

GEOG 220

Food and Place/ place and food

Alan Nash

Food and place

- In this part of the course, on “topophilia”, we have been looking at how we [or a group of us] create a “sense of place” [or identify with a region] by using aspects of culture, such
 - as vernacular architecture,
 - language and dialects,
 - music.
- Today, I want to consider how food can be added to that group.

So – let me ask you if you have any suggestions – how can food suggest a place or region to you?

- What foods are connected with places or regions?

- When someone mentions the food, we immediately think of the place

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- What regions or places can be connected with food?

- When someone mentions the place or region we immediately think of the food

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So – let me ask you if you have any suggestions –
how can food suggest a place or region to you?

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- PIZZA - ITALY.....

- CURRY - -- INDIA.....

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- What regions or places can be connected with food?

- When someone mentions the place or region we immediately think of the food

- Champagne - France.....

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Food, place / place-making & place marketing

- I think it is fairly obvious from even these quick ideas, that foods {and drink} are a very important way of not only recognizing and celebrating places and regions, they are ways of place making too.
- And one that is important commercially – the link between food and place has been *commodified*
 - *Examples – UNESCO's intangible heritage list now includes "French cuisine" and the "Mediterranean diet"*
 - *The EU's PDOs [foods of Protected Designated Origin] such as Greece's feta cheese*
 - *Example of terroir [the taste of the land] – most notably with cheese and wine ...interestingly another thing that was almost banned by the French Revoln.*

A closer look at food and place making in Montreal

- In this class, what I want to do is to take a look at how food can be an important place maker, and to use some examples from the restaurant world of Montreal
- I will use two examples from some of my own work
 - The example of Montreal Smoked Meat
 - [how one food has become a symbol of Montreal]
 - The example of Montreal's many international-cuisine restaurants
 - [how different international foods are a shorthand for that country – wherever you actually are... the idea of the world on a plate]
- Lets start with smoked meat

Lets start with some quick questions:

How many of you have:

- (1) eaten smoked meat in the last 12 months?
- (2) eaten smoked meat at Schwartz's ?
- (3) eaten poutine in the last 12 months?

Schwartz's smoked meat sandwich



Schwartz's smoked meat is famous

- Most of us would agree it is famous as a Montreal tradition
 - Let us look further into this phenomenon
 - 1. we will explore its fame
 - 2. take a look at its history
 - 3. suggest that the theory of “iconic foods” helps explain its fame.

Everyone from the original Captain Kirk onwards would tell you
Schwartz's Montreal smoked meat is famous

- “When Montrealer William Shatner sold his kidney stone on eBay for charity, a clause stated that the winner had to cater the *Boston Legal* set with smoked meat and bagels from Montreal”.
- And it had to come from Schwartz's

David Sax, *Save the Deli*, 2009: 208.

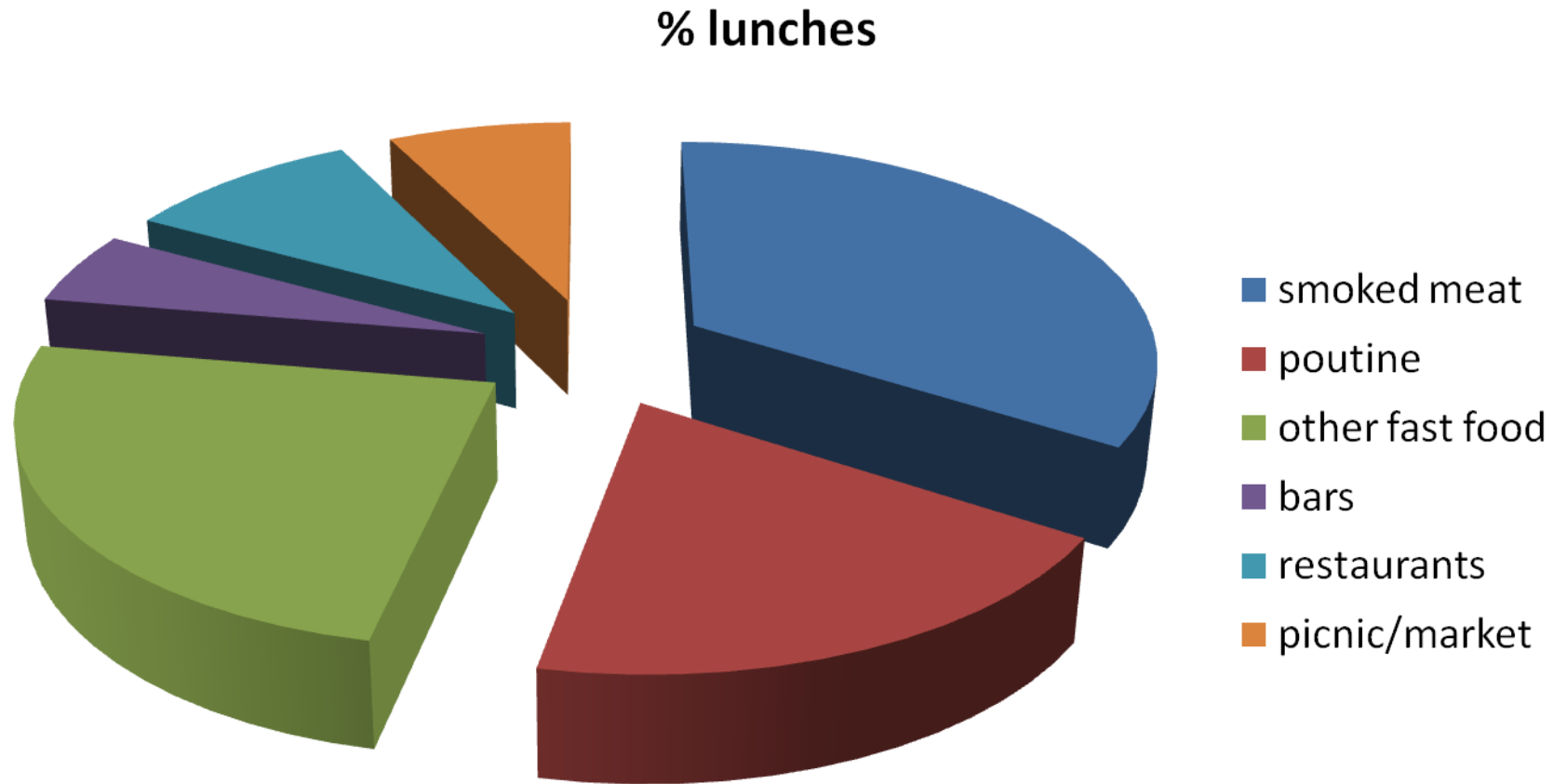
Concordia students would agree it is famous..

In answer to the question “Where would you take a visitor to Montreal to eat?” (in an April 2010 survey of 65 undergraduates)the answer is clear:

- 33% (21) opted for a smoked meat sandwich
- 23% (15) specifically named Schwartz’s Delicatessen (on Montreal’s St Laurent Boulevard, or “The Main”), where you should eat
 - Schwartz’s smoked meat sandwich

.

A visitor's lunch in Montreal



Smoked meat – breakfast, lunch and dinner!?

- Although 35% of the students preferred restaurants for their visitor's evening meal, 11% said they would treat a visitor to smoked meat for dinner (at Schwartz's or elsewhere).
- And one student would even go to Schwartz's for breakfast: "it gives you the energy required for a day of activities".

