prerequisite: "primitive in the best sense of the word, 'primal,' not backward, first, not last." Similarly, in *Getting Back Together,* one of the first sympathetic treatments of the hip back-to-the-land movement, Robert Houriet argued that the retreat to preindustrial roots was but the "first lap in a long journey." After backing out of the "cul-de-sac" of recent history, Houriet argued, hip naturalists "would again move forward, very slowly, careful not to take the wrong turn and keeping to the main road and to the central spirit and consciousness that modern man has lost along the way." Out of the negation process would hopefully come more positive models for rebuilding self and society.[19]

3

RADICAL THERAPY:

THE OPPOSITIONAL IDENTITY

The counterculture went natural not only for survival but also for fulfillment. Dietary primitivism would purge and protect you, but it would also make you well—even happy. Like most young leftists, ecofreaks saw no reason why radicalism could not be enjoyable. Like most bohemians, they rejected deferred gratification. What kind of new society could come out of joyless self-denial? The charm—and fragility—of the insurgency was that it honestly believed (or hoped) that you could survive Armageddon, start all over, *and* have fun along the way.

Part of the fun came in romantically relishing the paradoxes.[1] Natural foods were safer *and* tastier; wild greens were hardscrabble staples *and* gourmet treats. Ethnic foods were cheap *and* rich. Vegetarianism seemed ecologically *and* spiritually sound. Exercise and dieting made you a better street fighter *and* lover. Fasting confronted the system *and* made you high. Hip food stores peddled both radical tracts *and* facial creams, wilderness survival manuals *and* aphrodisiac teas. Organic gardening was a medium for self-discovery *and* social integration.

As dour intellectuals lamented, hip vocabulary seemed more than a bit vague, inconsistent, and disconnected—and it often was. When applied to underground cuisine, however, the words had a tangible context and internal coherence. A cuisine consists of a distinct set of core foods and seasonings, preparation techniques, and dining etiquette. Every society derives its cuisine (and culture) out of a much wider range of options. The human race as a whole is omnivorous, but individual societies are picky. By categorizing foods into what's good to eat and what is not, a cuisine helps a society's members define themselves: To eat appropriate foods is to participate in a particular group; eat inappropriate foods and you're an outsider. Like language, a cuisine is a medium by which a society establishes its special identity.[2]

Deviant subcultures are especially dependent on such oppositional language.[3] Reflecting the polarization of the period, the countercuisine offered rebels a rich vocabulary of clear contrasts, e.g., "natural" vs. "plastic." While these polarities had important nutritional implications, the symbolic aspects were initially more interesting. Indeed, only later, after their serendipitous experiences in the kitchen, did some participants turn for theoretical confirmation to the lab and library—as if in fulfillment of the Diggers' hope that subversive theories of economics would follow the social facts of countercultural life.

IMPROVISATION VS. SPECIALIZATION

Paradoxically, the first rule was to improvise. Even as they offered recipes and advice, underground food advisors consistently undercut their own authority by urging readers to experiment. One enduring goal of the 1960s was to upset the rule of "experts." "Deprofessionalization" would return power and dignity to the grass roots, giving ordinary people a sense of worth and importance. Throwing away the few reigning cookbooks and conventional wisdoms, freaks adopted an "anything goes" approach to food.[4]

Drug experiences no doubt reinforced such experimentation. Like the bohemian experience in general, psychedelics simulated a childlike state in which you nibbled here, picked there, sometimes with your hands, and otherwise played with your food. Ita Jones found it easy to add food to the delightful "kaleidoscope of

things" rediscovered in hallucinogenic explorations. After detailing the recipe for "Venezuelan head food"—a hash of red peppers, onions, raisins, squash, and noodles—Jeanie Darlington advised, "Cook it straight and eat it stoned, because that's what it's made for." In acid trip's "white light," all connections were valid, all taboos arbitrary. If acid could go in Kool-Aid and marijuana could go into just about anything, why *not* put onions and oranges in the same salad, garlic and zucchini in pancakes, peanut butter in ice cream? It was no coincidence that some of today's superpremium ice cream moguls started out as hip restaurateurs serving zonked customers attuned to strange blends of thick fresh cream, tropical fruits, and crushed candy bars.[5]

National cuisines were mixed and matched without concern for international boundaries or incongruities: bologna knish enchiladas or Irish-Jewish stew. Compiling "unusual combinations flavored with a free hand by stoned culinary adventurers," Lucy Horton's *Country Commune Cooking* (1972) adapted recipes from Tibet, the Ukraine, Hungary, Denmark, Mexico, India, none anthropologically precise—but who cared? Ecologically one-worldish, Horton's recipes leaped continents within a single dish: for example, Sweet and Sour Spaghetti Sauce (from High Lodge Farm, Oregon), Torgerson's Mexican-Italian Blintzes (Crow Farm, Oregon), Armenian Polenta (Morning Star Ranch, California).[6]

Mystical religions and living theater also encouraged trust in intuition. The California-Buddhist authors of *Tassajara Cooking* likened food preparation to the satori-inducing experiences of Zen archery and tea service: zap! something you just *did*. "The way to be a cook is to cook." Don't try to achieve some prescribed standard; just pick up some tools and vegetables and get started.[7] Like the Diggers' Free Store, hip groceries and restaurants were full of props and improvisational possibilities. Recipes were scripts that could be altered at will.

