In order to focus on significant differences in approaches to food and eating that anthropologists have brought to the fore, I use the concept of gastronomy, as Brillat-Savarin (1970[1825]) elaborated it. His much-
p. 237 quoted epithet 'Tell me what ↳ you eat and I will tell you what you are' suggests that food conveys messages that provide identity. It expresses several layers of meaning, whether in its material manifestations, social commitments, or spiritual values. Some foods become formal symbols, for example a roast suckling pig in Tongan rites of feasting, while snacks or sweets may be more informal.

Anthropologists of food have pursued several alternative modes of analyses, borrowed from related disciplines. Initially they focused on food production as it had a place in local economics (Firth 1936), as a political entity (cf. Mintz's 1985 study of sugar), as 'a highly condensed social fact' (Appadurai 1996: 494), or as a set of components such as animal, vegetable, minerals, or carbohydrates, fats, etc. (Jerome 1980).

As an introduction to a range of anthropological studies of food, Belasco (2008) proposes a perspective on a food system through food concepts. These consist of three key elements: identity, convenience, and responsibility, which he derives mainly from an American perspective in order to encourage his students to think beyond food as a material item. I prefer to look at food concepts as they represent the basic values which a household draws on when choosing foods. A gastronomic picture emerges from observations and from questioning people about what they eat and why.

The aim is to compile a broad cultural perspective on the place food holds in social life, and the values so expressed. While Belasco's view of the American food system presents food concepts in terms of three basic elements, other gastronomic approaches underline the variations in the meanings of food that communities share when choosing foods that bring mental or physical satisfaction.

Fisher's (1954) *The Art of Eating* discusses the interactions and bonds between those who produce the food, as well as its many meanings, while *The Gastronomical Me* (Fisher 1997) stresses that the presence of food in the bowl leads to nourishment in the heart and feeds wilder and more insistent hungers. 'We must eat ... There is a communion of more than our bodies when bread is broken and wine drunk' (p. vii). Fisher thus alludes to several layers of meanings and metaphors that anthropologists seek out in order to expand their comprehension of the place of food in society.

There is a wide diversity of symbols attached to food, as well as diverse ways in which food contributes to well-being. The biological is closely intertwined with the psychological and sociological in a gastronomic approach. While early Victorians viewed any matters associated with eating as 'unmentionable', food has emerged from 'the darkness' as a subject of wide debate and media attention. As 'domestic science', taught mainly to female students, it ranked among the 'lesser' sciences. Awareness of the diversity of beliefs and practices associated with food has exposed us to a wide understanding of cultural interactions, and the sense of well-being involving food (Belasco 2008: 3). Thus those writing about the anthropology of food
p. 238 address topics ranging from the politics of food and hunger on a global scale, ↳ as set out in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (2000), to empowering households' access to foods as a step to freedom (Sen 1999), to local ethnographies in which food restrictions are seen to dominate life, for example, in a Papua New Guinea Highland society (Meigs 1984).

An evolutionary interpretation of human history differentiates hunting and gathering as the dominant means of food provisioning from the subsequent stages of sedentary agriculture, plantations, and modern 'grazing' practices, including fast foods. The dominant contrast today lies between those societies that rely largely on growing their own food (subsistence) and those societies that use cash to buy their foods. Both means of access require choices that differentiate and cohere into distinctive gastronomies. Ethnic differences, and local cuisines have emerged, as well as 'slow food' cooking, alongside McDonalds and Coca Cola, as globalizing consumables.