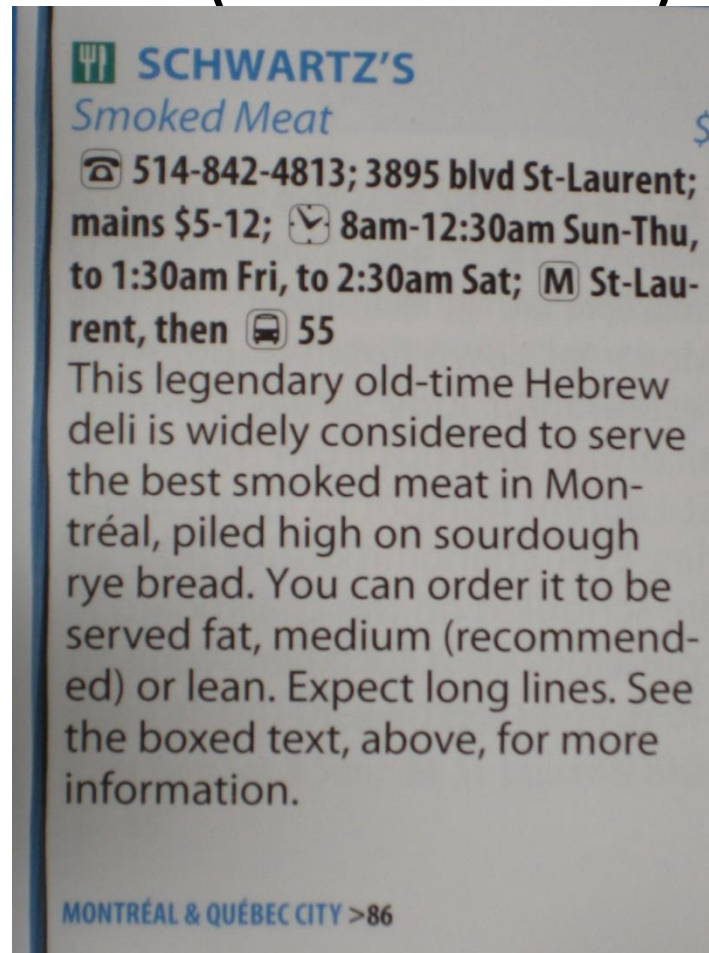
Why would the students take you to Schwartz's?

- “You can’t go to Montreal and not eat at Schwartz.” “It’s the best place for smoked meat”.
- “Smoked meat is a cultural staple of Quebec and, even though I am not a fan, it is part of the tourist experience”.
- “It’s a tradition and [a] Montreal tourist attraction.”
- “It’s Montreal’s “must do” very iconic place.”

Schwartz's fame - tourism

- Schwartz's fame is clearly stated in all of the latest guidebooks to Montreal.
- For example, the following pages from the 2009 *Lonely Planet* guidebook.

Schwartz's entry in Lonely Planet's guide to Montreal (2009: 86)



Schwartz's (Lonely Planet 2009: 87)



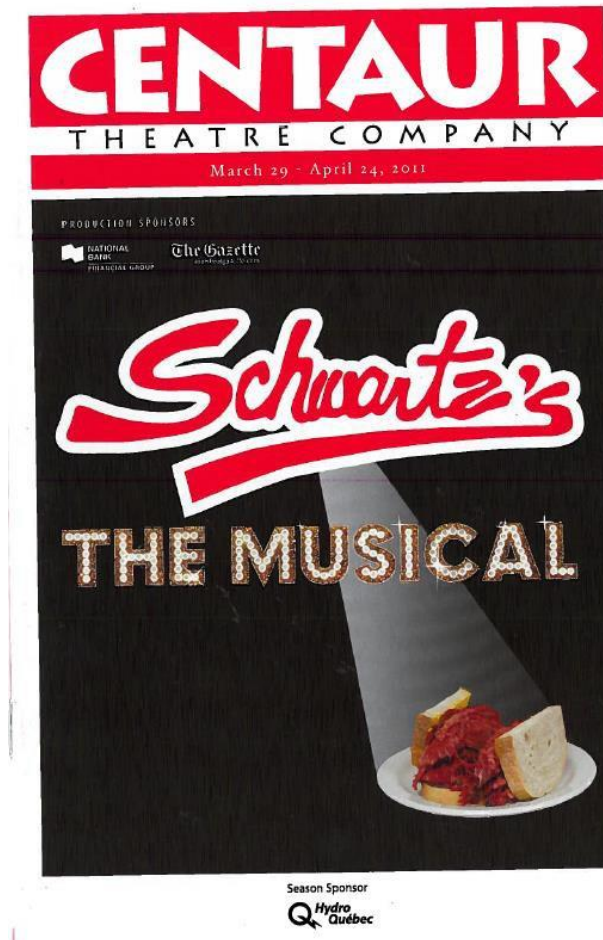
Even Schwartz's tells you it's famous --

Magazine Quotes (from the restaurant's walls):

- "A Beef on Rye to freeze to death for" ('Financial Times')
- "When you're in Montreal, you must go to Schwartz's" [NYT]
- "The best place in the Milky Way to sample smoked meat sandwiches!" ('Time Magazine')
- "A Montreal legend for 75 years" ('National Geographic')
- "Schwartz's is the best smoked meat in Montreal and therefore in the world" ('Gourmet')

♪ Schwartz's: The Musical ♪

Centaur Theatre: March 29 to April 24, 2011



Now even a flavour for chips (2018)



Gastronomic tourism

- The importance of food, agrotourism, restaurants etc only recently being noticed by the city
 - As late as 2001, official tourism statistics paid no attention to this issue
 - See next slide as an example
- But now the city very much promotes the city as a site for gastronomy [the latest interest in food trucks is an example of this]

Montreal Tourism 2001,

Visits (in millions)

- **Attractions**
- 1. Casino 6.40
- 2.. Old Port 2.20
- 3.. Botanic Gardens/ Insectarium 1.31
- 4.. La Ronde 1.20
- 5.. Hippodrome 1.06
- 6.. Biodome 0.86
- 7.. Granby Zoo 0.86
- 8.. Musée des Beaux Arts 0.55
- 9. Molson Stadium 0.54
- 10. Olympic Park 0.27
- 11. Pte a Callière 0.19
- 12. Contemp.Art 0.15
- 13. Planetarium 0.14
- 14. Fort Chambly 0.12
- 15. Cosmodome 0.12
- **Source:**
- Danielle Pilette and Boualem Kadri, *Le tourisme métropolitain : le cas de Montréal* (Sainte-Foy, Québec: Presses de Université du Québec, 2005) Chapter 4, Tables 4.4 to 4.6, pages 86-97 (based on data presented in Tourisme Montreal, *État de tourisme en 2001*).