Sometimes dabbling could lead to important results. Thus Frances Moore Lappé dated her food activist career from her recombinant trials in the late 1960s. Discouraged by the antiwar movement and her futile social work job, Lappé turned in 1969 to ecology. As her friends began to go natural, Lappé started playing with all sorts of peculiar foods like tofu, mung beans, bulgur, soy grits, and buckwheat groats. "I remember devouring my first 'natural foods' cookbook as if it were a novel. Barley, mushrooms, and dill together? Cheddar cheese, walnuts, and rice? How odd. What

would that taste like?" The new combinations restored a sense of intentionality and contact—key therapeutic goals—to what had previously seemed humdrum chores. "As new types of combinations became more attractive, shopping for food and cooking was no longer unconscious and boring, but a real adventure." As culinary barriers broke down, so did other assumptions. Lappé began to question conventional wisdoms about nutrition and world hunger. At the Berkeley agricultural library, Lappé read about the vast amount of acreage devoted to growing feed grains for livestock: half of our harvested land was planted with feed crops; 78 percent of our grain was fed to animals. Assuming that meat was the best source of protein, most Americans accepted this allocation of resources. Yet Lappé also encountered the theory of protein complementarity: by creatively combining beans, seeds, grains, and dairy products, one could easily meet daily protein needs without resorting to ecologically wasteful meat. There was thus theoretical underpinning for all this seemingly random mixing and matching. Zap! Lappé's career as a food activist was off and running! Her *Diet for a Small Planet* (1971), with its mix of recipes and analysis, typified radicals' faith in the ability to combine personal therapy with political activism.[8]

PROCESS, NOT PRODUCT

Although many of the experiments no doubt wound up in the garbage can—or compost heap—this was not necessarily seen as failure, for the countercuisine stressed process over product. It was more important how you got there—what you learned along the way—than what you actually wound up with. The True Light Beavers' commune cookbook *Eat, Fast, Feast* was "not a book, but a process." *Tassajara Cooking* was "a cooking book, not a cookbook." In her column, "'Bread Bakin': A Garden of Kneadin'," *Northwest Passage*'s "mother bird" gently advised, "Don't be discouraged by a few bricks, or even a lot of bricks—they're all building blocks."[9] Clearly, in Lappé's case the building process *was* productive, but such happy endings were not always so obvious—or even important.

It was in their abuse of the process, in fact, that most manufacturers went astray. Little consideration was paid to how food was grown, manufactured, or distributed. The welfare of farmers,

migrant workers, animals, slaughterhouse workers, and supermarket clerks mattered little. All that counted was that it got to the consumer, who had no connection to or responsibility for those in the food chain who sustained him.

Nutritionists collaborated with food technologists by analyzing foods into molecular components that could be rearranged to suit the processors' convenience. Since all that mattered was that the body somehow got its "recommended daily allowance" of basic chemicals, it really did not matter if vitamins and minerals were sprayed on shelf-stable wheat flakes or if sugar and artificial flavors were added to otherwise tasteless fruit preserves. Some nutritionists even boasted of their indifference to the aesthetics of food; taste, color, and appearance were relevant only to the extent that they fooled the mouth into ingesting the daily dose of nutrients. "Plastic" foods were consummately efficient, malleable, convenient—and biochemically "adequate" according to the prevailing nutritional paradigm.[10]

Such exaggerated attention to end over means offended the holistically minded. Thus, mother bird opened her bread column with a much-used quote from Khalil Gibran: "If a man bakes bread with indifference, he bakes a bitter loaf that feeds but half his hunger." Mass-produced, processed food encouraged alienation from nature, society, one's own body. Unfortunately, most consumers seemed to collaborate in their own alienation. "They are content to swallow 'enriched' foods as a substitute for real nutrition, much as a robot might be content to practice artificial insemination," *Quicksilver Times*'s food writer observed. Ita Jones agreed. Anesthetized by the system, Americans ate "as though the object of eating is to fill a pink box called the stomach."[11]

To overcome such alienation and interact with Mother Nature, you had to become fully conscious of every step of the preparation, each ingredient. If the recipes were traditional, you also communed with the past. Like music, sex, and drugs, food was to be shared as a medium of "communication," the counterculture's favorite process-oriented word. The Haight's flower children frequently offered strangers food on the street—an act of "propitiation" that sociologist Helen Perry likened to the practices of primitive people. Similarly, Diggers used food to bind and educate the hip community. In gloomy 1969 one of Diane DiPrima's "revolutionary letters" suggested that the act of sharing food in countercultural gatherings was in itself a healing and subversive act:

but don't get uptight, the guns
will not win this one; they are
an incidental part of the action
which we better damn well be good at
what will win
is mantras, the sustenance we give each other
the energy we plug into
(the fact that we touch
share food)
the buddha nature
of everyone, friend and foe, like a million earthworms
tunneling under the structure
till it falls.

Appropriately, *The Last Whole Earth Catalog* put all its food-related entries in its Community section as central to the group-fostering process. Get good cooking equipment for your "cell," editor Stewart Brand observed, for "the best way to attract and keep good people is with outstanding food."[12]

BROWN VS. WHITE

White vs. brown was a central contrast. For *Quicksilver Times*, underground nutrition could be easily capsulized in the admonition: "Don't eat white; eat right; and fight." Whiteness meant Wonder Bread, White Tower, Cool Whip, Minute Rice, instant mashed potatoes, peeled apples, White Tornadoes, white coats, white collar, whitewash, White House, white racism. Brown meant whole wheat bread, unhulled rice, turbinado sugar, wildflower honey, unsulfured molasses, soy sauce, peasant yams, "black is beautiful." Darkness was funky, earthy, authentic, while whiteness, the color of powerful detergents, suggested fear of contamination and disorder. "Only in Amerika," *Quicksilver Times* observed (incorrectly), "could people want their food *bleached* before they eat it. Flour, sugar, rice—all bleached to match the bleached-out mentality of white supremacy." Unlike flabby, devitalized Tastee Bread or Minute Rice, brown breads and rice offered resistance to teeth and digestive tract. White foods were preprocessed,

but dark foods left the processing to you. Later research would corroborate the physiological benefits of fiber, but in the sixties, the payoff seemed more immediately sensual: a rush of energy that came from sustained chewing of tougher, sturdier, hardier food.[13]

Whiteness meant blandness. The two main seasonings of white middle-class culture were white salt and sugar, with white saccharin making gains along with the other white powders that went into plastic foods and their wrappers. Spices were generally abhorred, other than perhaps a dash of pepper. But the countercuisine favored powerfully dark spices: soy sauce, miso, molasses, curries, chilies. About the only white flavorings used were garlic and onions—sources of terror to the WASP middle class—and yogurt, whose bitterness cut against the mainstream's sweet cream sauces and mayonnaise.[14] Pale, insipid lager beers gave way to darker, frequently homemade ales, bitters, and stouts. Alternative stores sold brown eggs, dark whole wheat noodles, mud-colored unpasteurized apple cider, and a variety of products wrapped in brown paper.

