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Rachel B. Herrmann, Editorial

Introduction: Zooming In, Zooming Out, and Some Thoughts on Zoom

Collectively, the articles in this issue of *Global Food History* present readers with a spectrum of insulated to integrated food systems, and the challenges of teaching about them in a world brought to its knees by a pandemic that ignores the terrestrial and watery borders that reflect these systems.

In two articles about islands, Jane Hooper and Jack Bouchard explore the Indian and Atlantic oceans, respectively. Bouchard begins earlier in “Shetland Sheep and Azorean Wheat: Atlantic Islands as Provisioning Centers, 1400-1550.” He urges historians of the Atlantic World to shift their focus backwards in time, and into the mid- and north Atlantic islands of the Azores, Madeira, the Canaries, Cabo Verde, and Orkney, Shetland, Faro, and Iceland. Examining these islands together and reinterpreting them as staple provisioning centers, rather than looking elsewhere to explore the importance of luxury foodstuffs and spices allows us to see how concerns over bulk food production of fish from the north Atlantic islands and wheat from the south shaped colonization. Bouchard provides Atlanticists with a more expansive periodization and geography that better encompasses the fifteenth century and that begins at sea, rather than in Europe, the coastline of Latin America, the Caribbean, or North America.

In “American Provisioning and the Environmental Impact of Islands in the Indian Ocean,” Jane Hooper moves forward in time to the nineteenth century. Hooper draws on Indian Ocean scholarship to consider the environmental consequences that hungry American sailors wrought on Madagascar, the Seychelles, and other islands in the southern Indian Ocean. Hooper demonstrates that by this point in time, on islands such as Cape Verde, island inhabitants signed up as sailors to avoid the famine that had resulted from previous crews’ depletion of resources. Here, Hooper’s work echoes Bouchard’s observations about the Azores several centuries earlier. Taken together, these essays demonstrate the islands were not insular spaces—but the provisioning they facilitated integrated the world at the same time that they encouraged imperial expansion and environmental destruction.

Paul Freedman and Joshua Evans refocus attention on another island: England, and the rise and fall of the savoury course over a century that began around 1870. In “The English Savoury course,” or the course that often followed dessert and consisted of familiar items such as cheese puffs or angels on horseback (bacon-wrapped oysters), the authors examine menus from a wide range of digital archives and Oxbridge college collections. The authors hypothesized that savouries became more common after the Second World War because of rationing prohibitions on sugar, but found that to the contrary the savoury declined in popularity. This article serves as a useful bridge between the luxury commodities that drove the voyages that Bouchard and Hooper describe and the staple foods that facilitated them. Studying savouries also illuminates the value of digitized sources for fleshing out a long history of a recurring menu item.

Indeed, digitized sources, such as some of the ones that Freedman and Evans use, have become especially critical since the beginning of COVID-19. As the pandemic continues, historians have needed to revise their classroom strategies to make palatable this extended period of swiftly rejiggered online teaching and learning. The editors, including Elizabeth Zaroni (who introduces the forum at the end of this issue), hope that these final short essays offer readers ideas and strategies for using the new food database *What America Ate* in their teaching.

In the 1930s, the Works Project Administration sent people from the Federal Writers’ Project to different regions of the United States to pen stories describing what and how people

were eating for a project called *America Eats*. A forum essay by Camille Bégin draws on her book *Tasting the Nation: The New Deal Search for America's Food* to explain the limitations of the WPA approach, and to reflect on what it felt like to see all of the WPA sources (which Bégin used in the book) digitized for a new database. Historian and director Helen Zoe Veit explains this database, which she conceptualized to address the gaps and elisions in WPA coverage by supplementing them with additional primary sources—advertisements, packaging materials, and photographs, among others. These forum pieces allow readers to begin thinking about the limitations of using only one archive, and strategies that digital humanists can employ to expand source bases to provide material for more comprehensive histories. We should also take seriously Bégin's point that, in the context of the pandemic, not all food historians will need to travel to archives during this current moment.

Graduate student essays by Alexander Bright, Cathryn Janka, Kevin Lopez-Gibbs, Brad Moore, and Jim Wilkerson then use work by Bégin and others to explore *What America Ate* with a critical eye. What emerges is students' conclusions that WPA writers were pressured to deemphasize a variety of themes, from the importance of regional, African American, and Mexican labor and culinary influences, to the growing popularity of processed foods. Collectively, their words illustrate the outcome of attempting to cast the American food system as a cohesive whole. They also, thankfully, testify to the value of using this online database in our teaching. Another semester (and likely another year) of Zoom, Teams, and Skype seems far from ideal—but we hope that the resulting work that these students have undertaken here gives readers a sense of the pedagogical possibilities for engaged learning as the world becomes still more integrated.