggested by home economists. She recommends using “our minds as well as our hearts in order to survive,” rather than unthinkingly following instructions. She states, staunchly, “we must change. If the people set aside to instruct us cannot help, we must do it ourselves. We must do our own balancing, according to what we have learned and also, for a chance, according to what we have *thought*” (Ibid). So instead of simply telling home cooks what to do, Fisher exhorts them to *think* about how best to suit their family’s needs; this insistence on an *intentional* approach to cooking and eating is a thread that runs throughout Fisher’s books. As an inducement to try things her way, Fisher says “Try it. It is easy, and simple, and fun, and--perhaps most importantly--people like it” (Ibid). There is pleasure, she implies, in balancing the *day*, rather than each meal--such an approach can provide the required nutrients, it can conform to any budget, and it will satisfy individual desires. “It is all a question,” she claims,” of weeding out what you yourself like best to do, so that you can live most agreeably in a world full of an increasing number of disagreeable surprises” (197). The rhetoric of scientific cooking did not provide the kind of flexibility and creativity that economic

downturns require, and so Fisher tries to persuade people to adopt a different stance toward cooking.⁴⁵

Yet Fisher never encourages readers to deny themselves *some* form of pleasure, even when faced with the most abject poverty. Unlike the home economists, whose recommendations consist largely of combining food in strange ways to “stretch” it, Fisher prefers having “too little of the best to plenty of an inferior kind,” and advocates creating a sense of abundance by having “generous casseroles and bowls and platters” of food, even if the food itself is plain and simple, such as a vegetable salad or toast. Far better, she advises, to give people too little of a good thing than to “amplify” a soufflé by adding a cup of puffed cereal. Such artificial abundance should be reserved for those “you dislike intensely and hope never to see again” (*HtCaW* 200-1.) Fisher thus implies that culinary deception of this sort is tantamount to betrayal when practiced on friends or loved ones. She thus compels readers to view their culinary practices as deeply imbued with meaning, not simply a chore to be gotten through quickly and with little emotional investment.

As another example, Fisher writes of her friend Sue, a very poor woman who served strange salads made of wild lettuces and herbs and other scavenged items. Recounting one visit she and her husband paid to Sue, where they were served a very meager meal, Fisher nonetheless writes that Sue put it together “with thought and

⁴⁵ One of those “disagreeable surprises,” she claims, is pressurized dessert topping (an early version of Redi-Whip). Only “vaguely reminiscent of real whipped cream,” it more often creates a “fine social catastrophe when sprayed, heedlessly upright, about the room” (*HtCaW* 197). Fisher thus implies a link between so-called “convenience foods” and “social catastrophes:” foods that allow us to abdicate responsibility for thoughtful preparation leave us vulnerable to losing the camaraderie and intimacy that sharing food prepared with intention can provide.

gratitude” in such a “gracious abstracted way;” the emotional generosity made up for any material lack. Such meal preparation does not require special training, but rather “anyone in the world, with intelligence and spirit and the knowledge that it must be done, can live with her inspired oblivion to the ugliness of poverty” (255). This example illustrates, again, that the emotional investment “served” with the meal carries the same weight as the food itself.

In addition to her almost cheerful approach to deprivation, Fisher dismisses debates over the “correct” or “authentic” way to prepare a given dish and instead tells readers they “should eat according to [their] own tastes” (213). She is adamant, though, that readers learn what those personal tastes, and she continues to offer her own experience, as an adolescent and a young adult, as a model of how to develop this sort of “gastronomical intelligence” (290). These experiences are chronicled primarily in *The Gastronomical Me* and *Long Ago in France*. The accretion of personal anecdotes and examples from Fisher’s life leads to what Campbell and other scholars of women’s rhetorics regard as the “truth emerging out of women’s lived experience” (Enos 265).

As we saw in the discussion (above) of Fisher’s childhood, her early experiences with food vacillated between the extremes of the culinary asceticism practiced by her grandmother and the more decadent diet her parents adopted after 1920. In the mid-1920s, Fisher spent several years in boarding school before beginning college (which she never finished) in Illinois. These early years away from home gave Fisher some space within which to develop her own approach to eating. The one she eventually chose lies somewhere between the two culinary poles of her childhood. She eats according to own sense of balance, and is in touch enough with her mind and body to know what kinds

of foods she wants at a given moment. Some extravagances still mark Fisher's eating habits; for example, as a student at Miss Huntington's School for Girls, she saved her weekly allotment of chocolate bars and ate them slowly, voluptuously, by herself, all in one sitting, on Sunday afternoons--a practice that requires discipline and allows for indulgence (*WBKaF* 101). During her semester in Illinois, Fisher and her roommates made strange suppers of "ginger ale, rolls, cream cheese, anchovy paste, bottled 'French' dressing, and at least six heads of the most beautiful expensive lettuce [they] could find" (*GM* 384). Such meals, while unconventional and certainly not balanced by any nutritional standards, satisfy the hungers of girls homesick for food other than what could be found in the dormitory or "the little town where only snobs ate anything but cabbage, turnips, and parsnips for the winter months" (384). For Fisher in particular, accustomed to California produce and even her family's backyard orange grove, winter produce in the Midwest would have been disheartening. Yet she recalls these strange meals as "the best part of the year" she spent in Illinois, both because the strange combination sated her hunger for fresh green things, but also because she shared both the meal and the ensuing "completely helpless giggles" with her friends (*Ibid*).

Fisher relates these experiences, primarily, to illustrate her own burgeoning sense that food, to be truly satisfying, must respond to the hungers (exigencies) of the moment. As a young person, though, these hungers may have been diffuse and poorly articulated (or understood), and so other anecdotes show us Fisher's increasing confidence as her gastronomical self-education proceeds. On a trip to her university, Fisher once traveled with her uncle, a "quiet worldly man" and his son as far as Chicago (379). Anxious to appear polished and mature, at dinner she would "glance hastily at the menu and then

murmur the name of something familiar” or, when asked what she wanted, she would reply “anything.” After several such ambivalent responses, Fisher’s uncle gave a “cold speculative somewhat disgusted look,” as if to say it was hardly worth bringing her to a good restaurant if she could not be bothered to care what she ate. Recognizing that her attempts at insouciance are just hiding what she calls “gaucherie,” Fisher finally “looked at [her] menu, really looked with all [her] brain, for the first time” (381). Such an anecdote instructs the reader that real sophistication requires an intelligent engagement and deliberate attentiveness to food, devoid of apathy.

Once Fisher moves to France 1929 her first husband, food takes on a dramatically more important role in her life, and the descriptions of her years in Dijon function in her texts as the origin of her gastronomical self-education. Her childhood and adolescence offered her a taste of the pleasures food and shared meals can provide, and offered readers the reassurance that Fisher was not “born” being so articulate and thoughtful about food. They help to paint the picture of Fisher “before” her sojourn in France, which might easily be called a conversion experience, given its profound impact on the trajectory of Fisher’s life. And they also reveal a young woman trying to find her way to sophistication and elegance, and eagerly searching for some guidance.

In *Long Ago in France*, she presents herself as immersed in a culture in which food and eating are central to family and community life--the anchors of the day. France, in 1929, had recovered from World War I, but Dijon was still a provincial town where food was valuable. Fisher encounters several women while in Dijon, each of whom figures prominently in her gastronomical education, much the way Ora and her grandmother did (albeit in opposite directions). They provide a kind of informal

mentoring in cooking and eating practices that help Fisher to adopt a different rhetorical and practical stance toward cooking. They help Fisher to articulate two separate but intertwined rhetorics: a rhetoric *about* cooking and a rhetoric *of* cooking. In the first, Fisher argues for a specific approach to procuring and preparing food, and this she refines primarily while observing and learning from various culinary mentors in France. In the second, Fisher argues for a more natural and relaxed approach than that advocated by scientific cooking experts. This rhetoric of cooking relies heavily on personal experience, trial and error, and insists on the pleasures to be found in simple cooking that allows food to retain its natural properties (another rejection of scientific cooking that tends to obscure foods' natural qualities). She refines this rhetoric over the course of her lifetime.

Fisher's rhetoric *about* cooking emerges out of her time in France, when she lives with and interacts with several French families. The dealings between Fisher and these French women (including her landlords) are analogous to what Campbell describes as a process of traditional craft-learning, or a sort of "supervised internship combining expert advice with trial and error" (13). Campbell writes that "craft-related skills cannot be expressed in universal laws;" instead, "one must learn to apply them contingently, depending upon conditions and materials" (Campbell 13).⁴⁶ Furthermore, she argues that "[l]earning to adapt to variation is essential to mastery of a craft, and the highly skilled craftsman is alert of variation, aware of a host of alternatives, and able to read cues related to specific conditions" (Ibid). All of these characteristics stand in sharp contrast to the tenets of home economics education, which argue for rules and precision in the kitchen, regardless of circumstances. Very little in the curriculum of a scientific cooking

⁴⁶ Campbell also refers here to Carol McMillan's 1983 study *Woman, Reason, and Nature: Some Philosophical Problems with Feminism*.

school would help a student learn to be flexible and attentive to changes in even material conditions, let alone alterations in a family's preferences or tastes.⁴⁷ By recounting and (by extension) promoting a return to more traditional, personal ways of learning to cook, Fisher participates in a long-standing female tradition of craft-learning.

Campbell goes on to link this process of craft-learning with women's rhetorics and particularly with a "'consciousness-raising style[, which] mimics the participatory, experience-based, inductive processes of craft learning'" (qtd. in Enos 265). This style also often seeks to "substitute[] research into and comparison with the experiences of other women for mentoring" (Ibid). Since Fisher cannot literally mentor the women who might read her books, but she is relatively sure that most are not getting that sort of mentoring at home, her book offers a reasonable substitute for the kind of face-to-face interaction that she implicitly argues should be a more prominent feature of home cooking instruction. By relating her own encounters, she offers readers a glimpse into her own mentoring: by perennially casting herself as the novice, she invites readers to inhabit that role as well, and to learn from her mentors as she did.

Her first mentor/teacher is Madame Ollangnier, the Fisher's first landlord in Dijon. Madame, obsessively frugal and often vulgar to a degree that embarrasses her husband (who aspires to the upper classes), spends her days scouring the shops and markets of Dijon for whatever bruised and battered provisions she can find for the least money. For instance, she often bought the "worthless" and "greenish midgets" instead of

⁴⁷ Of course, no self-respecting home economist or scientific cook would argue that she was teaching anything called a "craft" since the entire premise of home economics and domestic science was to *elevate* women's traditional practices to the status of professional, scientific activities. For the reasons outlined in Chapter 1, however, this neglect of the "craft" aspects of homemaking led to the marginalization of traditional methods and community- or family-based knowledge.

ripe bananas, and then fixed them “somehow with cream (at half-price because it was souring) and kirsch (bought cheaply because it was not properly stamped[...])” (*LAI* 13). In spite of these humble beginnings, the dessert “would be delicious.” On Sundays, the Fishers dined with the Ollangnier’s on “good food, well cooked, seasoned with a kind of avaricious genius that could have made boiled shoe taste like milk-fed lamb *à la mode printanière*.” In fact, Fisher allows, “maybe it *was* boiled shoe...but by the time Madame got through with it, it was nourishing and full of heavenly flavor, and so were all the other courses that she wrung daily, in a kind of maniacal game, from the third-rate shops of Dijon and her own ingenuity” (19). By presenting Madame Ollangnier as a kind of culinary magician, capable of turning water into wine, so to speak, Fisher supports the argument running throughout her texts that valuable and credible culinary education can take place in all sorts of venues and circumstances, not just in those officially sanctioned institutions.

Further, Fisher’s descriptions of Madame Ollangnier’s cooking routine reveal an admiration for her frugality, but more importantly, for her resourcefulness and creativity. They echo Fisher’s admiration for Ora, who also used simple methods to transform the plainest dishes. Madame also teaches Fisher a valuable lesson in making the most out of the least since, as she discovers when she and Al move into their first apartment alone, providing meals for two people in that ancient city “meant walking endless cobbled miles from little shop to another.” Her first attempt at cooking dinner in their ill-equipped kitchen was, she remembers, “only a little less complicated than performing an appendectomy on a life raft” (145). Fisher’s characteristically deadpan tone, in both of these passages, underscores the idea that while cooking is indeed a challenge requiring

mental and physical fortitude, it should also be fun and enjoyable, for both cook and eaters.

Fisher discovers, in another echo of childhood experience, that this enjoyment is tempered when people keep silent about it, whereas honest, frank discussions about food enhance the pleasures it affords. In passages where she recounts (with evident pleasure) conversations about food, she literally gives readers models for a new rhetoric of food that values taste and desire. Monsieur Ollangnier particularly trained her in this new rhetoric, since he “introduced [her] to the name Brillat-Savarin” (16).⁴⁸ Fisher says nothing about *what* she learned about Brillat-Savarin, except to say that the family discussed both him and the meal, which “probably had been scraped up from the pavement somewhere,” “at great length” (16-17). These meals with the Ollangniers constitute “the first time I ever *talked* about food” (17, original emphasis). Her italicization of “talked” suggests that these conversations were revelatory not simply because Fisher’s upbringing had forbade discussion of food, but also because food became a serious topic of conversation, one enriched by reading, learning, and shared experience. Such conversations were vital to Fisher’s own rhetorical education and to the development of her rhetoric *about* cooking; relating the substance of these conversations contributes to her purpose of encouraging others to engage in such conversations and thus promote their own rhetorical education.

Fisher encounters other “teachers” along her route to gastronomical self-awareness, all of whom would be considered unconventional (at best) by home

⁴⁸ Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, possibly the most famous French epicure of the 19th century, published *La Physiologie du Goût* in 1823. Fisher’s 1949 translation remains the standard.

economists and scientific cooking experts. On their first night with the Ollangniers, which coincided with their three-week wedding anniversary, Fisher and her husband make the first of many trips to Aux Trois Faisans, a restaurant Madame recommends. Fisher calls their first meal there “a shy stupid one,” which she blames on their feeling “really very timid” and being relatively uneducated in French cuisine. They read over the menu, feeling “lost, naturally, but not particularly worried.” When the waiter returns to take their order, he recommends the house wines, rather than presenting them with the restaurant’s extensive wine list. Fisher recalls that it was the “only time Charles [the waiter] ever did that, but I have always blessed him for it. One of the great wines [...] would have been utterly wasted on us.” Instead, Charles started them off slowly, and “through the months watched us with his certain deft guidance learn to know what wine we wanted, and why” (33). Unlike tourists who would often order expensive bottles “through snobbism or timidity,” Fisher and her husband happily accept the waiter’s thoughtful advice, which no doubt increased their enjoyment by decreasing their anxiety about their first meal out together in France. Part of gastronomical education, Fisher realizes, involves recognizing the *limits* of her knowledge and allowing those with greater experience to guide her choices. In this case, choosing a bottle of wine to complement a meal involves knowledge both of wine and the desire for it, in a particular context and accompanying particular dishes. This anecdote shows Fisher at a very early stage of her gastronomic education, and reminds readers that letting oneself be guided by another’s experience is a surer path *to* experience.

A year after the Fishers’ arrival in Dijon, the Ollangniers abruptly decide to sell their home to the Rigoulots, a family hell-bent on squandering the last of Madame

Rigoulot's "enormous but now vanished *dot* [dowry]" on rich food and drink. Unlike Madame Ollangnier, whose thrifty example taught Fisher to economize and make the best of half-spoiled ingredients, the Rigoulots offer their boarders some of the most decadent meals that Fisher ate in France. While Fisher sometimes resists the extravagance and certainly does not suggest that the Rigoulots' culinary habits should be ordinary practice, some features of their approach to cooking inform her emerging culinary sensibility. Madame Rigoulot and Papazi, her father and a former pastry chef, ply the table daily with extravagant meals. Fisher describes the piles of soufflés and salads and sweets, heavy suppers eaten closely on the heels of the even heavier noon dinner, but the food alone is not her most vivid memory of the Rigoulots. Rather, she writes "when I think of all that [indulgence], it is the people I see. My mind is filled with wonderment at them as they were then" (*L*ai*F* 120). Despite sharing some no doubt delicious meals at their table, the lessons Fisher takes away from the Rigoulots have less to do with cooking than with an appreciation for the patience and skill it takes to prepare a truly excellent dish, rather than a facsimile. This approach contributes another facet to her rhetoric *about* cooking, since many of the habits she observes among the Rigoulots (such as the willing expenditure of time and money for an excellent meal) would have been unfamiliar, at best, to most American audiences.

The Rigoulots' treatment of cooking as an art form contributes a rhetoric about cooking that values the "artwork" on grounds other than nutritional or economic grounds. For instance, like many Burgundian families, the Rigoulots had their own method of snail preparation. As the family anticipates spring arrival of snail season, Fisher is puzzled by Papazi's grumbling that preparing snails is a "long and tedious business" (122). Ignorant

of the family's special traditions, Fisher admonishes herself (later, in print) for being "fool enough to ask, 'Why not buy them, then, all ready to eat?'" A "shocked silence" greeted this question, and the "children stared at [her]. Papazi grew pink and haughty. Finally high daughter rebuked me, very gently, 'Oh, but Madame! Nobody can prepare snails like Papazi. These store snails are good, yes--but to fix them as my father does is an art! It is an achievement!'" (122). Certainly, calling home cooking, no matter how accomplished, "artistic" would have seemed strange to American audiences who were, by this point, accustomed to the scientific rhetoric of food discourse and instruction.

Fisher even casts herself, in this essay, as one skeptical that such fastidious preparation is *really* necessary when prepared snails were widely available. She writes of how she and her husband observed and participated in the days-long process of gathering snails, starving them to rid them of any impurities, cleaning the snails and their shells, and preparing them with butter, garlic and herbs. This patience is rewarded, however, since "when we finally ate them, *les escargots d'or*, sizzling hot and delicately pungent on our little curved forks, it was clear that 'store snails' were only for those unhappy people who did not live with Papazi--or those fools too impatient to wait for his slow perfection" (123). Fisher's tone here is self-derisive, but her real message is to her readers, who should (likewise) not expect delicious dishes to result from minimal effort or carelessness. Papazi repeats this lesson in patience by preparing, most Sundays, a fruit tart for dessert. Although years of experience have enabled him to turn out delectable, beautiful tarts without much trouble, he reminds Fisher that producing such a tart "'takes years of careful behavior, like--like being the one Protestant in a nest of papists! It takes *guile!*'" (125). Cooking well, then, is not simply a matter of following recipes, no matter

how good the recipe. Fisher learns, from these examples, that cooking well requires patience, dedication, considerable practice, and perhaps above all an uncompromising commitment to high personal standards.

In short, Fisher viewed cooking and eating as complex phenomena, not singular events that can be reduced to a single consciousness or single goal, like sating hunger or meeting recommended daily vitamin intake. Thus, food choices must always be contingent on the material realities and emotional atmospheres of particular moments. They must, in rhetorical terms, be kairotic.

Gastronomical Kairos

Given Fisher's concern with personal tastes and her tendency to "revise" her attitudes and memories, it is little wonder that some of the more poignant moments in her writing derive their poignancy precisely because of their kairotic nature. To describe something as kairotic usually implies a kind of fitness or appropriateness to a particular moment. The concept of *kairos* is often distinguished from that of *chronos* in that the latter refers to chronological or quantitative time, whereas the former implies a more qualitative view of time. In kairotic moments, the actual time elapsed is inconsequential; what matters is how that time was filled.

As a component of rhetorical theory, *kairos* is concerned with rhetoric's search for relative, rather than absolute, truth. For rhetoric to be kairotic, it must take multiple perspectives into account in order to produce a "truth relative to circumstances" (Herrick 45). Above all, *kairos* is concerned with context, and with selecting the opportune moment for response to an exigency. Thus, *kairos* is often defined in relation to time and

usually signifies timeliness, or the appropriate moment for rhetorical response (Sipiora & Baumlin 1). Yet classical Greek theories of *kairos* often encompass many other non-temporal meanings, including “‘symmetry,’ ‘propriety,’ ‘occasion,’ ‘due measure,’ ‘fitness,’ ‘tact,’ ‘decorum,’ ‘convenience,’ ‘proportion,’ ‘fruit,’ ‘profit,’ and ‘wise moderation’” (Ibid). What all these possible significations have in common is a concern with suitability to a particular moment; that is, a kairotic response is one that is appropriate to a unique context or situation. Rhetorically speaking, *kairos* is often linked with invention and with choosing arguments and persuasive strategies that are somehow right for a given exigency. In this sense, *kairos* implies the need for specificity and individuation; stock or formulaic responses, or static genres, lack the necessary flexibility and suppleness to be kairotic.

Isocrates, the Greek orator who rejected the Sophists’ attempts to teach a creative process (rhetorical invention) through a series of inflexible rules, theorized *kairos* extensively. For him, *kairos* was not a trick or device, but rather a kind of building block, necessary for the development of any effective rhetoric. Furthermore, Isocrates theorized *kairos* as something of a *modus Vivendi*, applicable in situations other than just those calling for oratory. I argue, in the final section of this chapter, that Fisher’s task throughout her writing career was to describe a version of *kairos*, one in which cooks and eaters take multiple factors (nutrition one among many that might include tradition, community, taste, etc.) into account when making food choices. The formulaic and static recommendations of the home economists and domestic scientists form a kind of inflexible rhetoric of cooking and eating that is simply inadequate to meet the needs of a

wide variety of people, largely because it was so *akairotic*--so out of touch with the particular, mutable circumstances that motivate daily eating choices.

Fisher's rhetoric, by emphasizing pleasure, practicality, and self-knowledge, displays more flexibility and capaciousness. Like Plato, perhaps, she would reject the notion that tricks or devices for cooking and eating (in her case, those tricks might be so-called convenience foods, like readymade dips⁴⁹) are effective educational tools for cooks and eaters. Yet she recognizes that moments which were gastronomically kairoic for her might not necessarily be so for others. Just as Sipiora and Baumlin point out, in their discussion of *kairos*, that "each discourse must be shaped in immediate response to the present occasion," so Fisher realizes that cooking and eating decisions must always be made in response to the exigencies of a particular moment (6). Furthermore, as Sipiora and Baumlin claim that since "rhetorical theory cannot cast its net over the unforeseen, unpredictable, and uncontrollable moments," neither can food choices be made in the abstract, without consideration of the individual and her circumstances. Every rhetorical act is an act of "reinvention" (Ibid). The same might be said for meals: as monotonous as daily cooking becomes for almost all of us, at some point, it is a daily opportunity to respond anew to a familiar (but also slightly altered) exigency. The essays I examine in this section illustrate moments when a certain food or dish was simply *right* for the specific and unrepeatable occasion, given all of the other contextual elements, including time, place, company, and mood. Several of these essays are among Fisher's most

⁴⁹ Fisher rails hilariously against dips in *With Bold Knife and Fork*. It seems that they epitomize the kind of lazy cookery she abhors. She gives a litany of reasons for her abhorrence, including "men don't like them," but the real problem seems to be the image of "all kinds of wafers and chips and vegetables and plastic skewers dabbling in a common bowl, and often breaking off in it." She concludes, "down, down to hell itself, I said, with dips" (*WBKaF* 17).

famous and widely read and they are examples of Fisher's characteristically understated way of showing by example and personal experience, rather than telling or instructing. They teach us that decisions about food and eating are best made in context, and in response to particular needs or hungers.

Furthermore, these essays show how food and the experience of eating it (alone or with others) can nourish more than just the body, and satisfy more than just physical hunger. It can satisfy a whole matrix of physiological, emotional, and spiritual hungers. Although she often describes food and meals themselves in rather sensuous detail, the context is always equally important. She calls attention to the intensely personal nature of each of these moments, further underlining her point about the necessity of self-knowledge and the relative nature of hunger. The "truth" of our gastronomic needs will be personal and idiosyncratic, perhaps even unpredictable at times. Ultimately, these moments are about more than simply the food consumed; indeed, sometimes the food seems like an afterthought, just as it did in the anecdote (above) about eating peach pie and ice cream with her father and sister. Here, food provides the occasion for gathering, and it acquires meaning because of its having been situated in a particular context; its meaning is contingent, and therefore unrepeatable.

Fisher often comments on the kairotic nature of meals taken at certain milestones in her life. For instance, when she and Al first arrive in France in 1929, they travel by train from Cherbourg (where their boat docked) to Paris. Onboard the train, Fisher finds herself eating "not the best meal of [her] life, but the most important one" (*Last House*

798).⁵⁰ Although “the gastronomical quality of the food in that meal, of course, had very little to do with its importance,” she recognizes herself, as she eats, as a “thinking human being instead of a healthy young animal” (798, 796). Given Fisher’s career-long insistence that we approach food thoughtfully and purposefully, it should hardly surprise that a meal prompting her to see feeding herself as an intellectual as well as physiological activity should be one that “came to have the greatest significance in the pattern of [her] life” (798). But again: the food itself does not prompt such a revelation. The meal takes on special import because she ate it “at the Right Moment” (Ibid).

Some such “right moments” are right simply because they are the ideal response to a particular hunger. In an essay titled “The Pale Yellow Glove,” published in 1937’s *Serve it Forth*, Fisher announces that “once at least in the life of every human [...] comes a moment of complete gastronomical satisfaction” (83). She does not go on to describe the most exotic or decadent meal she ever ate, nor does she recount a time when extreme hunger was sated. Instead, she highlights the kairotic nature of these moments by suggesting that they come almost as a surprise to participants. She shares her own and others’ descriptions of moments when food was uniquely and completely satisfying, and when the significance of the moment was “inspired by [...] high emotional pressure” (84). For example, she writes of Miss Lyse, an English teacher that Fisher and her husband knew in Dijon. The story of a picnic that Miss Lyse, her mother, and a friend shared with “three--young--gentlemen--from--the--*Schloss*” is told almost entirely in Miss Lyse’s voice, to the point that Fisher’s voice hardly intrudes at all, except to offer

⁵⁰ Julia Child experienced a similarly revelatory moment on the way to Paris from the boat dock, only in her case it was at a restaurant called La Couronne in Rouen, and by most accounts she ate *sole meunière*, the famous dish of delicate white fish served in *beurre blanc*.

brief descriptions of Miss Lyse's person (85). Fisher's choice to almost absent herself from this tale tells us plainly that this is *Miss Lyse's* tale to tell, not Fisher's, and so we are made to understand again the radically personal nature of these stories.

The climax of Miss Lyse's story comes with the description of the tea her mother made, using "sparkling water" from a little nearby brook. Miss Lyse exclaims, "I never *never* have such tea tasted! (86, original emphasis). She continues, asserting that this tea

was like no tea before--or since. I have often boiled the water from brooklets, and poured it over the same brand of tea, *and* in my dear mother's silver teapot that to India twelve times went. But that tea, that summer afternoon near Garmisch, with dear mamma and Tanya and the three young gentlemen--and the little flowers, and I remember the poor yellow gloves--

(Ibid)

Miss Lyse's narrative emphasizes the singularity of the experience ("no tea before--or since"); even when she subsequently tried to recreate every detail of the experience, she cannot quite capture it. Her repeated use of the adjective "that" and the clarity of her memories are features that help to highlight the uniqueness of the experience. Of course, it seems likely that the tea itself, when boiled with similar water and the same tea in the same teapot, probably *does* taste the same, but Fisher implies here (through Miss Lyse) that flavor is not solely a chemical property of food. Food (or, in this case, tea) becomes the repository of a whole host of memories and sensations. In re-creating the tea, Miss Lyse attempts to recapture the whole emotional landscape of the picnic. She fails, of course, because the tea itself was kairotic: intensely appropriate to the moment and now the most tangible memory of the day. This section of the essay reads almost like a monologue, which allows Fisher to signal just how intensely personal and radically contingent these moments of gastronomical kairos are.

Similarly, several of Fisher's own essays also illustrate the impossibility of recreating a poignant or significant moment, even when the finest details are reproduced. In her famous essay "The Standing and the Waiting," Fisher narrates another evening spent at Les Trois Faisans, the first restaurant she and Al visited on their first night in Dijon. Only this time around, Fisher is six years older, living in southern California, and traveling in France with her now-husband, Timmy Parrish. Earlier in the day, she and Parrish had met with the restaurant's owner to reserve a table and request that Charles, the same waiter who gracefully shepherded her and Al through the intimidating wine list years earlier, serve them.

Upon arriving at the restaurant later that evening, though, Fisher notes that nothing is the quite the same, even though many of the same dishes appear on the menu and the same patrons sit at the tables. Worse, besides catching a whiff of "bad air" from the kitchen, Fisher is mortified when her "perfect waiter," who turns out to be drunk, spills "wine on the tablecloth and soup on the saucers" (*SiF* 65, 68). Over the course of the evening, though, Charles steadies himself and the meal ends well...at least until Fisher learns that Ribaudot, the restaurant owner, had fired Charles earlier in the day, just prior to Fisher's first visit. He explains, "it was sad--a fine waiter once, a brave little man always--but what will you do? Everything changes. Everything passes" (73). Fisher offers no commentary on this sad assessment, but her own tears at the end of the essay⁵¹

⁵¹ The essay concludes, "I began to cry" (74). Certainly, one could argue that Fisher is mourning far more than Charles's losing his job. Visiting the restaurant was a reminder, perhaps, of all the excitement and hopes she felt early in her first marriage, but also a reminder of its eventual dissolution, much of which was owing to what biographers speculate was Al Fisher's emotional indifference to his wife, which became apparent almost immediately after their wedding.

corroborate Ribaudot's words. While the dinner she and Parrish shared was special in its own way, she could not recapture the past experience. Whatever allures or magic Aux Trois Faisans held for her belonged to an irretrievable moment in the past. Dining there now might satisfy new and different hungers, but not her hunger for those youthful emotions.⁵²

By presenting her return to this restaurant, the site of so much gastronomical learning, as something of a failure, Fisher again insists upon the radical contingency of these kairotic moments, which seem to be unpredictable and only identifiable after the fact, and even then hard to define completely. She admits, "sometimes it is hard to say, even from remembrance, just what magic chord has sounded for you with the right blending of time, space, and the physical sensation of eating" (87). For her, "there is one time, one souvenir" of eating, that I can keep with impunity throughout all seasonal changes"⁵³ (87). During her sojourn in France, she belonged to the local chapter of the Alpine Club and often participated in the group's outdoor and gustatory outings. She claims to have felt generally "rather lonesome, foreign" while on these outings until one day, as she stood shivering on top of a hill, and "old general" in the club offered her some chocolate, saying only, "Here! Try some of this, young lady." Although "he had never done more than bow" to her, she accepts the chocolate and eats it. At first the bitter

⁵² It is certainly tempting to compare Fisher's "food memories" to that most famous food memory--Marcel Proust's tea and madeleines. Fisher's stories seem to move in the opposite direction, though--rather than food conjuring up the past, eating the same foods seems only to make the past seem more remote. For more on this subject, see David E. Sutton's *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory*, which explores the relationships among food, memory, and culture.

⁵³ An interesting turn of phrase, since a souvenir is usually a physical object you take away from a place to which you aren't likely to return soon. Eating, of course, we return to day after day in practice, but Fisher suggests that past meals are irretrievable.

chocolate breaks into “separate, disagreeable bits, [and she] began to wonder if [she] could swallow them. Then they grew soft, and melted voluptuously into a warm stream down [her] throat” (88).