Cultural Events

- 1. Jazz festival 1.70
- 2. Just for Laughs 1.61
- 3. Francofolies 0.61
- 4. World film festival 0.40
- 5. Internat Benson&Hedges 0.23
- 6. Fêtes de Neiges 0.13
- 7. Nuits d'Afrique 0.12

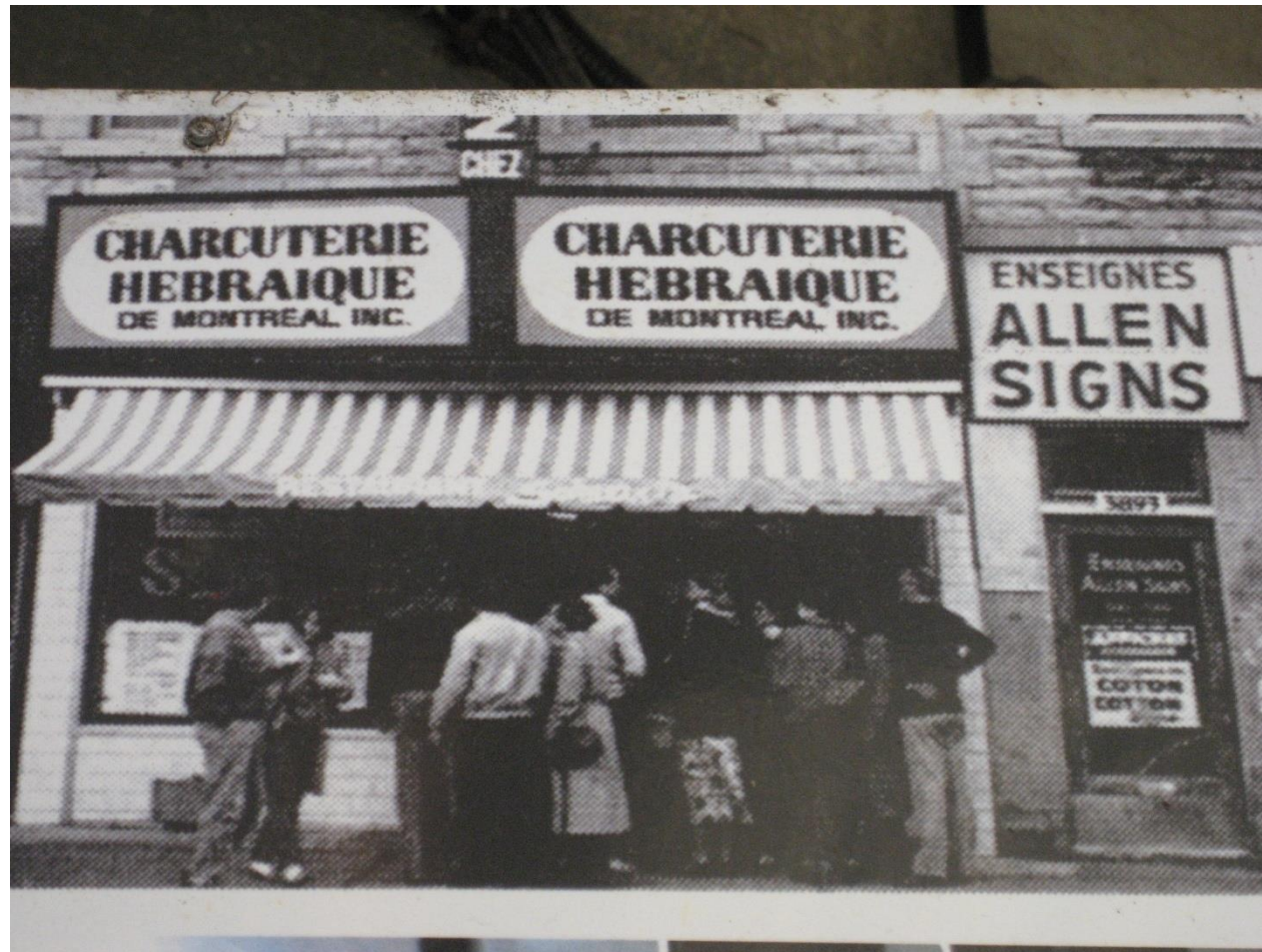
Sports

- 1. Canadiens 0.92
- 2. Expos 0.64
- 3. grand Prix 0.30
- 4. Omnium de Tennis 0.17
- 5. Alouettes 0.16

Long line-ups are a feature at Schwartz's
(photo: 2008)



Old picture
Approx 1960s



Our question – some history

- Our question is how did this get to be such a famous food in Montreal? – How does it come to “represent the city”
- Let us take a quick look at some history

Some history - *Lonely Planet*, 2009: 86 –
mostly wrong!



A very brief history of Montreal smoked meat

- comes originally from Middle East (*pastirma* is a Turkish word), and brought by Jewish butchers (*pastrami* is Yiddish) with them as they migrate from eastern Europe (*pastram* is Romanian) to New York and Montreal.
- 1884 Aaron Sanft (from Romania) opens first kosher butchers shop in Montreal,
 - By 1894 he has placed the city's newspapers, the first known adverts for smoked meat – so he (and not Ben Kravitz) is most likely the originator of smoked meat in Montreal
- First Jewish delicatessen opens in Montreal in 1908 by Hyman Rees!
- By 1933, there were 33 delis listed in Montreal (Schwartz, opened 1928) is thus only one of many.
- Ben's (opens 1912) is important: (1) started next to garment factories and so provided cheap lunches for workers (2) distributed free smoked meat sandwiches in the Depression (3) moved downtown and became a famous late-night spot for the jazz clubs of 1940s to 1950s – all this made smoked meat no longer the food of one community.

First Jewish delicatessen in Montreal 1908: Hyman Rees' "British American Delicatessen Store" 501 Main St

Grand Opening, May 9, 1908, of the
British American (כשר) Delicatessen Store
501 MAIN STREET, 2 Doors South of Ontario.

With a complete assortment of fine delicatessen, we call your attention to a few specialties in our new department which we receive **FRESH DAILY DIRECT FROM THEIR SOURCE CITY**, consisting of Canada, East of Great West, Baltimore, London, Bologna and Bologna. We carry every known food that is sold in the best delicatessen stores in New York City.

We intend to make ourselves famous with our Old Canadian food and to serve them (and you) daily.

IN OUR FIRST RESTAURANT.

We carry **Marques, Smoked Salmon, Smoked Chicken**, in fact every known food that is possible, which we receive **DAILY DIRECT FROM THE NEW YORK MARKET.**

CANADIAN COOKS

We have a large array of **Canadian Food and Vegetables** of well-known brands of imported and domestic quality.

IMPORTED CAVIARS.

And **Smoked, Cured Salmon** in all sizes, we have a specialty of selling by the case as well as the single can. **Salads, Pickles and Relishes** as well.

FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC CIGARETTES OF ALL KINDS.

Our fourteen years of experience in the delicatessen business gives us the experience how to buy and sell in satisfaction and under perfect conditions.

Special **Delicacies for catering to Weddings and Birthdays** at notice.

In connection with our store we have a **large and complete stock of the right quality of all these.**

OUR AID IS NOT TO SELL THE THING CHEAPEST OF ALL, BUT TO GET THE HIGHEST GRADE GOODS AT THE LOWEST PRICE POSSIBLE.

Don't forget the date of the Grand Opening May 9. Come anyway and get a Free Sample.

BRITISH AMERICAN DELICATESSEN STORE
501 MAIN STREET, 2 doors South of Ontario Street.

