**Globalization and Food**

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The influence of globalization on the foods we choose to eat began with the earliest trade routes and has intensified over time. Some of our earliest recorded history tells us about spice trade. Throughout time, any event that caused a mass migration added to the globalization of food as migrants brought their own culinary culture with them. As we look at the humanities, we cannot underestimate the impact that Julia Child and other celebrity chefs have had on the globalization of food. Some of these celebrity chefs are the same ones exposing the use of natural and applied sciences on food as they look at the chemistry of cooking. Finally, looking through the social sciences lens, immigrants brought their food traditions with them which helped to maintain some of their heritage even as they adapted to a new life in a new place.

Early evidence of trade dates to at least 1200 BCE (Hansen, pp 12). It is hard to say when the first food products were traded but we do know that spices were a traded commodity over the Silk Road (Hansen, pp 235). The Silk Road is a term that refers to a series of trade routes that brought silk and other goods, including spices, from China out across what is now Asia (Hansen, pp 235). Food production and trade continues to be a global concern as is evidenced by the agricultural aspects of the USMCA trade agreement. According to Charles Hankla of MarketWatch, the United States is not doing a good job of looking at trade through the lens of history. He believes that we are making some of the same mistakes we made during the Great Depression. In 1930 congress passed the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act to protect American agriculture and industry from international competition. U.S. trading partners responded with their own tariffs, potentially prolonging the depression. The Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act of 1934 gave the president “authority to reach tariff reduction agreements with foreign governments”. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1948 followed by the World Trade Organization founded in 1995 all shared the principle idea of reciprocity in trade. Each country would agree to be as liberal in their trade as the others were willing in theirs. The idea being to reduce obstructions to trade. Instead, with President Trump’s “America First” approach, as we increase tariffs, other nations are reciprocating with increased tariffs on American goods. (Hankla, 2018) This dynamic can be seen in the U.S. and Canadian lobster industry. On the heels of President Trump withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, Canada and the European Union moved forward on a trade deal that, among other things, removed an 8 percent tariff on live Canadian lobster entering the European Union and phases out the tariff on frozen lobster. Canadian lobster exports to the EU jumped 50%. (Swanson, 2017) We saw the same dynamic when the US imposed new tariffs on imports from China in 2018 and they reciprocated with tariffs on American goods. Live Maine lobster exports to China cut in half. A new trade deal does not lift the tariff on lobster; however, China has committed to purchasing more American product. (Rasbrow-Telem, 2020) It is unclear how much the purchases of lobster will increase and whether they will return to pre-tariff quantities. When we look at the history of trade deals and apply them to what is happening now, it does not appear that we have learned from the past. This is of great concern when we look at our food supply and industry.

Since the first settlers landed in North America, pilgrims have come in search of freedom and opportunity. Each wave of immigration into the United States has helped to shape our global food culture, a culture that began when Indian corn was introduced into the European settler’s diet. The colonial American food culture was a blend of European taste and the American bounty. Upon arrival, pilgrims thought of Indian corn as pig food. Over time, they realized that the crop was easy to grow and had a pleasant flavor. They quickly worked the grain into their diet replacing much of the wheat which took a lot more land to produce the same quantity. (McWilliams, 2005)

The potato famine brought millions of Irish to America. According to History.com, “In the 1840s, over half of America’s immigrants were from Ireland alone.” They were poor and they were hungry leading them to settle quickly near their ports of entry along the east coast. (History.com Editors, 2019) We credit the Irish with bringing us corned beef and cabbage which is an American interpretation of the traditional Irish boiled bacon and cabbage (Gray, 2015). Ireland did produce large amounts of corned beef; however, the Irish could not afford it for themselves, it was all for export to Britain. When they came to America and began to prosper, they could afford beef and started making their traditional dish with corned beef. (Esposito, 2013) The globalization does not end there. The corned beef the Irish used in America was Jewish corned beef (Esposito, 2013).

The California gold rush which brought roughly 25,000 Chinese to the west coast (History.com Editors, 2019). In 1849, the year following the start of the gold rush, the first Chinese restaurant opened in San Francisco. In the early years, Chinese restaurants were frequented by people of various nationalities. 1852 ushered in a period of racial tensions but by the 1880’s they were back to attracting non-Chinese customers (Newman, 2006). Chinese food has continued to remain a staple in the American food landscape.