The experience alone might be worthy of note; perhaps this was Fisher’s first taste of French chocolate (if that is what it was), or perhaps simply the surprise of something disagreeable becoming delightful was worth recording in such sensory detail. For Fisher, though, the chocolate--its taste and surprisingly pleasant texture--tells only part of the story. The more significant event occurs when a “little doctor,” presumably another member of the Alpine Club, “came bustling up” (Ibid). He cries, “Never eat chocolate without bread, young lady! Very bad for the interior, very bad!” He goes on to rebuke the old general, telling him he is “remiss” for offering chocolate without bread (Ibid). The general offers to trade, bread for chocolate, and Fisher describes their snack:

We sat gingerly, the three of us, on the frozen hill, looking down into the valley where Vercingetorix had fought so splendidly, we peered shyly and silently at each other and smiled and chewed at one of the most satisfying things I have ever eaten. I thought vaguely of the metamorphosis of bread and wine.

(88)

As she often does, Fisher situates herself physically (“on the frozen hill, looking down into the valley”) and historically. The Club had just climbed a hill near Les Laumes-Alésia, the site of Vercingetorix’s famous stand against the Roman army led by Julius Caesar. The most important feature of this moment, though, is the strange “communion” this trio of strangers shares, despite having so little in common (presumably, at this point, even language--it took Fisher some months to be comfortable with French). Fisher suggests that while the bread and chocolate are tasty and probably complement one

another well, the experience is so satisfying because it is shared.⁵⁴ Additionally, Fisher highlights the utility and value of multiple perspectives; by recording dialogue and allowing these men to speak in their own voices, she downplays her own role as expert or authority. Instead she is a fellow participant in an experience only possible through the confluence of these three separate bodies and minds.

Of course, not all kairotic food experiences need to feature multiple perspectives, or even multiple people. Much of Fisher's work, especially later in life, takes seriously the practice of cooking and eating for one.⁵⁵ She writes unapologetically, "There are few people alive with whom I care to pray, sleep, dance, sing, or share my bread and wine"⁵⁶ (*An Alphabet for Gourmets* 577). Though such an attitude might be fairly characterized as misanthropic (and Fisher admits as much), Fisher seems most invested in "car[ing] for [her]self, at least at table." After spending some years alone following her second husband's suicide, Fisher "came to believe that since nobody else dared feed [her] as [she] wished to be fed," she would simply have to do it herself (577). The word "dared" suggests perhaps that Fisher's appetites were unusual, and certainly that they would have

⁵⁴ I am reluctant to push the Eucharistic imagery here too far, but there is a reference, at least in the Episcopal service, to the Eucharist as a "memorial of our Redemption." (Interestingly, Fisher's family was Episcopalian--the lone Episcopalians in Whittier, a town settled and primarily populated, during Fisher's childhood, by Quakers.) There is the suggestion here that these three people, united by nothing except this particular moment in time, are somehow commemorating the moment of the Gallic army's last stand against the Romans, just as the Last Supper was Christ's last meal before His crucifixion at the hands of the Romans.

⁵⁵ Although she did marry a third time (to Donald Friede, the father of her younger daughter), the death of Timmy Parrish, her second husband, was an emotional blow from which Fisher never recovered. Ever after, she referred to herself as a "ghost of a person."

⁵⁶ This last item, again with Eucharistic overtones, is probably yet another reference to Fisher's conviction that "there is a communion of more than our bodies" when we eat together.

surprised prospective lovers and friends. Yet rather than modify or restrain her hungers, Fishers vows to satisfy them herself. After all, Fisher's insistence that we recognize and understand our desires has mostly to do with her firm belief that we must care for ourselves *as we wish to be cared for*, not as others tell us we should be.

Fisher describes what she calls "secret eating" in the essay "Borderland," published in *Serve it Forth*, and this "secret eating" serves as something of a composite for her ideas about responding to personal hungers and deriving pleasure from foods, however unusual. After Al finished his doctorate in Dijon, the Fishers lived for a time in Strasbourg, on the German border. After a few weeks of freezing temperatures in a "cramped dirty apartment," they move themselves into a far more expensive boarding house where Fisher first "discovered how to eat little dried sections of tangerine" (*SiF* 26-7). The pleasure itself is "inexplicable," so she only tells how they are prepared (*Ibid*). The process itself is simple. Fisher dries peeled sections of tangerine on her radiator. When they are hot and plump, she sets them "for a few minutes on the packed snow of the sill," then eats them (27). She concludes the essay:

I cannot tell you why they are so magical. Perhaps it is that little shell, thin as one layer of enamel on a Chinese bowl, that crackles so tinily, so ultimately under your teeth. Or the rush of cold pulp just after it. Or the perfume. I cannot tell. There must be someone, though, who knows what I mean. Perhaps everyone does, because of his own secret eatings.

(28)

The inability to articulate just what she finds so compellingly delicious about the tangerine sections might seem to contradict my earlier contention about the necessity, according to Fisher, of understanding and articulating one's culinary desires. But while Fisher might not be able to describe precisely the mechanism through which she derives pleasure from the tangerine sections, she does make clear that the pleasure is not *just* a

function of taste, nor just texture, but rather from the whole process of preparing the sections, waiting for them to “cook” and then chill, and then eating the sections, just for herself. By not explaining (or even entirely understanding) why she enjoys this strange little snack, Fisher implies again the intensely individual nature of gastronomic pleasures. She makes no attempt at suggesting that what pleases or nourishes her should do the same for others, but she *does* encourage us to discover and (occasionally) indulge our own “secret eatings,” if they give us pleasure.

Interestingly, Fisher adopts an instructive mode in the writing of this essay: she uses the second person, and most of her sentences are commands (“Listen to the chambermaid thumping up the pillows”) or suggestions (“After you have put the pieces of tangerine on the hot radiator, it is best to forget about them”) (27). Yet these instructions are ultimately only for herself; it hardly seems likely that she would recommend others prepare the same snack since that would undermine the entire point of devising food experiences that satisfy personal desires.

When the sections are ready, she revels in sitting “all afternoon[...], looking down on the corner,” watching as “children come home from school” or “a basketful of Dutch tulips stations itself by the tram-stop, ready to tempt tired clerks at six o’clock” (Ibid). There is a tinge of sadness to this moment, whatever pleasure it affords; Fisher’s biographers note that her marriage, by this point, was starting to falter and Fisher no doubt felt intensely lonely, stranded at home in yet another foreign city while her husband worked long hours at the university to make ends meet. The tangerine sections, by giving her something to do, something to look forward to, and something to enjoy, are perhaps especially kairotic because they are antidotes to the long, lonely afternoons.

Like this simple pleasure of the tangerine sections, many of Fisher's fondest food memories, and those that seem particularly kairoitic, involve simple preparations wherein the food speaks for itself, rather than being overpowered by sauces or other obfuscating devices, such as the salad molds, popular with home economists in the World War II era, which rendered vegetables nearly unrecognizable. For instance, she writes on several occasions of the delight of eating fresh-picked garden peas while living at Vevey in Switzerland, during her second marriage. Her parents had come to visit from California, and the family spent much of the day working in the garden, mostly picking and shelling peas. As Fisher stands in the kitchen, preparing the peas, she looks toward the table where

[t]here sat most of the people in the world I loved, in a thin light that was pink with Alpen glow, blue with a veil of pine smoke from the hearth. Their voices sang with a certain remoteness into the clear air, and suddenly from across the curve of the Lower Corniche a cow in Monsieur Rogivue's orchard moved her head among the meadow flowers and shook her bell in a slow, melodies rhythm, a kind of hymn. My father lifted up his face at the sweet sound, and his fists all stained with green-pea juice, said passionately, "God, but I feel good!" I felt near to tears.

(AfG 666)

Clearly, the poignancy of this moment--enough to prompt Rex Kennedy, never one to voice emotions, to make this proclamation--is not simply a result of the peas, which are themselves no gastronomical marvel. The preparation Fisher describes consists only of quickly steaming the peas and then tossing them with some sweet butter. Rather, the good, simple, honest (to use one of Fisher's highest terms of praise) food, good company, and the bucolic scene combine in such a way to produce these feelings of health and well being. Fisher does not resort to culinary sleights of hand or even artistry to make the peas especially memorable, but she does treat them with a kind of respect--gathering them at

the peak of ripeness and serving them relatively unadorned. With such treatment, the peas enable her and her guests to feel “what really mattered, what piped the high unforgettable tune of perfection,” and Fisher writes that the whole experience of sharing “fresh green garden peas, picked and shelled by my friends, to the sound of a cowbell” constitutes her idea of “heaven” (Ibid). They are, like the tangerine sections in Strasbourg, the right things at the right moment.

Other foods serve more immediate needs, and are described in equally kairotic terms. The subject of invalid cookery was a favorite of both scientific cooking experts like Fannie Farmer (who devotes whole chapters to it in the *Boston Cooking School Book*) and Fisher’s Grandmother Holbrook, but Fisher seems to want to avoid it. She does, however, acknowledge the value what we might today call comfort foods that, whatever their nutritional benefits, are often just the thing for moments of illness or injury, whether of the body or the heart. She recounts an instance of a (physical) childhood illness: a despairing young Mary Frances had all but persuaded herself that her family had forgotten her upstairs, “weak, starved, almost sobbing, *alive*” (*WBKaF* 40, original emphasis). Her mother finally brings a bowl “of the most beautiful soup,” which is simply beef broth with some morsels of meat and vegetables in the bottom of the bowl. The “magic potion” revives her spirits, if not her body, entirely, and the gesture convinces her that “Fate could not harm” her (41). Similarly, milk toast and mashed potatoes with ketchup occupy similarly esteemed places in Fisher’s memory, not because either is particularly delicious, but because, at a certain moment in her life, the dishes comforted her and satisfied her (100-1). She denies that any single food could be the right dish for all illnesses, or even that the same food will always soothe in the same way. She

would probably claim, in fact, that no such universally comforting or appealing foods exist, since each will be experienced differently, depending on circumstances. Illness or injury provokes hungers just like any other human experience, and so feeding these particular hungers must be approached with the same care.

These kinds of kairotic gastronomical experiences are the payoff the self-awareness and self-education that Fisher advocates elsewhere, as an alternative to blindly following scientific advice and recommendations. The problem is not, of course, *that* such advice and recommendations are scientific, but simply that they are coming from those who are, in large part, wholly unconnected with the circumstances of their audience's daily lives, and ignorant of their audience's particular needs and desires. Fisher argues that if we allow that kind of external power to engineer eating choices and thereby devalue the pleasure derived from them, we essentially allow ourselves to be robbed of the chance to experience moments where food becomes both complementary and integral. That is, we miss out on moments when food completes and enhances an occasion simply by suiting it, on a multitude of physical and emotional levels for which the discourse of quantification simply does not--indeed, can not--account.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by dividing Fisher's rhetoric of desire into three components: pleasure, practical self-education, and gastronomical kairos. But the ensuing pages have surely demonstrated that these are fairly slippery categories. Indeed, these topoi are so thoroughly interconnected as to be almost inseparable from one another; any piece of evidence for a particular topos could easily be used as evidence for another. In a sort of

ecological relationship, they each inform and affect each other, so that experiencing kairotic moments leads to pleasure, and recognizing what one finds pleasurable, gastronomically speaking, requires some self-education. And then, of course, the heightened awareness that self-education makes possible renders these moments even more pleasurable. Trying to unravel this tangle, though, is perhaps beside the point. By presenting her own gastronomical life as such a complex web of feelings, thoughts, needs, and desires, Fisher shows her readers that there is no simplifying the process of feeding ourselves, despite the promises of domestic science. The process cannot be boiled down into a set of rules or scientific recommendations that will suit everyone, always, everywhere. Feeding ourselves well requires a serious commitment of body, mind, and heart, at least two of which the discourse of quantification tried to remove from the equation, largely through their efforts to “professionalize” the discourse. Fisher’s adoption of a rhetorical style incorporating both feminine (personal anecdotes, emotion) and masculine (technical instruction and unabashed discussions of pleasure) allows her, rhetorically speaking, to present her own life as a model of gastronomical education in an inspirational and encouraging way.

By relying on her own testimony and anecdotal evidence, Fisher also downplays her role as an authority. The almost relentless recounting of memories and personal experiences argues, on just about every page, for the necessarily radical contingency of personal gastronomy. Although it is tempting to read Fisher as an expert (and in some ways, she did become one), her writing very rarely suggests that she views herself as such, or imagines that readers will follow her *advice* the way they might follow the advice in regular cookbooks or domestic manuals. Since stories of her own cooking

experience and recipes are integrated into longer personal narratives, Fisher's texts reify the notion that cooking and eating must be part of our identity, not just a task we undertake when we are "lured [to the kitchen], willy-nilly, by the piping of [...] empty stomachs" (*SiF* 17). The texts themselves reflect the interweaving she advocates. So while readers could certainly try to follow the example of her life, as it is presented in the books, she is careful to give readers considerable agency in terms of what features they might adopt. Her tendency to offer numerous variations and options for her recipes, and the frequency with which she employs phrases like "what you have on hand" or "what you like" further dilute whatever authoritative, instructive tone might linger.

However, it remains clear that Fisher wants to educate her readers to follow at least the example of learning to know what they like to eat, and why. She often seems puzzled by Americans' general detachment from cooking and eating, and wrote in 1972 (in an article published in *Vogue* magazine), that "it seems strange that all this [attentiveness to food] has to be taught. It should come from a natural awareness" (*A Stew or a Story* 139). However, since "our culture is increasingly unnatural," we must be taught, again, how to approach food and cooking with intention, purpose, and thoughtfulness. Although she never explicitly declares herself as such, she becomes a rhetorical educator--offering readers a new way of thinking and talking about food. Her way is purposeful and pragmatic, taking the whole person into account, and thus provides a real rhetorical alternative to a discourse valuing only numbers and data. Moreover, her feminine style helps to reclaim some space for home cooks (probably mostly female, at least while she was writing) who may have felt marginalized by the technical, masculine style of home economics and scientific cooking discourse. Finally, her rhetoric of desire

accounts for pleasure and appetite in a way that quantitative rhetorics do not, and such an accounting reinstates the thinking, feeling human as the authority where food is concerned, rather than the hungry animal who needs a trained expert to tell her what to eat.

According to Fisher, finding suitable responses to hungers can be quite complex, despite the home economists' efforts at reducing those responses to a simple equation. To create a rhetorical purpose for themselves, the home economists had tried to complicate the exigency: they turned the questions "what to eat" and "how to cook it" into problems of paralyzing complexity, solvable only by those with specialized training. The exigency for Fisher, on the other hand, is quite simple: "All men are hungry. They always have been. They must eat" (*HiCaW* 322). Yet simply "eating," without thought or attention, will not suffice. "When they deny themselves the pleasures of carrying out that need, they are cutting off part of their possible fullness, their natural realization of life, whether they are rich or poor" (*Ibid*). To eat according to another's dietary rules, instead of purposefully creating one's own, constitutes for Fisher a denial of life. What her extensive oeuvre offers, then, is the almost exhaustive self-portrait of a woman who did create her own gastronomical rules, and she encourages us to follow her example.

Chapter 3

“Taste Analytically”: Julia Child’s Constitutive Rhetoric

In a letter of March, 1958 you yourself spoke of the revised project as a ‘short simple book directed to the housewife chauffeur’. The present book could never be called this. It is a big, expensive cookbook of elaborate information and might well prove formidable to the American housewife. She might easily clip one of these recipes out of a magazine but be frightened by the book as a whole.

November 6, 1959

Letter from Houghton-Mifflin, rejecting Child & Beck’s manuscript

We must accept the fact that this may well be a book unacceptable to any publisher, as it requires work on the part of the reader. NOBODY has ever wanted to publish ANY of our recipes in any publication whatsoever.

November 1959

Letter from Julia Child to her co-author, Simone Beck, and friend Avis DeVoto

Criticism of other chefs and their recipes is *de rigueur* in the hyper-competitive food world, but for the most part Julia Child was and remains exempt. *Time* magazine profiled Child in a 1966 cover story, and the reporter gushed that female viewers “adore” her and “won’t dine out” on the nights her show aired. Even men who have no interest in cooking watch her for “pure entertainment.” Toward the end of her life, and certainly

since her death in 2004, articles proclaiming that she “started” the food revolution in America, and that she almost single-handedly inverted gender stereotypes about food preparation have abounded (Lerhman, Strauss). On her 90th birthday in 2002, the Smithsonian Institute, which now houses the kitchen from her Cambridge, Massachusetts home, proclaimed her a national treasure. Indeed, even the very few who criticize Child on the grounds of her minimal professional training or who scoff at her (not infrequent) gaffes would find it hard to dispute the influence she has had on American culinary discourse.

Yet Julia Child—and her ground-breaking cookbooks—barely escaped obscurity, as the above epigraphs attest. The original publisher, in what Karen Lerhman called one of the “major bloopers in publishing history,” rejected the manuscript for what became Volume 1 of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* on the grounds that they could not imagine a book-buying audience for such an unwieldy tome (Lerhman 60). No one at Boston’s WGBH television station expected a low-budget show demonstrating obscure cooking techniques to draw very many viewers, especially given Child’s stature (she was 6’2” and not conventionally pretty) and warbling voice. In the midst of her publishing woes, in the very late 1950s, Child herself at times seemed content with a future of offering cooking classes out of her home kitchen. At several moments in her posthumously published autobiography *My Life in France* (2006), she mentions looking forward to her husband’s retirement from diplomatic service so she could get back to a quiet life of “self-training and teaching” (290). And besides, American culinary culture in the 1950s, obsessed with reducing the time and labor associated with domestic work,

seemed unlikely to embrace a woman who advocated a method of cooking that, however rewarding the results, demanded considerable time and energy from the cook.

Of course, this longed-for quiet life did not happen: the book found a publisher, it sold well, and the television show became the first public television program to win an Emmy award. How, in a culture awash with convenience foods, convinced that home cooking was a dying art, and suspicious of anything described as “gourmet,” did Julia Child and her cookbooks triumph?

Certainly, Julia Child was lucky, and she often said as much. Nancy Verde Barr, longtime executive chef for Child’s appearances on *Good Morning America*, wrote in her memoir *Backstage with Julia* that Child always said “I just happened to come along at the right time. If it hadn’t been me, someone else would have done it” (Barr xiv). Her position among the relatively sophisticated diplomatic corps, and later among the American intelligentsia in Cambridge, Massachusetts, helped her insofar as she knew (or got to know) people who were in a position to buy and even help sell her book. Despite somewhat awkward physicality, she had a vivacious, likeable personality that drew television viewers to her. And history was on her side: the war was over, Europe was rebuilding but its currencies were still relatively weak against the dollar, and so travel to France was increasingly affordable for middle- and upper-class families. In an added stroke of historical good fortune, the young, charismatic President Kennedy and his glamorous wife (herself a Francophile) set trends that middle-class Americans, especially women, eagerly followed. So when the Kennedys hired a French chef for the White House, French cuisine became synonymous with high-class sophisticated dining. In retrospect, it is little wonder that scholars and historians like David Strauss and even

Child herself have argued that there was just something in the air, and the time was simply “right” for someone to publish a how-to manual for French cooking.

Such zeitgeist-based explanations, though, initially seem unsatisfying from a rhetorical perspective. They ignore the possibility of a real exigency in favor of a vague cultural current that Child somehow managed to access or tap into, and in so doing they reduce Child’s rhetorical achievement to mere luck or happenstance. It seems unlikely that Child would have been very aware of American cultural trends, since she had lived abroad for most of the 1940s and all of the 1950s, beginning with her posting to China with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during the war. After a brief stint in the United States (during which she married Paul Child, whom she had met in China), the couple left for France in 1948. They remained in Europe almost continuously until June of 1961.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the Childs prided themselves on becoming immersed in local culture: learning the language, eating the food, sharing in the customs.⁵⁸ Their joint disdain for Senator Joseph McCarthy’s anti-Communist fervor and what they viewed as the generally conservative leanings of American politics in the 1950s put them increasingly out of sync with both mainstream American culture and most of Child’s

⁵⁷ The Childs lived in Paris from 1948-1953, and were then transferred briefly to Marseilles from 1953-54. They lived in Bonn, Germany (Child’s least favorite posting, by far) from 1954-56. They then spent two years back in Washington, D.C., which was typical for Foreign Service officers. Their final overseas posting was to Oslo, where they lived from 1958-1961, before returning to the U.S. permanently and settling in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

⁵⁸ In addition to their general antipathy about living in Germany with the horrors of the Nazi regime still fresh in their minds, they found the accommodations particularly galling: they were assigned to live in an all-American compound called Plittersdorf. They never found much to admire in German cuisine, and hated doing their shopping at the U.S. commissary.

California-based immediately family.⁵⁹ Given how little first-hand sense she would have had of American popular culture, and how consciously she tried to distance herself from it, it is difficult to argue convincingly that she (or her co-authors, for that matter) would have seen evidence in popular culture that the American public, immersed as it was in a food culture that emphasized convenience and efficiency, had a serious interest in learning to cook French food. Yet Child was convinced that once people tasted French food and, perhaps even more crucially, realized that they could produce it themselves, they would be converted, as Child had been upon her arrival in France.⁶⁰ And somehow, her text proved *kairotic*, insofar as it offered the right response at the right moment, even if that moment was only identifiable and describable after the fact. Although neither Child nor publishers would claim that a large number of French cuisine enthusiasts emerged as a *response* to the book, they would probably claim that such enthusiasts were *created* because of the book.

There were considerable challenges, including the fact that few precedents existed for instruction like hers, and several other authors had made unsuccessful attempts to

⁵⁹ Paul himself was recalled to Washington in 1955 and “investigated” by two of McCarthy’s cronies for his liberal, pro-European views. Although he was exonerated, the episode left a bad taste in both Paul and Julia’s mouths, and convinced them to get out of government service as soon as was practical. The records from these investigations were somewhat suspiciously destroyed in 1986. See Fitch, 225-229 and Jennet Conant, *A Covert Affair: Julia Child and Paul Child in the OSS* (2011).

⁶⁰ In a well-chronicled anecdote, Child and her husband arrived in France, and stopped in Rouen for lunch on their way to Paris from Cherbourg. Child ordered *sole meunière*, and the buttery, lemony sauce (*beurre blanc*) overwhelmed her palate such that she always dated her culinary awakening to that moment. After the lunch, she wrote, “Paul and I floated out the door into the brilliant sunshine and cool air. Our first lunch together in France had been absolute perfection. It was the most exciting meal of my life” (Child & Prudhomme 24).

persuade Americans to cook and eat French cuisine. Several chefs and cookbook authors had already attempted to capitalize on American's fascination with all things French, albeit with little success, including Dione Lucas, an Englishwoman and the first woman graduate of the Cordon Bleu Cooking School in Paris, which Julia Child would begin attending in 1950. Lucas published several cookbooks, including *The Cordon Bleu Cookbook* (1947), and she was the first woman featured on a televised cooking show, beginning in 1948. However, neither of her shows was long-lived, and her cookbooks enjoyed only modest sales. Later, Child would criticize Lucas's books in a letter to her co-author Simone Beck, calling one published in 1956 "sloppy" (qtd. in Fitch 231). In general, Child felt that Lucas's books, like many on the market, did not offer sufficient technical instruction to an audience long out of practice with basic culinary techniques. Joseph Donon, chef and founder of Les Amis d'Escoffier Foundation, also published *The Classic French Cuisine* in 1960 (the coincidence of dates gave Child and her co-authors a scare, since their book was due out the next year), but it made little impact. And although Elizabeth David, another Englishwoman and prolific cookbook author, would also publish *French Provincial Cooking* in 1960, just a year before *Mastering*, Child continued to believe that no book yet existed which actually *taught* Americans how to cook in the French way. Many recipe collections existed, but no true manuals.

Herein lay precisely the problem, and it was a rhetorical one. Publishing houses like Houghton Mifflin and most major women's magazines that might feature recipes (such as *McCall's* or *House Beautiful*) did not think Child's long, detailed, and often labor-intensive recipes would appeal to their audiences at all. In other words, they told her, there was no audience for such a book. At the start of Child's and Beck's meeting

with Houghton Mifflin publishing executives in late February of 1958, one executive even “muttered something like, ‘Americans don’t want an encyclopedia, they want to cook something quick, with a mix’” (Child & Prudhomme 277). Convincing an American audience to use their book would have to wait; first, Child and her co-authors had to convince the publishers that such an audience even existed.

Of course, the nay-saying publishers would be proven wrong. When *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, Volume I, was finally published in August of 1961, it sold quickly. By November, the book “had sold 20,000 copies and was in its third printing” (Lehrman 60). A series of fortunate events, including profiles in popular magazines, some serendipitous meetings with other shining stars in the food world (such as James Beard), and ultimately a five-minute spot on Boston public television’s *What I’ve Been Reading* brought *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, and with it Julia Child, to public consciousness. By the time Volume II was published in 1970, Volume I was in its 19th printing and Julia Child was a household name, largely owing to the popularity of her WGBH (Boston’s public television station) show *The French Chef*, which began airing in 1963. Many cooks, expert and novice alike, credit her with single-handedly transforming the way Americans cooked, and there is no denying that the book received much critical praise and sold well.⁶¹ It continues to sell well today, especially in the wake of the

⁶¹ In 1961, Craig Claiborne called the book “probably the most comprehensive, laudable, and monumental work on [French cuisine],” and predicted it would “remain as the definitive work for nonprofessionals,” a view he maintained until his death (Claiborne 1961).

popular 2009 film *Julie and Julia*.⁶² So it may seem unfathomable to readers and cooks encountering Julia Child today that there were publishers and magazine editors who passed on the chance to publish and market her work.

In the case of cookbooks, such publishing and marketing decisions could have a profound effect on public discourse. Houghton Mifflin and most women's magazines (at least before the book was published) took a largely conservative view of the book's potential audience, essentially declaring it immutable and unreceptive to rhetorics that might suggest a different approach to or attitude about cooking. This view is at odds with Child's conviction that, with proper instruction and practice, even the most unschooled home cook could learn to make delicious food. Rather, the dominant view of publishers like Houghton-Mifflin assumed that the public consists of at best reluctant students; at worst, un-teachable and recalcitrant ones. Child herself and Knopf, however, took a more flexible view of audience, and were certain that a willing and interested audience could be found—or if not, it could be created.

In this chapter, I argue that the publishing history of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* presents a useful case study in how different conceptions of audience can shape and inform not only composition decisions, but also publishing and marketing decisions. I claim that Houghton Mifflin, along with the many women's magazines that rejected Child's recipes, relied on a conception of audience that assumed that the cookbook-buying public in 1960s America was a fixed, static entity. According to publishers, cookbooks either did or did not reach that audience, but failures to do so were the result

⁶² Following this film's August 2009 release, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Volume I* did what it had not in 1961 or since: it topped the *New York Times* bestseller list. The book was also a hugely popular Christmas gift that year.

of rhetorical failures in the text itself—and particularly a failure to correctly “read” the culinary culture of the time, which valued convenience and efficiency above all.

Julia Child, on the other hand, was always unwilling to compromise, at least to any great degree, on her vision for the book, and that meant refusing to cater to the dulled culinary sensibilities of most American homemakers, or to the popular insistence that speed and efficiency were the hallmarks of good, modern cooking. In fact, until she began to think seriously about publishing, Child seemed to want to ignore the practical problem of audience, and remained firm in her pragmatic conviction that her recipes were *good* because they *worked*. She was convinced that the food her readers could produce, by following her recipes, would speak for itself. So the rhetorical challenge for her, in writing the text, was twofold. Not only did she need to produce recipes that served as effective technical communication, but she also needed to persuade an audience that they could confidently make her recipes and be sure of good results. She imagined her audience to be capable and interested, if inexperienced, but there was no way to ascertain for sure. But as long as Child held firm in her conviction, her only issue was finding a bold publisher who would agree that such a group existed—or could be called into being.

She found such a publisher in Alfred Knopf, Inc., and specifically in Judith Jones. Judith Jones was an intrepid young editor who had risen quickly at Knopf after she discovered and published Anne Frank’s *Diary of a Young Girl*.⁶³ She received Child’s manuscript in early 1960 and spent several months testing the recipes. In May of 1960, she wrote to Child, saying she believed the book “would do for French cooking what

⁶³ Judith Jones and Julia Child overlapped during the Childs’ early years in Paris, and experienced similar culinary epiphanies, but they never met.

Rombauer's *The Joy of Cooking*⁶⁴ once did for standard cooking" (Jones). Furthermore, she stated, "we intend to sell it that way." While the Knopf editors shared Child's conviction that the text itself was persuasive, they also held a more elastic view of audience. Instead of envisioning a monolithic group whose pre-existing tastes and proclivities had to be accommodated, the Knopf editors envisioned potential book buyers as more malleable and receptive. They could, in other words be taught to like, use, and appreciate something new--depending on how the book was marketed and presented to potential audiences. They viewed the process of identifying and addressing an audience as a collaborative one, between author and editor. Together, Child and Jones would arrive at a rhetoric that served the authors' intentions, and which they hoped would constitute a book-buying and (more important to Child) book-*using* audience.

In this chapter, I claim that an audience of eager disciples of French cooking was not "discovered;" secret devotees of French cuisine did not emerge. Rather, the book's rhetoric served a constitutive function. The book responded to the de-familiarization of cooking by systematizing French cooking techniques and presenting them in clear, precise language. In this way, Child and her co-authors re-invigorated cookbooks as a genre: rather than simply a compendium of recipes, which was the problem with cookbooks like Lucas's and Donon's, *Mastering* offered comprehensive instructions and explanations. Furthermore, they made technical know-how and detailed

⁶⁴ The *Joy of Cooking* was first published privately in 1936 by its author, Irma Rombauer. This cookbook has been continuously in print since then and remains (as it was for Child) a standard for many home kitchens. The publishing history of this book was no doubt an instructive case for Child and her co-authors: Rombauer was apparently not savvy about publishing and gave up certain rights that cost her quite a bit of money. For the full story, see Anne Mendelson's *Stand Facing the Stove: The Story of the Women Who Gave Us the Joy of Cooking* (1996).

explanations palatable and comprehensible to ordinary home cooks in a way that most comprehensive cooking manuals (like Escoffier's *Guide Culinaire*) did not. Rather than insult the reader's intelligence, Child and her co-authors presented a how-to manual that effectively empowered among users by guiding them methodically through sequenced steps, yet simultaneously encouraging them to experiment. And instead of implying that cooking was a task "modern" convenience foods and methods would soon render obsolete, Child and her co-authors emphasized the satisfaction one could derive from making something delicious and of sharing it with friends or family. The sharing of food and meals was paramount, and evident in their oft-repeated exhortation to their readers: "have a good time." This chapter will show how, by promoting a rhetoric of cooking that emphasized empowerment, practical education, taste, and fun, Child and her co-authors offered an alternative to discourses of quantification, and effectively resisted the "dumbing down" of culinary knowledge by constituting an audience through appeals to readers' senses of enjoyment and empowerment. In what follows, I will first offer a more detailed discussion of the publishing context Child and her coauthors sought to enter, and then a fuller account of *MAFC*'s publishing history. These sections show how the differing (and sometimes competing) conceptions of audience influenced decisions about the book's composition, revision, and eventual publication and marketing.