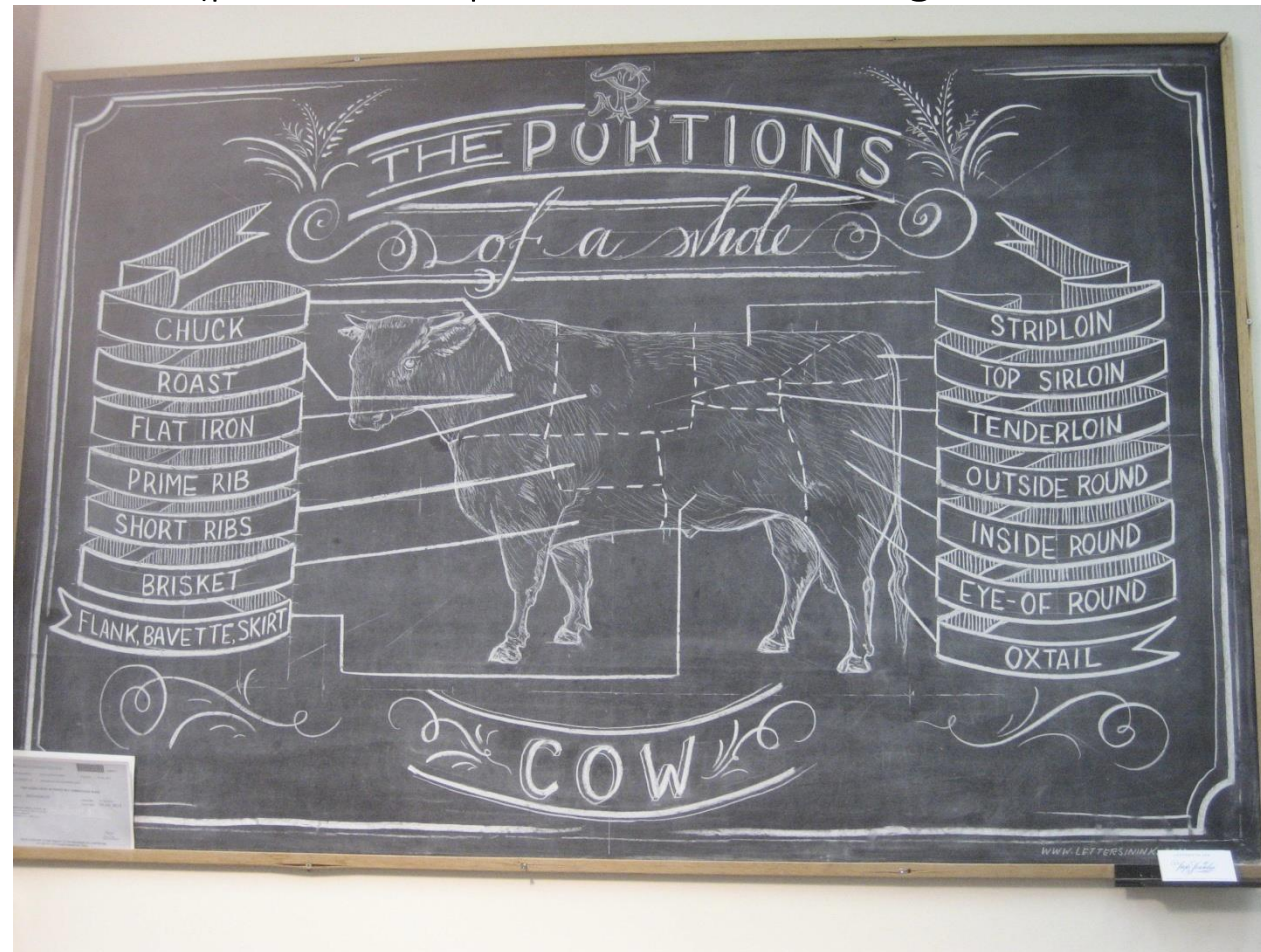
*Advertisement of the Grand Opening of the British
American Delicatessen on May 9, 1908.*

An aside -- How is smoked meat made?

- We need to appreciate smoked meat is made from brisket – a fairly tough cut of beef, but few blood vessels/veins present
- We need to realize that smoked meat goes through a fairly long (and sometimes secret) process of preparation
 - Traditional slower methods have been speeded up in the face of modern consumerism and industrialization of food
- We also need to know if/how New York pastrami differs from Montreal smoked meat.

What is brisket?

(photo: with permission of Kensington Market butcher, Toronto Oct 2012)



What is Montreal-style smoked meat?

Two basic types:

Traditional “dry cure”

- Beef briskets rubbed with salt and spices
- Put in wooden barrels and cured in own juices for 12-20 days
- Hung from racks in smoke house for 6-9 hours

The more modern “wet cure”

- Beef briskets rubbed with spices
- Put in barrels and cured in a brine of water and nitrate for 4 days
- Hung from racks in smoke house for 6-9 hours
- Steamed for 3 hours prior to slicing and serving

How is Schwartz's Montreal smoked meat made?

Schwartz's smoked meat

- Uses beef brisket
- Rubbed with salt, pepper corns and Schwartz's "secret" spice mix
- Put in plastic barrels and cured in own juices for 7 days
- smoke house for 5-7 hours
- Steamed for 3 hours prior to slicing and serving.

(Source: David Sax 2009, 197)

What is the difference between smoked meat and pastrami?

Schwartz's smoked meat

- Uses beef brisket
- Rubbed with salt, pepper corns and Schwartz's "secret" spice mix
- Put in plastic barrels and cured in own juices for 7 days
- smoke house for 5-7 hours
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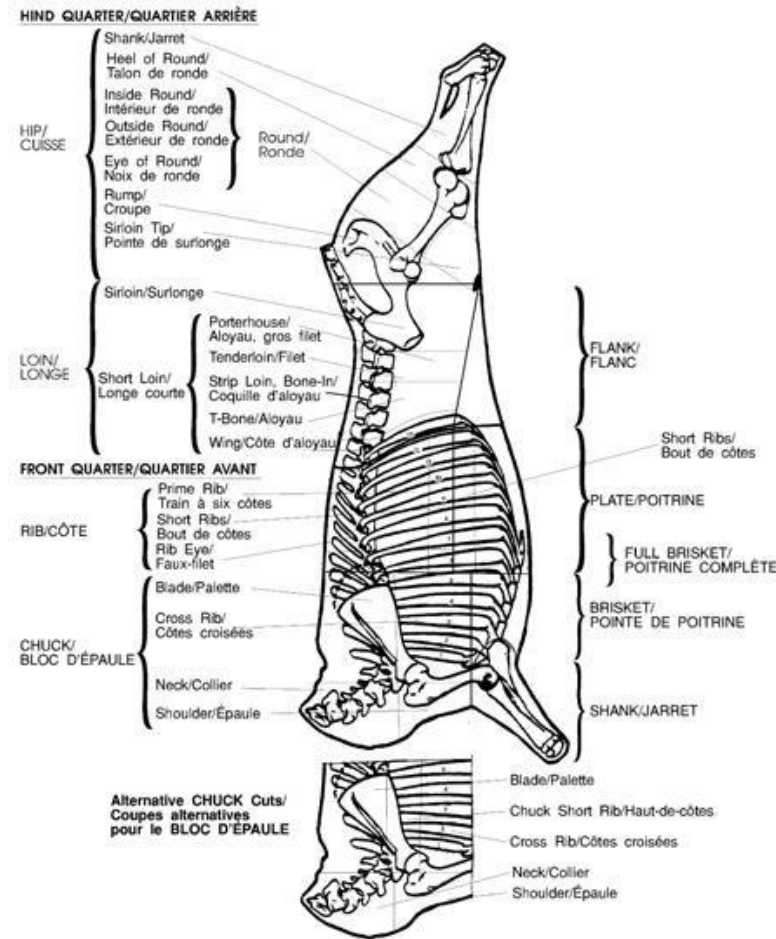
(Source: David Sax 2009, 197)

New York-style pastrami

- Fattier cuts such as "plate"
- Dry-rubbed with a mix that uses more sugar and spices, but less pepper.
- Refrigerated for up to 10 days
- Smoked
- steamed

(Source: Josephine Bacon, 2004: 240; Sue Shephard, 2000: 74)

What is “plate”? – just behind the brisket



Schwartz's menu – smoked meat sandwiches, *no* coffee, *no* dessert.