The early countercuisine paid a lot of attention to white and dark breads because bread was a staple—the proverbial staff of life, hip slang for currency, and, in its white form, a longtime symbol of all that seemed banal and mass in Western culture. For Theodore Roszak, who popularized the word "counterculture" in his 1969 best-seller, white bread was a perfect metaphor for the regime of experts and technocrats who, for the sake of efficiency and order, threatened to rob us of all effort, thought, and independence. "Not only do they provide bread aplenty, but the bread is as soft as floss; it takes no effort to chew, and yet it is vitamin-enriched." Linking plastic food to totalitarian control, an ad for *Good Times* listed white bread as a "dangerous drug"—along with work, property, television, and money: "This and similar nonprescription drugs are gobbled almost unconsciously by drug users at nearly every stage of their addiction. Runs down the body and adds to addict's general misery. Psychologically addicting. Signs: general weakness and lack of vitality; 'faded' appearance."[15]

Wonder Bread came in for special attack, partly because, having been billed as a builder of strong bodies in "eight ways," it was the best-selling brand. Also, the Orwellian name itself tickled the stoned and invited analogy. The manufacture of this first cousin to the Twinkie aptly symbolized the white flight of the 1950s and 1960s. To make clean bread, ITT's bakers removed all colored

ingredients (segregation), bleached the remaining flour (suburban school socialization), and then, to prevent discoloring decay, added strong preservatives and stabilizers (law enforcement). Brown breads had shorter life spans, but at their peak seemed suffused with innate character. The color contrast externalized white radicals' estrangement from sanitized suburban life.

Baking brown bread nicely balanced the personal and the political—a craft and a statement, a first step toward self-reliance. Appropriately, one of the first hip best-sellers was Edward Espe Brown's *Tassajara Bread Book* (1970), which sold 400,000 copies. According to Brown, bread baking was a "ripening, maturing, baking, blossoming *process*." After mastering bread, hip cooks moved on to the *Tassajara Cooking Book* (1973)—and main courses. Similarly, when Carol Flinders apprenticed herself to Laurel Robertson, her first real challenge was to bake bread. For Laurel, bread was the ultimate life food because it was in fact the product of a living process of fermentation; the dough "seemed to come alive in her hands." Bread baking was thus a ritualistic affirmation of membership in a subculture that viewed itself in direct opposition to the plastic death culture.[16]

SLOW FOODS VS. FAST FOODS: CRAFT VS. CONVENIENCE

Baking bread took a lot of time, but that was the point. After first tasting a homebaked loaf, Ita Jones *had* to bake her own, even if it took a whole afternoon—indeed, precisely because it took a whole afternoon. "There's no return to the days when I thought that three cluttered hours were preferable to three, long, calm, warm fragrant ones."[17]

It is a mark of the modern mind to complain that life is moving too fast. Throughout the nineteenth century food reformers struggled against food "bolting" as an unhealthy symptom of urban-industrial acceleration. In the late 1960s the pace seemed especially fast to the young for whom one stressful year could seem like ten. Moreover, as amphetamines became more popular, the phrase "speed kills" had special meaning in the drug culture. Food writers linked this fear of uncontrolled momentum—"bad trips"—with the food they despised. Thus, the Red Yogis Collective likened "shit food" laden with predigested white sugar and white

flour to white powdery drugs like speed and junk: "Easy to cop, quick to fix, satisfies your craving for awhile, and destroys your body." Cooking soybeans on the other hand took almost forever. Infant formulas—white powders—were easy to prepare, but these too became addictive drugs—children's introduction to a lifetime's dependence on sugary convenience foods. On the other hand, time-consuming breast feeding was, for Jeanie Darlington, a natural high, "a beautiful, organic experience . . . a feeling of cosmic exchange." Wooden chopsticks took time to master and prevented bolting. "Eating with sticks teaches us to caress food in small enough doses to notice and appreciate a meal," Windcatcher observed. "Metal utensils are simply instruments for shoveling food into our mouths." For "alicia bay laurel," author of the best-selling manual *Living on the Earth,* eating slowly heightened bodily awareness: "To find your own perfect diet, eat very slowly and chew each mouthful as many times as you can. Feel the effects of each food on your stomach, intestines, and throughout your body." Such advice recalled progressive era dietary reformer Horace Fletcher—except that, in true progressive spirit, Fletcher had seen slow mastication as the most rational, efficient way to eat, while for alicia, it was a form of Buddhist meditation and a surrogate for drug-induced self-discovery.[18]

Gardening too had a calming, decelerating appeal. Stephen Gaskin—who led a convoy of Haight refugees to The Farm, a large and enduring Tennessee commune—wrote a short aphorism titled "How to Slow Down": "Find a little bit of land somewhere and plant a carrot seed. Now sit down and watch it grow. When it is fully grown pull it up and eat it." Labor-intensive organic techniques took more time than conventional chemicals, which "put your soil on a speed trip," according to Jeanie Darlington. By taking time to build up compost, cultivate earthworms, handpick predatory insects, you became "part of the living process."[19]

Slowing down could have subversive economic consequences as well, for the prevailing insistence on speed was the very basis of the processed foods business. Slicing, chopping, dicing, pureeing, mincing, pounding, cutting, stewing, fermenting—all this could be done in the kitchen or, for a fee, in the factory ahead of time—part of the bargain by which harried consumers bought minutes from processors. The deal was costly to both budget and health. One reason why refined foods had so much sugar and salt was that natural flavors had been sacrificed for the sake of speedy prepara-

tion. Presliced bread may have been, as the cliché went, one of the world's wonders, but at what cost to the palate? For the sake of a few minutes, instant oatmeal was more expensive and less nutritious than the less refined flakes. Moreover, to the mechanical ways of speeding up food production, agribusiness had added a new dimension of chemical acceleration. Speedy agrichemicals damaged soil, water, and, possibly, human health. In the kitchen, instant breakfast bars, stove-top stuffing mixes, TV dinners, imitation juice drinks, and toaster-ready waffles took seconds to prepare, but their ingredients resembled paint formulas. In contents and manner of consumption, these products were virtually indistinguishable from the snacks that were, because of all the packaging and assorted "value added," the processors' major profit area. To Carol Flinders of *Laurel's Kitchen,* the fetish of speed made the home irrelevant. " 'Household' is hardly the word—at this point, when the emphasis falls increasingly on speedy refueling and immediate departure, 'pit stop' might be closer to the truth." The autoracing analogy applied especially well to the roadside fast-food restaurant, with its roots in the disreputable drive-in of the 1950s.[20]