Midcentury Cookbook Culture

Dione Lucas and Joseph Donon published fairly atypical books, and relatively low sales of these books seem to confirm the idea that American home cooks in the 1950s were simply not interested in complicated foreign recipes. Much more popular were

books that tapped into the culinary culture brought about the discourses of home economics, nutrition science, and scientific cooking, described in Chapter 1. This culture essentially downplayed the value of home cooking and implied that anyone who wasted her time on such things was hopelessly un-modern.

Two such books were Peg Bracken's *I Hate to Cook Book* and Poppy Cannon's *The Can Opener Cookbook*, books whose very titles summarize some of the unfortunate (if unintended) legacies of home economics and scientific cooking.⁶⁵ The declarative title of Bracken's book ("I Hate to Cook") refuses to allow for any sort of attitudinal or behavioral change in the cook-reader; instead, the title confirms and validates an anti-cooking stance. Such a title also implies that audience attitudes are static and inflexible, and certainly won't be changed through interaction with a book. Cannon's book, on the other hand, ignores the cook-reader altogether and gives the implement (a can-opener) sole agency. Her title suggests the widespread mechanization and automation happening in many sectors of the American economy, in American domestic spaces, and certainly in American kitchens.⁶⁶ In this way, these titles manifest the degree to which cooking was de-familiarized and trivialized by the rise of the so-called "expert discourses" of home

⁶⁵ I do not wish to claim that home economists were anti-cooking, or that these two books "represent" home economics. However, the home economists' insistence that proper cooking education could only take place within certain sanctioned institutional structures led many women to abandon or mistrust cooking instruction received elsewhere. Furthermore, home economists (especially by the middle of the twentieth century) were often allied, commercially or professionally, with food companies whose products (like cake mixes) discouraged the kind of from-scratch cooking that Child wanted to promote.

⁶⁶ During the pre- and post-World War II era, sales of kitchen appliances like handheld mixers skyrocketed; the widespread commercial availability of food processors and microwave ovens in the 1960s and 1970s continued this trend.

economics and nutrition science, and by early- and mid-20th-century “improvements” in food storage and preparation methods.

Furthermore, cookbook authors like Bracken and Cannon used paratexts to address their audience directly: introductory sections to both of their books establish very clearly for whom the book is intended, and they thus encourage readers to self-identify as the appropriate audience. Bracken, for instance, acknowledges that not everyone feels the same way about cooking when she opens with the statement, “Some women, it is said, like to cook” (ix). Immediately, the reader can sense that the author does not agree with this statement, or cannot imagine such women, since clearly *she* (Bracken) does not say she likes to cook or that other women do, but only the unknown subject invoked in the passive construction “it is said.” If there were any doubt, though, she makes it clear in the following sentence, declaring that “[t]his book is not for them. This book is for those of us who hate to, who have learned, through hard experience, that some activities become no less painful through repetition: childbearing, paying taxes, cooking” (Ibid). Rather than focus on anything positive or enjoyable associated with cooking or eating, Bracken focuses solely on the labor involved, and links cooking with decidedly unpleasant experiences. Furthermore, the word “repetition” implies that no matter what sort of dish one is making, or for whom, no amount of variation or creativity in the process itself can lessen the monotony of daily cooking.

Interestingly, repetition does not lead to expertise, or even reliable or predictable results, as Bracken goes on to suggest that culinary education is hopeless for those who don’t enjoy cooking. Despite “having been told [how to cook], you won’t remember. When you hate to cook, your mind doesn’t retain” details about how to prepare food (x).

It would seem then, that liking to cook is a prerequisite to learning to cook. The jaded tone in these opening paragraphs differs sharply from the more optimistic tone that Child and her co-authors take, but it seems in keeping with a conception of audience as static and unchanging. If audiences can't be altered, and audiences hate to cook, then it seems fitting that the tone should mimic the kind of bored indifference that publishers like Houghton Mifflin seemed to believe most Americans felt about cooking.

Also, while Child and her co-authors were careful to refer to extensive testing of recipes and practice as a means of bolstering their credibility and establishing themselves as experts,⁶⁷ Bracken cultivates a different *ethos* entirely. She states baldly, “[t]hese recipes have not been tested by experts. That is why they are valuable. Experts in their sunny spotless test kitchens can make anything taste good. But even *we* can make these taste good” (xi). Fed up, perhaps, with expert cooks who assumed that all home cooks had the time and inclination to make elaborate multi-course meals, Bracken distances herself from any cookbook author who would claim authority on purely culinary grounds, and instead identifies herself as *really* like the women who will buy her book. The repeated use of “we” underscores this identification, and implies, too, that Bracken is not a very good cook either (“even *we* can make these taste good”). She hints here, too, that her recipes really *are* foolproof, a hint suggesting she thinks that more elaborate recipes simply leave too much room for error, or are not sufficiently explained. Such problems

⁶⁷ One of the recipes that gave Child and Beck the most trouble was one for French baguettes. She wrote in the introduction to the Baking: Breads, Brioches, Croissants, and Pastries (in Volume II) that no “home” recipes exist for bread, since everyone goes to the neighborhood bakery. The baguette recipe she includes, therefore is one “used by professionals whose techniques we have worked out for the home baker, using standard ingredients and household equipment” (53). Here, Child and Beck present themselves almost as middlemen, between culinary experts and novice home cooks.

are the fault of the author, she implies, but certainly not the cook. This insinuation reinforces the idea that audiences cannot be transformed or called into being by texts, since she assigns all responsibility for a recipe's success *to* the author, without giving any consideration to whether a reader followed instructions or paid attention to what she was doing. Indeed, the undercurrent of texts like Bracken's is one of passivity: rather than being active learners or even active do-ers in the kitchen, the audience Bracken seems to be targeting wants to produce an edible meal with as little effort as possible, and any problems they encounter are surely the fault of someone else. This passivity stands sharply at odds with what many who knew her describe as Child's "inexhaustible" curiosity and her take-no-prisoners approach to cooking (Barr 111).

Poppy Cannon, in her Introduction to the *New New Can-Opener Cookbook*, takes a far less cynical view of cooking, but ultimately she allows for no serious interest in cooking among her readers, either. She imagines these readers to be busy, working women who have "the problem of time, the crowding of many varied interests" (1). She describes her ideal reader as an "artist-cook, the master, the creative chef" who is "armed with a can-opener" (Ibid). Her recipes are essentially a giant shortcut through the tedious process of learning to cook; she promises that "[e]very recipe includes a short cut" and that a reader who follows her methods will become a "chef even before you can really cook" (3). Her recipes will lead to not only "excellent eating but also considerable acclaim" despite doing "the least possible expenditure of work." While such rhetoric certainly seems more uplifting than Bracken's, and perhaps even *more* encouraging than Child's, Cannon essentially seems to be pulling readers aside to say, "serious cooking is for chumps. You can get the same or better results by opening some cans."

Cannon presents herself as among those converted to the modern, gadget-intensive way of cooking; she obviously plans never to return to a style of cooking that did *not* involve using packaged foods. She treats cooking as a performance; indeed, the audience she focuses upon most is not the readership for the book, but rather the dinner guests or family members who will witness her culinary sleights of hand, such as “that glorious and ever-so-easy and dramatic trick of serving food flambé.” She makes constant appeals to being “modern” and stylish, as if to say that no modern woman would be caught dead actually *cooking*. More so than Bracken, Cannon treats cooking as something trivial and superficial--something to be done with a flourish but no actual labor or care. This attitude, too, stands in sharp contrast to Child’s attitude that cooking “takes all of your intelligence and all your dexterity” (Hudgins 104).

Both of these authors project very clear ideas about the people who should read their books. Bracken and Cannon address an audience that they seem already to know--an audience of like-minded women who want a cookbook that will not challenge any of their ideas about cooking, but will rather fit smoothly, almost imperceptibly into their culinary habits, confirming them. The rhetoric of these books does not attempt to convert anyone or constitute a new audience, but rather simply speak to an audience the publishers believed was already extant and knowable.

Child and her co-authors present an entirely different sort of rhetoric. They do ask that their audience to self-identify, to a certain extent, but unlike Bracken and Cannon, they do not assume that the person reading their book is immutable. Instead, as Child wrote to Beck in 1955, they sought a “literature audience that **LIKES TO COOK AND WANTS TO LEARN**” (qtd. in Fitch 245, original emphasis). The desire to learn

indicates that a reader is willing to re-examine and possibly revise her attitude about cooking in a way for which Bracken's and Cannon's models do not account. While ultimately, I argue, the book's rhetoric serves as an invitation into both a new attitude about cooking and a new set of practices, making inroads in a publishing environment that was relatively hostile to time-consuming and labor-intensive recipes would prove to be a formidable challenge. In the next section, I describe some of the rhetorical challenges Child faced when she began her collaboration with Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle, and began to transform an unwieldy collection of recipes into a book that could constitute a new audience for French cooking techniques.

“The Book’s” Potential and the Invitation to Rhetoric

From the moment she read the manuscript that Beck and Bertholle had tried, unsuccessfully, to publish in the United States,⁶⁸ Julia Child was convinced of the book's utility and potential, but also of its problems. First, where precision and clarity were demanded, she found imprecise measurements and needlessly complicated instructions. Furthermore, the “language was not ‘American’,” and perhaps worst of all, the recipes were just “not well suited for the American home kitchen” (Child & Prudhomme 172-3). Solving the first two problems would eventually occupy most of her time, as she insisted on exhaustively researching each ingredient and testing each recipe a dozen times or more, or what she and her husband Paul called subjecting it to the “operational proof.”

⁶⁸ The history of Beck and Bertholle's first foray into cookbook publishing is a story in its own right. While they had compiled a huge book, their publisher and editor eventually published a very short selection titled *What's Cooking in France*. The book sold terribly, and at any rate was nothing like what Beck and Bertholle had envisioned when they set out to write a cookbook of French recipes for American cooks. Severing ties with the original publisher, though, caused much consternation among the three co-authors.

And writing the recipes often proved difficult, as she sought to translate unpublished recipes for *cuisine bourgeoise* (or French home cooking) into American English. The third problem became the focus of her infrequent trips home: whenever Julia and Paul Child went on home leave, Julia frantically tested her French recipes using American ingredients to see whether they would work. But the most vexing problem was still the matter of determining whether there was, or could be, an American audience eager to learn to cook French food in their homes.

Initially, the answer appeared to be no. All the communication from editors at Houghton Mifflin, including the book's initial advocate, Dorothy de Santillana, focused on the fact that American homemakers, most of whom were likely to be "mother, nurse, chauffeur, and cleaner as well," would be overwhelmed by the book. When Houghton Mifflin ultimately rejected the book in 1959 on the grounds that it was "a big, expensive cookbook of elaborate information [that] might well prove formidable to the American housewife," the case seemed to be closed (Brooks). In a letter to Avis deVoto, longtime friend and champion of Julia Child's,⁶⁹ de Santillana explained that the editors simply could not imagine an audience for it, and instead feared that "the elaborateness of procedural information overweighed the book's foolproof quality" (qtd in Reardon, ed. 2010, 330). What was needed, the editors had insisted, was a breezy book that would show readers how to add the "French touch" to their dishes, rather than actually teach them how to cook in the French way (Child & Prudhomme 180). In short, while some of

⁶⁹ While living abroad in France, Child read an article by Avis's husband, the writer Bernard de Voto, in which he lamented the dull edges of stainless steel knives—then all the rage in the United States. Child sent him a fan letter, heartily agreeing with his assessment and enclosing two high-quality French knives. His wife, Avis, replied to Child's letter, and a correspondence and close friendship developed between the two women, and it would last until de Voto's death from pancreatic cancer in 1989.

the problems Child had noticed in the earliest drafts that Beck and Bertholle had given her, in September 1952, had been rectified, the problem of addressing the intended audience (American housewives, at least as the publisher defined them) still plagued the edition that Houghton Mifflin rejected.

Houghton Mifflin's reaction to Child's manuscript reflects their apparent conviction that audiences pre-exist texts; that is, would-be authors must identify and learn about an audience *before* writing. Thus, the text is shaped almost entirely by what the writers know the audience will find persuasive or compelling. Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, in their 1984 article "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy," identify this approach as an attempt to *address* an audience. Writers who adopt this approach assume that acquiring "knowledge of this audience's attitudes, beliefs, and expectations is not only possible, [...] but essential" (156). In this particular case, the "audience addressed" could only be the audience that Houghton Mifflin already knew about, which included those women who bought books like the *I Hate to Cook Book*, which Houghton Mifflin published in 1960, just after rejecting Child's manuscript. It was as if the deluge of advertisements and women's magazine articles claiming that *all* American housewives were cut from the same efficient, nutrition-conscious mold (a mold that would never accommodate a serious interest in cooking) had persuaded Houghton Mifflin of the cookbook-buying public's intransigence. At any rate, Houghton Mifflin did not see itself as performing the kind of cultural work that might *change* or *constitute* an audience; rather, it saw itself as simply confirming an audience's view of itself by catering to known preferences.

Initially, Child's response to the disappointing rejection was typical of her: calm, diplomatic, but determined to get back to work. She wrote to Beck and Bertholle, saying that they "must accept the fact that this may well be a book unacceptable to any publisher, as it requires work on the part of the reader. NOBODY has ever wanted to publish ANY of our recipes in any publication whatsoever thus far."⁷⁰ She admitted that they were not "presenting things in a popular manner," but stated unequivocally in a letter to Beck and Bertholle that she was "frankly not interested in the chauffeur-den mother type of cooking, as we have enough of it" (qtd in Reardon, ed. 2010, 331). It seemed as though Child had accepted the notion that, however foolproof and delicious her recipes, if an audience was not *already* identifiable, then no publishers would take the chance that her rhetoric might cultivate a book-buying audience.

Yet all hope was not lost. Child and her co-authors remained convinced of their book's utility, and indeed, no one at Houghton Mifflin disputed the quality of the recipes or the professionalism of the writing or even the idea that the book had a unique contribution to make. Even the rejection letter praised the book as a "work of art" and an "achievement" (qtd. in Child & Prudhomme 289). Houghton Mifflin simply doubted whether they could "define in advance the market for the book, [or] envisage a large buying public for a cookbook which will have to be high-priced" (Ibid). Such an attitude reflects the degree to which commonplaces about the drudgery of cooking and the virtue of easy, quick recipes using processed and convenience foods had come to dominate

⁷⁰ Child and Beck had tried, frequently, to publish recipes in *Vogue*, *House Beautiful*, *McCall's*, *Woman's Day* and other relevant publications, but to no avail. The recipes were always rejected for being too long and too complicated. One can hear Child's irritation here, though, at a culture that seemed to be refusing to put any effort or *work* into their cooking and eating habits.

public discourse about food—and to infiltrate the criteria publishers used to evaluate cookbook manuscripts. And the apparent desirability of a “French touch” underscores the unspoken superficiality of American cooking habits, at least so far as Houghton Mifflin was concerned--their ideal book would simply given home cooks a few tricks to make everyday food taste “French.” Habits of mind and deed were so ingrained that no one, not even a large and powerful publishing company, could imagine an effective alternative rhetoric, let alone that a cookbook could effect substantial change in the dominant food discourses.

Given that Child and her co-authors were unwilling to compromise their standards for their recipes, revising the book to meet Houghton Mifflin’s standards had long since lost its appeal, and the final rejection letter made it clear that no such revision would be welcome. So publishing the book became a new kind of challenge. Channeling F.D. Roosevelt, de Voto wrote to Julia that they had “only just begun to fight,” and immediately sent the manuscript to a friend of hers at Alfred Knopf, Inc., a well-respected publishing house known for its high-brow literary tastes.⁷¹ Within a year, Child received the note from Judith Jones promising to publish the book and, importantly, to market it aggressively. Finally, the book had an enthusiastic publisher.

Yet even the Knopf editors recognized that publishing the mammoth tome was a gamble. So as Child and Beck revised the manuscript, under Jones’s watchful eye, they thought continually about how to make the book appeal to a broad enough audience to make the publisher’s investment worthwhile, without conceding their standards. Child

⁷¹ To date, Knopf has published at least 17 Nobel Prize winners and at least 47 Pulitzer Prize winners. Their fiction authors include the likes of Ezra Pound, Thomas Mann, Toni Morrison, and others.

believed, fervently, that the delicious food her recipes produced would outweigh readers' concerns about complexity, time, expense, and even nutrition. Child had long been operating under the assumption that her ideal audience—whom she often characterized as a “servantless American cook who enjoyed producing something wonderful to eat”—was really out there, just waiting for her book to come along.

While she kept such imagined (and ideal) readers in mind, Child refused to allow the dominant picture of American housewives to cloud her thinking or influence her writing. Indeed, she could almost be characterized as having “closed her eyes” to the problem of audience, much the way Peter Elbow often exhorts writers to do when he argues that “the closer we come—the more we think about these [imagined] readers—the stronger the pull they exert on the content of our minds” (51). For Elbow, writers must take care, when imagining an audience, to imagine a helpful or enabling audience, rather than one that might constrain or inhibit creativity. For Child, imagining a typical American home cook—one who would prefer to open a few cans and be done with it—would have been stifling. Even when sending what she considered some of her prize recipes (such as her “absolutely foolproof” recipe for mayonnaise) to her sister-in-law, Freddie Child, she was dismayed by the lack of enthusiasm Freddie showed, and so after a time she stopped sending recipes to anyone except Avis De Voto. Herself an accomplished cook, De Voto was always interested in testing Child's recipes, and she helped Child immensely by keeping her informed about what ingredients and supplies were available in the U.S. De Voto became, then, what Elbow would call an “inviting” or “enabling” audience. She encouraged Child to pursue *her* vision of the book, while offering useful constructive criticism.

Further, Elbow argues, overthinking audience can lead to “mediocre pieces,” and a writer who commits this fault will be “acting too much like a salesman trained to look the customer in the eye and to think at all times about the characteristics of the ‘target audience’,” rather than keeping their own rhetorical purposes in mind (53). However, I do not wish to suggest that Child ignored the realities of American home cooks’ preferences and tendencies altogether, as ample evidence shows she did not.⁷² Additionally, Elbow is primarily concerned, at least in the essay to which I have been referring, with private meaning-making, and with the initial stages of working through an idea. Although Child always claimed that her “immediate plan was to develop enough foolproof recipes so that I could begin to teach classes of my own,” even if no one ever published the book, her eventual goal was always to share her knowledge of and passion for French cooking with as wide an audience as possible, which is one reason she found television such an ideal medium (Barr 251). Nonetheless, Elbow’s assertion that “the pervasiveness of past audiences in our heads is one reason for the difficulty of reaching present audiences with our texts” rings true, even when considering Child’s rhetoric as a constitutive one. After all, if Child had thought exclusively about how to tailor her text to a largely uninterested American public, she probably never would have *actually* reached that audience. Instead, she “closed her eyes” to that particular problem temporarily, while she worked out the recipes to *her* satisfaction. Of course, this strategy turned out to be a good one, since readers ended up *liking* her detailed instructions. But they were largely the result of

⁷² For example, in the Foreword to Volume II of *MAFC*, Child and Beck bow to pressure and include instructions for using food processors and other appliances. When a fan, J. Lasses, questioned this approach in a January, 1979 letter, Child replied, “My object is to turn people on to cooking, and anything that will speed up that process, makes cooking more pleasure to most people.”

research and writing she did to help herself cook better;⁷³ readers are the happy recipients of work she did mostly without them in mind.

The experience with Houghton Mifflin, and the cautious optimism about the book's salability from the higher-ups at Knopf, had taught her otherwise. She knew that excellent recipes alone would not sell the book. Since her ideal audience was not ready identifiable, but rather had to be called into being, Child and her co-authors knew that their meta-discourse, which is to say the prefatory material of the book and the short introductions to each recipe, had to both *invoke* an audience of "servantless American cooks" who wanted to cook "something wonderful," and also persuade those cooks that they could *become* the kind of cooks who made *coq au vin*, *cassoulet*, *crêpes Suzette* or any of the other seemingly exotic recipes in *MAFC*. Similar to the way the paratexts from Bracken and Cannon served to delineate audiences, these paratexts perform the rhetorical function of constituting an audience.

Constitutive Rhetoric

Scholar Maurice Charland notes, in an influential article on constitutive rhetoric, that most rhetoricians rely on theories of "rhetoric as persuasion" that "cannot account for the audiences that rhetoric addresses" (133). Charland argues that, by making persuasion "rhetoric's key term," we simultaneously posit an "agent who is free to be persuaded." But if audiences are already situated in particular contexts and interpellated by particular

⁷³ Many of the recipes in the archives at the Schlesinger Library (from Child's demonstrations or appearances on *Good Morning America* or even from the early days of teaching with *Les Trois Gourmandes* in her Paris kitchen) contain copious annotations in Child's hand. Child sought continual improvement and refinement, even in her most tried and true recipes.

ideologies, then they are not simply open to persuasion. In fact, no text could be characterized simply as “persuasive;” it could only be persuasive to a particular audience at a particular moment.

In his study of the policy documents leading to the 1979 proposal to make Quebec a sovereign state within Canada, Charland analyzes *le peuple quebécois* as a rhetorical and social construction, rather than an actual political or demographic description. He claims that, “audiences are constituted as subjects through a process of identification with a textual position” (147). Rhetoric does not *persuade* the audience that they are subjects, or that they should feel or vote a certain way, but rather rhetoric leads readers through a process of identification whereby they come to inhabit (or feel themselves to be inhabiting) the subject position described. Although I will show how Charland’s model does not perfectly describe Child’s strategies for audience constitution, her rhetoric did function to make readers imagine themselves into positions of authority and comfort in the kitchen, at least in part because readers could identify with Child more than they could with professional chefs or scientific cooking experts.

By “identification,” Charland refers to Kenneth Burke’s concept of identification, which Burke developed extensively in *A Rhetoric of Motives*. For Burke, identification may be one of rhetoric’s aims, and it is necessary for rhetoric to succeed or be persuasive. Burke’s notion of identification differs from that of Freud or others who study communication from a psychological perspective. For them, identification happens prior to division from another; for example, an infant child “identifies” with its mother, which is to say that she feels herself to be coterminous with the mother. This sort of an identification, though, is an *impediment* to self-actualization--one must break that

identification in order to assume a positive self-identity. Burke, on the other hand, argues that identification is “compensatory to division” (22). Identification allows rhetors and audiences to find sufficient common ground so that divisions are overcome (or at least mitigated), and thus persuasion and (one hopes) cooperation can take place.⁷⁴

Of course, identification is never perfect or absolute, which is good news for rhetoric, according to Burke. After all, if people were not divided, “there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity” (Ibid). In other words, perfect identification would mean perfect communication, and would render rhetoric superfluous. Burke argues, therefore, that division is a necessary condition for rhetoric, since “opponents can join battle only through a mediatory ground that makes their communication possible, thus providing the first condition necessary for the interchange of blows” (25). Thus, for communication to start at all there must be both common ground (even if undiscovered) *and* points of contention; Burke calls the juxtaposition of identification and division “the characteristic invitation to rhetoric” (Ibid). Put another way, there was to be a reason to communicate, and that reason is usually some sort of division. In Child’s case, the “division” was between American home cooks’ perceptions of their own potential and her sense that anyone who could be convinced to try her recipes would be a convert, as she had been when she first tried French cuisine.

Yet Child needed to do more than simply convince her audience that French food is delicious. She needed to convince them that they, too, could produce it in their own home kitchens without investing in a lot of new equipment or important exotic

⁷⁴ For more on the differences between Burke’s account and the psychoanalytic account of identification and its utility, see Diane Davis, “Identification: Burke and Freud on Who You Are.” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 38.2 (2008): 123-147.

ingredients. Burke calls this a “persuasion to out-and-out action” (55). Such persuasion to attitude, he claims, clarifies the truer purpose of rhetoric, not persuasion to undertake particular actions (although he does address how rhetoric is useful in urging people to act in certain ways). A “choice of action is restricted,” he says, which means that rhetoric has little bearing on what people *must* do. Instead, “rhetoric seeks rather to have a formative effect upon *attitude*” (Ibid). And changing an audience’s attitude toward a particular behavior or course of action seems, for Burke, to be a more desirable outcome than simply persuading someone to undertake one particular action in an isolated case. Rather, by persuading audiences to adopt a new *attitude*, which Burke defines as “incipient act[s],” rhetors can be more confident in the lasting effects of their efforts. Unlike poetic language or even scientific language, which Burke claims are either “symbolic of” or “preparation for” action, rhetorical language can actually *induce* people to think and eventually act in different ways. Identification, then, becomes a crucial component in Charland’s theory of constitutive rhetoric. The discovery of the shared beliefs or affinities with which to identify is precisely what unites a disparate group, and forms--constitutes--an audience.

Thus, one of the many rhetorical challenges that Child and her co-authors faced as they again revised their manuscript was locating these potential points of identification, especially in the face of evidence that many Americans had little interest in gourmet cooking, and constant reinforcement of that apathy in popular media and advertisements. For example, in a 1956 letter to Avis de Voto, Child laments a recent article in *Woman’s Day* that “contrast[ed] an old Do-Do who had time to do things the old-fashioned way, and a smart young thing who did everything the “New Modern Way”....using cans and

boxes and frozen stuff” (Reardon ed. 2010 281). Child, who for many years refused to do things the quick or easy way, could establish few points of identification with women determined to cook in the “new modern way.” Besides the pressure from popular media to abandon traditional cooking practices, cooking as a profession was held in fairly low esteem; in Child’s words, “the cooking end of gastronomy was strictly a blue-collar job” (qtd. in Barr 104).⁷⁵ Unlike today’s culture, where gourmet cooking has become a fairly popular hobby, at least among middle- and upper-class people, gourmet cooking in the 1960s was associated at best with chefs (who never came out of the kitchen) and at worst with pretension and snobbery. Finding an opening would prove difficult.

Yet it is important to note that, despite the pervasive notion that the average American woman was interested in learning to cook, and despite cultural pressures to disavow certain domestic tasks, there was strong but countervailing pressure coming from the cultural centers of the United States to improve American cuisine. As noted above, easier travel to and from Europe, the relative strength of the dollar against European currencies, and the presence of a Francophile in the White House meant that Americans were more interested in expanding their culinary horizons. And the food world, largely confined to major cities like New York, San Francisco, and New Orleans, was starting to expand its influence via syndicated columns⁷⁶ and an increasing number

⁷⁵ Although chefs at the most famous restaurants (such as André Soltner, chef at New York’s Lutèce from 1961-1995) were accorded some level of respect, there was nothing to compare with today’s culture of celebrity chefs. Restaurant owners or even maître d’s might have been known to patrons, but the chefs remained in the background.

⁷⁶ Craig Claiborne became food editor of the *New York Times* in 1957 and sought to elevate the status of food writing, which had largely been confined to what he dismissed as inconsequential women’s magazines, such as the *Ladies Home Journal*. In his memoir, *A Feast Made for Laughter*, Claiborne derides Clementine Paddleford, the best-known of

of food-related publications, such as *Gourmet* magazine, first published in 1941 and *Bon Appétit* in 1956. Further, as historian David Strauss has recently shown in *Setting the Table for Julia Child: Gourmet Dining in America, 1934-1961* (2011), there was a small but dedicated group of connoisseurs of fine food who hoped to recreate European (and specifically French) culinary traditions in the United States.⁷⁷

Burke would argue that by recognizing that the public still admired those who cooked well, a rhetor could find an opening. As he writes, if a rhetor can determine that a potential audience “has a strong opinion that a certain kind of conduct is admirable,” then “a speaker might persuade [that] audience by using ideas and images that identify his cause with that kind of [admirable] conduct” (54-55). Whatever they might think of cooking as a profession, Americans still admired those who cooked well, and of course they enjoyed eating carefully prepared food. They simply assumed that the actual preparation was drudgery, and that the average homemaker did not have the time or inclination to pursue cooking seriously. But by focusing on taste and empowerment, Child found an opening whereby she could effectively link the ability to cook, or at least the desire to learn to cook, with desirable or admirable traits like skill, knowledge, confidence, and sophistication (the mere fact of French-ness tended to imply sophistication to American audiences in the 1960s).

the writers whose work deplores, saying he doubted “she ever cooked a serious meal in her life,” and that other “restaurant critics in town, such as they were, were equally inept” (140-1).

⁷⁷ Strauss argues, in his study of American gourmet dining societies (or what he labels “Café Society”) in the early decades of the twentieth century, that such dining societies paved the way for someone like Julia Child. However, as he notes, these dining societies were almost exclusively made up of wealthy white men. Most American societies, unlike the European counterparts “initially excluded women altogether,” and “significant economic and cultural barriers” excluded all but the wealthy and cosmopolitan (102).

Thus Julia Child begins to constitute her audience. It mattered little that most Americans had little direct experience with French cuisine or cooking methods; in fact, the presence of this “division,” between the expert Child and her inexpert audiences, formed Burke’s “invitation to rhetoric.” To begin bridging this gap, Child suggests that even *trying* to cook food in the French way conferred some level of the skill, knowledge, confidence, and sophistication that she represented. In terms of training and experience, her audiences knew perfectly well that they weren’t “like” Julia Child. But in other ways, they were. Anyone who has watched even a short segment of one of Child’s television episodes knows that she was not a typical television star: she was unusually tall, not conventionally pretty, and had an operatically high-pitched voice and tended to “gasp” and “galumph” about the set, as some early reviewers put it. Her shows were meticulously planned (this is especially true of later shows), but they were unscripted, which allowed Child’s personality to emerge in all its quirkiness. Her very humanity further persuaded audiences that they *were* like her, or could become more like her, by adopting her confidence and sense of adventure.

Still, there remained the challenge of moving people from *admiring* certain behaviors or skills to *emulating* those behaviors--and giving them the tools to do so. Julia Child, as she worked on the final revisions of *MAFC*, understood how necessary it was to position herself within the text as trustworthy and expert, but also as accessible and friendly. This “middle ground” persona became the defining feature of her television program, and surely a reason for her broad and enduring appeal. While audiences respected and valued her authority when it came to cooking, they also appreciated that she seemed usually to understand their time, budget, and skill constraints. She recognized

that in order to “change the audience’s opinion in one respect,” she would have to “yield to that audience’s opinions in other respects” (56). For instance, in the second volume of *Mastering*, she yielded to the inevitable and included instructions for using small kitchen appliances like the food processor, which she had scrupulously avoided in Volume 1.

The paratexts (forewords, introductions) of Julia Child’s major works show most obviously the degree to which she walked the line between presenting herself as both a trained, authoritative cook and an approachable, friendly teacher. Child speaks most directly to the reader in these paratexts, and to advise readers generally about approaching food and French cooking; these sections, I will argue, afford Child the rhetorical space in which to describe the type of home cook she wants her readers to aspire to become. In what follows, I analyze some of these paratexts to highlight the rhetorical strategies Child and her co-authors used in order to establish points of identification with their readership, and to constitute an audience for their books.