What theories help explain its fame?

- “...*foods* do not simply come from places, organically growing out of them, but also *make places as symbolic constructs*... [in] ... various imaginative geographies.”

(I.Cook and P.Crang 1996 “The World on a Plate: Culinary Culture, Displacement and Geographical Knowledges”, *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 1 (2) 131-153; quote from p 140; italics mine)

Sites of memory

Lieux de mémoires

- The French historian Pierre Nora talks about “sites of memory” – places that are important not so much for what they actually represent, but for their part in commemorating an event that has been re-told and re-interpreted as part of a story that is now part of the accepted tradition of a group.
- Foods too can be “sites of memory” – we adopt foods that were originally part of only one small group in Montreal’s background and re-imagine the story so that it becomes part of a tradition we all share.

Theories (2) ?

- Josee Johnston and Shyon Baumann, *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape* (New York: Routledge 2010, p. 203; italics mine).
 - “Foodies ... take interest in a great variety of foods from many global culinary traditions, especially exotic foods *from distant groups or cultures*”
 - “*Foodies ... want food that is authentic – foods that are simple, made from the heart, and with history and tradition to back them up*”.

Theories (3) Iconic foods

Definition: noting that an *icon* is a tangible sign of something bigger (or more important), Jennifer Berg argues that: “when consumed or even just imagined, a specific *iconic food* immediately suggests links to specific places” (Berg 2009: 253; italics added).

Iconic foods: a created tradition – we don't even need to eat them!

“Once scorned foods from early-twentieth-century immigrant groups, they [i.e. iconic foods] now symbolize the city's embracing of immigrants and the social mobility of the underclasses. New Yorkers [Montrealers] need not consume these foods regularly to appreciate their value as a symbolic representation of their reality” (Berg 2009:254).

Iconic foods are public foods: “... dishes don’t become iconic by being served at the dinner table”

- Josh Ozersky *The Hamburger: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008):
 - “...*dishes don’t become iconic by being served at the dinner table*” ... “totems exist in the public place” (p. 15; italics mine)
 - “The hamburger has its own history ... it’s the story of European immigration in the nineteenth century and urbanization in the twentieth” (p. 2-3)
 - Origins lie in the hamburg steak (in NYC by 1837) and hamburger itself developed by White Castle of Wichita in 1916

But Iconic foods are not
static in time

“...before the advent of *poutine**, smoked meat
was probably Montreal’s best known food...”

Calvin Trillin, *The New Yorker* (November 2009)

**poutine: a mixture of french fries, cheese curds and gravy.*

But notice the key word above – “before” – now
we are seeing the rise of poutine – a Quebec-
originated food of the 1950s and so a new
tradition and a new iconic food is in the
process of creation.

Source: *Globe and Mail* Monday April 23, 2012
page B3.

Smoke's POUTINERIE

GLOBAL DOMINATION

WHERE NEXT?

Come see Ryan Smolkin, Founder of Smoke's Pouterie, as Featured Guest Speaker at the Business Exchange Show Sunday, April 29th @ 1:30pm at Exhibition Place!

for more info: franchises@smokespouterie.com

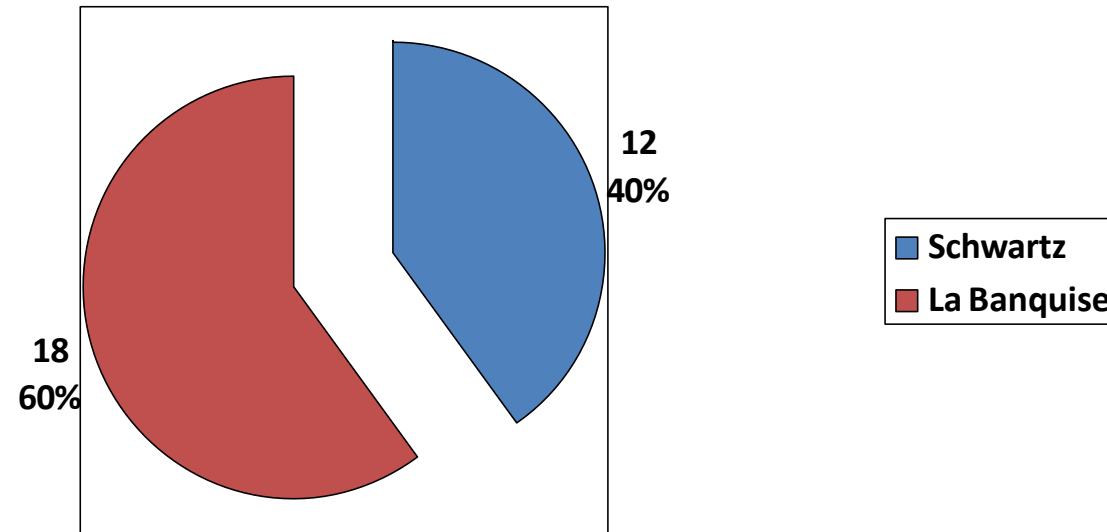
facebook [Smoke's Pouterie](https://www.facebook.com/Smoke's-Pouterie) twitter [@POUTINERIE](https://twitter.com/POUTINERIE)