Against this backdrop, writers of the countercuisine called for a deliberate slowdown. For sustained contact with nature, take time to pick your own produce, clean your own chicken, shell your own nuts. At the co-op, weigh and bag your own beans and grains. Instead of the bogus warmth of a can of Campbell's soup—that camp symbol of the 1960s—take time to make soup from scratch. Can your own tomatoes, pickles, preserves. Instead of heating a frozen dinner in a toaster oven, simmer lentil stew in an old-fashioned cast-iron kettle over the stove—preferably of the labor-intensive wood-burning kind.

In confronting the time question, the countercuisine touched an inflamed nerve; the middle class has always worried about the acceleration wrought in large part by their own industriousness and entrepreneurship. As Pierre Bourdieu notes in *Distinction,* the bourgeoisie has long envied the aristocrat's power over time, that upper-class ability to carry on affairs with a sense of complete detachment, civility, ease. To an extent, the bohemian's historic function has been to explore low-cost routes to that upper-class control of time.[21]

Moreover, consumers themselves have sometimes hesitated to sacrifice craftsmanship for efficiency. In the mid-nineteenth century some cooks questioned whether food cooked in timesaving

cast-iron stoves tasted as good as the old fireplace-roasted variety; as late as the 1890s, middle-class housewives regarded baker's bread as immoral and "poorfolksy." More recently, immigrant mothers might criticize "lazy" daughters-in-law who fed sons "from a can" or from the freezer. One-stop, self-service chain stores came under attack in the 1920s and 1930s, because they undermined friendly Mama-Papa groceries, just as fast-food chains had to fend off zoning restrictions in the 1950s. Every new gadget has had to run the gauntlet of humor magazines, stand-up comics, ad parodies, and other forms of ritualized ridicule. Furthermore, as Ruth Schwartz Cowan argues in *More Work for Mother,* the very persistence of the home appliance testifies to the reluctance of Americans to surrender completely to centralized production and processing. If convenience were the sole determinant of market behavior, middle-class Americans might eat out all the time or have meals home delivered from commercial kitchens rather than insist on processing food at home—even if only from freezer to microwave. In other words, the enduring cult of the private home reflects continued ambivalence about modernization.[22]

But the fact is that, for the most part, Americans have accepted the ideology of convenience, with its aura of liberation, freedom, and choice—some of it grounded in historical experience. Few familiar with the chores of the typical nineteenth-century housewife would doubt that the transition from wood to gas or electric stove was worth making. Still, as Cowan's title suggests, it is possible that many "laborsaving" appliances introduced since the 1920s have made as much work for women as they have saved. Before automatic washing machines, clothes simply stayed dirtier; ditto for rugs and upholstery before vacuum cleaners. But consumers' expectations were raised and there was no going back. Moreover, they liked the technological spectacle. Faced with the trade-off between craft satisfactions and push-button, prewrapped wizardry, consumers generally chose the latter, and the challenge of marketing has been, through creative use of nostalgic themes, to ease the guilt that consumers feel in making the bargain.[23]

The countercuisine too sensed the craft-convenience trade-offs. There were times when large batches of portable food needed to be prepared quickly and efficiently. A pressure cooker did save time cooking beans. With a blender, busy students and activists could make nutritious, easily transportable smoothies. Some even defended that ultimate convenience item, the food stamp. Did

food stamps release time for "the revolution" or co-opt freaks into "the system"?

Feminists debated whether the priority of craft over convenience was sexist, for women did most of the cooking. On the one hand, rejecting convenience products reasserted female competence and control, much as the revival of midwifery, witchcraft, and other forms of folk self-health was a feminist defense against modern medical patriarchy. On the other hand, cooking without packaged aids and appliances was more work, especially if you were not used to going primitive. There was, moreover, a regressive tone in some of the cookbooks extolling premodern housewifery. The chapter in *Laurel's Kitchen* entitled "The Keeper of the Keys" sounded strikingly Victorian, with its praise of women's traditional role as gatekeeper and spiritual paragon—the person whose inherent cooperativeness and "nurturant impulse" made her best suited to lead the ecological, social, and moral reform that America so desperately needed. Some of this time-consuming work could seem boring or tedious, Flinders allowed, especially for working women who were too rushed to appreciate household craftsmanship. If this required that women reexamine their commitment to business or professional careers, so be it—an uncomfortably conservative critique of the two-career family model that was coming to dominate mainstream middle-class life.[24]

In all, the craft mystique was simultaneously one of the countercuisine's enduring charms and one of its chief obstacles to widespread acceptance. As we will see, overcoming the craft-convenience conflict would be one of the major marketing challenges of the following decade.

VEGETABLE VS. ANIMAL

Sooner or later, every oppositional cuisine confronts the meat question. In the late 1960s this was no small undertaking. If it was hard to give up convenience, the determinant technique in American cuisine, it was doubly hard to give up meat, the core staple. Americans ate about 121.7 pounds of red meat per person a year in 1930 and about 160 pounds in 1970; the greatest gains had been in beef consumption, which rose from 38 pounds a year per person in 1930 to 90 pounds in 1970. Two factors contributed to the gains in beef: the lower cost that came after World War II from

feeding America's chemically stimulated grain surplus to cattle and the spread of burger-based fast-food restaurants. The virtually unique availability of cheap, grain-fed beef was a central component of the American ideology of abundance. Vegetables, on the other hand, had a distinctly subordinate role—decorative, supplementary, certainly not sufficient. The basic structure of the American dinner plate was set as early as the colonial period, according to nutritional anthropologist Norge Jerome: "animal meat forming the centerpiece and embroidered with fruits, vegetables, grain products, dairy products, legumes, sweetmeats, sugar, and alcohol." And the soybean—well, it might be fit for animals and Orientals, but certainly not for Americans![25]

To turn all this around was indeed an ambitious task, and even the countercuisine was uncertain about the wisdom or viability of doing so. Many tried giving up meat, but since the reasons for doing so were ideological, not traditionally religious or even physiological, it was easy to lapse. At first few worried about cholesterol, fat, or animal antibiotics—or animal welfare either.[26] Confronting meat eating was part of the consciousness-raising process, a bit like taking a course, and even those who remained committed to meat felt compelled to attend classes and take the exams.