Although much of the Foreword to *Mastering* offers readers practical advice and useful tips, the Foreword ends with this exhortation to readers: “above all, have a good time” (Child, Bertholle, Beck x). This mingling of technique and fun, systems and their variations, science and art, helped to set Child’s book apart from what was rapidly becoming the crowded field of American cookbook publishing in the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁷⁸ A large number of cookbooks published around mid-century focused on convenience and speed more than taste or tradition; many aligned themselves with

⁷⁸ Comprehensive publishing statistics are difficult to find, but by the mid-twentieth century, most of the major women’s magazines (*Good Housekeeping*, *Better Homes and Gardens*) had begun to publish cookbooks, as had companies like General Mills (creators of Betty Crocker). Most cookbooks were either associated with a national brand (a magazine or commercial product) or they were intensely local, with very limited circulation (a church cookbook, for instance).

particular products or kitchen appliances. This publishing trend produced books like Bracken's and Cannon's and others aimed at a rapidly increasing number of women who worked outside the home and hence had less time or energy to prepare elaborate meals. Not all cookbooks from this era demonstrate the disdain for cooking that Bracken's does, or Cannon's conviction that appliances can work magic, but few display any sort of enthusiasm for the actual work of cooking, either.

Come into the Kitchen: *Mastering* Constitutes an Audience

Child's title announces a different approach altogether. While the present participle "mastering" suggests the difficulty of learning this subject and may thereby create some distance between teacher and learner, the word also underlines the fact that learning to cook is an ongoing process, and it promises the eventual acquisition of expertise. Indeed, Child states as much in the opening sentence of Volume II: "mastering any art is a continuing process" (*Mastering* II vii). Therefore, there are no promises of speedy skill acquisition or four-star dinners in 20 minutes flat, and no odes to miracle appliances. Instead, the book simply promises that those who want to can learn to cook delicious French meals.

Like their contemporaries Bracken and Cannon, Child and her co-authors use the paratexts as a rhetorical space in which to describe the kind of audience who will enjoy their book, and to encourage readers to self-identify. It is also the space for the authors to explain why they are qualified to offer the sort of instruction that might (if the audience is willing and able) transform readers' cooking. In particular, the Foreword to *Mastering* concentrates primarily on establishing the authors' collective *ethos* as authorities on

French cooking and offering useful encouragement and tips for the reader. As such, the Foreword addresses an imagined (or hoped for) audience of interested cooks who need instruction but are perfectly willing and capable of accurately following directions. While these rhetorical functions seem like logical ones for a Foreword to serve, they are striking when compared to other popular cookbooks of the era. While Child and her co-authors forecast their book's emphasis on technique and on the intellectual and practical demands the recipes will place on the cook, Bracken and Cannon focused on getting the cook out of the kitchen as quickly and painlessly as possible, suggesting that she should be able to put dinner on the table almost without noticing that she has done any work.

The two sets of authors (Bracken/Cannon and Child/Bertholle/Beck) imagine themselves in very different relationships to their readers. While Child and her co-authors position themselves as experts and teachers, Cannon and Bracken position themselves as friends, equally bored with cooking, who have some handy and time-saving tips to share. Child and her co-authors present themselves almost as aspirational peers--like their readers, they are ordinary women who themselves learned to cook for their families with some training (in Child's case only), but largely through trial and error and experimentation. They never even hint at uncertainty, but they point repeatedly to the extensive research and recipe-testing they undertook and which, incidentally, anyone could do if she felt so inclined. This approach reassures readers that by imitating the habits and practices of Child and her co-authors, they can achieve the same results in terms of increased culinary expertise and familiarity. Bracken and Cannon, on the other hand, both seem to want to identify with readers as fellow "modern" women who have better things to do than slave over a hot stove.

The degree to which the Foreword to Child's book focuses on identifying and describing its imagined audience, as opposed to other rhetorical tasks the Foreword might accomplish, like describing the cuisine in question or telling the author's biography, is striking. Overtones of the publishing struggles are evident in the Foreword where Child and her co-authors are careful to delineate both for whom the book is and is *not* intended. The Foreword begins "This is a book for the servantless American cook," which sounds rather inclusive. But the authors then narrow the scope slightly by saying that this "servantless" cook must also "be unconcerned on occasion with budgets, waistlines, time schedules, children's meals, the parent-chauffer-den-mother syndrome, or anything else which might interfere with the enjoyment of producing something wonderful to eat" (vii). This opening statement contains several remarkable rhetorical features,⁷⁹ the first of which is that Child and her co-authors limit the audience by both nationality and, more interestingly, class.⁸⁰ Although servants had long been disappearing from American homes, even upper-class homes, and were certainly all but gone by the time of this book's publication, the authors insist here that this is a book for regular people, probably women, who are generally solely responsible for their family's meals and who (presumably) have many other tasks to accomplish during the day.

⁷⁹ Not the least of which is Child's somewhat flip dismissal of the competing demands on time and pocketbook that many American homemakers faced. Her impatience with what she called "den mother syndrome" might seem offensive, but little evidence exists that readers found it so--or that they reproached her for it.

⁸⁰ Of course, American middle-class home cooks had long been the target audience for Beck and Bertholle, even before Child joined their collaboration. It is interesting that other English-speaking audiences were not considered. Volume 2 was published in London in 1970, but in general the British public was unimpressed with Child's television personality, and so she was never as popular overseas as she was in the U.S. Besides, the U.K. had their own Elizabeth David to explain French cookery to them.

However, this “regular person” must also be able and willing to ignore some of the economic realities of home-making occasionally, and even to splurge a bit, if she wishes to cook from this book. It may be worth noting that while the Childs were certainly not rich in 1961, Paul earned a respectable salary from his job, as did the husbands of the other co-authors, and Julia’s family was quite wealthy. Furthermore, both Child and Beck, who did the lion’s share of the work on the book, were childless and so had fewer demands on their time--and probably fewer nutritional worries--than women who were caring for small children.⁸¹ In any case, the book was *not* written for a home cook whose primary motivation was saving money, nor for someone who could never devote more than a few minutes to food preparation, nor for someone deeply concerned with calories. In fact, the ideal imagined reader for the book was someone who will (and has the resources to) approach cooking dinner with a sense of fun; indeed, the placement of the word “enjoyment” is interesting, since it linked not to eating, but rather to the *production* of food. So for all its democratic tones of inclusiveness, the book was really targeting middle- or upper-middle class women who could afford to shop and cook according to tastes and desires, and not just according to their budgets.⁸² Child and her co-authors do seem to be targeting audiences similar to those that, Strauss argues,

⁸¹ Louisette Bertholle had two children, and in the late 1950s she was going through an ugly divorce and in any case had not made substantial contributions either to the cooking school (L’Ecole des Trois Gourmandes) or to the book. The three women argued intently over what share of the royalties Bertholle should receive; in the end, she received a much smaller share than the other two. She would not collaborate on Volume II, or any subsequent cookbooks, with Child or Beck, although she did publish *French Cooking for All* in 1984.

⁸² Although MFK Fisher wrote a number of essays designed to help home cooks economize, her dictum that one should eat and cook according to tastes and desires could, at times, smack of the same kind of blindness or even indifference to differences in socioeconomic status.

comprised the bulk of the membership of the gourmet dining clubs popular before and after World War II.

These clues to the reader map onto the description that Ede and Lunsford give of an “audience invoked.” Ede & Lunsford borrow from Walter Ong, who wrote in his famous essay “The Writer’s Audience is Always a Fiction” about his claim that the audience the writer imagines as she is composing is always a “fiction,” which is to say that the imagined audience is not the same as the actual, eventual readers of her text. Even if she does have particular readers in mind (as, for instance, students have the teacher in mind when writing in class), the imagined reader is not coterminous with the actual person. Ong’s concern was primarily for writers of fiction, and Ede and Lunsford adapt his ideas for an audience of rhetoricians. Essentially, they argue, writers of all kinds use textual clues to hint to the reader how she should imagine herself in relation to the text. That is, the writer posits a sort of “ideal reader” in the writing itself. Since Child and her co-authors did not know whether such ideal readers existed (and had been assured by many that they did not), the reader they seem to address remains a fiction--an imaginary reader. Although Child and her co-authors use the second person to address and seem generally “closer” to the reader, they also hold themselves at a distance, and allowing the reader to decide for herself whether she is, in fact, such a “servantless American cook” who would “enjoy[s] producing something wonderful to eat.” One aspect of their constitutive rhetoric, then, involves asking the audience to self-identify based on the criteria that they set forth.

Considering the litany of concerns which the ideal audience member must be willing to ignore on occasion (money, diet, time constraints of all sorts), Child and her

co-authors threw down a gauntlet, both to prospective users of their recipes and to the cookbook publishing market in general, which during this time period was primarily interested in publishing books that promised either a nutritionally balanced, low-calorie meal, or a meal that could be ready in ten minutes or, better yet, both. Not only must the reader be prepared to abandon her other commitments about food (budgetary, dietary), but she must also reject the culture of speed and convenience that, as noted above and in Chapter 1, had thoroughly infiltrated American home kitchens. And above all, say the authors, she must “love to cook,” and be willing to spend considerable time with these detailed recipes (Ibid.) In fact, while Child and her co-authors probably hope that this book will increase its users confidence and enjoyment in cooking, they do not attempt to persuade someone who hates to cook that this book will transform her attitude. In a way, they thus render themselves immune to the charge that the recipes are too complicated for the average American reader. If the reader imagined herself as one of those addressed, then any problems that arise can be viewed as a problem of the reader’s faulty self-identification, not with the text itself.

Despite all these caveats about audience membership, the authors endeavor to demystify their topic and render it both accessible and even ordinary. “We have,” they write, “purposely omitted cobwebbed bottles, the *patron* in his white cap bustling among his sauces, anecdotes about charming little restaurants with gleaming napery, and so forth.” The authors fear such “romantic interludes” because they “put French cooking into a never-never land instead of the Here, where happily it is available to everybody” (vii). Although French cuisine may strike us as pedestrian today, it was still considered quite exotic in midcentury America and certainly synonymous with sophisticated, high-

class dining. So the confident assertion that “anyone” could cook French food “anywhere” was a bold one, even with the qualification that such would-be cooks needed “the right instruction” (Ibid.) Yet by shifting the focus away from restaurants as the site for the production of French food,⁸³ the authors attempt to relocate potential sites for expertise in French cooking in private homes. Such a move contributes to their project of demystifying French cooking and encouraging American cooks that French cooking was not the result of deft “French touches” or magical ingredients, but rather the product of systematic methods that ordinary people could learn.

The introductory paragraph thus limits its own scope and reach by stating firmly what the book will *not* do and whom it will *not* please. Despite these limitations, the paragraph claims frankly that French cooking is simply a matter of education and practice, *not* a matter of birthright or foreign ingredients.⁸⁴ So readers who continue beyond the first few sentences will be predisposed to feel confident and ambitious about tackling the recipes in the book, especially with such capable teachers as Child and her co-authors claim to be.

⁸³ After WWII and the collapse of the Vichy regime in France, the French economy was in terrible shape and nobody felt there was a clientele for a restaurant, which meant there were a lot of unemployed chefs. Since the 1939 New York World’s Fair, which featured a wildly popular French pavilion, had sparked some American interest in French food, many of these chefs made their way to New York City. Henri Soulé (who handled the food at the pavilion) opened Le Pavillon, which remained for 40 years one of the best French restaurants in the U.S. The same was true of Lutèce (André Soltner’s restaurant). While these restaurants were highly acclaimed, their prices and exclusivity meant that, for most Americans, French cooking remained associated with an unobtainable lifestyle.

⁸⁴ That said, Child had great difficulty, at times, finding suitable substitutes for items readily available in France, like shallots and crème fraîche, that were still unheard of in the United States. Other ingredients were simply too different; for instance, American hard wheat flour produced a decidedly different sort of dough than French soft wheat. Working out these quirks took untold hours.

The necessity of proper instruction takes on an almost incantatory quality in this and other Child publications. Above all and to the end of her public career, Child considered herself a teacher; she always referred to her role on the TV show as a “TV teacher” (Child & Prudhomme 399). In this Foreword, Child and her co-authors state firmly that their “primary purpose is to teach [readers] how to cook,” and to encourage culinary independence, so they rely on the language of education and instruction (Child, Beck, & Bertholle ix). For example, they write of “cooking techniques” and “fundamentals,” terms suggesting repeatable actions and foundational skills that even beginners can master. The authors also reassure readers that the organization of the recipes will quickly become apparent, which suggests the kind of orderly approach one might take to learning, say, mathematics. When they assert confidently that “the seemingly endless babble of recipes begins to fall rather neatly into groups of theme and variations,” they are reassuring readers that French cooking is not simply an endless compilation of atomized, unique recipes. Instead, there are patterns: systems and techniques that, once learned, can be applied to many different dishes. Child notes, in fact, that many dishes (like chicken fricassee and boeuf bourgignonne) use exactly the same methods but different ingredients. The insistence that French cooking is an eminently *learnable* skill, based on habits and practice, was no doubt comforting to readers who may have felt overwhelmed by French recipes in the past, especially when they ignored technical instruction (as Lucas’s recipes tended to do) or were geared toward professionals (as Escoffier’s famous *Guide Culinaire* was). Furthermore, if we recall that the discourse of home economics had the effect of marginalizing ordinary women’s culinary knowledge, a discourse that emphasized the importance of practice and

repetition might have had the opposite effect. By encouraging readers to master techniques, one at a time, and work on them until they feel comfortable enough to transfer them to other recipes, Child and her co-authors facilitated the slow development of knowledge based on experience and practice.

The pedagogical tone also convinces readers that the co-authors are credible authorities, and that they are invested in their audience's success. They occasionally make reference to "our years of teaching cookery" and offer a collection of general cooking hints at the end of the Foreword (e.g., "Train yourself to use your hands and fingers" or "Allow yourself plenty of time") (x). These statements, along with explanations for recipe formats and descriptions of "recipe language" as a kind of "shorthand," help to engender confidence on the reader's part, making her more likely to follow instructions and trust the authors because they seem to have anticipated so many of their readers' concerns. These statements also serve to demystify the practice of cooking from scratch, a practice which, as I have shown elsewhere, had become increasingly rare by midcentury.

Other components of the Foreword, such as the repeated command that readers not skip steps, reinforce the impression that this book is truly a cooking manual—more like a textbook than simply a collection of recipes. Yet the authors are careful to allow for personal taste and pleasure. For example, in their explanation of the rationale for recipe selection, Child and her co-authors admit that space prevented them from including everything, but claim to have chosen recipes that they "particularly like" and that they "hope will interest [their] readers" (viii). In this way, Child and her co-authors subtly remind readers of the importance of cooking according to one's own tastes and pleasures,

and thus distance themselves from the very technical cooking manuals, such as Fannie Farmer's *Boston Cooking School Cookbook*.

The Foreword to *Mastering* thus begins the work of constituting an audience for the book by, first, asking the audience to do some self-assessment. Just as Charland pointed out that audiences are not simply “out there” to be persuaded but rather are always situated in particular contexts, Child and her co-authors recognize that readers must discern for themselves, based on the ideal reader they describe in the Foreword, whether they will enjoy the book or find it useful. If a reader already has a personal chef, or knows that she just despises cooking, or is worried about how many calories her children are ingesting, then the book probably won't appeal to her, no matter how good the recipes might be. But Child and her co-authors are savvy: they don't *try* to reach this reader. Rather than fight a losing battle, they essentially say--don't bother. Like in Charland's analysis of the *peuple quebécois* example, Child and her co-authors ask the reader to identify with a certain subject position that they have described in detail. Those who find an accurate description of themselves (or a version of themselves they'd like to become) in the Foreword are precisely the audience they are trying to reach.

In the next section, I analyze several recipes from each of the two volumes of *Mastering*, as well as *The French Chef Cookbook*, the companion volume to Child's PBS series, along with some scenes from the television show itself. I have limited my analysis to these texts because they are the foundation on which Child's reputation was built, and they catalyzed her public career. Although the focus necessarily shifts away from directly telling the reader what to expect from the book, Child and her co-authors retain their pedagogical and engaging tone, a rhetorical choice which suggests again that the authors

are primarily interested not in consolidating their own authority, but rather in their readers' success in the kitchen. If readers are successful, they will continue using the book, recommending it to their friends, and thus widen the addressed audience for *Mastering*.

Education and Empowerment: A New Recipe Rhetoric

In her memoir *My Life in France*, Child described how she approached the actual writing of recipes, a task she found satisfying but challenging:

Like teaching, writing has to be lively, especially for things as technical and potentially dullsville as recipes. I tried to keep my style amusing and non-pedantic, but also clear and correct. I remained my own audience: I wanted to know why things happened on the stove, and when, and what I could do to shape the outcome. And I assumed that our ideal reader—the servantless American cook who enjoyed producing something wonderful to eat—would feel the same way.

(*MLiF* 232).

Child saw her books and especially her television shows as extensions of her cooking classes, and always endeavored to provide the requisite amount of instruction and guidance. In addition to lengthy Forewords, her books tend to contain long introductions for each chapter and headnotes for each recipe. On her television shows, in particular *The French Chef* (which was the most explicitly educational of her shows), she never misses an opportunity to remind viewers that the techniques she demonstrates for one recipe are easily transferrable to others, thus reinforcing her point that French cooking is a case of theme and variations. In these (written) paratexts and (televised) asides, she can continue to impart general cooking advice, and also reiterate that cooking is a serious undertaking,

requiring intelligence and attention, but also something that should be fun and which, with practice, should build confidence and empowerment.

To these ends, Child and her co-authors included a lengthy section, following the Foreword, that provided definitions, descriptions and illustrations of cooking equipment, which presumably readers would peruse before beginning. However, most people tend to approach cookbooks with a specific purpose in mind, like wanting to know how long to roast a chicken or what to do with extra zucchini. The very organization of their book, then, requires a different kind of reading practice, which necessarily will affect the type of audience it constitutes. Much to Child's chagrin, most cookbooks aimed at the general public did not provide this sort of detailed technical information.⁸⁵ By placing it right up front (rather than scattered throughout or in an appendix), Child and her co-authors urged their readers to read their cookbook like a book, beginning on page 1 rather than flipping to the index to look up a specific topic. In terms of audience constitution, such an organization and implied reading practice would tend to turn away those who just wanted to flip quickly to a certain recipe, but would appeal to those who wanted a sustained engagement with French cooking methods. Such language implies that the audience they hope to constitute is, then, a subset of all possible audience members who might pick up this book.

⁸⁵ It is perhaps worth noting that some of these introductory and instructive sections, such as the glossary of cooking terms and especially the sections listing measuring and temperature equivalents, seem to have more in common with the Fannie Farmer-type school of scientific cooking. Indeed, Child was obsessed with precision and with proving that her recipes had "scientific workability." In a sense, her scientific and professional approach put her at odds with Fisher's more intuitive style of cooking, despite their shared passion for French cooking and their long friendship.

Further, the topics addressed in these opening sections confirm Child and her co-authors' pedagogical commitments, and they also provide rhetorical space for them to continue refining the audience they seek. For example, they begin the section, "Kitchen Equipment," with the assertion that "a good cook should be able to perform under any circumstances," which implies the need for flexibility and adaptability (3). This definition, though, is itself capacious enough to appeal to both those who consider themselves already "good cooks" and those who hope to become so. They also urge their audience buy high-quality kitchen equipment and put the price of such equipment in perspective by comparing it to food; for example, "a fine paring knife may cost less than two small lamb chops" (Ibid). In an effort to persuade readers to buy higher quality equipment, the authors repeatedly emphasize the versatility and utility of the items they recommend, but there is no escaping the fact that the audience they have in mind is middle- to upper-middle class. Even if "a big, enameled-iron casserole costs no more than a 6-rib roast," such a roast was simply unaffordable for many Americans (Ibid). Rhetorically, these opening passages both expansive and constraining: they welcome all who want to learn to cook, but only those who can devote the resources Child and her co-authors deem necessary. Constituting an audience, then, was for these writers a matter of appealing to particular type of book-buying audience member.

The penultimate introductory section focuses on "Cutting: Chopping, Slicing, Dicing, and Mincing," and it offers some of the most technical and precise instruction in the book. Rather than outright commanding readers to

practice chopping before beginning to cook, Child and her co-authors write that “if you have not learned to wield a knife rapidly a recipe calling for 2 cups of finely diced vegetables and 2 pounds of sliced mushroom caps is often too discouraging to attempt” (26). They admit that acquiring solid knife skills “takes several weeks of off-and-on practice,” but promise that such skills are “never forgotten,” and allow a home cook to “save a tremendous amount of time, and also derive a modest pride,” having learned “to use a knife professionally” (Ibid). Such qualified statements are representative of the double function of Child and her co-authors’ constitutive rhetoric: the concession that skill development takes time narrows the audience to those who are willing to *devote* the time (i.e., serious, or would-be serious home cooks,) and the promise of eventual mastery *and* time-saving tempts more readers to try their methods. And the co-authors often refer readers to specific recipes where a technique is employed--a strategy surely designed to, literally, whet the appetite.

In fact, one might argue that what Child and her co-authors are doing is itself a narrower project than audience constitution, but is rather audience *cultivation*. Whether we mean “cultivate” in the agricultural sense of preparing soil for crops to grow or in the sense of “cultivating a talent” through extended labor and practice, as a metaphor for audience-reaching, “cultivation” implies a combination of working with what is given (soil, inborn talent, or in this case, prior knowledge and a desire to learn) and of adding certain elements likely to produce the desired outcome. Child and her co-authors move back and forth between addressing an existing audience (“the servantless American cook”) and addressing the one constituted through rhetoric. This latter audience member

will identify (or wish to identify) with the “ideal” cook described--the one who can temporarily put aside worries about grocery bills and calories, and who can expend money and time to produce a delicious meal. In this way, Child’s audience is “carved out” from among those already at least partially sympathetic to her argument. Burke argues that such a strategy is unique to “modern life,” wherein “the commercial rhetorician” (and certainly Child and her co-authors, not to mention the publishers, were commercial) must find “topics that will appeal to the particular ‘income group’ most likely to be interested” in their “product” (Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives* 64). The metaphors of “cultivation” and “carving” each imply a far less inclusive approach, and suggest that constitutive rhetorics are limited at the outset, but they more accurately reflect the way Child and her co-authors sought both to draw in a large group of potential readers, but also to shave off those readers who would not use the book as they intended.

Such readers, the authors left no doubt, would be expected to devote considerable time to practicing culinary techniques. The recipes and televised segments I analyze below are those where Child explicitly discusses the transferability of a technique and the importance of developing culinary skill through practice. One can find examples of both emphases in many of Child’s recipes, but I will focus on sauces for the former, since they are so foundational to French cooking and were viewed with tremendous trepidation by midcentury American home cooks. For the latter, I focus on omelettes because the frequency with which Child demonstrated omelette technique shows her conviction that even simple dishes deserve care and attention. In any case, she never loses her sense (nor fails to remind her audience) that cooking should be fun, and indeed

that fun is part of the reason for cooking at all. Indeed, Child's emphasis on fun was likely a rhetorical strategy designed to keep her audience engaged by offsetting the intensely detailed recipes and precise methodical approach.

After a fairly short chapter on soups, Child and her co-authors introduce sauces, "the splendor and glory of French cooking" (55). Lest one worry that such glories are the domain of experts only, the authors reassure readers that there is "nothing secret or mysterious about making them," and state that the great panoply of French sauces organizes itself neatly into seven categories. After giving a few examples illustrating how most recognizable sauces are simply enriched or flavored versions of the few basic ones, they encourage readers directly: "as soon as you have put into practice the basic formulas for the few mother sauces, you are equipped to command the whole towering edifice" (54). This grand promise of sauce-making glory (which no doubt inspired some readers) is followed by the categories themselves, some of which are further explained by their more common name; for instance, they remind us that the family of Egg Yolk and Oil Sauces are all "variations of mayonnaise" (55). This summary of what would otherwise be a daunting list of French sauces again serves a dual rhetorical function in terms of audience: they both limit their target audience to those willing to "practice," but also encourage those who might find sauce-making intimidating by suggesting that she learn just a "few mother sauces."

This neat distillation is one of the clearest illustrations of Child's conviction that French cooking was essentially a system of "basic themes could

be made in a seemingly infinite number of variations” (*MLiF* 112). The organization of this chapter reflects that conviction. It begins with a brief description and history of White Sauces, along with some basic instructions. Then follows the master recipe marked, as always, with a star. The following half-dozen pages detail the various Enrichments (such as cream, butter, or egg yolks), as well as instructions for making sauces derived from the basic white sauce, such as Sauce Mornay (cheese sauce), Sauce à l’Estragon (tarragon sauce), and at least six others. In short, the authors claim, once one masters the basic white sauce (either a Béchamel, which is a white sauce made with milk, or a Velouté, a white sauce made with stock), it is an easy leap to a dozen others, each of which are suitable for a number of dishes. Such rhetoric is encouraging, because conceivably one’s cooking repertoire could expand exponentially, and also because the tidy organization breaks a complicated and (certainly for American home cooks in the 1960s) mysterious subject down into manageable chunks. It also gives audience members intermediate goals to work toward, whereas scientific cooking manuals tended to present cooking in a rather monolithic and unapproachable way.

Other contemporary French cookbooks were less attentive to their audience’s need for gradual, step-by-step instruction. For instance, Dione Lucas included a recipe for Béchamel sauce in her 1947 *Cordon Bleu Cookbook*, but it is buried within a recipe for Cold Salmon Mousse, and the ingredients for the sauce are not set apart from the rest of the recipe, which implies that readers should know ahead of time which ingredients make up the sauce. Furthermore, the recipe

itself is sandwiched between a recipe for Stuffed Lobster St. Jacques and Salmon with Red Wine, neither of which bear much resemblance (in terms of transferable techniques) to the mousse recipe (Lucas 116-18). Indeed, without disparaging the quality of Lucas's recipes, it is easy to see how a disorganized list of recipes all having vaguely to do with fish (or other capacious culinary category) would be overwhelming to someone with only a rudimentary knowledge of French cooking.

In Child's book, the organizational and rhetorical strategies for a chapter like the Sauces chapter are repeated in the chapter on Poultry, where recipes are primarily divided by cooking method (such as Roasting, Sautéing, Broiling), and Desserts, where recipes are organized into subcategories such as Sweet Sauces and Fillings, Tarts, and Crêpes. The Table of Contents lists each of these chapter subtitles, which gives the reader a clear roadmap and an easy way to locate a desired recipe or technique, whereas each chapter title in the Table of Contents for Lucas's book is followed by several dozen recipes without discernable organization.⁸⁶ And while Joseph Donon's *The Classic French Cuisine* looks similar to Child's insofar as the Table of Contents goes, it is far less clear in his chapters themselves when one recipe is a variation or adaptation of another. In the "White Sauces" section of Donon's "Stocks, Sauces, and Soups" chapter, the *sauce velouté* is listed first, but the following six white sauces are sometimes

⁸⁶ As illustration, here is a list of six consecutive recipes in Lucas's dessert chapter: Vacherin aux Pêches, Riz aux Fraises, Baba Au Rhum, Dents de Lion, Pudding Sans Souci, Ginger Roll. (Translated: Peach Vacherin [a layered dessert usually consisting of fruit with whipped cream and meringue], Strawberries with Rice Cream, Rum Baba [a rum-saturated cake filled with pastry cream or fruit], Lion's Teeth [a sweet omelet with strawberries], Pudding Without Cares [an apple-flavored egg pudding]. The Ginger Roll is essentially a jellyroll flavored with spices.)

veloutés and sometimes béchamels. Such an organization would not have done inexperienced cooks any favors in terms of helping them to master one technique before transferring it to another recipe or attempting a new one. Neither Donon nor Lucas arrange their recipes in ways that make French cooking appear systematic; instead, French cook is a jumble of unpronounceable names.

Regardless of the recipes' quality or authenticity, neither Donon's nor Lucas's organizational strategies allow for the kind of scaffolded learning that Child and her co-authors' organization promotes. A cook would have to discover on her own when one sauce is simply the basic white one enriched with some butter, or flavored with some herbs. Furthermore, both systems (Lucas's and Donon's) keep the reader dependent as ever on the cookbook, while Child and her co-authors' approach promotes eventual independence and indeed, mastery. Their book is organized like a series of cooking classes, rather than a simple anthology of recipes. In fact, both volumes of *Mastering* are designed to work together and to give the home cook a complete course in French *cuisine bourgeoise*, so much so that Volume II contains a comprehensive index. The Foreword to Volume II assumes that readers are familiar with Volume 1, saying that still-novice cooks will recognize and become even comfortable with the methods in Volume 2, and that they "hope [the book's] ideas will start you off on further ventures in other categories" (*Mastering* II ix). They refer to the work cooks will do with their books as "training," and by stating declaratively and often that cooks will, with practice, "feel confident," they continue to attract an audience pre-disposed to try their recipes with optimism. Additionally, the logical progression implied by the

two books (and Volume II includes a comprehensive index, as there were numerous problems with the original index to Volume I) creates the sense of a shared journey or ongoing apprenticeship, a sense which helped to build loyalty among readers.

Child and her co-authors feel sure, too, that the layout of the book will help all cooks, and indeed the placement of words and pictures is one of the innovations of the *Mastering* series. Although not widely adopted in cookbook publishing, these two books and also Child's magnum opus *The Way to Cook* pioneered a page layout in which ingredients and equipment were listed alongside the relevant steps in the process, rather than all together at the top. Child believed that such a layout made more sense, since home cooks could see at a glance what ingredients and equipment they needed at each stage of the recipe. This layout takes up much more space on the page, which may be one reason it never caught on.

Yet no amount of logic or organization will save the would-be French cook from many hours of practicing the various techniques described. The section on Omelettes provides an example of the level of detail Child and her co-authors offered when they felt a technique warranted thorough explanation, and the *French Chef* episodes dedicated to omelettes illustrates the same principle.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ The very first *French Chef* episode (3/4/63, after the three pilot episodes in the summer of 1962) dealt with omelettes, but the recording, along with episodes #2-12, was destroyed because "before WGBH realized duplicates were needed to serve other educational stations throughout the country the first thirteen tapes had worn out" (*TFCC* vii). Another episode, "The Omelette Show," aired February 27, 1972 and is readily available online or DVD. A third early episode, "Elegance with Eggs" (3/2/64) dealt with eggs more generally.

Child learned omelette technique while at the Cordon Bleu, omelettes were the first thing she ever demonstrated on television, and they were often the recipe she chose for live demonstrations. The recipe for omelettes in *Mastering I*, including various fillings, takes up 12 pages, which might seem excessive for a simple dish that Child claims is “ideal for a quick meal” (*Mastering I* 126). Yet such thoroughness typifies Child’s approach to teaching even the simplest of recipes, and surely she was aware that, having promised in the Foreword that anyone who approached her recipes with a modicum of enthusiasm and determination could turn out delicious food, she needed to deliver foolproof recipes. And omelettes, as she notes, are a bit tricky to master since the eggs cook so quickly, which explains the need for twelve pages of detailed instructions and copious illustrations.

In fact, one must “read, remember, and visualize the directions from beginning to end, and practice the movements,” for the simple reason that “everything must go so quickly once the eggs are in the pan that there is no time at all to stop in the middle and pore over your book to see what comes next” (*Mastering I* 127). While such instructions⁸⁸ seem to suggest that a cook must already know what she is doing before she begins, and which therefore might undermine Child’s contention that anyone who wants to can cook from her

⁸⁸ Similar instructions appear throughout Child’s writings. She often marks recipes with an asterisk (*) to indicate that a recipe can be prepared ahead to that point. But she is careful to note when one must *not* pause in continuing the preparation. For example, in the recipe for the Reine de Saba cake in *The French Chef Cookbook* (the companion book to her television show), Child writes that, after creaming butter, sugar, and egg yolks together, “From now on you must complete the batter and get the cake into the oven; this is so that the batter will remain soft enough for easy folding in of the beaten egg whites” (287). Such instructions are typical; Child rarely states unequivocally that one *must* do something, and certainly never without providing what she would call a “scientific” reason.

recipes, her goal here seems to be to prevent readers from ruining omelettes because they aren't sure of the next step and let it overcook while they find their place in the recipe. Here is evidence of Child's ongoing concern with her audience's success: she recognizes that such failures will discourage novice cooks, and so she tries to head off such disasters by stressing that the proper technique takes *practice*.