smokespouterie.com

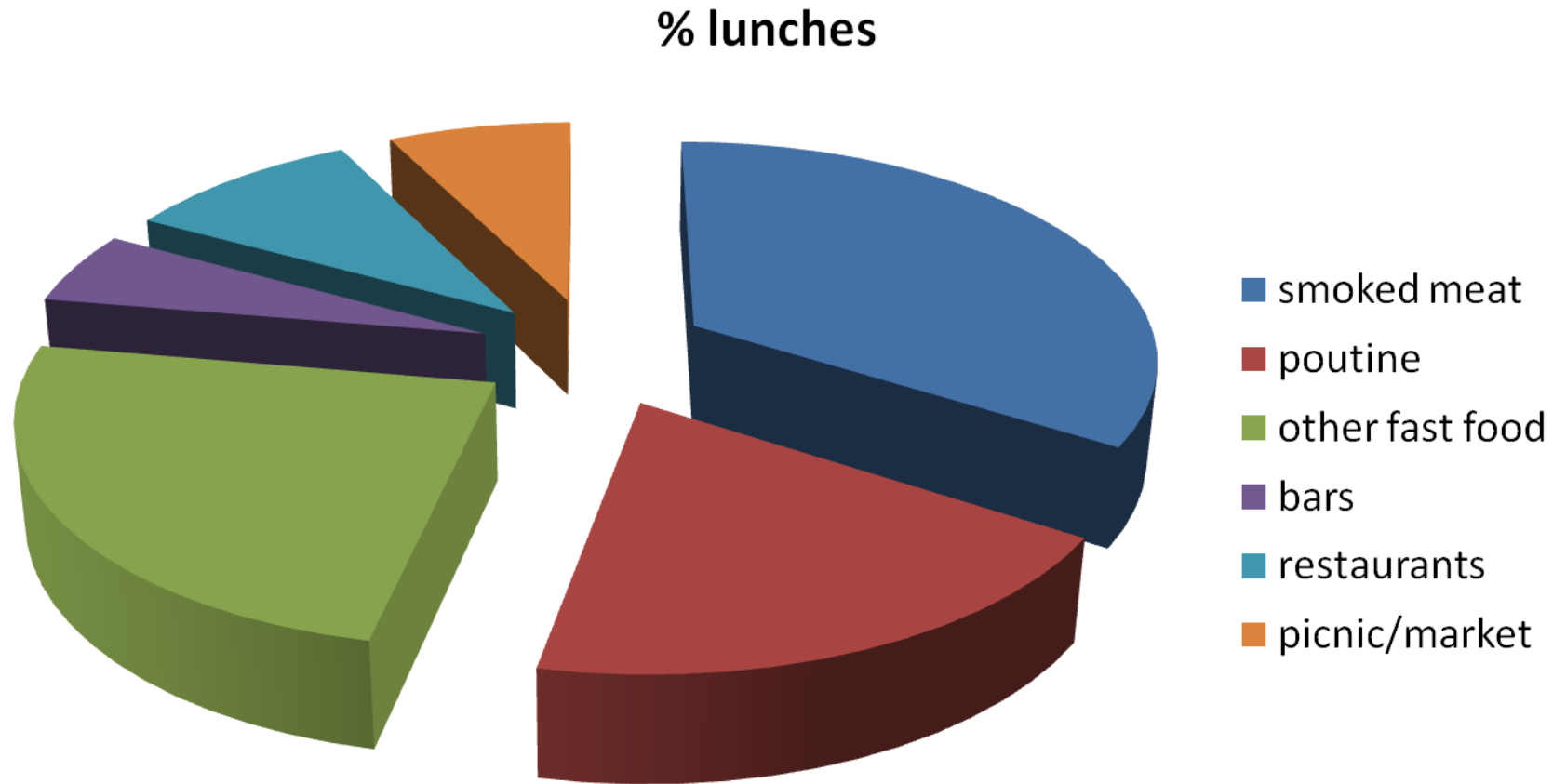
Cities listed around the globe: HAMILTON, OTTAWA, GUELPH, WINNIPEG, ST. JOHN'S, MONTREAL, KINGSTON, REGINA, EDMONTON, MONT-TREMBLANT, VANCOUVER, SASKATOON, HALIFAX, CALGARY, LONDON, TORONTO.

The rise of poutine

GEOG 321 restaurant survey October 2012



Compare with: A visitor's lunch in Montreal (2010 data)



A safe compromise:
poutine & smoked meat (La Banquise)



References

- Jennifer Berg, "Iconic Foods" in Solomon H. Katz (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture* (New York: Schribner, 2003) vol 2: 243-244
- Jennifer Berg, "From the Big Bagel to the Big Roti? The Evolution of New York's Jewish Food Icons", in Annie Hauck-Lawson and Jonathan Deutsch (eds.) *Gastropolis: Food and New York City* (New York: Columbia, 2009): 252-273
- Pascal Ory, "Gastronomy" in Pierre Nora (dir) *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past* (NY: Columbia, 1997) Vo 2, 443-467
- Bill Brownstein, *Schwartz's Hebrew Delicatessen: The Story* (Montreal: Vehicule, 2006)
- Lara Rabinovitch "Montreal-Style Smoked Meat: An Interview with Eiran Harris" *Cuizine: The Journal of Canadian Food Studies*, vol 1, no. 2 (2009) (online at www.erudit.org)
- Joe King, *From the Ghetto to the Main: The Story of the Jews of Montreal* (Montreal: The Montreal Jewish Publication Society)
- David Sax, *Save the Deli: In Search of Perfect Pastrami, Crusty Rye and the Heart of Jewish Delicatessen* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2009)

Read

- Jennifer Berg, “Iconic Foods” in Solomon H. Katz (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture* (New York: Schribner, 2003) vol 2: 243-244
- Alan Nash, “Smoke and Mirrors: Montreal’s Smoked Meat and the creation of tradition” in 2010 Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, *Fermented, Smoked and Preserved Foods*, ed. Helen Saberi (Devon: Prospect Books, 2011) [*a revised version is on Moodle*]

We turn now to our second example – the rise in the number of restaurants serving “international cuisines” in Montreal – or the “world on your plate”.



There are many as this map shows

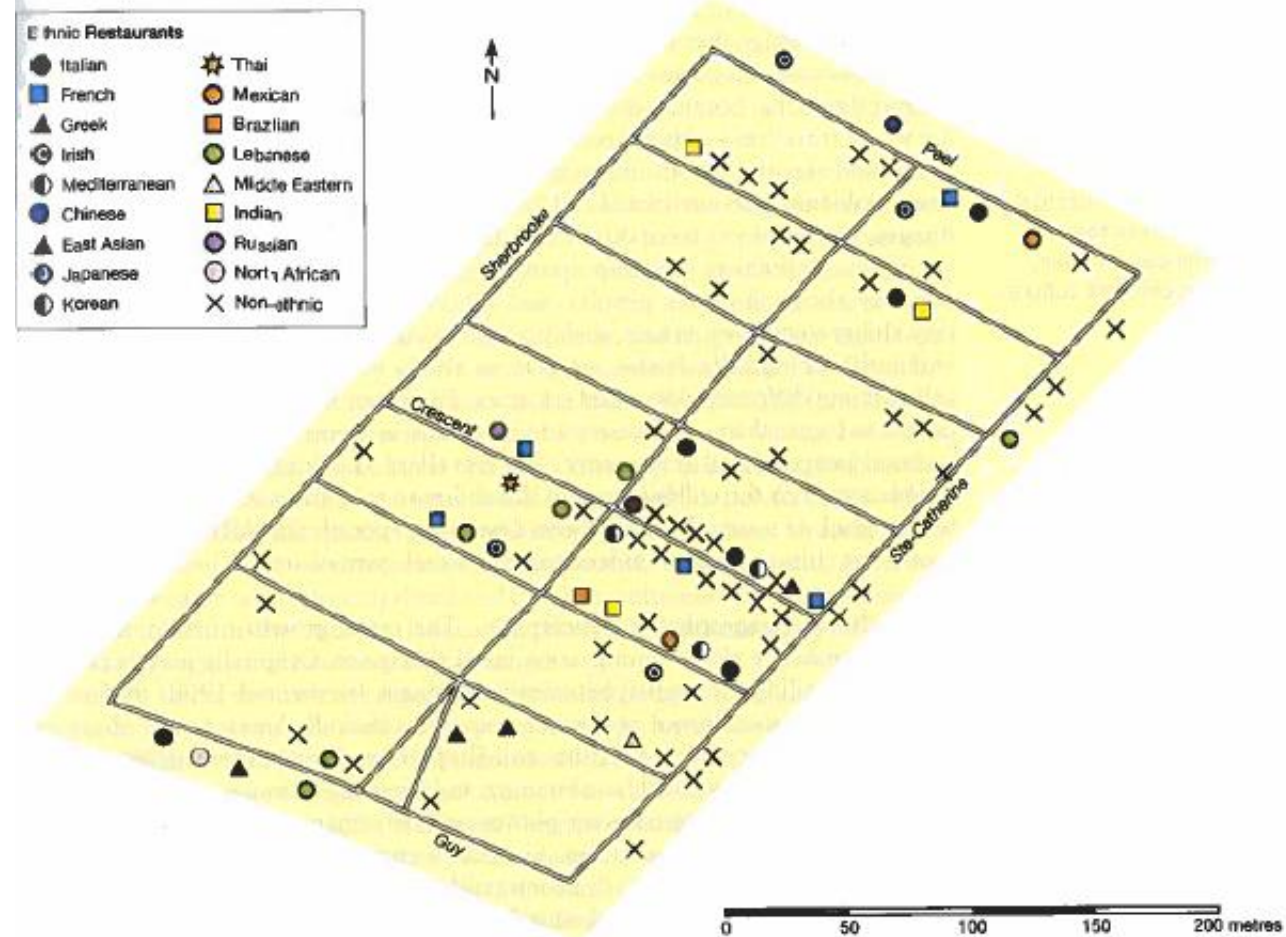


Figure 6.33 Ethnic restaurants This map of a few blocks of downtown Montreal shows the enormous popularity and variety of ethnic restaurants in Canada's large urban and metropolitan centres. (Source: Marie-Michelle Belanger, Concordia University, B.A. Honours Essay, Department of Geography, April 2002.)