Pursuing the holistic search for connections, some first tried macrobiotics, a complex Japanese import that was, in the late sixties, only poorly understood. By the late 1970s macrobiotics would earn grudging respect as a viable therapy for certain types of cancer[27]; a decade earlier, however, its appeal lay largely in its ambitious unification of diet, Eastern religion, and a variety of academic disciplines, including psychology, physics, geography, and biochemistry. Literally translated as "large life," macrobiotics was as interdisciplinary and paradigmatic as ecology, for it offered both a comprehensive world view and a program for individual action—with a healthy vegetarian diet as the key link.[28]

Drawing on Taoist thought, macrobiotics divided not just foods but all matter into yin-yang categories. Health—i.e., wholeness—came by reconciling these opposites. To find the right balance, one had to understand the larger environment. This became complicated, for the precise ratio of yin and yang forces bearing down on, say, a twenty-year-old white Christian male in Berkeley, California, was different from the ratio affecting a forty-eight-year-old black Muslim female in Kaduna, Nigeria. Macrobiotics was thus considerably more personalized than conventional

dietetics, which tended to reduce health to a statistically averaged standard of U.S. RDAs. Since the correct macrobiotic diet aligned individual need, environmental influences, and transcendent forces, getting there required systematic study and guidance.

Few new converts in the late 1960s got past the first stages, which involved simplifying one's sources of yin and yang foods to a few basic grains, beans, sauces, and vegetables. The word circulated that meat was "too yang," whatever that meant. Although macrobiotics advised eating locally grown and seasonally available foods, in the 1960s young converts gravitated toward brown rice and soy sauce. It was, after all, hard to find strictly localized foods in an economy based on nationalized distribution. Also, perhaps simplifying one's diet to a few "Oriental" staples symbolized solidarity with poor but spiritually strong Vietnamese peasants. The soybean was a particularly expressive oppositional staple for ecological reasons as well. As Peter Farb and George Armelagos have noted, eastern civilizations discovered early on that soy was well adapted to a society pressed by growing population, limited land, and scarce energy—the very opposite of the American core food, the burger, which took so much land and energy to produce and distribute. The cheap soybean was indeed a miraculously flexible bean. Soaked in water, it could be left to sprout into a nutrient-rich vegetable that could be eaten without any expenditure of energy; pureed, it could ferment on its own into soy sauce and miso. Simmered, it turned into curd (tofu). It could also be processed into oil and flour.[29]

Macrobiotics also offered a tidy reconciliation of opposites. If, as one popularizer put it, "everything is the differentiated manifestation of one infinity," then perhaps there was hope for brutally polarized America. Eventually, however, most found the yin-yang idea to be either impenetrable or simplistic.[30] The numerous misinterpretations in underground columns invited ridicule and backlash. Still, with its emphasis on integrating individual and environment, macrobiotics did serve as a congenial rest stop on the path to Frances Moore Lappé's more secular version of ecological vegetarianism.

An extension of a one-page handout that Lappé had circulated among her fellow improvisers in Berkeley, *Diet for a Small Planet* (1971) soon became *the* vegetarian text of the ecology movement, selling in the next ten years almost two million copies in three editions and six languages. The argument was straightforward and

well-presented. By feeding vegetable protein (grain, soy) to animals rather than directly to humans, Americans were wasting scarce protein resources at a time when much of the world went hungry or had serious nutritional deficiencies. A grain-fed North American steer ate 21 pounds of vegetable protein for every pound of protein it delivered to the steak eater. This inefficient process required vast quantities of land, fertilizer, water, pesticides, and herbicides. An acre of land devoted to cereals for direct human consumption produced five times as much protein as an acre devoted to feedstuffs; an acre devoted to legumes was ten times as productive of protein, an acre of leafy vegetables, fifteen times as much protein. Conversely, if Americans ate the protein directly in grain and bean form, they would free up large amounts for redistribution elsewhere. Lappé calculated that of the 20 million tons of protein fed to U.S. livestock in 1968, only 2 million tons were retrieved for human consumption; 18 million tons were lost—90 percent of the yearly world protein deficit, enough to provide 12 grams of protein a day to every person in the world! To cap her case, Lappé showed that, popular beliefs notwithstanding, a vegetarian diet was nutritionally adequate because creative combinations of beans, nuts, grains, and dairy products would produce more than enough protein.[31]

The argument had been making the rounds in underground papers even before the book's publication in 1971. But Lappé was the first to put it down at length in a readable, accessible way. In characteristically countercultural style, she merged the political and the personal by combining economics and autobiography, consumerism and therapy, sober biochemistry and tasty recipes. Like most ecologists, she thought in terms of a single world system transcending petty national boundaries and of the interrelatedness of all species. A shopper's decision at the meat counter in Gary, Indiana, would affect food availability in Bombay, India. She understood well the counterculture's need for a language of inversion to overcome its sense of alienation and disbelief. Noting that most Americans ate far more protein than they really needed, Lappé asked who were the real "heads"—hip vegetarians or "respectable" meat eaters parasitically overdosing on protein? Pointing out that beef was a relatively recent addition to the human diet, Lappé questioned whether the real "faddists" were those who were now returning to timeless grains and legumes.