The precision of this recipe is particularly striking; for example, the recommendation of a "Number 24 chef's iron pan with a bottom diameter of 7 inches," which ensures that "the depth of the egg mass in the pan [will] not be over ¼ inch," so long as one follows the instruction to limit omelettes to 2-3 eggs-which one should, unless one is "extremely expert" or in possession of "a restaurant-size heat source" (127-8). All of these instructions, which may seem overly fussy and likely to irritate a reader-cook who just wants to make an omelette, are designed to provide the reader-cook with a fail-safe method of making omelettes. Furthermore, Child's books were popular in an era long after the discourse of scientific cooking and home economics had done its rhetorical work, which is to say that, by the 1960s, many women may genuinely have been convinced that they couldn't learn to cook without instruction. So Child's hyper-precision may have been designed to further earn her audience's trust by eliminating as much margin for error as possible.

The culinary challenge of omelettes lies in the physical technique, as the ingredients are simple and any fillings should be made ahead of time. On "The Omelette Show," which aired in 1972, she demonstrated more than a dozen

omelettes, claiming that so many examples would help viewers, since “the more we make, the more you see what’s gonna go on” (“The Omelette Show”). She touts both the speed of omelette-making (noting repeatedly that one can make an omelette in 20 or 30 seconds) and their versatility; besides breakfast, they make a “lovely lunch,” a “quick dinner,” or even suitable fare for a dinner party (Ibid).

This episode emphasizes technique and precision more than flavor (as some other episodes do), but Child never loses her sense of fun, and continually emphasizes to her audience (viewers and readers) that they should enjoy themselves and not give up if they make mistakes. Child begins with optimism, and opens “The Omelette Show” by promising that viewers who master omelette technique could hold a “last minute dinner party for 300 people.” She ends her introduction by exclaiming, “we’re even going to have a dining room party with omelettes!” The bulk of the show involves demonstrating two omelette-making techniques, one involving stirring the eggs in the pan and the other the “jerk” technique she prefers. The jerk technique involves melting butter in an appropriate pan just until the foaming ceases, then adding slightly beaten eggs. Rather than stirring the mixture with a utensil, Child shows viewers how to shake the pan, jerking it forcibly toward the edge of the stove, until the omelette begins to gather in the far side of the pan, folding over on itself. She clearly delights in watching the omelette come together quickly using this method, and she remarks that the “jerk” technique is “infinitely more fun than the other ways of doing it,” and for her that is reason enough to employ it (“The Omelette Show”).

And lest one be discouraged by her discussion of the merits of various pans or feel that her deft touch is unattainable, she reminds viewers that no one's omelettes are always perfect, not even Julia Child's. When her second example omelette turns out to be a little messy on the unmolding, she says, almost conspiratorily, "If no one is watching, you can take the sides of your hands and push it together" (Ibid). Of course, thousands, if not million, of viewers, have now watched her fix an omelette with her hands, and such a move is typical of Child's efforts to demystify French cooking and of her oft-quoted reassurance that "you're alone in the kitchen. No one can see you."⁸⁹ Such minor (or even major) gaffes, and her matter-of-fact way of fixing things, endeared Child further to her viewers, fostering identification with home cooks who no doubt make similar blunders in the kitchen. In fact, a 1992 article in the *Washington Post* in honor of her 80th birthday noted that "It wasn't that she could do no wrong; rather, she made doing wrong so right. The more she faltered [...]-- the more viewers loved and trusted her" (Richman).⁹⁰ Her blunders and matter-of-fact responses to fixing them made Child and the gourmet cooking she demonstrated seem accessible and desirable, and helped to endear her to her audiences.

Child sensed that to cultivate an enthusiastic audience who would not only buy her book and watch her show but *actually cook*, she needed to show a real cook and real

⁸⁹ Rumors still persist that Child gave this advice after dropping a turkey, or a chicken, or a leg of lamb on the floor, none of which never happened. She did once flip a potato pancake out of the pan, but just scooped it back in and uttered these now-famous words.

⁹⁰ Child never dropped a side of lamb on the floor, but such rumors were so widely accepted that even printing them (without verifying) must have seemed acceptable if they added to the Julia Child mythology.

cooking in action--with all the unpredictability and occasional slip-ups. Because her manner on television was so natural and conversational, viewers could imagine her in their own kitchens, giving advice and laughing about soufflés that failed to rise.

Countless fan letters testify to the ways Child's television shows helped her to constitute an audience by presenting herself as a friend. For example, one fan began a 1979 fan letter "Dearest Juila—Please my familiarity, but you have been a friend to me for so long that I can't quite bring myself to say Ms. Child" (1979 Letter 1). Another fan, later that same year, wrote "I should, I suppose, call you Mrs. Child, but as this is a love letter and as I usually call you 'Dear Julia' in my kitchen where, according to you, nobody knows what happens, I take the liberty of calling you by your first name" (1979 Letter 2).

Furthermore, to effectively constitute an audience, Child saw that she needed to acknowledge a culture that largely saw cooking as a tedious business with only minimal payoff. She did so not by making concessions, but by flat-out contradicting those ingrained beliefs: for Child, cooking *was* fun,⁹¹ and delicious food *could* be made in a home kitchen--sometimes even quickly. In the words of one fan, "By watching you I came to the feel that cooking good food didn't take any more than a desire to do so. You took the 'scare' factor out of the kitchen" (1979 Letter 2). By demystifying cooking and making it appear to be a skill anyone could master, Child not only managed to constitute a book-buying audience, but she managed to change the way Americans thought about cooking.

⁹¹ Barr often quotes Child as saying, "Isn't cooking together fun?" during television shoots, demonstration classes, prep work, or even in her home kitchen with friends.

Conclusion

One of the difficulties in assessing the impact of Child's rhetoric from our vantage point is that the culinary landscape has changed so dramatically since the late 1950s. Walk through any grocery store today, and shallots, crème fraîche, and other "French" ingredients are commonplace. Specialty cooking supply stores all carry the enameled pans and balloon whisks that Child found indispensable, but such tools are also widely available from discount retailers. She profoundly influenced the kinds of products that American consumers demanded and bought. It is not a stretch to say that the audience she constituted, through her cookbook rhetoric, was also a new group of consumers.

Yet much of Child's impact was subtler than helping to create demand for the necessary materials.⁹² All of Child's books and her television shows also contributed to a larger shift in discourses of cooking as they related to gender and professionalism. Child never made it to her mission to correct stereotypes about what kinds of cooking women were suited to do (home cooking) and that men were suited to do (professional restaurant cooking); in fact, she went on record more than once claiming *not* to be a feminist or often asserted that she never felt "downtrodden" by males (Lydon). Although she decried the influence of home economics, often called nutrition experts the "food police," and worried that "fear

⁹² It is worth nothing, too, that Child consistently refused to align herself with any commercial products, or even with commercial television (which certainly could have compensated her more handsomely than WGBH). She turned down endorsement offers, saying she couldn't be sure that a product she liked today would be any good in six months, and she remained loyal to WGBH and public television in general (which she insisted on calling "educational television"), despite many lucrative offers from commercial stations.

of food would be the death of gastronomy,” she seemed almost unaware of the gendered nature of most midcentury food and cooking rhetoric in the United States (Barr 202). Her goal, throughout her career, was to get *everyone* into the kitchen--male or female, young or old--and she did so by, as I have shown above, systematizing and explaining a cuisine that seemed beyond the reach of ordinary home cooks and, perhaps more importantly but less obviously, occupying a kind of middle ground herself. While no one who watched her show or read her books could doubt her expertise, she was not *actually* a professional chef, nor did she ever claim to be one.⁹³ As such, and as she herself often stated, she was not a threat to anyone, nor did she ever pretend to be what she wasn’t. That kind of authenticity and normalcy made her a loveable and accessible figure to men and women, old and young alike. A fan wrote to her in December of 1992, saying: “I became a cook in the Julia Child generation and have long thought of you as ‘The Enabler.’ You told us all that we could become gourmet cooks and gave us the courage to do so. You encouraged us to use our imaginations and enjoy working with food; so we did. Because of you and your cookbooks, many of us are far better cooks than we would ever have been without you” (1992 Fan Letter).

Most of the people who bought her book and watched her show were women; women still did the majority of the cooking in American families during the 1960s. Yet unlike contemporary books such as the *The Can Opener Cookbook* or *The I Hate to Cook Book*, both of which can strike modern readers as

⁹³ Her rival Madeleine Kamman and food writer Karen Hess often pointed out that she was neither French nor a chef.

patronizing in their assumptions that women cannot handle complicated recipes, Child's books were precise, methodical, and deeply grounded in careful research, and as such would have appealed to an audience that wanted real information and serious instruction.⁹⁴ Providing such technical and often scientific information to home cooks affirmed her confidence in all home cooks, but particularly women, and thus helped to subvert pervasive popular notions that gourmet cooking was mysterious and beyond the reach of everyday practitioners. Instead, Child's rhetoric served to constitute an audience of people interested in learning to cook French where no such audience had been before

As I outlined in the first chapter, the domestic science and nutrition movements had the unintended consequence of *reducing* women's confidence when it came to culinary matters, and despite the reams of pamphlets and guidebooks its proponents produced, this sort of rhetoric had a generally discouraging and un-empowering effect on readers. Child and her coauthors, by approaching cooking with knowledge and experience, but also a spirit of fun and adventure, manage to produce a different effect altogether. Recipes in their hands serve a pedagogical function, but without the pedantry or condescension of those

⁹⁴ I hesitate to call Child's recipes or methods "scientific," although she often did, and certainly she understood, and explained to readers, the chemical processes that, for example, allow "milk solids to remain in suspension" when butter is beaten into boiled and reduced acid (wine and vinegar) (*MAFC* I 96). But in the context of this project, the word "scientific" carries overtones of scientific cooking which are inappropriate here. When she called her recipes "scientific," Child referred primarily to the fact that she had tested and re-tested them, always accounting for changes in ingredients (American hard wheat flour vs. French soft wheat flour) or method (chopping vegetables by hand or in a processor). So her recipe were "scientific" insofar as they had been scrupulously revised based on repeated experimentation, but she did not consider them valid only because they illustrated chemical principles.

produced by domestic science or nutrition experts. By offering encouragement and taking an optimistic tone, Child produces a culinary rhetoric that empowers women, even in a context (domestic work) that is usually viewed as oppressive or stifling to women. It is little wonder that such a rhetoric effectively constituted an audience for books and television shows about French cooking, even in a culture that seemed (at the outset) wholly inhospitable to such a project. And the promised rewards--delicious food, fun, and eventual expertise, all with the added cache of being French--provided a real incentive to try cooking, Julia's way.

Chapter 4

Alice Waters and the “Delicious Revolution”:

Sensory Seduction and Manifestoes

Since its founding in August of 1971, Chez Panisse has pioneered a number of culinary trends that seem commonplace now, such as choosing organic ingredients, offering grilled meats, and noting a food’s provenance on the menu. The celebrated Berkeley restaurant routinely appears on “best restaurant” lists, and has been called “indisputably the most influential” restaurant in the country by food journalist R.W. Apple, Jr. (qtd. in McNamee xi). The restaurant’s founder, Alice Waters, and former head chef Jeremiah Tower are frequently credited with inventing “California” or “New American” cuisine, a style of cooking that fuses techniques and methods from a variety of culinary traditions (primarily French, Latin American, and Asian) and prizes fresh, seasonal ingredients. Yet Chez Panisse’s influence does not stop with the restaurant alone. Such is Waters’s passion for encouraging others to adopt her mantra of fresh-local-seasonal that she has become a highly visible advocate for school lunch reform, the expansion of farmers’ markets and farm-restaurant connections, school and campus gardens, and a host of other food-related activist projects. In the process, Waters and Chez Panisse have contributed to substantial discursive shifts in food rhetoric. This chapter analyzes some of those contributions.

The early days of Chez Panisse hardly suggested that this “slapdash, make-it-up-as-we-go-along little hangout” would become the potent political, education, and rhetorical force that it has in the last four decades (McNamee 5). According to Waters herself, she never set out to start a movement, and her passion is often muted by her modesty. Waters often credits her semester abroad in France with transforming her culinary sensibility and describes herself as having been “young and naïve” when she first spent time abroad. And though the experience was profound enough to prompt her to start her restaurant, she denies having revolutionary aims and claims much simpler motivations: she was “looking for flavor, not philosophy” (Waters, *The Art of Simple Food*, 3). What she discovered, though, was that to recreate those flavors, she had to embark on a new and unconventional way of procuring her ingredients. Dissatisfied with what was widely available in grocery stores, she soon discovered that “the people who were growing the tastiest food were organic farmers in my own backyard, small farmers and ranchers within a radius of a hundred miles or so of the restaurant who were planting heirloom varieties of fruits and vegetables and harvesting them at their peak” (Ibid).

Choosing ingredients in this way seemed economically unsound for a new restaurant: after all there were few guarantees that the desired products would be available, and it put the restaurant’s menu directly at the mercy of the farmers, who were, in turn, at the mercy of the weather. This foraging approach (as Chez Panisse employees call it) also ran directly counter to standard practice in the restaurant industry in the 1970s, which relied on wholesale ingredients. And “locally grown” was not yet a powerful marketing tool; in fact, the opposite was true. For something special, writes Calvin Trillin, restaurant menus in that era “needed a single word to designate the high

quality of an ingredient--imported” (Trillin 7). Trillin joins many who have called Waters a revolutionary, but Waters herself downplays this designation and claims that “[w]hat was revolutionary” about her approach “was being able to buy directly from the source and not being limited to what I could find at the supermarket” (Waters, *ASF* 3).⁹⁵ Home gardens and boutique farms and farmers’ markets have benefited in the last decade by rapidly increasing public interest in more sustainable agriculture and organic produce, but in the early 1970s, no restaurant that expected to stay in business was buying its produce this way--the usual practice was to buy from wholesalers and commercial suppliers, but not from small local farmers. From the very beginning, Chez Panisse was an anomaly, to be sure, and not one that anyone thought would survive financially, let alone become so influential.

This chapter traces the evolution of the rhetoric associated with Chez Panisse, Alice Waters, and two of Waters’s other activist projects, including her involvement with the Slow Food movement and with the Edible Schoolyard. Like M.F.K. Fisher, Waters is intensely concerned with the pleasures food offers. Like Julia Child, Waters also relentlessly encourages her audiences to get back into the kitchen and make meals from scratch, rather than relying on convenience foods. Waters extends both positions, however. Rather than celebrating the pleasure of food for its own sake, Waters encourages her audiences to use that pleasure as motivation for political action. If they find greater pleasure, for instance, in tomatoes picked at the height of the season rather than artificially ripened with ethylene gas, she recommends working to promote small,

⁹⁵ This statement is typical of Waters: she views the seasonal and geographical limitations imposed by shopping for food locally as an advantage. It is important to remember, though, that supermarket produce offerings in the early 1970s were not nearly as diverse as they are today.

local agriculture, rather than buying food produced (and packaged, shipped, and distributed) by big conglomerates. In a related vein, Waters wants to do more than reinvest home cooking with some of the dignity stripped from it by the scientific cooking movement and the rise of processed food culture. Waters wants a wholesale re-evaluation of the way we approach eating in this country. If Fisher was concerned primarily with eating food, and Child with cooking it, Waters is concerned with food production and sourcing as another element we must consider as part of a more intentional approach to food. Like Fisher, and Child, she offers a rhetorical alternative to the discourses of quantification and convenience, but her target is much bigger than the home cooks who are Fisher's and Child's primary audiences. Waters's goals have far-reaching social, political, and economic implications. Many people, including Waters herself, have called her project a "delicious revolution," and the name is apt. The food rhetoric she offers is both "delicious" in that she relies on seductive and sensory topoi, and it is also "revolutionary" in that it is deeply political and agitates strongly for a complete revision of the dominant food paradigms.

Over the four decades of Chez Panisse's history, the core message of eating high-quality locally and sustainably grown foods has remained the same. What has evolved, though, are the rhetorical strategies Waters and her colleagues and co-authors have adopted to reach not only wider audiences, but audiences more committed to fighting to change America's food system and food culture. This chapter traces the evolution of these strategies, and analyzes their relative impacts and efficacy.

I begin with a short history of Waters's early professional life because the years she spent at the University of California-Berkeley, in Paris, and immediately after her

graduation had a profound and formative effect on her later career and particularly what she calls her “personal gastronomic aesthetics” which, in turn, shaped the restaurant. This section concludes with the founding of Chez Panisse in 1971. The second section examines the Chez Panisse philosophy, at least as it is elaborated in a number of the cookbooks and other texts associated with the restaurant, including the *Chez Panisse Menu Cookbook*, published in 1982, and *Chez Panisse Cooking*, which Waters co-authored with then-head-chef Paul Bertolli in 1989. I argue that Waters’s (and by extension Chez Panisse’s) message is organized by four key topoi: high quality, freshness, seasonality, and simplicity. These topoi are the cornerstones of Waters’ beliefs about food and cooking, which are that food should be fresh, seasonal, and should taste like what it is. They allow her to make an additional claim for the importance of developing one’s own “personal gastronomic aesthetics.” With this goal in mind, the texts I consider in this section tend to rely on personal experience and seductive, sensory rhetoric.

The final section examines the application of this argument to food discourse generally, at least in its more obviously political and educational manifestations. Here, I consider a marked shift in the generic and rhetorical features of the relevant texts, which include cookbooks, histories, and retrospectives. Waters and her co-authors and colleagues rely on the features of more explicitly political tracts, especially manifestoes--some texts are even labeled as such. Here, I consider two of Waters’s more recent cookbooks, *The Art of Simple Food* (2007) and *In the Green Kitchen* (2010), both of which take a more polemic tone than do the Chez Panisse series of books. I also discuss the texts associated with the Edible Schoolyard, the most visible of Waters’s projects to

reform the role that food plays in schools. Finally I consider the rhetoric of Slow Food, an international movement (of which Waters is vice-president) that works to preserve heirloom or threatened food species (plants and animals), to support small and indigenous farming practices, and to preserve traditional methods of food preparation. The conclusion will consider the place of Waters's rhetoric in the realm of food politics more generally.

Waters's Sensory and Revolutionary Education

Alice Waters was born in Chatham, New Jersey in 1944 and, like Fisher and Child, enjoyed a comfortable childhood of relative privilege but without distinction as far as food was concerned. Although she fondly recalls birthday dinners of grilled steak and green beans and dressing up as the Queen of the Garden, complete with radish bracelets and a strawberry necklace, for a Halloween party (McNamee 8-9), she also described herself in a 1998 *New Yorker* interview as a "girl who'd grown up on frozen food" (Gopnik 62). In any case, nothing in Waters's childhood made a culinary career seem inevitable. Waters's father's job eventually took the family to southern California, and upon graduating from Van Nuys High School, Waters decided to matriculate at the University of California-Santa Barbara. But after three semesters of what she describes as a "dark period," Waters and her friend Eleanor Bertino applied to transfer to the University of California-Berkeley.

Almost immediately upon arrival, the two women were swept up in the protests and demonstrations engulfing Berkeley and many other college campuses around the nation, especially in the wake of President Kennedy's assassination, the Gulf of Tonkin

Resolution, and the ensuing escalation of war in Vietnam. Just as Waters and Bertino were preparing to transfer, a massive student protest led by Mario Savio led to the arrest of hundreds of students on Berkeley's campus--the largest mass arrest of students in history (Cohen 160). Although Waters herself had participated in some of the demonstrations and sympathized with protesters' concerns, she was not so radicalized that the prospect of study in Paris was not more appealing than another semester on a campus that seemed increasingly violent and unstable. Her later career and political activism suggests that early exposure to rhetorics of political protest had a profound effect on her, but at that particular moment, she jumped at the chance to escape the turmoil in Berkeley. With her friend Sara Flanders, Waters left for France in February of 1965.

By her own admission, Waters knew little about France and even less about French food. She had never been abroad, spoke not a word of French, and although they had vague plans to attend classes at the Sorbonne, the two women had hardly made any practical arrangements. On only their second day in Paris, though, Waters describes a simple meal in the same glowing, transcendent tone that Julia Child used to describe her first meal in France. Waters's meal was far simpler than Child's *sole meunière*; she ate simply a vegetable soup (*soupe des legumes*), chosen "because it was the cheapest thing" (McNamee 12). The soup, though was "so delicious" that Waters "felt like [she] had never eaten before" (Ibid). This soup marked the beginning of a culinary awakening that, in many ways, mimicked those of Fisher and Child. Like them, French food culture permanently altered her thinking about food. Echoing her reaction to the vegetable soup, Waters wrote in the Introduction to the *Chez Panisse Cookbook* that in France she

realized she “hadn’t eaten *anything*, comparative speaking, and I wanted to taste *everything*” (ix). Indeed, like for Child and Fisher, France served as the backdrop for something of a conversion experience for Waters. John Hammerback and Richard Jensen write that those who undergo these sorts of profound changes “see themselves as different in fundamental ways from their former selves” (45). Although their argument specifically addresses religious or political conversion, it applies equally well to Waters’s conversion to the French way of thinking about food.⁹⁶ In her books and in interviews, Waters often describes herself before going to France as hopelessly unenlightened, and considers her post-France self to have been altered in profound and irreversible ways. Not only had her gastronomical life before France been something of a blank (she “hadn’t eaten *anything*”), but she hadn’t even known what she’d been missing. So France not only introduced her to an alternative approach to food, but it also awakened her desire, as it did for Fisher and Child, to learn everything she could.

Despite knowing so little at the outset, Waters apparently threw herself wholeheartedly into discovering France through its cuisine. Instead of going to class, she spent her time “soaking up the civilization, [...] mostly by eating” (Waters, *40 Years of Chez Panisse* 18). Most of all, she was captivated by the French way of shopping and cooking according to what was local, fresh, and in season. As she tasted new foods and

⁹⁶ It is worth noting Waters’s tendency to idealize French food culture. McNamee, similarly prone, wrote that Waters supposedly saw, “many times,” “French housew[ives who] would stroll through a village market, sniffing, appraising, thinking.” This “housewife” would “devise” daily menus based on whatever was fresh and “struck her fancy,” and would “compose [dinner] as she paced along the quay” (31). Certainly, this is McNamee’s interpretation of an experience presumably recounted by Waters, but it is symptomatic of a tendency to view *all* French people as profoundly interested in and knowledgeable about food. While there is little question that food occupies a larger place in French culture than it does in American culture, such views tend to strike readers as overly romantic.

learned more about French culinary habits, she “began to appreciate how food anchored life to the land and to the seasons” (Ibid). This appreciation still guides the menus at Chez Panisse and Waters’s projects, like the Edible Schoolyard, that seek to promote understanding food as a living thing, connected to a place and a time, rather than just a commodity one purchases in the supermarket.

Although her semester in France was just the beginning of Waters’s gastronomical education, some of the key foundations for her rhetoric of food had already been laid, along with some of the habits that she encourages in those who read her books or ascribe to her ideals. Besides appreciating the superior flavors of food eaten fresh and in season, she began to appreciate the value of local, small-scale food production. She wrote of her French friends, who “would drive around on Sunday afternoon, stopping at all the restaurants in town to see who had the best of whatever was fresh and in season, and then they would agonize over the final choice” (*Chez Panisse Menu Cookbook* ix). This careful deliberation, she argues, “showed much respect for food” (Ibid). In her recollection of these experience, Waters encapsulates three of the four topoi that organize the food philosophy at Chez Panisse; namely, freshness, seasonality, and high quality. In the rest of her work, Waters emphasizes the importance of each of these criteria, and she also insists that developing a discriminating palate--one that chooses only the best of everything--is an important part of anyone’s gastronomical education.⁹⁷

When Waters returned from her semester in France, she knew that, above all, she wanted to re-construct the flavors and textures that she enjoyed in France and, equally

⁹⁷ Many employees, including her longtime partner Jerry Budrick, have claimed that Waters’s palate is unerring; when she declares that a dish needs a pinch of salt or a squeeze of lemon juice, she is invariably right (McNamee 55, 119).

important, she wanted to re-create, at least for herself, a space where taking time to sit, to talk, and to enjoy a coffee or a leisurely meal with friends was *normal*. Later, Waters will write dismissively of her decision to start a restaurant, saying she just went “looking for good-tasting food to cook,” not that she had other goals (*Art of Simple Food*, 3). But according to her friends and those who became her co-workers, Waters always had a crystal-clear vision of what she wanted her restaurant to be, from the food to the lighting to the flowers on the tables. Suggesting otherwise seems to be a rhetorical move designed to suggest that her goals are simple, and therefore the food culture she wants to recreate and promote is similarly simple and accessible.

Before the idea of the restaurant took firm shape in her mind, though, Waters tried her hand at teaching. She had student taught at a Montessori school during her senior year in college, and spent the year after graduation at a Montessori training center in London. Although she only worked for four years as a teacher, the Montessori method proved to be integral to her sensibilities as a cook and restaurateur. The Montessori pedagogy, based on the research and practice of Maria Montessori, seeks to educate the “whole child” through, among other pedagogical strategies, “prepared environments,” where everything with which a child might come into contact is designed to stimulate the senses and encourage practical, hands-on learning. The goals of this pedagogical method are to encourage the kind of confidence in children that leads to experimentation as a means of learning. As Montessori herself had it in her book *The Absorbent Mind*, the “hands are the instrument of human intelligence” (Montessori 27).

In Waters’s words, the Montessori method is “all about encountering the world through the senses” (McNamee 32) and the method clearly influenced her own

inclination to know the world “through the senses, always through the senses” (8). Her desire to rely on sensory data in order to experience the world fit logically with her continued obsession with what she called the French “aesthetic,” which to her meant paying attention to every detail of lighting, tableware, decorations, seating, and of course, food. Waters’s teaching career itself would be quite short, but bundled into her then-nascent ideas for a restaurant were increasingly clear ideas for *educating* the public to eat according to a very different set of criteria than the usual cost and convenience. Although Waters was and remains deeply committed to promoting a diet that is healthy, her method would differ sharply from nutrition experts who established their credibility through sets of data or the results of scientific experiments. Nowhere in Waters’s books or other writings will one find explicit references to the quantities of food--the number of calories, fat grams, or the vitamin content. For Waters, eating healthful food would be a natural effect of eating food that she deems good--food that is fresh, local, organic, and seasonal. If people could taste this good food, it would be so delicious that the sensory experience itself would be all the convincing they needed. As Waters wrote in the Introduction to the *Chez Panisse Cookbook*, “I wish I could just sit people down and give them something to eat; then I know they would understand” (ix). This wish--to give people good things to eat and thereby persuade them to adopt her approach to food--was what spurred Waters’s decision to open a restaurant. A restaurant, she believed, could be the forum for an education in the sensory, seductive rhetoric of food. Galvanized by the energy and rhetoric of the Free Speech Movement, Waters and her cohort firmly believed that they could change the world through peaceful demonstrations and other tactics. Still yearning

to re-create both the flavors and ambiance of her experience in France, and encouraged by friends who felt similarly, Waters began to think seriously about a restaurant.

The Birth of Chez Panisse

Long before Chez Panisse would actually open its doors in August of 1971, Waters said it “often felt like I already had a restaurant in my house, [since f]riends were always coming over for dinner” (*40 Years of Chez Panisse* 24). Making dinners for her friends gave Waters the chance to refine her own culinary sensibility. Knowing about her passion for French food, Gene Opton, a friend who owned an upscale kitchen supply store in Berkeley, introduced Waters to Elizabeth David. During the late 1960s, as her restaurant plans were coalescing and a steady stream of filmmakers and artists flowed through the dining room of the Berkeley home she shared with artist David Lance Goines, Waters began “cooking [her] way through Elizabeth David’s books” (Ibid). David’s cookbooks (notably *French Country Cooking* and *French Provincial Cooking*), along with books by Richard Olney and a relatively obscure cookbook called *The Auberge of the Flowering Hearth*, would become Waters’s kitchen bibles. Since these books profoundly influenced the cooking style and practices at Chez Panisse, and the culinary approach that Waters describes in her books, it is worth spending a few minutes here describing the culinary approach these books suggest.

Elizabeth David (1913-1992) was a British culinary writer famous for introducing Continental cuisines to British audiences. David left England for France in 1930, and did not return until after World War II. In the intervening years, she traveled around Europe and lived for a time in Egypt. Upon returning to England, she was dismayed by British

cuisine, which had never been considered wonderful, but had suffered even further during the years of rationing and wartime shortages. David's books served British audiences much the way Julia Child's served American audiences: she helped to revitalize interest in home cooking and, like Child, had little patience for shortcuts and ersatz substitutes (like margarine). Like Fisher, David valued pleasure above all in culinary matters, and encouraged her readers to seek out the foods and recipes that bring them the most pleasure.

In the opening pages of *French Provincial Cooking* (1970), David encapsulates the French dining aesthetic through a hypothetical anecdote. She writes that "when we say to friends, 'we'll just have an omelette and a salad and a piece of cheese,' what we mean is 'we won't make any fuss, but what we have will be well chosen, will make a satisfying meal and will go nicely with a glass of wine'" (16). What matters most, she insists, is the *quality* of the items and the *cohesion* of the menu, not the size of the portions or the elaborateness of the preparation. When we approach dining in this way, David argues, "without our even knowing it, a little piece of French wisdom in the matter of eating has rubbed off on to ourselves" (Ibid). Certainly, this vision of a "satisfying meal" being one where all components worked in concert to generate an integral experience guided Waters's earliest plans for her restaurant, which since the first night has offered a single menu, with no choices.⁹⁸ This somewhat controversial practice means that Waters wanted to offer diners an entirely different experience: while part of the

⁹⁸ While such a practice runs counter to the undercurrent of developing personal taste (which one finds in David's, Waters's, Fisher's, and Child's writing), it does allow Waters to "teach" her culinary aesthetic by presenting menus as finished compositions, designed by master craftsmen.

appeal of dining out has always been that each diner can choose according to her desires, Chez Panisse offers a pre-selected sequence of dishes that (ideally) will satisfy the diner and provide something of a gastronomical education.

David also describes French cooking in a way that appeals to Waters's sensibilities about what good cooking should be. David distinguishes between "crude" and "simple" approaches to cookery and implies that "simple" dishes are usually deceptively so, since considerable care went into choosing the ingredients for the dish, and in preparing them in a way that shows them to best advantage. She argues that one can't avoid "the work or the basic ingredients," but one can dispense with all the fuss and garnishes that were endemic to many so-called authentic French restaurants in the U.S. in the 1960s, but which, David tells us, are "alien to the whole spirit of French cookery" (16-17). Since one of the mantras of the Chez Panisse kitchen has always been that the food must always taste like what it is,⁹⁹ most of the chefs at the restaurant have agreed that cooking well means finding the best ingredients, but then doing as little as possible to them.