Montreal –
Location map of restaurants
serving international cuisines
2002

Alan Nash “From Spaghetti to Sushi: An Investigation of the Growth of Ethnic Restaurants in Montreal, 1951-2001”, *Food, Culture and Society* 12 (1) 2009: 5-24

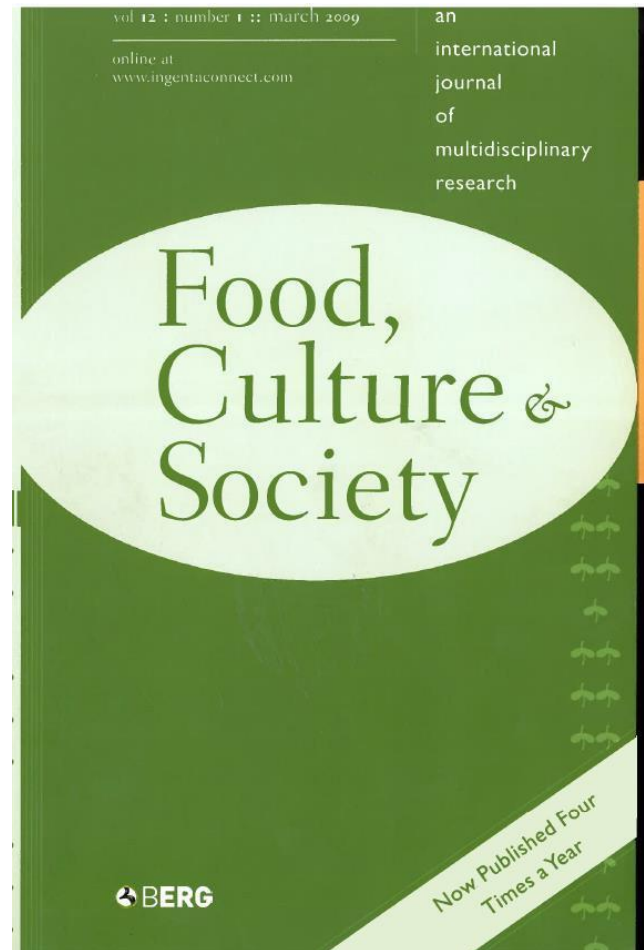
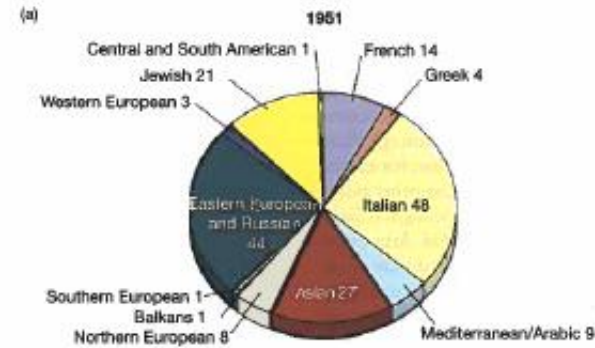


Table 1: *Ethnic restaurants in Montreal, 1951–2007*

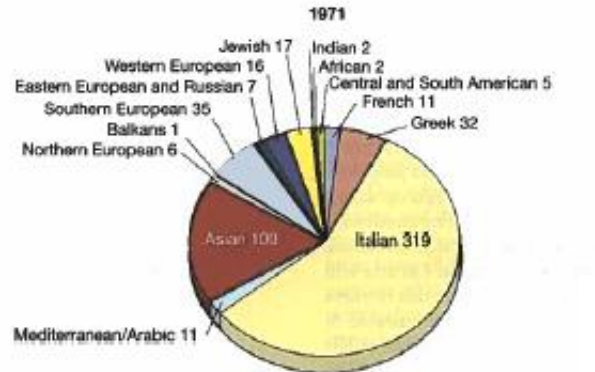
Category of ethnic restaurant	1951	1971	2001	2007
Italian	48	319	304	285
Asian	27	100	252	275
Mediterranean/Arabic	9	11	57	64
Greek	4	32	48	63
India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka	0	2	28	53
Caribbean, Central & S. America	1	5	21	53
S. European	1	35	20	46
W. European	11	22	20	22
Jewish	21	17	10	3
Africa	0	2	5	19
E. European/Russia	45	8	5	13

Restaurants listed by major category of restaurant and ranked by number of restaurants in 2001
Source: 1951, 1971 and 2001 data are derived from the Montreal classified telephone directories (the *Yellow Pages*) for those years; 2007 data are derived from Restomontreal's online restaurant guide to Montreal, available at <http://restomontreal.ca> (accessed September 16, 17 and October 11, 2007).

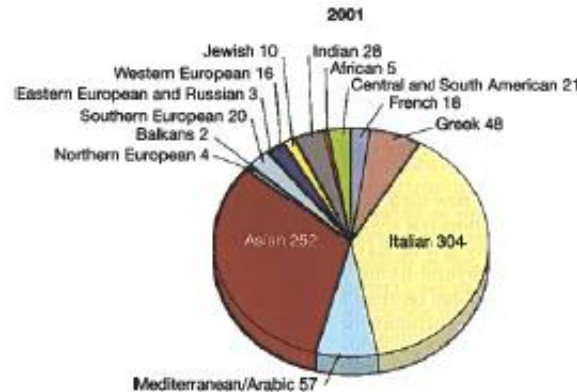
Montreal –
Restaurants serving an
International cuisine
1951, 1971 and 2001



Approx 200 restaurants serving
International cuisines in 1951 in Montreal



Approx 800 restaurants serving
International cuisines in 2001 in
Montreal



1951 phone listing

Au Lutin Qui Bouffe

Our data for this survey came from listings in
The “Yellow Pages” 1951-2001.