She also did not flinch from the subversive implications in her

program. Global economic interests were involved in America's meat-oriented diet, which was itself a reflection of a much larger "cultural pattern of waste." Even if Americans gave up meat, major changes in world distribution would be necessary to insure that feedgrains were released to the needy overseas. In later editions and other books, Lappé became even more explicit in her advocacy of worldwide revolution. At the same time, she seemed to back away from her original implication that eating soybeans and rice in America would feed the hungry in the Third World. Instead, she claimed that the Third World did not need American food, but could feed itself—if the existing economic and political order were overhauled. But Americans should still stop eating meat, partly to relieve the ecological and economic burden on American agriculture and partly to change their own ideas about food and politics. At the same time as she advocated radical political change, however, she also promised personal adventure, growth, and liberation through culinary adventure.[32]

The book also avoided the usual mystical prose. There was no mention of karma, yin, or yang. If meat was nutritionally dangerous, it was due to DDT, not "bad vibrations," in the fatty tissues. Much holistic literature relied on faith, not research. But in explaining protein complementarity, Lappé stuck to amino acids and NPU (net protein utilization): biochemistry, not meditation, showed that if you ate, say, soybeans and rice together in the same meal, you would gain more protein than if you ate them separately. The whole *did* total more than its parts, and Western science proved it![33]

Indeed, Lappé took pains to distance herself from her more spiritual comrades by claiming that she was not really a vegetarian (in the traditional sense of disdaining flesh). If meat weren't so ecologically wasteful to produce, she'd eat it; cattle and chickens raised economically on the open range were acceptable, though hard to find in this age of feedlots and chicken factories. She also accepted beef raised on a diet of urea, a nitrogen-containing compound derived from the animals' own urine—the wonders of recycling! In her insistence on efficiency she certainly did not sound like a stoned hippie.[34]

There was also a strong meat-eating strand in the countercuisine. In her tour of communal kitchens, Lucy Horton found that only half were vegetarian, and that most of those were in California, Lappé's territory. For many in the more Marxist East, the issue

was strictly economic: if you had the money you ate meat, if you didn't, you resorted to beans and other substitutes. For these rationalists, vegetarianism smacked of extremism, holier-than-thou "purism," even fascism. Underground defenders of meat often pointed out (incorrectly) that Hitler was a vegetarian. Economic determinists noted that many in the Third World did eat meat if they could afford it, and it was possible to stretch meat cheaply in stews and curries.[35] As the ecological paradigm gained ground in the early 1970s, however, some meat eaters felt compelled to defend their habits, and in so doing, they invoked rationales similar to those of vegetarians.

For example, Ita Jones explored the meat issue in several of her *Liberation News Service* food columns, which were reissued by Random House as *The Grubbag* in 1971. Like Lappé, Jones believed in conscientious consumption, i.e., taking responsibility for the full implications of one's actions. The problem with modern diet was not its use of meat, but its alienation from death itself. By cleaning your own meat and fish, she argued, you could regain the more primitive sense of respect for basic life forces.

> *Sitting at the kitchen table yesterday, I cleaned and shelled a pound of fresh shrimp—the pink and white soft bodies stripped of the transparent flower-like shells, the gut system knifed out, the heads chopped off. I felt murderous, yet a calm feeling was settling like a snow on me. I didn't feel stranded from nature as I do when I open a box or can, and stare at the bloodless, diced, dried, powdered, unrecognizable "food" which permits us to look neither life nor death in the face.*[36]

Such determination induced some rural communards to attempt butchering their own meat. Reviewing an old manual for home butchering, *Last Whole Earth Catalog* editor Stewart Brand wrote, only half ironically: "One advantage of doing your own butchering, you get to thank the animal personally, and see him personally all the way through what you're doing together. There's nothing abstract about it." Some communes even ritualized the process. Guided by a USDA pamphlet, "Let's Butcher a Hog," one Pacific Coast community collected wood, built a huge fire, and

paraded "Siegfried" to the slaughtering place. After much singing and chanting—and squealing by the recalcitrant Siegfried—the pig was reduced to elemental flesh, blood, and bones. Drinking a mix of homemade wine and Siegfried's blood, one stoned celebrant felt "energized and clear, disconnected and numb, fearless, and in touch with my inner self."[37]

Although there would seem to be extreme differences between the vegetarian and carnal wings of the countercuisine, in therapeutic and political terms, the ritual butchers were not so very far removed from Frances Moore Lappé. Both saw diet as a way to transform consciousness, to reintegrate mind and body, to overcome personal alienation, and to take social responsibility. Ecologically, a society where people had to slaughter and butcher their own meat would probably be a society where people ate less meat (and thereby wasted less protein—Lappé's concern) since it would take so much time, effort, and emotional energy to prepare. The problem with modern American society was that it was so easy to get meat—disembodied and prewrapped in plastic—so easy to forget the killing. The same disconnection had produced the Vietnam War, where politicians and their constituents could so blithely approve saturation bombing because they did not have to see the consequences. The modern fragmented mind had become anesthetized to death—and thus callous to life. Either response—whether avoiding flesh or drinking fresh blood—involved resensitizing, seeing connections, understanding whole systems.

Ultimately, however, neither extreme prevailed, in part because the philosophical purity of either was hard to maintain. Why stick to rice and beans in order to feed the hungry when it was clear that, if given a choice, most of the Third World preferred meat too (just as it liked white rice and breads)? Moreover, as Lappé herself wrote in the mid-seventies, it was not at all clear that growing less corn for hogs in Iowa would automatically put grain on the table in India. Since India could grow its own food, perhaps the hunger problem was India's, not ours. As for the humanitarian argument against flesh, wasn't it murder to eat a seed before it sprouted, to pull weeds or kill bugs that through no fault of theirs interfered with your own predatory needs or social conventions? Wasn't it inherently imperialistic to tame vegetable species? Were those who kept animals for dairy products so free from blame? Wasn't the domestication of animals similar to the subjugation of women in households? How could a vegetarian

support abortion? On the other hand, weren't the blood-ritualists glorifying a sadomasochistic fantasy: a timeless "intimate experience," a sensuous indulgence of our "animal side"? When stoned communards chanted, "Kill the pig," as they slaughtered Siegfried, were they that different from Charles Manson's comrades shouting the same thing in Beverly Hills? Cultism aside, would inexperienced amateurs with knives really be more humane than slaughterhouse professionals with stun guns and buzz saws?[38]

In all, like so much in the early countercuisine, the meat debate was a learning process that illuminated but did not necessarily resolve basic conflicts.