David's approach to cooking amounts to leaving well enough alone, and Waters adopts this view wholeheartedly in the restaurants and, by her own admission, in her home cooking. She also adopts features of David's style, most notably her tendency to write narrative recipes, which differ markedly from the recipes in typical cookbook layout. Rather than a list of ingredients followed by a set of instructions, David's recipes

⁹⁹ Maurice Edmond Saillant (1872-1956), better known by his pen name Curnonsky, was a French gastronome and writer who famously defined cuisine as "quand les choses goûtent de ce qu'ils sont" (which translates to: "cuisine is when things taste of what they are"). Waters often references this declaration when asked to define the Chez Panisse philosophy of cooking.

usually begin with an interesting historical detail about the dish or perhaps some anecdote about the dish's region of origin. The recipe proceeds directly from this anecdote; amounts and ingredients are noted right in the text, rather than in a list set apart from the instructions. While many of the recipes in the Chez Panisse cookbooks follow the conventional format, a number of the recipes do not, especially those for essential or basic dishes. For example, the recipe for poached eggs in *The Art of Simple Food* consists of a page and a half's account of a poached egg's possible applications, the effect it produces on an eater, the method for poaching an egg, and ideas for using poached eggs to feed a crowd. By modifying the recipe genre in this way, Waters (like David) deemphasizes the technical and sometimes intimidating aspect of cooking in favor of an individual narrative style that emphasizes description and sensory detail.

Aside from David, another of "the biggest influences" on Waters's actual cooking style was Richard Olney, whose *The French Menu Cookbook* (1970) also inspired Waters's decision to offer only a single prix-fixe menu each night (Waters *40 Years of Chez Panisse* 41). In fact, in her Introduction to Olney's 1999 memoir *Reflexions*, Waters noted that *The French Menu Cookbook* provided "unexpected validation" for this decision (7). She describes "the gastronomic aesthetic" of Olney's cookbook as "exuberant, sensual and, at the same time, deeply knowledgeable and rigorously uncompromising," all of which terms could apply equally to Waters's own aesthetic, and the one she strove to put forward at Chez Panisse. In his 1974 cookbook *Simple French Food*, Olney echoes Elizabeth David in his assertion that "simple food" is usually deceptively complex, writing that

unless the supremely social acts of eating and drinking, of human communion at table, of analyzing and sharing voluptuous experience evolved and refined

within the nonetheless flexible boundaries of tradition, find their place as primordial and essential threads in the larger fabric of simplicity, Simple Food as a concept can have no meaning beyond that of elementary nourishment for the anti-sensualist or ease of preparation for the lazy cook.

Olney, *Simple French Food*, 7

In other words, preparing “simple food” still requires tremendous attention to the entire experience of eating. David and Olney both seem committed to reclaiming “simple” from a culinary culture that had associated the word with convenience cooking methods (what Olney calls laziness) or with carelessness about ingredients (what David calls crude). For each of them, and for Waters, “simple” cooking can only work when using the “best and tastiest ingredients” (*Art of Simple Food* 3).

The third most significant cookbook for developing the restaurant’s culinary philosophy was *The Auberge of the Flowering Hearth* (1973). Written by the culinary writer Roy Andries de Groot, the book began as an assignment for one of the magazines de Groot wrote for, and emerged as a full-length book that is both story and cookbook. De Groot traveled to the small town of St. Pierre-de-Chartreuse in southeastern France to discover and write about the method of making green chartreuse, and stayed at L’Auberge de l’Atré Fleuri (the auberge of the flowering hearth). Instead of an article about a liqueur, de Groot produced the book that is a chronicle primarily of the meals he ate at the inn, complete with menus and recipes. What set the cuisine apart, he writes, was that the meals were “based almost entirely on the local specialties of the Alpine region,” and the inn’s cuisine “was made memorable by [the proprietresses’] approach to the food as a picture set off by the frame of the wine” (17). In his descriptions of the first two meals, de Groot emphasizes details like the fact that the “fish had been brought in the

morning” from a local fisherman, and that it had been prepared according to Genovese tradition because “we were only about ninety miles from Geneva” (26).

In the fifth chapter, “The Art of the Perfectly Balanced Menu--Learning the Rules,” de Groot lays out “rules” that could just as easily organize the aesthetics at Chez Panisse--at least the way Waters imagined the restaurant to be. For example, he describes the inn’s living room as being decorated in “restful colors” that were “offset by the vivid brightness of fresh flowers,” and one could adjust the heat from the fireplace by “lowering a large sheet of insulating glass” (28). Such details may seem inconsequential, but they greatly enhanced de Groot’s experience at the Auberge, and they are echoed in Waters’s desire to have every detail of the restaurant--from the lighting to the seating to the displays of fresh flowers to, of course, the food itself--contribute to the sensory experience.

After one of his first dinners at the inn, de Groot could not resist asking Mademoiselle Vivette, one of the proprietresses of the inn and the chief cook, how she learned to cook. She credited her skill in wine and food pairings to her father, who taught her that “the key to success is [...] in the balance between the dominance and power of the wine and the dominance and power of the food,” rather than arbitrary rules about matching colors (30). For culinary training, she turned to her mother, who insisted that “each dish on a menu must complement and enhance *all* the other dishes,” and that a menu was “the script of a dramatic performance” (31). The entire first half of the book proceeds in similar fashion: after revealing the menu for lunch or dinner, de Groot offers a short essay on the dishes, telling either an anecdote about their origin or more information about a particular ingredient, which was nearly always locally sourced. The

book, in many ways, encapsulates the “French aesthetic” that Waters wanted to recreate: a restaurant wherein each detail was integrated and integral, and whose food was intimately connected with time and place.

Given the rich Provençal culinary tradition, it is little surprise that Provence was the “place” whose culinary traditions Waters seems most interested in re-creating at Chez Panisse. Mademoiselle Vivette had explained her culinary prowess to de Groot by stating simply, “I come from Provence, [...where] one is born a gourmet” (29). While that point is perhaps debatable, the influence of Provençal culinary traditions on Chez Panisse is not. First, the name of the restaurant is borrowed from Marcel Pagnol’s trilogy of films set in Marseilles. For Waters, the films (*Marius*, *Fanny*, and *César*) capture the “sunny good feelings of a world that contained so much that was missing from our own--the simple good food of Provence, the atmosphere of tolerant camaraderie and great lifelong friendships, and a respect for both the old folks and their pleasures and the young and their passions” (Waters *40 Years of Chez Panisse* 33). Besides naming the restaurant after Honoré Panisse, the generous merchant who agrees to marry Fanny, a young pregnant woman abandoned by her lover Marius, Waters would name both her own daughter and a café (the only other restaurant she has ever owned) after Fanny, and she and the other partners in the restaurant named their foundation Pagnol et Cie (Pagnol and Company). While most of these references are probably lost on the average restaurant-goer, they serve as a constant reminder to the staff at Chez Panisse that they were trying to “recreate an ideal reality where life was lived close to the land, where food was produced by people who were sustained by each other and by the earth itself” (Ibid).

Other mentors and influences frequently appear in Waters's cookbooks and other writings, notably Lulu and Lucien Peyraud, whom Waters met through Richard Olney in the mid-1970s. The Peyrauds owned the Domaine Tempier vineyard, now regarded as one of the premier vineyards in the Bandol AOC¹⁰⁰ in Provence. When Waters first met them, she describes feeling "as if [she] had walked into a Marcel Pagnol film come to life" (Olney *Lulu's Provençal Table* xi). Lulu Peyraud is celebrated in gastronomical circles as the best home cook in France, and her style of cooking is immortalized in Olney's 1994 book *Lulu's Provençal Table* which, as one would expect, consist of recipes prefaced by information about the origin of the ingredients (always local) and how to choose the best ones. Waters claims that the "Peyraud family's example has been helping us to find our balance at Chez Panisse for years," primarily insofar as they strive to "let the food and wine speak for themselves at the table" (xiv).

A sensory experience in which every detail plays a role, food served at the peak of freshness and prepared so as to showcase its best qualities, and an atmosphere of warm generosity: these were the goals Waters set for the restaurant. Chez Panisse opened on August 28, 1971, even as Waters and others were still completing the last preparations, like nailing down carpets. The menu featured *pâté en croûte*, duck with olives, and a plum tart, plus wine and coffee, for \$3.95. The night ended when, after serving 120 dinners, Waters had to send away some four dozen people because the kitchen had simply run out of food (McNamee 5). While it would take the restaurant several decades

¹⁰⁰ A French acronym standing for "appellation d'origine contrôlée," which translates to controlled designation of origin. Essentially, marking a bottle of wine with an AOC is a guarantee that a wine was produced in a particular region. The designations are based on the French concept of *terroir*, an untranslatable term that essentially refers to all the land- and climate-based characteristics of a place which are believed to affect food or wine produced there.

to get its financial house in order, let alone become profitable, the restaurant had hit a chord from the first night. Whatever it lacked in business acumen or culinary finesse, it made up for in a clear-sighted vision of the restaurant's mission and an uncompromising stand on quality. In the next section, I examine the rhetoric of Chez Panisse's message, and argue that Waters and her co-authors adopt a sensuous, seductive rhetoric designed to approximate, as much as is possible, the sensory pleasure of eating at the restaurant. Rather than being an end unto itself, though, Waters and her co-authors use this rhetoric to advance an agenda of political and social change.

Putting the “Delicious” in the “Delicious Revolution”:

Rhetorics of Sense and Seduction

The dominant persuasive tool in the Chez Panisse arsenal has always been the appeal to the senses, which seems like a surprising rhetorical choice given that Waters aims to convince her audiences of ethical and environmental grounds to participate in a radical overhaul of American culinary habits that Waters has sought. But this choice also seems quite savvy. After all, as the first chapter of this project demonstrated, scientific and quantitative rhetorics of food may have persuaded the public that cooking and eating were complicated matters best left to experts, but even the wide dissemination of scientific data, backed by government- and university-sponsored research into nutrition by trained experts has largely failed, rhetorically speaking, to persuade the public to eat a healthier diet--let alone one that supports local economies or results in less environmental degradation. Ironically, a rhetoric that simply tells people to look for (and eat) food that *tastes good* has been more successful, both in terms of convincing people to eat healthier

foods and to be more mindful of the economic and environmental consequences of their food choices.

This section analyzes how Waters and her co-authors manage to unite pleasure and purpose in their books. As noted above, this sensory rhetoric is organized according to the mantra of “fresh, local, seasonal,” and most importantly high quality. Waters and her co-authors argue that eating according to the senses should, above all, be pleasurable, but this pleasure is not an end in itself, but rather should be an inducement to action. While the desired action is not as explicitly political as that proposed by the texts I will treat in the last section, Waters and her co-authors adopt this sensory rhetoric to convince readers to shop and eat not according to the dictates of mass culture (which values convenience and speed), but rather according to what is better-tasting and, therefore, healthier for bodies, local communities, and the environment.

Appeals to the senses form a subset of appeals to *pathos*, which Aristotle identified as one of the three proofs. An appeal to *pathos*, of course, usually indicates an appeal to the emotions, which led Aristotle and others to question their utility and even integrity; in fact, early in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle famously compared an emotional appeal to using a bent ruler (1354a26). Later, though, he seems to reverse himself and decide that a systematic understanding of the emotions--what they are, how they are aroused, and how they can be dissipated--is crucial for an orator. Later scholars, including George Campbell in the 19th century and W.W. Fortenbraugh in the 20th, have argued that emotions are, in fact, not antithetical to reason, but are rather a form of intellectual reflection. Eugene Garver (1994) will further argue that one should “not offer emotion as a reason for [a] decision,” but instead argue that a particular emotional response is

“appropriate[]” and reasonable, and therefore justifies action” (137). While Waters and her co-authors do not appeal specifically to *emotions*, they are interested in arousing pleasure, or at least arousing the imagination or desire for pleasure, and thereby inducing people to eat differently. They do so through vivid, sensual descriptions of food, which we might label instances of *enargia*, which Richard Lanham defines as “general term for vigor and verve [...] in expression” (64). Such descriptions offer, perhaps, a linguistic approximation of the experience Waters would like to give each person who eats in her restaurant. These descriptions might be categorized as *gustographia*, to coin a term, which is to say that they seek to capture the sensory pleasures of taste in lively, rich language.

I begin with the first Chez Panisse cookbook, which Waters published in 1981. *The Chez Panisse Menu Cookbook* opens with Waters’s declaration that her “one unbreakable rule has always been to use the freshest and finest ingredients available” (x). Indeed, all of the other tenets of Waters’s food philosophy flow from this rule. Many have noted Waters’s extravagance, but this constant search for the very best led to the necessity of identifying local producers, of eating in season, and using produce at the peak of freshness. Obviously, the “best” ingredients are not always grown in one’s neighborhood, especially if one does not live in a climate that is as agriculture-friendly as California’s. But for Waters, the best food is always that which is grown without chemical intervention and with travels the shortest possible distance from farm to plate so as to ensure that the food actually ripened on the plant and was not subject to long-term storage. She defines “fresh,” for instance, as “the perfect little lettuces that are carefully hand-picked from the hillside garden and served within a few hours” (x). Such a short

time frame does not allow for industrial processing or long-range transportation of food, and thus ensures that the lettuces are ripe for eating when picked and still incredibly fresh when presented to a diner.

Waters justifies her use of sensory descriptions, or what I have called *gustographia*, in the essay titled “What I Believe About Cooking,” which follows the declaration analyzed above. In this essay, Waters lays out an approach to food that she claims is “not radical or unconventional,” though she admits it may appear that way since “we as a nation are so removed from any real involvement with the food we buy, cook, and consume” (3). The central problem is that “food should be experienced through the senses,” and we have let concerns like price and convenience dominate to the point that we cannot “see a lovely, unblemished apple[...] as voluptuous,” and are instead content with a “brown-spotted two-foot-high lettuce,” even though such a thing is, according to Waters, “ugly and offensive” (3). As a result, Waters says, children grow up thinking this “mass-produced imitation” of good food is the real thing, and are thus “deprived of so much pleasure” (Ibid). A culture full of disposable dishes and regulations that ensure minimal contact between both the cook and food and the eater and food, we are utterly discouraged from actually coming into contact of any sort with our food, and thus miss out on many of the sensory pleasures it offers. Even in home kitchens, she advocates literally getting one’s hands dirty, since “when you use a machine, you never really touch the food, a fact that deprives you of much of the sensual pleasure and sensory experience so important to developing good cooking habits” (8). Chez Panisse, and presumably this cookbook, undertake a kind of re-education of readers, since both aim to promote “the genuine involvement with food that fosters [...] sensory receptiveness” (4). Waters

argues in this essay that developing food and cooking knowledge requires literal hands-on experience. When it comes to gaining such knowledge, the senses of taste, touch, and smell are just as important as sight and hearing.

Waters goes on to enumerate what she feels are key components of cooking, such as flexibility and a refusal to compromise on the quality of ingredients. She insists that cooks modify recipes according to what they like and afford, promising not to “write anything in this book that is so precise that the reader must evoke great powers of concentration on every last detail,” but reminding readers that any modifications they made must keep the “anticipated harmony and balance of the dish uppermost in [their] mind” (4). And echoing Elizabeth David, she notes that she has “not attempted to oversimplify the problem of obtaining first-quality ingredients, nor have I de-emphasized the sometimes exorbitant cost” of such ingredients. And moreover, she has “not attempted to simplify the complex preparation of a simple dish [because] the ultimate quality of a dish is determined by the worth of the ingredients and the time and effort expended by the cook” (5). Despite Waters’s insistence that simple cooking is best, she has little patience for what David calls “crude” cooking. In a declaration she will often repeat in later books, interviews, and presentations, Waters reminds us of the “fundamental fact” that “no cook, however creative and capable, can produce a dish of a quality any higher than that of the raw ingredients” (3). Additionally, she writes that cooks make a mistake when they “attempt to make foods taste and look like something other than what they actually are” (163). Similar to Curnonsky’s view of cuisine, Waters writes in the introduction to the section on “Uncomplicated Menus” that “what one does *not* do to ingredients is as important as what one does do” (Ibid).

Waters's tendency to write in these sorts of absolute declarations generally leaves little room for argument. In the section that follows ("Composing a Menu"), though, she makes clear that while using high-quality ingredients is imperative, there is little else that is carved in stone about Waters's methods. Like M.F.K. Fisher, she encourages readers to figure out what foods they like, and to cook those. Even if they choose to use a menu from the book, "to execute any menu in this book will be to re-compose it; to cook any recipe will be to reinvent it." After all, she writes, "it will be your character and your taste that determine the outcome" (12). This sort of deference to personal preferences not only encourages readers, but it also confirms that Waters is primarily interested in changing people's general attitudes toward and approach to cooking and eating, rather than issuing a lot of instructions or technical guidelines.

Cooking actually seems somewhat secondary to the choosing of ingredients, which has led some critics to claim that the Chez Panisse way more "closely resembles inspired shopping" than inspired cooking (*40 Years of Chez Panisse* 295). Waters almost admits as much, when she repeats in the introduction to a later section of the *Chez Panisse Menu Cookbook* ("Seasonal Menus") that she "cannot stress [this] point strongly enough: the importance of developing an approach to marketing for food that will heighten your discrimination" (54). Becoming a good food shopper is, in fact, just as crucial as being a good cook--perhaps even more so, since Waters hopes that an increase in the number of such careful shoppers will "result in an increased demand for higher-quality foodstuffs from the supermarket" (Ibid). But for Waters, the early stages of cooking (the choosing and acquisition of ingredients) "determine the outcome" insofar as they limit the potential pleasure of a dish, and they are the point at which to measure

whether a finished dish can conform to her high standards for freshness, seasonality, and localness. And so the insistence on high-quality ingredients, repeated throughout the various paratexts of this book, forms the foundation of Waters's approach and is a kind of node around which her sensory rhetoric is organized.

This book does not fully address how one develops this discerning sense, although Waters does note that choosing, for example, a "perfect melon" is complicated and "involves the intimate knowledge that comes from having eaten hundreds of melons, and having learned precisely what they're about" (165). She claims that "this kind of perception" will allow one to "see an ingredient in a myriad of ways" and "take the greatest advantage of seasonal abundance," but she admits that little in our food culture helps us to develop this sort of perception, since "going to the supermarket, which tries to supply all of the produce all of the time, [...] will not give you the answer" (53). Indeed, there is little explicit instruction in this book, only an implicit command to try lots of different foods, from lots of different sources, prepared in lots of different ways, until one discovers the *best* of whatever food one is researching, and presumably it will impeccably fresh, locally sourced, and in season.

While such non-instruction may frustrate readers hoping for more clear-cut recommendations about choosing foods or recognizing high-quality ingredients, it also suits Waters's insistence that food knowledge comes from direct sensory experience. She could not, in fact, capture the taste of a perfectly ripe peach or fish pulled from the ocean just hours before being served, and unlike Julia Child she refuses the notion that method

is the determining factor in the production of delicious meals.¹⁰¹ Instead, the appeal to the senses is really a promise of delicious food. Gustographia are one rhetorical strategy she employs to persuade readers that, provided readers choose the best ingredients and prepare them in a way that preserves their integrity, they can anticipate delicious results. The anticipation her sensory appeals evoke must serve as the motivation to follow Waters's suggestions.

In 1994, *Chez Panisse Cooking*, authored by then-head chef Paul Bertolli with Waters, was published. Bertolli affirms the principles laid out in the first book. He writes in the Preface, for example, that “prime raw materials with the appropriate condiment, such is the basic premise for this book,” and that the recipes should be read as “an invitation to engage the senses while cooking,” not as part of a “rigid culinary rulebook” (vii). Like Waters in the first book, Bertolli does not offer explicit instruction in choosing foods or even recommend that one follow his recipes “slavishly,” but rather exhorts readers to remember that they “are preparing food, not culinary artwork,” and that “cooking is a commonsense practice, not alchemy” (xi). Again, the senses are one of the most valuable tools in the kitchen, since “listening and watching closely while you cook will reveal a richly shaded language understood by all the senses--the degrees of a simmer, the aroma of a roast telling you it is done, the stages of elasticity of kneaded dough, the earthy scent of a vegetable just pulled from the ground.” Food itself becomes

¹⁰¹ In 1981, Child and Waters both sat on a panel convened by the California Culinary Academy. After Waters lamented that we were still in the “kindergarten stage” of California cuisine (i.e., cuisine based on fresh, seasonal, local ingredients), Child chided her for her “unduly doleful point of view about the way most people shop for food” (McNamee 162). Waters herself lamented elsewhere that although she “utterly appreciated” that Child had “expressed the joy of cooking,” she could have moved “the whole organic movement [...] along a lot more quickly” if she had gotten behind it (162-3).

a kind of language, according to Bertoli, and such details, he says tell us “everything” (Ibid). If we pay the kind of attention to detail that she and Bertolli recommend we will, almost by necessity, become ever more mindful of a food’s textures, smells, and flavors, and we will (presumably) become ever more discriminating in our tastes, such that we will seek out better products and suppliers. Bertolli, like Waters, teaches readers to employ all the senses and to use the information they supply in order to choose and prepare foods.

Between the *Chez Panisse Menu Cookbook* and Waters’s most recent regular cookbook *The Art of Simple Food* (2007) though, seven other Chez Panisse cookbooks¹⁰² were published, among them *Chez Panisse Vegetables* (1998) and *Chez Panisse Fruit* (2002), both of which are more specific about the sensory experience food provides, and also in their recommendations for locating and purchasing high-quality ingredients, locally and in season. For instance, in the Introduction to *Chez Panisse Fruit*, Waters recalls the first time she tasted a *fraise des bois* (wild strawberry) in France: “when I popped one in my mouth and tasted the concentrated essence of high springtime--so sweet, so spicily indescribable--my eyes fluttered shut and I didn’t know what to say” (xvi). In the Introduction to *Chez Panisse Vegetables*, Waters describes one of the restaurant’s favorite producer’s vegetable stand as a “staggering array of shades of green, from the almost black leaves of tatsoi to the glowing blanched centers of heads of curly endive” (xix). Another producer supplies them with “boxes of radicchios with leaves like tulip petals” (xviii). The insistence on their variety and volume (the “staggering array”

¹⁰² These include *Chez Panisse Vegetables*, *Chez Panisse Fruits*, *Chez Panisse Cooking*, *Chez Panisse Desserts*, *Chez Panisse Pizza , Pasta and Calzones*, *Chez Panisse Café Cookbook*, and *Fanny at Chez Panisse*.

and the “boxes of radicchios”) suggests a feeling of being overwhelmed by abundance, and by describing fruits and vegetables almost as artwork, Waters seems to want to inspire her audience to treat them with a similar reverence.

These rich descriptions continue to appear throughout the books as a constant reminder of what high-quality produce should look, smell, and taste like, and here Waters employs these gustographia instructively. For example, the description of fennel is all in the service of helping readers choose wisely: “the fennel to buy at the market is that with firm, globular, undamaged bulbs that are quite firm and not shrunken or dried out in any way” (Waters, *Chez Panisse Vegetables* 148). Similarly, the best figs “have beautifully bronzy-violent skin and juicy sweet flesh that ranges in color from amber to rose.” But “to be divine, they must be allowed to fully ripen on the tree;” when choosing figs, you should look for a “distinct bend in the stem” but avoid any that “have traces of milky latex sap at the stems” (87). The bottom line here is, of course, quite simple: buy ripe, undamaged food, preferably from a local producer. It may seem, then, that making such recommendations requires no particular rhetorical savvy. Yet Waters seems to have determined that few people actually *know* what a ripe fig or healthy fennel bulb should look like. And indeed, the common grocery store practice of affixing stickers proclaiming “ripe” on avocados and melons suggests that we are, in fact, somewhat ignorant about how to select high-quality produce. So by offering these gustographia, or rich descriptions of food that, it must be said, whet readers’ appetites, Waters is offering a rhetorical education in choosing foods based on sense data, not price or other criteria.

In 2007, Waters published *The Art of Simple Food*, which offers a different sort of education. Unlike the Chez Panisse series of cookbooks, *The Art of Simple Food* is meant

to provide a kind of primer in the actual cooking techniques that characterize both the Chez Panisse kitchen and Waters's home kitchen, and this goal sets it apart from the earlier books. For instance, the intended audience for the *Chez Panisse Menu Cookbook* included those who "underst[ood] and emphasize[d] with the guidelines set out here regarding freshness and excellence of ingredients," but suggested that those who found an "unfamiliar technique or process" in the book should consult "any of the procedurally oriented cookbooks" (5). The *Chez Panisse Menu Cookbook*, however, was not intended to provide that sort of instruction and indeed seemed more intent on purveying a philosophy, not a method. By 2007, though, it seemed that Waters's intended audience had changed, since *The Art of Simple Food* is, by the author's admission, a more procedural book. In the introduction, she promises that "by cooking your way through these lessons, tasting and learning from your successes (and your mistakes), you will get to know some fundamental techniques by heart and you won't have to look them up again" (*Art of Simple Food* 5). In this pledge, we see evidence of the turn in Waters's thinking, which (she claims) occurred with the birth of her daughter, Fanny, in 1983. No longer content to preach to the converted, so to speak, and apparently no longer convinced that the mere promise of excellent food would persuade people to try her approach, Waters engaged in more overtly instructive rhetoric in order to persuade a wider audience to choose higher-quality and better-tasting foods according to her mantra of local, fresh, and seasonal.

In the Introduction to *The Art of Simple Food*, Waters makes her habitual references to her own travels in France and how that journey led her to found Chez Panisse. In most of the Chez Panisse cookbooks, this story promotes intimacy with

readers, since it is personal and reveals an admittedly naïve and inexperienced Waters, rather than the poised public figure she is today. She appears to be someone who wanted to eat good meals, a desire with which all readers can identify, and her success as a restaurateur is presented as a kind of serendipity, rather than the result of calculation or even vision. Here, though, Waters repurposes this anecdote to different effect. In her effort to find foods that tasted as good as those she'd encountered in France, Waters discovered that "the people who were growing the tastiest food were organic farmers in my own backyard, small farmers and ranchers within a radius of a hundred miles or so of the restaurant" (3). Soon, the restaurant was employing people to "forage," as the practice became known, for innovative growers and farmers willing to supply the restaurant with produce that met Waters's exacting standards. According to Waters, the best part of this unconventional approach to sourcing a restaurant's ingredients was meeting the farmers, "learning from them--and influencing them, too" (4). The story of Chez Panisse's origin explains the necessity, for Waters, of buying local, fresh, and seasonal produce. But instead of dwelling on the superior flavor of meals produced from such ingredients and relying on those descriptions and sensory details to persuade readers, Waters now uses the story--and herself--as an example or model for readers. She writes that "by choosing to buy food grown locally and sustainably, in ways that are healthy and human, [she] had woven [her]self into a community that care[d] about the same thing" (4). She uses these commonplaces--healthy, human, community--to evoke shared values among her readers; after all, most would agree that connection to one's community is a desirable outcome.

By emphasizing community-building and declaring that such marketing practices connect us to "time and place, the seasons, and the cycle of nature," Waters clearly makes

a case for some of the more intangible benefits of eating locally and seasonally. However, I argue that this book and *In the Green Kitchen*, which I will discuss below, function as a kind of rhetorical middle ground between Waters's earliest writings and the Chez Panisse series of cookbooks, and her more overtly political and activist work with the Edible Schoolyard project and Slow Food. For example, *The Art of Simple Food* contains a list of what Waters calls "Principles of a Delicious Revolution," which include such exhortations as "Eat locally and sustainably. [...] Shop at farmers' markets. Plant a garden" (6-7). She also offers a list of "Pantry Staples and Perishable Staples," which is comprehensive enough to reassure readers that "no matter what time it is, and now matter who shows up hungry on [their] doorstep, there will always be something to eat" (11). Another long list notes all of the recipes in the book that one could make with just those pantry staples (20-21). Yet despite these more explicit instructions about how readers should choose foods, Waters still insists that the senses are the best teachers when it comes to actual cooking. For instance, "a sniff will tell you all you need to know" about nuts that have potentially gone rancid (19), and if you toss a salad with your hands, you can be "gentle and precise and make sure that each leaf is evenly dressed" (51). No matter what you are making tasting is the "only way you can find out" if a recipe is actually going well (69). Yet she recognizes in this book that readers may need more explicit instructions and explanation. Each chapter and most recipes are preceded by "mini-essays" that tell more about the ingredients, the methods involved, or how the process (e.g., of making bread) works at a chemical level. It seems that Waters has recognized that many readers may not like to make certain dishes at home simply because they lack the requisite skills or don't understand the process. She recalls her own early

understanding of soup-making: “I thought the process was nothing more than putting leftovers in a pot, heating them with stock or water, and--*voilà!* Soup.” When this “method” failed to produce the desired results, Waters “realized it was necessary to learn some simple techniques for maximizing flavor” (65). In this book, she seeks to pass these techniques on to readers who may have found her sensory descriptions of fruits and vegetables and other foods seductive, but were reluctant to try them without actual instruction.

The subtitle alone of this book (“Notes, Lessons, and Recipes from a Delicious Revolution”) pledges a very different sort of reading experience, and suggests a shift in Waters’s rhetorical strategies--perhaps in response to a sense that purely sensory appeals were no longer the most persuasive tactic. After all, for sensory and pathetic appeals to be most effective, there must be congruence between the emotions aroused and the proposed action (Jasinski 425-247). While the food described in Waters’s earlier cookbook may have sounded delicious, the promise of tasty meals alone was not yet producing the kind of substantial change in public behavior that Waters desired. One could identify the various obstacles to such change, such as persuading readers that the increased amount of time necessary to cook food from scratch was worth it, as was the increased percentage of one’s paycheck that would have to go toward purchasing more expensive ingredients. After all, although Waters often claims that buying local food in season is more economical, that may only apply to those foods grown in abundance in a particular location. In general, local and organic produce still costs more than conventional produce. As an inducement to action, this book does not overcome certain forms

resistance, in part because the emotions aroused do not correspond, at least in degree, with the called-for change.

Delicious Rhetoric in Action: Slow Food and the Edible Schoolyard

The word “revolution” has been attached to Chez Panisse since the beginning; this chapter has noted the numerous subtitles and other references to “delicious revolution.” Such language may seem outsized to describe something as quotidian as food, especially since the primary audience for Waters’s rhetoric has remained limited to the upper and upper-middle classes. But in the past decade and a half, as Waters has become increasingly involved with Slow Food International and as Edible Schoolyards and similar school or community gardens have cropped up all over the country, the language of “revolution” ceases to sound so inappropriate. As the various projects have broadened in scope and attracted increasingly larger audiences, Waters and her fellow activists (such as Slow Food founder Carlo Petrini) have consciously adopted the rhetorical and generic strategies of revolutionaries--going so far as to draft, adopt, and publish manifestos. In this section, I examine a selection of these manifestos and argue that they mark a significant shift in public discourse about food and cooking. While such discourse had heretofore confined its relevance largely to private domestic spaces and individual choices, these manifestos make far stronger claims about the relevance of food choices to issues of social justice, the environment, and economic fairness. In other words, these texts make a more convincing case that there is something genuinely revolutionary about a project seeking to overhaul the way Americans buy, cook, and consume food. Their

choice of genre is deliberate, of course, and before proceeding to a discussion of these manifestos, I will offer a short account of some of the rhetorical functions of this genre.