There is a great deal of cross over between the humanities lens and the other three. Molecular Gastronomy, different societies and cultures and the history of food all topics covered by popular chefs on television. Jose Andres is known for his use of molecular gastronomy as he brings the food of Spain to his audience. Julia Child became one of the first and most famous tv chefs with her French cooking show. Walter Staib teaches early American history along with intriguing period recipes.

Jose Andres is a successful chef, a proud Spaniard, a scientist, an activist and a tv personality. His television program, Made in Spain, features traditional Spanish dishes using ingredients available to the American cook. He adds in details about Spanish culture and gives us a real feel for not just what the food would taste like, but also how it would be experienced (pbs.org. 2008). There is a difference between the food he shows on television and what he serves in his restaurants. In his restaurants, molecular gastronomy and reimagined classics take center stage. In an interview with Anderson Cooper on 60 Minutes, Andres showed some of his small plates and cocktails. They started with a “temperature layered cocktail” that was hot and cold. Another dish was Andres’ take on bagel and lox, a mini ice cream cone, filled with cream cheese and topped with salmon roe. (cbsnews.com, 2010)

Julia Child learned to love French food as an American living in Paris and decided this was a love she wanted to share. She wrote Mastering the art of French Cooking to bring French cuisine to the American table. She succeeded, the book was an instant hit and it led to her PBS show, The French Chef. She brought French cooking to the American table, but she also elevated American cooking. Her television programs taught techniques that American housewives used to improve dishes they were already in the habit of making. (Lehrman, 1997) Blending the French and the American for a more global table.

Walter Staib is the German born and raised executive chef of the oldest restaurant in America. The City Tavern originally opened in 1773. It was the site of many important meetings involving our nation’s founders. There was a period when it was not in operation between 1834 when it was destroyed by fire and 1948 when it was rebuilt with historical accuracy. Chef Staib has been serving up his eighteenth-century fare at the City Tavern since 1994. (citytavern.com, 2018) Since 2009, his television program, A Taste of History, has featured eighteenth century recipes that he cooks in historic kitchens. For the first episode, Chef Staib cooked Pecan-Stuffed Sucking Pig, Pork Kidney and Plum Pudding at Mt. Vernon. He has continued to bring us unusual dishes from historic locations. (atasteofhistory.org, 2019)

Jose Andres, Julia Child and Walter Staib all had or have PBS cooking shows, but they are just a small sample of the chefs bringing global cuisine to the American table. Looking at the PBS website I count over a dozen shows specifically about a single international cuisine and a few others that travel the world looking for whatever food fits the theme of the episode. Chefs are using television to bring American cooks a wide array of global cuisines.

Jose Andres is a big fan of looking at food through the lens of natural and applied sciences. Cooking and chemistry go hand in hand. Molecular Gastronomy is the science of food. The term covers anything having to do with how ingredients interact and the reactions that occur. More recently it is used to describe a style of cooking that produces wild and spectacular displays. As early as the eighteenth century we have record of scientist actively studying food and the way ingredients react to different treatments and each other. (This, 2006, pp 4) In the twenty first century we see chefs around the world taking this science to new levels serving up little gelatinous balls of juice that replicate caviar, sauces presented as massive balls of foam and solid spheres filled with liquids. This style of cooking is exciting diners worldwide. Thirty years ago, only the upper crust dining in fancy metropolitan restaurants would have any access to this kind of culinary adventure but with all the information now at our fingertips anyone can explore the wonders molecular gastronomy.

Some argue the differences between molecular gastronomy and food science or consider molecular gastronomy a sub discipline of food science, either way we are looking at food through the lens of natural and applied sciences. Harve This finds it a difficult distinction to make when looking at the work done by eighteenth century innovators. He says that much of it depends on motivation. If the intention is to understand how an ingredient or ingredients react in a culinary setting, we have molecular gastronomy. If the intent is to better understand the ingredient, we have food science. (This, 2006)