ETHNIC VS. WASP

Before the late 1960s, vegetarian cookbooks suffered from terminal drabness, perhaps reflecting classic vegetarianism's puritanical edge—that ascetic drive to purge the mind of the taste not just for flesh, but for all sensual distractions. For Tolstoy and Gandhi the need for food in general, not just meat, was an annoying reminder of human frailty and imperfection. Typical of the precountercultural cookbooks was the Institute for Mentalphysis's spare but efficient *Food for Thought* (1954). Printed on undecorated white paper, the text presented simple, nutritious, tasteless dishes that might be prepared quickly between bouts of meditation. The names of the recipes were generic: cottage cheese patties, summer squash in sour cream, walnut-cheese loaf, squash-chestnut soup. Recipes were wholesome, relatively easy to prepare, and boring. The boredom factor was probably one reason why precountercultural "health food nuts" were branded as humorless fanatics.[39]

The design and tone of vegetarian guides changed in the early seventies, however. Printed on colorful thick paper, full of line drawings, calligraphy, occasional nudity, political analysis, and silly puns, *these* books were fun! And the recipes were ecologically and nutritionally correct, and usually ethnic, or at least ethnic inspired. Thus, Frances Moore Lappé's *Diet for a Small Planet* had recipes for Roman Rice and Beans, Masala Dosai (Indian Filled Pancakes), Curried Rice, Sukiyaki, Enchiladas, and Brazilian Feijoada. True Light Beavers's *Eat, Fast, Feast* had recipes for meatless tzimmes, Colleen's Tacos, and Joan's Tabbuleh Salad. *Laurel's Kitchen* had Green Beans Hellenika, Greek Cauliflower, Ratatouille, and Chil-

laquillas (a Mexican egg dish). Anna Thomas's *Vegetarian Epicure* had numerous dishes with vinaigrette, curry, and chutney.[40]

To a small extent, these dishes reflected the wider neoethnic revival. Inspired—or repulsed—by Black Is Beautiful, white ethnics were reasserting an immigrant heritage that they had been all too ready to forget a decade before. In particular, second- and third-generation "core" ethnics—those who had objective, genealogical, historical ties to a specific land or region outside the United States—resented the angloconformity of Kraft, Campbell's, and Howard Johnson's. In 1972, *Commentary* writer Robert Alter chose food metaphors to convey his rejection of the "depersonalized face of the new corporate America." "The alternative to Little Italy or Little Warsaw, with their networks of close kinship and distinctive custom, is usually not the riches of individualism, but a fresh-frozen life in some prepackaged suburb, Howard Johnson's on Sundays, Disneyland vacations, the cut-rate American dream of happiness out of an aerosol can." Asserting pride in heritage, Michael Novak's "unmeltable ethnics" dusted off old-world recipes, rediscovered specialty stores in declining immigrant neighborhoods, and patronized restaurants and festivals that featured traditional dishes.[41]

While Alter and Novak sounded a bit like the countercultural critics of WASP cultural imperialism, the similarities were superficial. Unlike "hard hats" and "core ethnics," hippies were as interested in other people's heritage as in their own. Indeed, the more *other* the better. Moreover, Novak's neoethnicity was conservative, almost antiquarian, but in hip theater, ethnicity provided the props for the improvisational, liberationist performance. Freaks adapted ethnic recipes, but rarely copied them. Novak's ethnics sought to get out of the melting pot, while hip cooks were ready to throw almost anything (but WASP) into their oppositional stew.[42]

There was, however, some method to the apparent madness; the choice of ingredients was not entirely random. Urban hip/student ghettos were frequently located in or near immigrant neighborhoods, with their ready supply of cheap, picturesque restaurants and Mama-Papa groceries. At a time when co-ops and natural foods stores were rare, ethnic groceries often had the unprocessed, unpackaged bulk commodities—rice, beans, grains, pastas—unavailable in conventional supermarkets, and they provided service and advice too. Indeed, in some minds ethnic foods *were* health foods, because foreign cuisines often lagged behind

America's in the use of prime beef, chemical additives, frozen or canned produce, and plastic wrap. Conversely, most old-world, lower-class cooks had long ago learned to stretch scarce or inferior ingredients by skillful use of stews, soups, and powerful spices—an obvious attraction to those scraping by in group homes. Highly spiced fare also went well with drugs and cheap wine, particularly the fruity kind popular among hip youth. Such romantic "peasant cuisine" also seemed closer to the earth, nature, life, and death, along the same lines as brown vs. white. Many ethnic breads were of course dark, filling, and cheap. Yet, interestingly, despite the obvious propinquity and political romance, black American cooks were not often discussed or recommended in white underground columns and books. While soul food was oppositional for blacks, at a time of rising tensions between black and white radicals, it may have been off limits for whites.

On the other hand, French dishes, despite the long-standing elitist associations, *were* adapted for underground use—especially quiche, crepes, fondues, and soufflés. To attract converts, some vegetarian cookbooks went overboard with rich gourmet staples, especially cheese, cream, and eggs. Also the hip appropriation of what was conventionally understood to stand for "high class" and "good taste" may have seemed, in its underground context, delightfully ironic and consummately bohemian. Here was a way of saying that despised deviants knew how to live well on so little. This at least might explain an otherwise puzzling contradiction in the *San Francisco Express Times* of 1968, that dreadful year: on the front pages, increasingly hysterical reporting and street-fighting rhetoric; on the back page, Alice Waters's exquisite recipes for vichyssoise, mushroom escargots, and chocolate mousse. Take, for example, the July 3, 1968 issue: on page 1, "War Declared" as troops gassed protesters in Berkeley/ page 14, marinated tomatoes. Or August 7, 1968: "FBI Agents Finger Hoover"/pâté maison.