Thomas B. Farrell classifies manifestoes as “movement genres,” suggesting that they are always attached to some broader project for social or political change (163). The manifestos associated with the “delicious revolution” are no exception. Extending the idea that manifestos are associated with overturning the status quo, James Jasinski characterizes a manifesto as a “type of verbal or linguistic slap [...] directed at unjust and oppressive social conditions.” Furthermore, he says, “it is a model of public denunciation aimed at those who perpetuate social oppression and injustice” (Ibid). A manifesto, in other words, addresses not those seeking to change current conditions, but rather those who keep such conditions in place. The choice to adopt this genre, or even some features of this genre, indicates that Waters and those who support her are no longer interested in addressing only those who are already invested in supporting local agriculture, in buying organic produce, or choosing foods according to the seasons. They seek a far broader audience, and they are also fingering those who stand in the way of Waters’s vision (which she shares with those behind the Slow Food and other movements) of a more economically and environmentally sustainable food industry and culture. The Slow Food arguments have been quite influential to Water’s activism in the last fifteen years, so I will take the time here to explore some of these argument’s rhetorical features, specifically as they are employed in several of Petrini’s texts and in the 2003 “Manifesto on the Future of Food.”

Since its founding by Carlo Petrini in 1986, Slow Food has been working toward three complementary and interwoven goals. First, they seek to promote local and

sustainable agriculture; second, to educate the populace about food and food production; and third, to protect traditional methods of food production, ranging from the cultivation of heirloom fruit varieties to artisanal cheese production. These goals are pursued through a variety of educational channels, most prominently the Salone del Gusto, a gastronomical fair which brings food artisans from all the over world together, and Terra Madre, a global network of food communities who work together to promote sustainable agriculture and protect traditional methods of food production and preparation.

Underlying these goals is the conviction that food must be of high quality, which for Slow Food advocates means meeting the following criteria. It must above all be **good**: tasty, diverse, and produced in such a way that the food's geographic and cultural origins are evident (Petrini 93). Food must also be **clean**, which for Slow Food advocates means that food production methods *enhance* the health of the environment (114). Finally, food must be **fair**, which is to say that food production methods are socially sustainable and adequately compensate workers (135).

These terms, according to rhetorician Stephen Schneider, “help mediate the dialogues between scientific and traditional knowledge” (390). He continues, “Slow Food advocates insist that both science and tradition have a part to play in preserving food that is good to eat and good to think” (Ibid). Put another way, Slow Food advocates are not interested in dismissing all technological or scientific advancements, or suggesting that everyone return to backyard or subsistence farming. Rather, they seek to borrow what is best about traditional methods and combine it with the modern methods or practices that *enhance* traditional methods (rather than supplant them) and that *sustain* the environment and local communities. The resulting foods, Slow Food advocates contend, are tastier and

fresher, and consumers can eat them without worrying that the production methods damaged the environment or exploited workers. These claims--that Slow Food rhetoric is both a mediating dialogue and that it seeks to unite pleasure and ethics--undergird Schneider's contention that Slow Food is "primarily an educational--and rhetorical--movement" (Ibid).

Indeed, much of Petrini's book *Slow Food Nation* (2007) suggests that whatever policy changes Slow Food advocates might hope to influence, their day-to-day operations focus more on increasing public awareness through educational and rhetorical efforts. Petrini begins the book by reclaiming the term "gastronome" from those who would define them "as a bunch of selfish gluttons who couldn't care less about the world around them" (Petrini 1). Petrini redefines a gastronome as someone whose finely tuned and trained senses allow her to "care very much about the world" and to "feel that [he/she] is in a sense a co-producer of food" (Ibid). Re-conceptualizing oneself as a "co-producer," rather than simply a consumer, is a key part of a gastronome's rhetorical self-education, and requires acknowledging the "necessity to keep learning, to respect traditional knowledge and heeds its teaching" (2). Once these tasks are accomplished, a gastronome has a responsibility to share her knowledge with others, a responsibility that confirms Schneider's contention that Slow Food is predominantly a rhetorical and educational movement.

Petrini's books also lay out something of a curriculum for would-be gastronomes, and his recommendations dovetail with Waters's career-long contention that gastronomic education must always take place through the senses. Petrini first establishes the need for this education when he laments that "the obliteration of gastronomic knowledge in the

United States has been total” (247). In a passage reminiscent of M.F.K. Fisher’s dismissal of domestic science as “earnest but stupid,” Petrini regrets, that “modern science is largely nutritionist in its approach, subdividing foods according to their nutritional characteristics--with no thought given to the taste of a dish or to its beneficial effects considered as an integrated whole, including both the nutritional and the pleasurable aspects” (54). Insisting that gastronomy is an interdisciplinary field (55), and Petrini borrows from Brillat-Savarin and defines gastronomy as the “reasoned knowledge of everything concerning man insofar as he eats” (44). The curriculum Petrini outlines in this book is essentially two-pronged: first, one must develop a sense of “*taste*--which is personal and linked to the sensorial sphere of each one of us--and *knowledge*--which is cultural and linked to the environment and to the history of communities, techniques, and places” (97). The practice of tasting becomes, in a sense, the epistemology for the science of gastronomy.

Most of his actual recommendations, indeed, emphasize the experiential side of this curriculum, sometimes at the expense of academic knowledge. For example, in the Introduction he asserts that gastronomic learning does not come from “reading books,” but rather through hands-on engagement: “you need to put your theories into practice; you must be curious, you must try to read reality with your senses, by coming into contact with as many different environments as possible, by talking to people, and by tasting” (6). However, he ultimately argues that the two pieces of this curriculum are mutually enriching when he states, “re-educating the senses and keeping them in constant training becomes the principle gastronomic act” (97). The prefix “re-” reminds us of his contention that gastronomic knowledge has been lost, or at least de-valued; we must

retrain our dulled senses. After all, Petrini writes, “if we cannot identify *flavor* on the basis of objective [i.e., sensory] data, we cannot achieve *knowledge*” (Ibid). We cannot identify a very wide range of flavors, of course, if we eat only a narrow selection of foods, or if we eat foods that are produced by anonymous corporations on mega-farms located thousands of miles away from our communities. This sort of disconnection from our food and its conditions of production means we can have no real knowledge of what we are eating.

Perhaps the worst consequence of this model (which Michael Pollan calls “industrial eating” in *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*) is that “we lose *pleasure*, our freedom of choice, and any change of directly or indirectly influencing the decisions of producers” (97). By following Petrini’s curriculum, re-educating and re-engaging our senses, and learning about the origins of our food, we see our role in the food cycle differently. We cease to be passive consumers outside the circle of production (or at the end of a finite line), but rather a co-producer who can influence food production. Slow Food advocates hope that such a shift in our self-positioning will bring about more responsible agricultural practices and fairer economic conditions for food producers, and re-inscribe human beings in the natural cycles of planting, harvesting, and consuming.

In many ways, the book I have been referencing and Petrini’s other volumes, including *Slow Food: the Case for Taste* (2003) and *Terra Madre* (2010) offer extended discussions of the themes raised in a number of manifestos published by various factions and committees within or involving members of the Slow Food organization.¹⁰³ While

¹⁰³ The Slow Food Manifesto in Defense of Raw Milk Cheese was signed in 2001, the Manifesto on the Future of Seeds was released in 2006, followed by the Manifesto on Climate Change and the Future of Food Security in 2008. Current work focuses on

treating all of them is beyond the scope of this project, I would like to dwell briefly on the 2003 “Manifesto on the Future of Food,” which was produced by the International Commission on the Future of Food and Agriculture and included members of Slow Food’s Board of Directors. This text provides a succinct statement of Slow Food’s objectives with regard to industrial and globalized food production, even as it avails itself of the generic resources of a manifesto, including the space to air grievances, to articulate principles, and to propose solutions.

In his 2008 article on the rhetoric of the Slow Food movement, Schneider argues that “Slow Food rhetoric [...] is less a rhetoric of protest and more a rhetoric of community organization,” which implies that, for Slow Food, airing grievances is a secondary goal. While I will discuss below some of the grievances that are aired in this manifesto, I argue that a “rhetoric of community organization” in fact better suits a rhetorical understanding of manifesto as a genre that works to delineate groups and to compel readers to choose sides. As Janet Lyon notes, “the manifesto seeks to polarize rather than negotiate,” and nowhere is this more evident than the manifesto’s positioning of audience members (102). For instance, the dominant pronouns in this manifesto are “we” and “they,” which serve to demarcate those who are “with” the writers of the manifesto and those who are “against” them, or at least perpetrating some of the ills against which the manifesto protests, such as the failure of the food industry giants to ameliorate world hunger despite enormous increases in so-called productivity (Part One). But by limiting a reader’s possible points of identification to these two diametrically

disseminating the Slow Food Manifesto on Quality, which is organized by the three topoi of good, clean and fair. The texts of all these manifestos are available on Slow Food’s website, <http://www.slowfood.com>.

opposed camps, the manifesto forces readers to take a stand on the issue in question. Lyon argues that the pronoun “‘we’ acts as an interpellation of a nascent or ideal audience” (104). That is, the inclusive implication of the first person plural pronoun positions the reader in a position of sympathy, and allows very little room for hesitation or hedging. The “we” also suggests plurality while presenting unanimity, and the implication of a pre-existing group consensus may be seductive to a reader already somewhat sympathetic to the manifesto’s claims.

Further, the manifesto makes disagreement or even questioning difficult. Lyon describes the manifesto as full of “descriptive or constative statement[s] that place[] its sender in the position of ‘knower,’” which means that the audience (however interpellated or forced into a position of sympathy they might be) must choose to agree or disagree with a statement presented as fact. If a reader disagrees, she “in effect takes up the position of agonistic ‘you’ to whom the discourse is directed,” whereas the reader who agrees is “enfold[ed] into the speaking ‘we’ of the manifesto” (104). The first part of the Manifesto on the Future of Food consists of (at times sweeping) declarations such as “The growing push toward industrialization and globalization of the world’s agriculture and food supply imperils the future of humanity and the natural world” and “negative trends of the past half-century have been accelerated by the recent rules of global trade and finance from global bureaucracies” (Part One). While the authors do not substantiate these claims with statistics or specific examples, they do offer related sub-claims, such as the claim that “the globalization of corporate-friendly patent regimes has also directly undermined the indigenous and traditional sui generis rights of farmers, for example, to save seeds and protect indigenous varieties” (Part One). They also make appeals to

pathos through repeated evocations of “small farmers,” “families,” “poor countries,” and even by suggesting that industrialized agriculture has led to increased “hunger, landlessness, homelessness, despair, and suicide among farmers” (Part One). The denotative style of all of these sentences, despite the relative lack of hard evidence for these claims, positions the writers as credible authorities, as “knowers,” and makes it difficult for audience members to question the claims without positioning themselves as somehow sympathetic to the position of the devils in this discourse: multinational corporations and international monetary institutions. Having positioned itself against these perpetrators of food injustice and described their crimes, the authors of this manifesto conclude Part One with the hopeful statement that there are “many optimistic developments,” and reiterate their “firm opposition to industrialized, globalized food production.” They thus re-establish their position and also open the door for a discussion of possible solutions by suggesting that the current situation is not irreparable.

Grievances properly aired, the authors move on to other sections, which both articulate the movement’s values and provide potential solutions to the problems identified in the first section. Part Two lists and describes twenty-one “principles toward an ecologically and socially sustainable agriculture and food system” (Part Two). These principles bear striking similarities to the commandments in Waters’s “Green Kitchen Manifesto;” for example, these authors assert that “food is a human right,” that people, not corporations, should control agricultural land, and that local food is preferable to that grown in distant communities. In Part Three, the authors describe some of the initiatives underway to “restor[e] food and food production to their proper places in culture and nature” (Part Three), while Part Four puts forward new trade rules that, they are argue,

will be fairer to the majority of food producers, not just major corporations (Part Four). These sections are both arranged in titled paragraphs, and written in what Lyon identifies as an “epigrammatic declarative style [that] directly challenges the oppressor” (Lyon 104). For instance, paragraph titles in Part Four consist of commands such as “Permit Tariffs and Import Quotas That Favour Sustainability” and “Eliminate Direct Export Subsidies and Payments for Corporations” (Part Four). This style of writing suggests that these new rules are not, in fact, proposals, but demands, and is in keeping with the “with us or against us” dichotomy established by the use of the pronouns “we” and “they” and in the opening section’s impassioned enumeration of grievances.

Although the manifesto as a genre provides the rhetorical space for complaint and protest, it also provides a platform from which to argue for--and demand--change. Galia Yanoshevsky, in her article on the recent history of manifestoes, describes the genre as a “discourse of power because it aspires to change reality with words,” and indeed, this manifesto appears to do just that by stating as indisputable fact the problems associated with industrial, globalized food production and suggesting that the adoption of its recommendations will contribute to remedying these problems (264). Yet the manifesto can also serve a constitutive function by compelling audiences to take sides. By interpellating readers in this way, the manifesto may win to its side some audience members who might otherwise have questioned its claims, but who find themselves unable to take the side of the opposition. The manifesto helps to rally people around a cause, which may be precisely where a rhetoric based purely on the persuasive power of sensory pleasure may have failed. The manifesto employs a revolutionary rhetoric that not only compels audiences to make decision, but it also demands that the audience act.

The Slow Food International movement certainly has a broader reach than any of Waters's cookbooks, but it is worth noting that her most recent cookbook, *In the Green Kitchen* (2010) goes a step further than *The Art of Simple Food* by laying out what Waters calls the Green Kitchen Manifesto. This manifesto is really a list of commandments for living according to the philosophy that Waters and her colleagues and fellow activists have been attempting to promulgate for years, and in that sense the book "articulate[s] principles and a program of action," which Jasinski notes is a crucial rhetorical function of any manifesto (354). The list does not differ sharply in content from any of the recommendations Waters gives in her other books, but the items are presented as declarations, with far less flexibility than was evident in earlier texts. For example, the second item asserts, "an organic pantry is an essential resource," and the third commands "Buy food that is organic, local, and seasonal" (*In the Green Kitchen* 3). In other texts, Waters might have extolled the superior taste of local and seasonal produce, and she would have encouraged readers to stock their kitchens with organic products, but she would not have made such unequivocal declarations or issued such firm orders. Such language confirms Lyon's assertion that the language of a manifesto seeks to "polarize rather than negotiate" (102). In the elements of this manifesto, there is little room for middle ground or compromise; readers can either decide to adopt these principles or not.

Of course, by the time Waters published *In the Green Kitchen*, she had already been involved with Slow Food for a number of years, and in fact had become one of the Vice-Presidents of the Board of Directors. Waters met Petrini more than twenty years ago at a Slow Food event in Italy. In Petrini she found a kindred spirit--a person who, like

her, was “trying to connect pleasure and politics,” and who believed that, if people had delicious, sustainably produced food, they would start to “pay attention to the politics of food” (Petrini ix). Since that meeting, Waters and Petrini have collaborated on a number of projects, including the San Francisco-based event that led to the publication of *In the Green Kitchen*. In her Foreword to Petrini’s book, Waters praises Petrini’s argument that “the education of our senses [is what] allows us to experience the beauty and meaning around us in the world,” and that such an education is--or should be--available to everyone (x).

The rhetoric of the remainder of *In the Green Kitchen* offers the kind of gastronomical education through the senses that Petrini describes, but does not dwell on the shortcomings on the current food system. Much of the rest of the book unpacks the ten elements of the Green Kitchen Manifesto, and Waters employs many of the rhetorical resources she uses elsewhere in her writing, such as her insistence on the centrality of taste, the sensuality of cooking, and on importance of sharing meals at the table for teaching “essential values to our children” (3). For instance, Waters recommends pounding ingredients (such as garlic for a salad dressing or pesto) in a mortar and pestle, rather than in a blender or food processor, because the process is “very sensual” and because “it helps you understand how to balance the flavors of a sauce: as you pound and blend the various elements, you can smell and taste their qualities and intensity” (21). While one could presumably also smell and taste ingredients in a blender, Waters insists that extended physical contact with food is the best way to ensure that one has the best ingredients and that they are being combined in the most pleasing and best-tasting way. So in order to support the bold claims in the Manifesto, Waters returns to the same

rhetorical strategies--including what I have called gustographia--that she used in earlier texts.

She tends, too, to locate multiple virtues in her way of cooking. For example, in addition to producing better-tasting food, she emphasizes how easy some of these “simple cooking techniques” are, claiming (in item #5 in the manifesto) that they “can be learned by heart” (3). Once these simple techniques are mastered, she promises, the resulting food will be repayment enough for the time invested in learning a new technique. “Handmade mayonnaise,” for instance, “is so superior to store-bought that it is well worth the effort,” and moreover making it is “a skill easily mastered” (27). She even returns to claims from the *Chez Panisse Menu Cookbook* that cooking from scratch, with seasonal ingredients, is the most economical way to cook. “Homemade stock,” for example, is “easy to make and economical, [and] it also tastes better than any you can buy” (47). Again, while the Manifesto organizes the claims this book makes and presents them in rather stark terms designed to designate readers as those who “get it” and those who don’t, the development and elaboration of these claims essentially adopts the same rhetorical strategy of appealing to the senses.

There are hints, of course, at appeals to *ethos*, particularly in the claim that the table is an important site for the communication of values, and in the claim (#9 in the manifesto) that eating according to the maxim of “local, organic, seasonal” is more environmentally sustainable because organic agriculture improves the health of the soil, and buying locally eliminates the need for long-distance shipping or elaborate food preservation techniques (such as artificially ripening fruits with ethylene gas). In a recipe for roasting, she asserts that the “best [meat] comes from animals that are pasture-raised,

organically fed, hormone- and antibiotic-free, and, in many cases, locally produced.”

Though she admits that such meat will “cost more,” the higher price is offset by the better taste and the knowledge that the meat came from farms that practice “better stewardship of the land [and provide] better health and care for the animals” (117). This example demonstrates that Waters has expanded the aims of her project. Instead of encouraging people to eat local, organic food *just* because it tastes better, she now asks them to use that pleasure as motivation to make more ethical and informed food choices.

In this text, Waters adopts rhetorical and discursive features that are more appropriate to a revolutionary effort. In fact, she may have realized that the emotions raised in response to the appeals in her earlier cookbooks were not commensurate with the actions she implored her audience to take. Additionally, by uniting the recommendation to shop differently with ethical concerns, she clarifies the exigency and strengthens her purpose.¹⁰⁴ These changes may have stemmed, too, from her recognition of two potential weaknesses of tying up her *ethos* and arguments with Chez Panisse. For one, the restaurant is expensive, which makes it inaccessible to most people. Furthermore, it has long been associated with a food movement that seems precious and unrealistic to many--a movement that has purchase only with people who have not only the means to buy more expensive food, but also the time to prepare it. By essentially suggesting that readers should attempt to shop, cook, and eat the way people do at Chez Panisse, Waters may have estranged readers who would otherwise have been sympathetic

¹⁰⁴ Certainly, the recent explosion of interest in organic food (which is the fastest growing sector of the food industry) and local food (witness the proliferation of farmers’ markets) has worked to Waters’s advantage in terms of bringing her new audiences. But many would argue that some of this increased interest is in fact owing to Waters’s efforts. Nonetheless, this particular book would probably not have sold well, or even been published, fifteen years ago.

to her arguments. So while there is a certain amount of cachet associated with the Chez Panisse name, the association is not an unmixed advantage when seeking to persuade the *average* reader. The impetus to change one's cooking and eating habits has to be for a greater good than simply the homemade version of a Chez Panisse dinner. Raising the stakes of food choices to include environmental health and social justice justifies the switch to a more polemical style. Highlighting the ethical dimension of food culture, from farm to table, offers Waters a more solid point of departure from which to launch her arguments which, in turn, provides an actual cause around which her audience can coalesce.

None of Waters's projects goes further in this direction--that of providing an actual cause around which to rally--than the Edible Schoolyard. Waters's 2008 chronicle of the Edible Schoolyard project begins, not surprisingly, with a brief recapping of Waters's professional life, including her brief stint as a Montessori teacher, her life-changing trip to France, and the founding (and eventual success) of Chez Panisse. The Edible Schoolyard Project combines most of the major nodes of Waters's professional life: her faith in the Montessori method of education through the senses, the conviction that food should be organically grown and locally sourced whenever possible, and the belief that mealtimes are sacred spaces for community development, trust-building, and the transmission of cultural values. Indeed, Waters claims in the opening pages of *The Edible Schoolyard* that the development of her own network of local supplies for the restaurant is what "led her back to education" (6). In the early pages of this book, Waters link herself with a generally popular cause (school reform and improved nutrition for children) and emphasizes the role that having her own child played in her decision to

focus on childhood nutrition. Thus Waters immediately establishes her *ethos*, in this text, as a mother and educator, positions with which many more readers identify, as opposed to wealthy restaurateur and author of bestselling cookbooks.

The idea for the Edible Schoolyard was born when, in 1994, a reporter interviewed Waters about her “unusual suppliers” and her notion that undeveloped lots in cities could be used to cultivate vegetables and fruit for the restaurant (Waters *Edible Schoolyard* 10). At some point in the interview, Waters cited the underused land at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School, a large urban school she passed every day on her way to work. She exclaimed to the reporter, “everything wrong with our world is bound up in that place and in the way we treat children” (10). After the article ran, Waters received a note from Neil Smith, the principal of the school, inviting her to come “look around the school with him, perhaps find a way to help” (11). Waters took him up on the offer, and one of her early visits to the school made visible the need for revitalizing the school’s lunch program, if nothing else. Horrified by the “walking taco,” which she describes as a “bag of mass-produced corn chips” mixed with a “beef-and-tomato slurry from a can,” Waters saw the lunch not only as a “terrible waste, but also a “perfect symbol of a broken culture” (7). Waters began to envision the school garden as fully integrated into the school’s curriculum--as a way to fix not only the nutritional and health deficiencies of the lunch, but as an alternative classroom, useful to teachers in many disciplines. The kitchen and cafeteria (which she hoped would follow the garden) could function similarly. Smith was skeptical, to say the least, but intrigued.

Over the next several years, Smith and Waters worked together to engage volunteers, to find people and companies willing to donate their time and resources, to

persuade teachers to integrate the garden into their lessons, and, perhaps hardest of all, to convince students not only to work in the garden, but to sample the produce that eventually emerged from it. In 1996, on the 25th anniversary of the founding of her restaurant, Waters founded the Chez Panisse Foundation to help support the Edible Schoolyard Project. Today, there are Edible Schoolyards all over the country. Hundreds of public schoolchildren visit the original Berkeley campus every week, and the gardens produce thousands of pounds of vegetables every year, nearly all of which the students harvest, prepare, and eat themselves.

Waters claims that her goal in writing the book *Edible Schoolyard: A Universal Idea* is to tell the story of the “universal idea” of “Edible Education,” which she describes as a “hopeful and delicious way of revitalizing public education” (6). This statement of purpose, in effect, unites the two major threads of Waters’s rhetoric that I have described in this chapter. While the emphasis on “deliciousness” and sensory pleasure tended to characterize Waters’ early writing and most of the Chez Panisse cookbooks, her later works (especially sections of *The Art of Simple Food* and *In the Green Kitchen*) adopt the more polemical style of the Slow Food movement, even going so far as using the term “manifesto” to describe the principles outlined in *In the Green Kitchen*. Furthermore, as noted elsewhere, Waters has often described the mission of Chez Panisse as an educational process: by reawakening American palates to delicious, fresh food, she hopes to attract sympathetic audiences who are receptive to arguments that they significantly alter their consumption patterns. The Edible Schoolyard project, and this book, provides a platform for her to make a similar argument to a much wider audience. After all, while people certainly may disagree about the *way* to reform public education, few doubt the

necessity of reforming and revitalizing American public education. Locating her arguments for local food production, from-scratch cooking, responsible land stewardship, and intentional eating habits in a public school gives Waters considerable rhetorical traction and much broader potential audiences.

The book itself combines these two rhetorical strategies, sensory and emotional appeals, as well as more politically charged demands for action and change. I will begin with the second half of the book, which bears a stronger resemblance to Waters's earlier books in terms of rhetorical strategies. In a sense, the second half of the book is a record of the students' rhetorical education. Waters has included student copies of journal entries and other assignments that reveal how students are encouraged to think and write carefully about food, dwelling on the sensory pleasures it produces and the emotional satisfaction it brings. Furthermore, merely the act of journaling about so pedestrian an activity as eating suggesting that the garden/kitchen curriculum encourages students to be more intentional and reflective about their food choices. Journal entries often contain statements such as "I have learned that vegetables are better than I thought" (72) and images such as a child squeezing the juice of fresh-picked oranges into her mouth. Such statements and images appeal to our sense of pathos since they suggest happy, healthy children; these appeals are reinforced by full-page photos of ripe, colorful produce and of children working in the garden.

We learn, too, about how the children themselves were persuaded through these sensory appeals. For instance, during the spring term when work first began on the garden, Waters tells of bringing tubs of homemade citrus sorbet to the campus for the children to taste. Students had to blindly taste each of the three unfamiliar flavors (Meyer

lemon, tangerine, and blood orange) before getting a scoop to take away. While tasting something unfamiliar “goes against a kid’s instinct,” the allure of the game (and then, of course, the flavors) led to success; by the end of the afternoon, Waters writes, “we’d had five hundred students letting those flavors explode in their mouth” (14). Presumably, she indicates, such students will be game to try new foods in the future. Several months later, students eagerly snack on toasts topped with sautéed kale, much to the adults’ surprise. In this case, the appeal lay in the fact that the students had “created [the snack] with their own hands” (28). Assertions about what students will and will not do or like are sprinkled liberally throughout the book, but they tend to be supported with anecdotal evidence. These anecdotes not only confirm Waters’s faith in the Montessori method (learning through the senses and kinesthetic experience), but they also reaffirm our faith, as readers, in the Edible Schoolyard as a viable educational model.

The first half of the book has much more in common with books like *In the Green Kitchen* and with the manifesto discussed earlier in conjunction with the Slow Food movement. Although this section is written as a narrative and contains emotional appeals similar to those in the second half, this section also indicts the culture that pays so little heed to what children are eating in school. For example, she lists the health problems caused by an unhealthy diet, the “disintegration of the America family” and the degradation of the environment, and links them all to our disconnection from the knowledge of where our food comes from. She argues, too, that previous efforts at reforming school lunches (“putting salad bars in cafeterias”) have been unsuccessful because they fail to recognize that “Edible Education is an experience, a long-term proposition,” and an “integration” of the garden and kitchen into “the very core of the

teaching mission” (40). Half-hearted efforts, she implies, are simply Band-Aids, not real responses to serious problems. She indicts readers, too, for not recognizing that ordinary actions--like shopping for groceries--are effectively a “vote for the kind of world we want” (Ibid). So when we choose the industrial, processed, unhealthy foods--and when we foist them on children in schools--we are contributing to these problems.

The last few paragraphs, though, abandon this rather accusatory tone and instead focus on the “hopeful” part of revitalizing public education. Waters even implies that a kairotic moment for “progressive change” is at hand: “the time is right” for a delicious revolution, and she notes that public attitudes about food and nutrition are shifting rapidly (41). She reiterates the claim that schools are an ideal place to launch a delicious revolution since, after all, it requires no major readjustment of the school day: “right there, in the middle of every child’s school day, driven by his own hunger and his own taste, lies all this time and energy set aside and devoted to food” (41). Although she acknowledges that providing tastier (not to mention healthier) food is an important result of the Edible Schoolyard, the most valuable result seems to be that children “fall in love with [the] lessons” of the garden, lessons that extend beyond the food itself. The lessons of plant biology, chemistry, ecology, nutrition, and many other subjects acquire a tangibility that would be impossible to re-create in a traditional classroom.

Waters ends on the most hopeful, idealistic and even prophetic tone when she repeats her conviction that “Edible Education” is “a truly universal idea” (42). This idea of universality brings with it rhetorical overtones of the manifesto, insofar as it encourages cooperation and coming together around a cause (the reform of public education and childhood nutrition) that most people support. By providing this common

cause, Waters offers a site for group identification, which, according to Sidonie Smith, is “the rhetorical ground of appeal” in a manifesto (Smith 437). Having responded to an exigency of such widespread concern and relevance, and having provided such emotionally compelling evidence that change is possible, Waters leaves little room for disagreement. While this book seems less like a manifesto than something explicitly labeled as such, it serves some of the same rhetorical functions, particularly insofar as it compels audiences to choose a side. She also offers five “Principles of Edible Education,” each of which implies that disagreement is tantamount to denying children the best kind of education. For example, the fifth principle “Beauty is a Language,” claims that a “beauty prepared environment [...] communicates to children that we care about them” (43). Anything less than such an environment, presumably, might communicate the opposite.

Unlike the “Manifesto on the Future of Food,” however, Waters does not explicitly identify the antagonist against whom she protests. While such an omission could be viewed as a weakness, here it seems like a savvy rhetorical choice because readers have no specific “other” with whom to identify. So in order to remain on the side of children, improved public education, and improved childhood nutrition and health, readers have no choice but to support Waters’ position. Besides, as she notes, what they are doing at the Edible Schoolyard is hardly novel: they are growing food and children are “eating a civilized and delicious meal around a shared table[...]-as humans have done for millennia” (38). There is little to argue against with that.

Conclusion: Limitations and Affordances in the Rhetoric of the Delicious Revolution

Certainly, a number of critiques have been levied against the Edible Schoolyard and against Waters's project (and Slow Food) in general. Perhaps the most frequent was voiced in Roberta Sassatelli and Federico Davolio's article on Slow Food, when the authors asked whether the movement was "subversive or elitist?" (208). It is a somewhat odd pairing: subversive and elitist are certainly not opposites, nor are they necessarily mutually exclusive. But the high cost of dinner at a place like Chez Panisse, or even of following Waters's recommendations and buying only local organic produce, suggest that her argument is limited, economically and geographically speaking. Only those with considerable income and with access to upscale grocery stores or farmers' markets could even entertain the possibility of eating only local organic produce. Waters's legendary extravagance¹⁰⁵ does not help the case, nor do blithe claims such as implementing Edible Schoolyards "no matter what it might cost" (Waters *Edible Schoolyard* 41).

Besides objecting to Waters's apparent disregard for the financial barriers standing between most Americans and an organic, local diet, others in the culinary world (including cookbook author Anthony Bourdain) find Waters's rhetoric a bit precious. Waters tends to describe fresh produce in somewhat rhapsodic terms; for example, she writes about the "miracle of just-picked grain" (35) and occasionally declares that such as something as simple as "shell beans, flavored with only olive oil, black pepper, and salt" is "food for the gods" (Waters *In the Green Kitchen* 66). While many readers would

¹⁰⁵ Friends recall Alice, during the early days of Chez Panisse, walking through the dining room and shaving truffles onto diners' plates, just to see the looks on their faces. Her sister Ellen claims that people "used to say she spent money like Waters" (qtd. in McNamee 47).

support developing a healthy appreciation for food and for the labor involved in producing it, some are put off by language that implies that *all* food deserves the kind of care and reverence that is usually reserved for fine art.