This is an example of what a listing looks like

Au Lutin
qui bouffe

THE RESTAURANT
WITH THE LITTLE PIG
FRENCH CUISINE
CHARCOAL BROILED
SPECIALTIES
FULLY AIR CONDITIONED
AMPLE PARKING
PRIVATE SALONS

DOLLARD 9305

753 ST. GREGOIRE JOHN HUBERT

Aust
Auto
Aux
Re
AUX
Azar
B C
Baba
Babo
Bach
Baig
Bald
Balf
Balk
Bam
Bant

Au Lutin Qui Bouffe 1946

Photo: McGill *Focus Medicine* Spring 2012

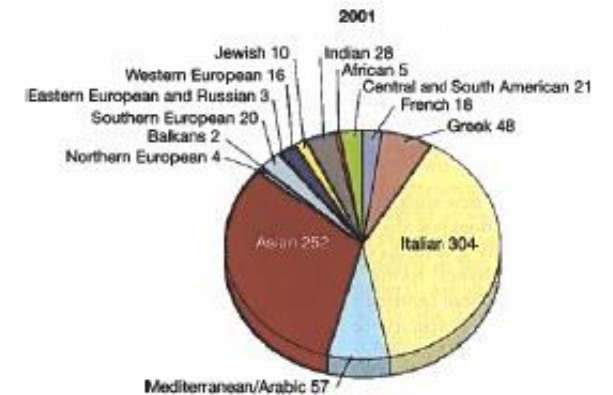
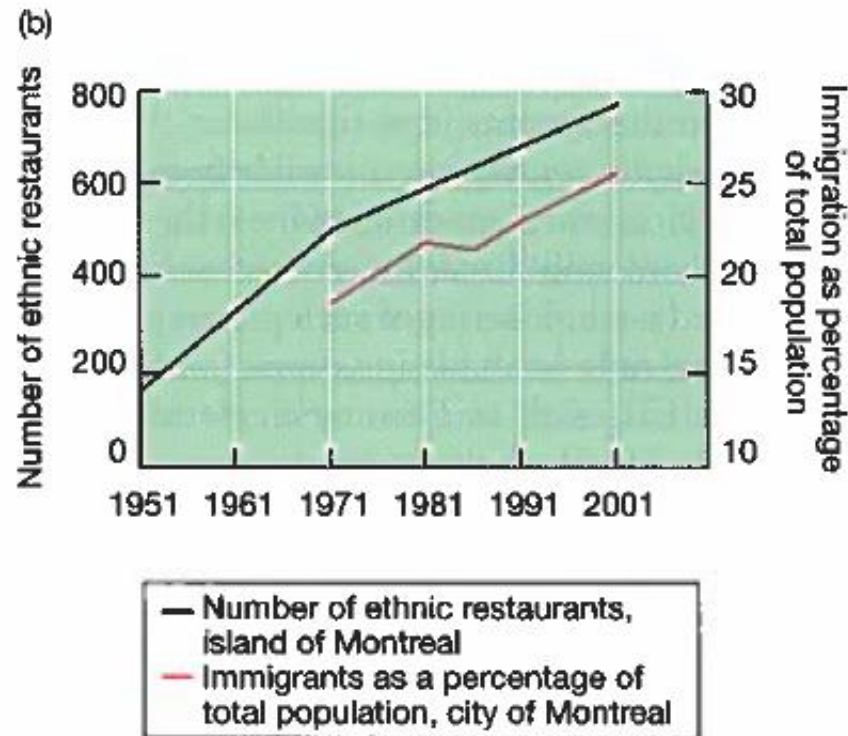
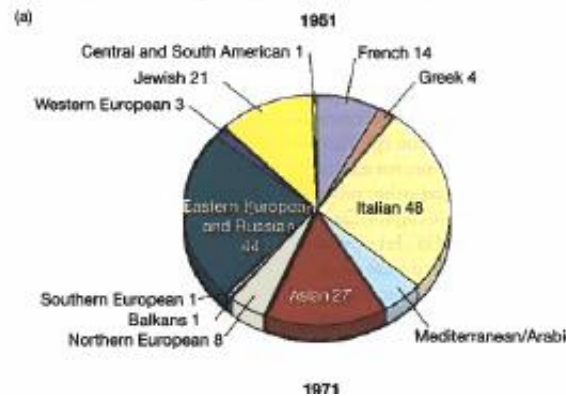


How can we explain that increase?

- Theory One – we all want to taste new foods -- we celebrate **difference** [in food, at least] – we are all good **postmodernists**
 - RECALL -- José Johnston and Shyon Baumann, *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape* (New York: Routledge 2010, p. 203; italics mine).
 - “Foodies ... take interest in a great variety of foods from many global culinary traditions, especially exotic foods *from distant groups or cultures*”
- Theory two – the rise in international difference due to rise in **immigration** to Montreal

Montreal – restaurants & immigration

286 Chapter 6 Interpreting Places and Landscapes



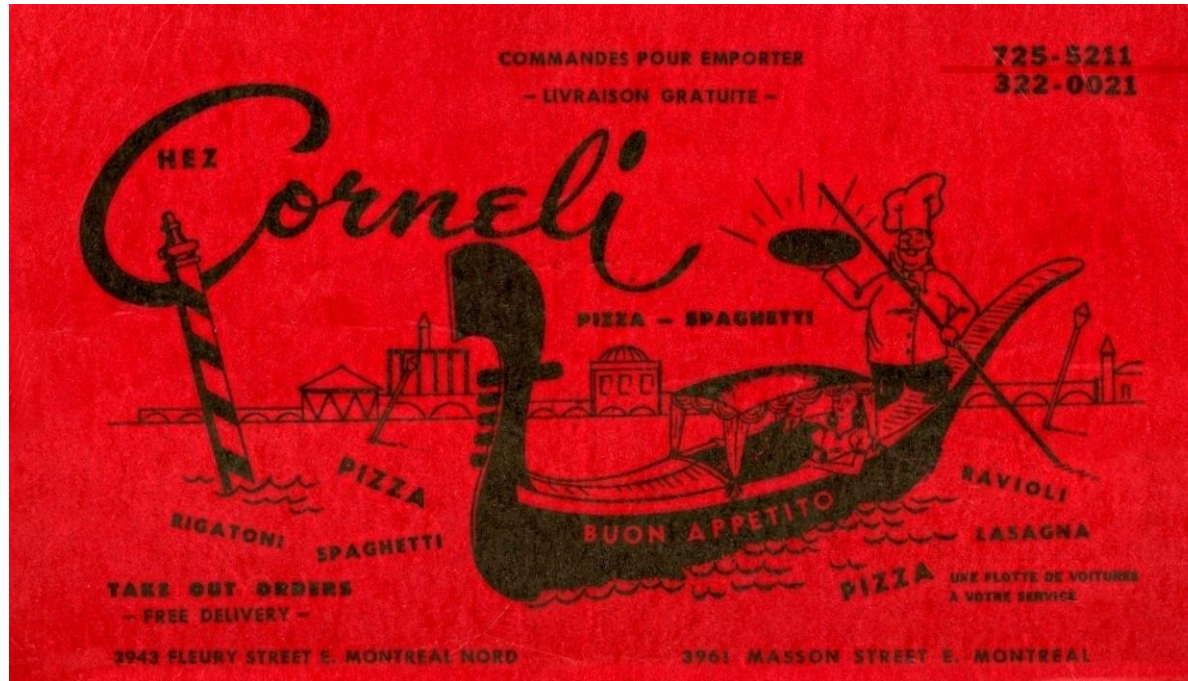
In Montreal's case, at least, the rise in the number and types of international restaurants would seem to be connected with the increase in the number and origins of international immigrants to the city

Quebec City seems to follow the other theory

- Laurier Turgeon and Madeleine Pastinelli,
“ “Eat the World”: Postcolonial Encounters
in Quebec City’s Ethnic Restaurants”, *The
Journal of American Folklore* 115(456):
247-268
 - Interestingly come to a different conclusion
and are much more supportive of
postmodernism (fashion) as an explanation.

THE END—lunch time—bon appetit “The World to your door”

{Illustration by permission: Lovell's Directory: Montreal 1967}



Thank you!