Molecular gastronomy, as we know it today, originated in the 1980’s with a souffle mishap. A physical chemist, Herve This, took a short cut while making a cheese souffle, the recipe clearly stated to add egg yolks two at a time, he added them all at once and the souffle failed. This led to him teaming up with Oxford University physics professor Nicholas Kurti to further study the new food science discipline they called molecular and physical gastronomy, later shortened to molecular gastronomy. (Harris, 2009) Some of the flashier aspects of molecular gastronomy are spherification, flash freezing and sous vide. Spherification involves a chemical reaction between calcium chloride and alginate. The calcium chloride is mixed with the liquid to be sphered and the alginate is mixed with water. When the calcium chloride mixture is dropped into the alginate mixture is instantly gels into a liquid filled bead. (Harris, 2009) If you have seen more than three episodes of Iron Chef or any other timed cooking show, you have likely seen someone use liquid nitrogen to make ice cream. This is one way to flash freeze something. Another way is to use an anti-griddle which looks like a cook top but instead of being hot, it is -30 degrees Fahrenheit on the surface instantly freezing the surface of anything that touches it. (Harris, 2009) Sous vide is French for “under vacuum”. First, the food is vacuum sealed, then it is cooked in water held at a precise temperature. (Harris, 2009) For chicken the temperature of the water would be set at 165 degrees, the proper internal temperature for cooked chicken to be safe to eat. The vacuum sealed chicken would then be left in that water until it is cooked through. The chicken could never overcook since the temperature would never exceed 165 degrees. It is also a great method to produce an evenly cooked steak. A thick steak can be impressive on the plate but difficult to execute.

The social sciences are rich with examples of globalization of food. We could talk about the economics of trade or how geography determines what can grow where but the anthropology is so much more interesting as is one particular political science example. Most migrants came to America as adults, some with families, to seek a better life. The continued to eat the foods they grew up with as much as was possible while adapting to available ingredients. The American global restaurant scene was also greatly influenced by The Chinese Exclusion act of 1882.

Over the course of four decades beginning in 1880, over four million Italians landed in America. In the middle of this boom there were almost 10,000 Italian- Americans living in New York City’s Little Italy, an area that spanned approximately two square miles. (Thirteen, n.d.) By the 1920, over 390,000 Italians were living in New York City. The opened restaurants and bakeries. Food carts lined the streets. (The Marketing Team, 2017) There are establishments still in operation, some still run by the same families, that opened in the early years of the 20th century. (Parrella, 2016)

Neighboring New York’s Little Italy is China Town. Chinese immigrants have historically settled together in neighborhoods. Many Chinese came to America first for the gold rush and then to help build the railroad. When the railroad was finished the Chinese became perceived as a threat to American’s employments as they would typically work for lower wages in horrible conditions. This led to the development of China Towns in large cities across the country as a self-imposed segregation to keep them safe. They were typically self-contained and self-sufficient communities. They lived, worked and shopped in the same neighborhood. (Waxman, n.d.) Even though they remained mostly in their small communities, China Town was a place to visit to experience the atmosphere and to enjoy a good meal.

The exponential growth in the number of Chinese restaurants in the early 20th century was the result of a loophole in a very stringent immigration law. The Chinese Exclusion act of 1882 barred almost all immigration from China. (History.com Editors, 2019) There were exemptions for certain businesses, including restaurants, who could apply for a special merchant visa to travel to China and bring back employees. Late night Chinese food in New York City became something of a guilty pleasure for the suburban upper class. (Godoy, 2016)

Looking at any aspect of globalization through the four lenses gives a more complete picture. I plan on working in data. I will be helping companies to analyze their data to produce needed information. I believe that taking a broader view of things will make me better. Globalization of food is, in the way I pursued it, a fun and interesting topic. I found myself often thinking that I really should be focusing on famine, drought, food stamps and soup kitchens. Even though I took a more lighthearted path, I do see how on a personal level I could use the lenses to better understand more serious topics. Addressing issues in globalization leads to a better understanding which leads to better relationships. We can get into trouble when we think we understand, the same issue can seem very different in various regions. This is a time when asking questions and listening to answers can be helpful. We might say to someone “I understand that this is the way things are done in some regions of your country, is that true at your company?” Another part of addressing globalization is understanding without comparing. There may be times that we don’t agree with someone else’s culture, but we can still understand how those aspects of their culture mold their perspective. This type of empathy can be vital in building productive business relationships.

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