Yet despite these objections, Waters remains one of the prominent voices in American culinary letters and in public discourse about food and nutrition. There is no denying that Waters and her restaurant have inspired dozens of followers, and no denying her influence in the way Americans shop for food. As I noted in the first chapter, the number of farmers' markets in this country has grown exponentially in the last decade, and this growth is due in no small part to Waters' advocacy work. There are at least five other Edible Schoolyards, and countless other school gardens modeled on the original garden in Berkeley.

At the end of her Foreword to Petrini's *Terra Madre*, Waters asserts confidently that the Slow Food argument is "an irrefutable demonstration that making the right decisions about food can change the world" (x). The Slow Food argument--that our food be good, clean, and fair--is also Waters's argument. It is a profound rejection of industrial, processed food, and even more importantly, it is a rejection of a food culture that values speed, efficiency, and cheap prices over taste, nutritional quality, and environmental and social sustainability. The progress has no doubt been slower than she or other Slow Food advocates would like, but there is ample evidence that the argument has taken root and is, in fact, changing the world.

Chapter 5

The Proliferation of Food Rhetorics and the Cultivation of Food *Ethos*

In the preceding chapters, I have argued that the profiled writers offer rhetorical alternatives to dominant food rhetorics by responding, to varying degrees, to the discourses of home economics and nutrition science. They do so by employing a variety of rhetorical strategies, many of which contribute to an alternative rhetorical education for their audiences because they suggest new ways of thinking and writing about food. However, these rhetorics also promoted new embodied practices regarding food purchasing, preparation, and consumption, and as such they are rhetorics of a particular sort of education. Unlike that promoted by home economists and nutrition scientists, this new rhetoric values the pleasures food provides, rather than just its nutritional benefits. Further, these new rhetorics provide a vocabulary for audience members to engage in their own process of gastronomical learning, as well as suggestions for pursuing that learning. Finally, they promote a more politically and socially conscious attitude toward food production and consumption, and encourage audiences to embody this attitude through their purchasing and consumption habits. Yet to argue that these three represent, or even are representative of, the major nodes of food discourse today would probably be an overstatement. They were, however, early shapers of alternative rhetorics of food that still exert considerable influence today.

To conclude this study, I would like to offer a snapshot of contemporary food discourse, particularly that written by women and which emphasizes the values of pleasure, empowerment, and activism. This snapshot is partial, at best; the sheer number of texts of all varieties devoted to food, nutrition, and cooking is far too vast to consider in a single study. I examine several examples of contemporary food writing that seem to follow most obviously in the trails blazed by M.F.K. Fisher, Julia Child, and Alice Waters. Specifically, I consider three persistent themes in contemporary food rhetorics: the importance of pleasure, the blending of educational and entertainment value, and the rejection of industrial food. I argue, too, that these texts continue to resist rhetorics of food that focus on quantification, and that they encourage readers to take more ownership over their eating and cooking habits in ways that are largely healthier for the individual, as well for their communities and even the environment at large.

These changes are not entirely positive, however; these rhetorics, “alternative” though they are in many ways, remain almost exclusively the products of white, relatively privileged women in the West and largely fail to account for other potentially valuable perspectives. As I demonstrate below, they also tend to gloss over some of the economic realities that drive most people’s food choices. Although some argue that changes in the food production and distribution system might mitigate some of the income and access disparities that prevent many people from making the kinds of choices that the authors advocate, most concentrate on the philosophical or even moral reasons for choosing to eat and cook more intentionally. Nonetheless, I will conclude by arguing that there is reason to be optimistic about the changes that this writing might help to bring about.

Living to Eat: Contemporary Instantiations of Fisher's Topos of Pleasure

For M.F.K. Fisher, finding and acknowledging pleasure in food constituted a rebellion against her Grandmother Holbrook's ascetic food habits, and against a cultural prejudice that viewed those who took pleasure in food, especially if they were female, as impolite and perhaps even sinful. By retelling her personal experiences with food in wildly different contexts ranging from her childhood home to post-WWI France to the Depression-Era United States and beyond, Fisher offers her own life as a model for those who might wish to engage more thoughtfully with their food. She recommends gastronomical self-education, so that readers can identify their own food preferences. She advocates preparing meals at home, only according to available resources and personal taste, rather than according to the methods supplied by so-called experts. Above all, her personal anecdotes compel us to consider food as a vehicle through which deeper communion and understanding can occur among friends and family members.

Certainly, a number of food writers today follow (or aspire to follow) her example of using personal experience to illustrate the principles or behaviors that characterize a more intentional, thoughtful approach to cooking and eating. Amanda Hesser, former food editor for the *New York Times Magazine* and author of the recent comprehensive revision of the *New York Times Cookbook*, has published two memoir-cookbooks that bear some resemblance to Fisher's texts. In her second book, *Cooking for Mr. Latte* (2004), Hesser intersperses recipes with anecdotes recounting her meeting of, courtship with, and eventual marriage to writer Tad Friend. Each chapter retells a significant event from her life, and each event is punctuated and sometimes even defined by a meal or dish.

For instance, near the end of the book and just prior the wedding, Hesser includes a chapter called “Single Cuisine.” In the chapter, Friend (by now her fiancé) is out of town, and Hesser uses the opportunity to reflect on the rapidly approaching end of her single days and to enjoy some of the pleasures of cooking for one. Facing writer’s block, she decides that only grocery shopping will relax her. As she picks up ingredients, “it occurred to [her] that the menu I was dreaming up was [...] tied together by nothing more than the fact that I liked each part” (286-7). If she had been cooking for others, she would have felt “obliged to make a meal with a beginning, middle, and end” (287). Cooking alone releases her from those pressures, and frees her to construct a meal that she alone finds pleasurable. The rest of the chapter suggests that such self-soothing practices are common, at least among her female friends, and all aim at treating the single eater well, but with a minimum of mess and fuss (Hesser, for instance, has a one pan rule). The chapter concludes with two recipes, both appropriate, Hesser says, for dinner “when there’s no one to share with” (290). Similarly, Judith Jones, the editor at Knopf who brought Child’s *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* to publication and later edited several of Fisher’s texts, published *The Pleasures of Cooking for One* in 2009. In her Introduction, she defends cooking delicious meals for oneself, saying “you have only yourself to please,” and therefore should feel free to “indulge” a bit (ix).

These authors, both of whom are familiar with Fisher’s work, seem to have adopted a similar regard for the value of personal preferences and of eating foods that bring us pleasure. Yet these texts are not simply accounts of their author’s experiences with food. Because these texts, like most of Fisher’s, contain recipes, they also serve an educative function in that recipes are linked—literally, in the text—to a specific

experience. The juxtaposition of recipe and experience rejects a model of culinary instruction that is divorced from context or which assumes that all audiences will enjoy the same kinds of foods at any moment. In a sense, the personal anecdote shapes the reader's attitude toward and expectation of the recipes. For example, the recipe for "Truffled Egg Toast" falls immediately under Hesser's heading of "Dinner for you, when there's no one to share with." Ingredient quantities are sufficient for just one diner. While one certainly could double or triple the recipe to accommodate others, Hesser's arrangement compels readers to think of the recipe as being designed for *one* person, and thus reinforces the idea that cooking well and thoughtfully for oneself is just as important as cooking for guests.

Hesser and Jones, along with writers like Nigel Slater, Madhur Jaffrey, and Ruth Reichl, follow Fisher's example of weaving actual culinary instruction in with autobiography, and as such they offer their own gastronomical lives as models. There are other writers, though, who chronicle their personal food experiences but do so in a manner that seems less committed to educating reasonably broad audiences, and more to entertaining a very exclusive audience. Gael Greene's 2006 memoir *Insatiable: Tales from a Life of Delicious Excess*, develops Fisher's topos of pleasure to a discomfiting degree. As the first food critic for *New York* magazine, Greene rapidly became one of the most influential food writers in the country, and her voracious appetite for sensory pleasures extended far beyond the table. While her explicit linking of food and sex is nothing new, and many have argued that Fisher's writing about food is simply an elaborate metaphor for writing about sex (see, for instance, Alice McLean's 2003 dissertation "Eat and Be Eaten: The Aesthetic Pleasures of M.F.K. Fisher and Elizabeth

David), Greene's memoir seems to have no purpose *other* than to relive decadent meals and sexual trysts with countless celebrities. The reader may be entertained by what one reviewer called her "gossipy prose," but a reader is unlikely to finish this book with any clear sense of how the culinary attitudes and practices expressed therein are applicable to her life.

The same is true for writers like Jeffrey Steingarten, the food writer for *Vanity Fair*, and Craig Claiborne, the late former restaurant critic at the *New York Times*. Despite their evident culinary erudition, both men's writings tend to focus unapologetically on extravagant culinary exploits. In one chapter of Steingarten's 1997 memoir *The Man Who Ate Everything*, Steingarten recounts buying a piece of Wagyu beef at New York's famous gourmet shop, Balducci's, for the "ridiculously low" price of \$45/pound (in the early 1990s). Disappointed by the results when he grills the "three hundred dollars' worth of Wagyu," Steingarten decided that he "had to know the truth" about whether any of the hype about Wagyu beef was legitimate (269-271). So he and his wife promptly "took a plane to Hong Kong, boarded a ship for Japan, and two weeks later landed in Osaka" (271). The initial price of the steak itself is unthinkable for most people, let alone a spontaneous trip around the world to confirm or dispute the findings of his culinary experiment. Similarly, many of Craig Claiborne's articles and his memoir *A Feast Made for Laughter* celebrate similar excesses. For instance, Claiborne drew the public's (and the Vatican's) ire when he wrote in 1975 about an outrageously expensive meal he shared with restaurateur Pierre Franey. For an initial bid of \$300, Claiborne had won a prize from American Express offering a "sky's-the-limit meal [for two] anywhere in the world," and Claiborne chose Chez Denis, a "little-known restaurant" which "also

had the reputation of being conceivably the most expensive restaurant in Paris” (220-222). He proposed that chef prepare a meal costing around 9,000 francs (then equivalent to around \$2,000), but the menu the chef proposed cost 17,600 francs, or \$4,000. Claiborne, however, “did not gasp. [He] smiled, savoring the reaction of American Express when they got the bill. If it had been \$6,000, [he] would not have been disturbed” (224). Needless to say, the resulting article drew considerable response from readers, most of whom condemned “the vulgarity” of such a meal when so many in the world were going hungry (225). Claiborne claims, though, that these critical letters were among the “most cherished of [his] possessions” (Ibid). Such unabashed extravagance, while perhaps entertaining to readers as a voyeuristic glimpse into the lives of the rich and powerful, not only highlights the difference between the kinds of foods available to the persons of different socio-economic groupings, but it also displays an attitude toward food that neither Fisher, Child, or Walter could approve. For them, dining should never be treated or valued as a spectacle or as simply a chance to display one’s buying power (especially when, as in Claiborne’s case, one is not actually buying).

Food memoirs offering glimpses into the finest restaurants in the world can function as a kind of virtual tourism to those for whom such experiences are financial or logistically impossible. Yet these texts--Greene’s, Steingarten’s, and Claiborne’s--also exemplify, to a more obvious degree than texts by Fisher, Hesser, or Jones, one of the problematic aspects of food writing that emphasizes pleasure and personal taste. Choosing foods based on personal taste and the anticipated pleasure they offer is a luxury that few outside of the middle and upper classes in the developed world can even imagine. Fisher’s exhortations to make pleasure one of the criteria for food-related

decisions attempted to counter an ascetic food rhetoric that encouraged renouncing pleasure and discounting personal preferences in favor of generalized food guidelines from anonymous experts. While some of her indulgences remain outside the realm of possibilities for many people, she tempers these indulgences with her tips for frugal shopping and dining (in *How to Cook a Wolf*) and the implicit suggestion that readers cook at home rather than dining out.

Nothing tempers or moderates the indulgence and consumption in texts like Greene's memoir; in fact, at times Greene seems to celebrate it. She flippantly describes extravagant meals in resort towns across Europe, noting that there was "fresh duck liver, of course, this time sautéed with apples" and the exorbitant cost of Dom Perignon champagne is justified by arguing that it is "fizzy, just like Coke" (141-2). Of course, there is no rule that food writing must be educational or that it must reflect or endorse experiences available to everyone, or even most people. But such texts, whatever function they may serve as escapist or just-for-fun reading, do not take questions of access and affordability into account and indeed seem often to dismiss such questions as trivial. While they promote finding pleasure in food, which Fisher certainly would have endorsed, they do so indiscriminately, without advocating the kind of intentionality that Fisher modeled for her readers. Encouraging people to find pleasure in food certainly still has a place in culinary writing, as Hesser, Jones, and others demonstrate. Fisher encourages readers to choose and prepare foods deliberately and carefully, thereby eliciting the greatest pleasure possible, even in restricted economic circumstances. If one chooses or values foods solely because of their expense or exclusivity, the entire point of Fisher's topos of pleasure is lost. Rhetorically speaking, these extravagance-promoting

texts offer little beyond entertainment value to readers. The attitudes and practices described are impossible for most people to adopt; they simply cost too much. Further, they devalue precisely the kinds of food experiences that Fisher, Child, and Waters want to advocate: simple, delicious food prepared at home with readily available (and generally affordable) ingredients, shared with friends or family. Of course, “food entertainment,” whether literary or televised, is big business, despite some of the problematic aspects outlined above, and some of its origins can be traced to Julia Child’s groundbreaking television show.

The Julia Effect? Cooking Instruction as Entertainment

Julia Child’s cookbooks continue to sell well today, particularly in the wake of the 2009 movie *Julie and Julia*, along with Julie Powell’s memoir, on which the film was based. In many ways, though, the long-term effects of Child’s books and television shows are better measured by the number of cookbook authors and television chef personalities who try to emulate her, rather than by the continuing interest in her books. If one of the primary effects of Child’s cookbooks (especially the *Mastering* pair of books) was to constitute a new audience for serious cooking instruction, then many cookbooks devoted to international cuisines or complicated methods owe something to her, as do television chefs who endeavor to persuade audiences that they, too, can produce elegant and delicious meals at home. Many of Child’s readers would have grown up during the heyday of home economics and thus were likely convinced that cooking was a difficult and tedious business best left to trained experts. In *Kitchen Literacy*, Ann Vileisis credits Child with “overturning the widely promoted notion that cooking from scratch was

drudgery” (208). Child’s books and shows made even the most inexperienced cooks believe they could produce delicious meals, provided they approached the task with a seriousness of purpose and followed the instructions closely.

This insistence on the ordinary person’s capabilities (or potential) marked an enormous shift in American culinary culture. While midcentury Americans may have resisted serious engagement with cooking instruction, Child made excellent meals seem accessible by teaching her readers transferable skills. For example, *America’s Test Kitchen*, which publishes cookbooks regularly and produces a television show, functions similarly by providing readers and viewers with painstakingly tested recipes and by explaining in enormous detail why certain techniques work better than others. By trusting readers and viewers to read and value this kind of information, and then use it to produce better meals at homes, the writers and producers of *America’s Text Kitchen* show their indebtedness to Child for having promoted a culture of empowerment among home cooks.

Furthermore, Child’s methods of arrangements have influenced the way a number of contemporary cookbook authors and television chefs organize their own books and teaching methods. Several popular writers, including vegetable expert Deborah Madison and self-proclaimed “domestic goddess” Nigella Lawson, have adapted Child’s method of teaching a “master recipe,” and then providing a series of variations. By breaking down a large entity (French cuisine) into manageable chunks, and then arranging those chunks in sequenced “lessons,” Child helped American audiences to see that one can learn to cook systematically. Home cooks learn a few techniques and methods at a time,

and then build upon those, rather than trying to absorb an enormous set of discrete recipes individually.

Along with building confidence in her audience members, Child never missed an opportunity to remind viewers and readers that cooking should be fun, and many television chefs today emphasize the fun and creative aspects of cooking. Whatever else viewers may have gleaned from her television shows, they were also entertained for half an hour. Certainly the proliferation of cable television shows (even a whole network) devoted to food and cooking is indebted to Child. After all, before Child the last claim most people would have made about cooking instruction was that it could be entertainment. One could argue today that the majority of cooking and food-related shows function first as entertainment (especially those featuring competitions, such as *Iron Chef America* or *Chopped*) and secondarily as instruction. While the relative merits of shows emphasizing entertainment and competition and shows emphasizing instruction could be debated, the fact remains that Child's shows laid the initial groundwork for using television as a forum for cooking instruction and discussion, and thus tapped into potentially enormous audiences. Child contributed to the wholesale shift in American thinking from cooking-as-work to cooking-as-fun by successfully combining the medium (television) and the message.

Child's effect reaches beyond the primary genres of cooking instruction (cookbooks and television shows) to more commercial realms as well. The widespread availability of French and other European ingredients may have happened eventually anyway, but Child's books and shows introduced American audiences to a whole range of new items, such as crème fraîche and shallots, that are relatively commonplace now

but were exotic in the early 1960s. Specialty cooking stores like Williams-Sonoma (founded in 1956) and Sur La Table (founded in 1972) certainly benefited from a generation of American home cooks who watched Child's shows and went in search of balloon whisks and ceramic-glazed cookware. Although such products may not feature prominently in the majority of American home kitchens, their relatively widespread availability and ongoing demand reveals the persuasive power of her rhetoric, at least to a population segment with the resources and time to procure and use these products. Many Americans are at least more familiar with the cooking terminology and the names of ingredients and pieces of equipment that she introduced via her books and television show.

Going off the Grid: Taking Over Food Production and Preparation

While I would hesitate to argue that Julia Child's influence is the primary one behind the current resurgence of interest in home-making, crafting, and traditional food practices such as canning or bread-baking, there is some discursive continuity between Child's rhetoric of empowerment and that of contemporary journalists, memoirists, bloggers, and other writers who chronicle their attempts to reclaim more and more authority over domestic labors, particularly where food is concerned.

There is tremendous range, of course, in the amount of domestic labor that these writers have chosen to take on. For many, the ambition extends to making at home items that we almost always buy in packages, and Child's influence seems particularly strong here. The confidence that may have inspired midcentury homemakers to tackle Child's recipes for baguettes or *boeuf bourgignonne* seems connected to that which inspired

blogger and author Molly Wizenberg to try making her own marshmallows. While Wizenberg's blog *Orangette* and her memoir *A Homemade Life* offer dozens of recipes, the marshmallow story and recipe capture the contemporary desire to cook more and to link cooking with pleasure, but also to demystify foods that were once the exclusive purview of food processors. Marshmallows, that food which appeared with alarming frequency in salads and casseroles in countless midcentury homes, resemble nothing that grows naturally in the ground or on a plant. In her July 2008 article on marshmallows in *Bon Appétit* magazine, Wizenberg calls them a "strange confection" and a "mystery," despite being "familiar to most everyone" (66). Making them from scratch, she argues, removes some of the industrial, chemical aura from marshmallows, and of course the primary reason to make them is that they are "impossibly delicious;" she even claims that homemade marshmallows "clinch[ed]" her decision to marry her now-husband (Ibid).

For Wizenberg and others like her, the primary motivation for turning the home kitchen into a more productive, creative site seems to be food quality: homemade tastes better than store-bought, and you know what you are eating if you make it yourself. The exaggerated sensory rhetoric ("impossibly delicious") and the frequent connection of delicious food and happy relationships¹⁰⁶ works to persuade readers that their lives will improve on *all* fronts if they start cooking more. Some homemakers, though, have taken a far more extreme approach to reclaiming domestic spaces.¹⁰⁷ These homemakers

¹⁰⁶ There are countless blogs that make this connection. Besides Wizenberg's *Orangette* blog, see *Smitten Kitchen* or *The Pioneer Woman*. Books such as *Eat, Pray, Love* also capitalize on this connection.

¹⁰⁷ It should be noted that Wizenberg is not strictly a homemaker; she and her husband Brandon own the successful Seattle restaurant *Delancey*, and Wizenberg continues to publish her writing.

certainly enjoy the kind of confidence about producing quality meals at home that Child sought to instill in her viewers, but they seem equally, if not more, influenced by Alice Waters's messages. Not only does Waters advocate cooking from scratch, but as the preceding chapter shows, she and other Slow Food proponents advocate a wholesale rejection of the industrial food system, and they seem convinced that widespread adoption of the habits they advocate (eating local produce in season) will lead to massive changes within the system itself. Women who refer to themselves by such terms as "femivores" and "radical homemakers" are among those who have taken this message most seriously.

Peggy Orenstein, who happens to live in Berkeley and dubbed her town "the Vatican of locavorism, the high church of Alice Waters," examined this renewed interest in her March 11, 2010 article in the *New York Times Magazine* called "The Femivore's Dilemma." The term "femivore" prompted some confusion among readers who wondered whether it referred to those who only ate female animals, but Orenstein adopts it to refer to women who are "highly educated," but who voluntarily "left the workforce to care for kith and kin" (11). She argues that femivorism is located in the same "principles" that drove women to the workforce in droves in the 1960s and 1970s: "self-sufficiency, autonomy, and personal fulfillment" (12). The movement, she writes, is best described by Shannon Hayes, herself an example of a highly educated woman (she holds a PhD in sustainable agriculture from Cornell) who left a job to become a full-time homemaker.

In her book *Radical Homemakers: Reclaiming Domesticity from a Consumer Culture*, Hayes offers interviews and profiles with a number of families who have rejected what she calls the "extractive economy" (13) in favor of a life that transforms the

home from a “unit of consumption” to a “unit of production” (9). The work that these couples and families undertake must adhere to Hayes’s four tenets of ecological sustainability, social justice, family, and community (16). Hayes argues that this sort of reorientation to the home (rather than the workplace) should allow practitioners to “bring about social transformation, reclaim personal power, build security, heal the planet, and create a better life for [them]selves and [their] families” (184). Such fervent rhetoric bears strong resemblance to the manifestos discussed in Chapter 4: changes in the public’s attitudes toward and practice of domestic work, particularly food-related domestic work, function as powerful resistance to a food culture dominated by industrial and economic interests. Advocates believe a grassroots approach to revising people’s ordinary, everyday practices will effect greater and more lasting change than policy decisions.

Advocates of this kind of radical return to the home adopt different rhetorical strategies and different genres. Hayes’s model combines “theory” and “practice.” The first half of Hayes’s book (the “theory” half) is structured like an academic argument, and is bolstered by considerable research and a plethora of interview and survey data, as well as her own personal experience. The second half (the “practice” half, titled “How”) serves as a manual for those who might wish to take up her call to arms. Other writers who have adopted the radical homemaker lifestyle, at least where food is concerned, employ more personal genres, using their own lives as the sole case study. Joan Dye Gussow, a widely regarded nutrition scholar, chronicled her ongoing efforts to grow as much of her own food as possible in her 2002 memoir *This Organic Life: Confessions of an Urban Homesteader*. Even more recently, and to greater public acclaim, Barbara

Kingsolver published *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, a book which traces her family's efforts to live for a year on food they grew themselves or which originated in their home county in southwestern Virginia.

Both Gussow and Kingsolver spend considerable portions of their books detailing the problems with contemporary food culture, including our over-reliance on “food brought in from elsewhere” (Gussow 258). Kingsolver describes Tucson, the city her family left in favor of their farm in Appalachia, as a “space station where human sustenance is concerned,” and insists that most “modern U.S. cities” are similarly unsustainable (3). In a sidebar Steven Hopp, Kingsolver's husband, notes that, every year, “we're consuming about 400 gallons of oil per citizen [...] for agriculture,” and the “average food item travels 1,500 miles” to reach our plates (5). Kingsolver offers no sources for these statistics, but simply mentioning them serves an important rhetorical function. In both books, readers are inundated with claims about our unsustainable food industry and our own unsustainable practices. By linking ordinary practices such as buying out-of-season imported produce in grocery stores to such sensitive and politically charged issues as foreign oil dependence, Kingsolver risks alienating some readers, to be sure. Among her likely audience, though, such linkages are likely to elicit increased reader interest: readers will be anxious to learn how to reduce their personal dependence on limited resources. These strategies, as well as Kingsolver's and Gussow's frequent inclusion of touching anecdotes about their families, are reminiscent of Waters's savvy rhetoric that combines politically potent rhetoric about the food industry with images of

and stories about the children who benefit from her Edible Schoolyard projects.¹⁰⁸

Contemporary writers seem to agree that Waters's mix of the personal and the political, along with her use of both ethical and pathetic appeals, works both to attract and persuade audience members.

Books like Hayes's, Gussow's, and Kingsolver's suffer from some of the same limitations as books like Greene's or even Wizenberg's. All three women reject the "too common assumption that this safe, fresh, local food movement is only for the well-off," and Kingsolver even presents the accounts for her family's food expenditures which reveal that her family members had fed themselves "on about fifty cents per family member, per meal" (344-5) during their year of local eating. Although each acknowledges a certain amount of good fortune in terms of having the land on which to grow a substantial portion of her food, as well as the know-how to do it, there are other strokes of good fortune that they seem less inclined to mention. For example, all conveniently live in climates where food production is possible, and they have or had careers that provided the necessary financial resources (not to mention time) to acquire land and supplies. They also each have partners and other family members who contribute substantially to their homesteading projects. While some of their more modest recommendations (such as devoting ten percent of one's food budget to local food) are within reach for many people, they are not for others. Not only because that ten percent could buy a lot more food at a discount grocery store than it could at a farmer's market,

¹⁰⁸ Kingsolver's younger daughter, Lily, starts a chicken business as her contribution to the family's self-feeding project. Although she was "too young to sign a book contract," she figures prominently and endearingly in the book (21).

but because farmer's markets simply don't exist in some communities, or they are only open for a few months out of the year.

Writers like Hayes, Gussow, and Kingsolver may underestimate the economic conditions that govern most people's food-buying decisions, but they do not gloss over the hard work involved in feeding one's family, nor do they discount the knowledge and experience one must acquire in order to do it well. They each fully acknowledge that feeding oneself (let alone some of the projects Hayes's case studies undertake, such as home schooling and auto repair) can be a full-time job in itself. But none of them fully address the implications for gender dynamics within couples and families who attempt food independence. Most assume two-parent households, and most assume heterosexual couples, although labor tends to fairly evenly divided in the texts that I examine.

While Hayes notes repeatedly that her version of radical homemaking must be a joint decision and a joint project, and both Gussow's husband and Kingsolver's husband and two daughters were as involved in the project as were the authors themselves. Nonetheless, the larger cultural trend these writers are participating in and advocating, whether "femivorism" captures it or not, tends to be driven by women and mothers. Although Hayes contends that homemaking is "not an act of submission or family servitude," it is not hard to imagine scenarios in which women who stay home, however radical their homemaking, risk losing a certain amount of autonomy, especially if their partner continues to work outside the home (47). As Orenstein noted in her article, the femivore role is only made possible (at least for the women she interviews) by the size of their husband's paycheck (12).

Furthermore, these food rhetorics remain gendered to the extent that familial roles (especially motherhood) are somewhat narrowly defined, and with few exceptions the female speakers in these texts tend to do most of the actual cooking. Additionally, these texts suggest that women are almost always the primary instigators for a return to domesticity.¹⁰⁹ While their husbands or male partners may participate, the “vision” seems largely to belong to or at least originate with the woman. And in almost every case, the woman is the one who writes the stories, although occasionally her male partner will contribute passages. However, in *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, Kingsolver and her husband do not write the same *kinds* of text. Kingsolver’s writing (which constitutes the vast majority of the book) tends to be anecdotal and personal, and at times a bit sentimental, as when she realizes she will forever refer to jonquils as “tranquils,” following the practice of her six-year-old daughter (76). Her husband’s contributions, on the other hand, are short essays that tend to focus on large-scale problems in the food industry. For instance, in a short essay titled “The Price of Life,” Hopp lays out the “three basic complaints” raised by opponents of CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations): the “treatment of animals,” “pollution,” and “health.” These objections are each described in succinct and often scientific terms and the claims are supported with statistics from reliable resources; for instance, he informs readers, “the Consumers Union reported that over 70 percent of supermarket chickens harbor campylobacter and/or

¹⁰⁹ Gary P. Nabhan’s *Coming Home to Eat: The Pleasures and Politics of Local Food*, is an exception insofar as eating locally was his idea and he actually wrote the story of his family’s year of local eating. Other male-authored texts focused on local eating, such as Brian Halweil’s *Home Grown: The Case for Local Food in a Global Market* and Ben Hewitt’s *The Town That Food Saved: How One Community Found Vitality in Local Food*, tend to focus on the economics and politics of local food, rather than on the personal lived experiences of eating locally.

salmonella bacteria” (91). Although both Hopp and Kingsolver want, in the end, to argue that eating locally is a more ethical choice, Hopp’s essays seem to draw on far more scientific and technical rhetoric and on appeals to logos, and to be organized like mini-term papers, whereas Kingsolver relies on personal narratives and on appeals to pathos.

Gender dynamics among urban homesteaders may not be any *more* unequal than any other economic arrangement a couple might adopt. But the implications of a reversion to traditional gender roles, however deliberately and consciously chosen, is worth considering more fully. The genres articulating these lifestyles not only illustrate fairly traditional gender roles, but the texts tend to be gendered themselves, insofar as women writers rely on the tactics described elsewhere as a “feminine style,” and men--when their voices are included at all--tend to rely on a more masculine, agonistic style.

What Have We Gained?

Having just outlined some of the pathologies of contemporary food discourses, I would like to end by noting the benefits that the new food rhetorics have wrought. While it is difficult to point to measurable gains such as a decrease in hunger, there is little doubt that there has been exponential growth in the publication of food-related books and magazines, an explosion of food-related blogs and websites, and an increasing number of food-related television shows. It is hard to say whether this discursive proliferation *caused* food concerns to become popular public issues or is a result and indication thereof. Nonetheless, food-related issues occupy a greater space in public consciousness than they have in decades, particularly when those issues are connected to social justice concerns (such as access to healthy food among underserved populations), education

(school lunch programs) and environmental degradation (such as that caused by industrial scale livestock breeding).

Certainly, I do not wish to claim that Fisher, Child, Waters, or any of their “progeny” (those writers profiled in this chapter) are single-handedly or even directly responsible for increased public scrutiny of food-related concerns. But all three of these women, as well as many others writing today, offered an alternative to the discourse of quantification, which had effectively ignored many important features of food culture. Instead of dictating dietary rules based on scientific data, these women collectively taught readers to care about food: where it comes from, how it is prepared, and how it affects ourselves and our families. They have instigated and encouraged a revival of interest in home cooking and what Vileisas calls kitchen literacy, and those who follow in their paths today are helping to recover knowledge of food production and preparation.

More generally, these writers have shown us the importance of what I will call food *ethos*. Food itself must be credible: it must come from good sources, and it should taste like itself (not like chemicals or its packaging). We should trust it, whether because we buy it from a farmer we know and/or because we prepare it ourselves, and trust that it will bring us pleasure. Finally, they have insisted on the importance of writing down and sharing our experiences with this most ordinary yet vital of daily practices. They, along with many other writers, have demonstrated convincingly that our food decisions and behaviors are intimately tied up with politics, economics, the environment, cultural values, and of course our own happiness. Their texts implore us to think, speak, write, and act in ways that are informed not simply by price tags or convenience, but also by concern for the health of our bodies, our communities, and our planet. In his essay “On

the Pleasures of Eating,” Wendell Berry famously claims that “eating is an agricultural act,” and certainly he was right (227). The writers profiled here, though, would argue that he has only told one part of the story.

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