This flirtation with French cuisine also reflected hip fascination with regional country cooking. Most of the French recipes found in countercuisine guides were of the simple, "peasant," variety, rather than of the flashy, overly fussy type found in all too many urban French-American restaurants: more provincial *cassoulet* than metropolitan *velouté*. In France, young, insurgent chefs were abandoning the pasty white sauces, canned truffles, and predictable frills of Paris for the seemingly plainer but fresher home cooking of the countryside. The countercuisine's premier adapter of

this "nouvelle" style, Alice Waters, traced her fascination with locally grown ingredients and regional specialties to personal experiences in Provence and her reading of Elizabeth David's *French Country Cooking*.[43]

In celebrating the local and unpretentious, food rebels were continuing the long battle between the cultivated and vernacular streams in American culture. While the former aped upper-class European and eastern metropolitan standards, the latter sought to preserve indigenous, grass roots culture. Historically, this struggle has been strongest at times of democratic ferment—the American Revolution, the 1830s and 1840s, the Progressive era, 1930s, and 1960s–70s. This most recent populist wave was strong enough that even mainstream food critics railed against formalized "second-rate Escoffier" and called for a return to "honest home cooking" using regional ingredients.[44]

In part, hip neoregionalism was born of necessity. When the counterculture moved out of cities into the countryside, survivalist considerations dictated local, seasonal produce. *The Last Whole Earth Catalog* listed fourteen books that classified edible wild plants. Forced to scrounge in unfamiliar territory, many did arm themselves with Euell Gibbons's *Stalking the Wild Asparagus* (1962) or Bradford Angier's *Gourmet Cooking for Free* (1970) and learned to identify fiddleheads, daylilies, wild mushrooms, gooseberries, and other indigenous "weeds." In *Living Poor with Style* (1972) Ernest Callenbach seemed to anticipate California cuisine as he advocated baking seaweed over an open driftwood fire on the Mendocino coast: "It tasted like those thin, salty crackers they serve at cocktail parties." Even better were the local mussels simmered over a campfire with wine, butter, and lemon. For those on the East Coast, Angier recommended Sea Moss Blancmange—sun-dried Irish moss cooked in milk and vanilla, topped by wild strawberries. From arcane pamphlets hip homesteaders also learned that the much-overlooked goat was cheap to keep and provided a delicious rustic cheese; in grazing preferences, the goat was in fact the animal equivalent of the hip survivalist—a rather undisciplined, easily bored deviant who preferred scavenging wild berries to clipping carefully tended lawns. ("Lesson one about dairy goats . . . [they] don't care much for grass. . . . If your interest in goats is a well-mowed lawn, we suggest sheep instead.") Every hip survival manual also had folk recipes for canning, pickling, and smoking.[45]

Indeed, in learning to cope with what was cheap and available, the countercuisine recapitulated the survivalist origins of many great cuisines. After attacking the "gourmet plague" in *The Taste of America* (1977), John and Karen Hess wrote:

> *One trouble is that Americans have forgotten how to be poor. Not that hard times were ever fun, but people coped better. In fact, the history of cookery is largely the triumph of housewives making do with what the gentry wouldn't touch. Eating high on the hog meant eating the fancy marketable cuts; the poor would get the jowl, the chitterlings, the feet, the tail, and with them would make fine food. All the great tripe, snail, and sausage dishes are their inventions, and all the chowders. What is* bouillabaisse *but a chowder that Marseilles women made of the trash fish that their husbands couldn't sell?*[46]

The Hesses therefore had much praise for the voluntarily poor of the counterculture who were rediscovering folk wisdom, though they worried that far too many were reinventing the wheel rather than consulting those who already knew how to make do. But reinvention was, after all, part of the therapeutic process.

LIGHT VS. HEAVY

The ethic of "living lightly" crystallized the countercuisine's sense of separateness. Opposed to "heaviness," the meaning was more metaphorical than dietetic. "Heavy" stood less for a set of foods than for a state of mind, an attitude, a frame of reference. Its etymology reflected the transition from the antiwar to ecology movements at the end of the 1960s. In their "Lexicon of Folk-Etymology" (in *The 60s Without Apology*), Ralph Larkin and Daniel Foss note the increasingly negative connotations of the word "heavy." Derived from black speech and popularized by Black Power, the word originally described someone who was respected for his or her admirably weighty ideas and charismatic leadership. By 1969, however, it meant "one of a bunch of people who think they're the whole movement and only talk to each other so they can spout Marxist bullshit." By the early 1970s it came to mean

any crazy or deviant person, as in "you're too heavy."[47] The turn to ecology was a rejection of such heaviness, a determination to break free of the left's acute gravitational drag.

Applied to food, "heavy" contrasted with a counterculturally derived notion of "common sense." Underground food writers repeatedly advised against embarking on any "heavy food trips," i.e., extremes in diet. Every cuisine seems moderate and balanced to its practitioners. Advocates of the countercuisine were no different. If the meat-centered diet of most Americans was an extreme, so too were the fringe diets that prescribed too much of one thing —say, vitamins or fruit or brown rice. Even macrobiotics—itself an example of self-defined balance—was attacked underground as a "Zen hustle," a "fad," "weird," a "heavy food trip." Such heaviness violated the improvisational ethic.[48]

The "light" ecological antidote to leftist political analysis may have been *The Whole Earth Catalog* which, with its short pieces, breezy tone, and stoned epigrams, was lighter reading than *Capital.* Yet it did provide, in its own words, "access to tools" for more systematic thought. Thus, in the September 1969 issue, Gary Snyder incorporated the Indian edict to "walk lightly on the land" into his environmentalist program of voluntary simplicity:

> To live lightly on the earth *[my emphasis], to be aware and alive, to be free of egotism, starts with concrete acts, but the inner principle is the insight that we are interdependent energy fields of great potential wisdom and compassion—expressed in each person as a superb mind, a beautiful and complex body, and the almost magical capacity of language. To these potentials and capacities "owning things" can add nothing of authenticity. "Clad in the sky with the earth for a pillow."*

At the same time as he called for voluntary poverty, however, Snyder cautioned against excessive self-denial: "Learn to break the habit of too many unnecessary possessions—a monkey on everybody's back—but avoid a self-abnegating, anti-joyous self-righteousness. *Simplicity is light, carefree, neat, and loving—not a self-punishing ascetic trip* [my emphasis]."[49]

Snyder's version was actually a straddling of two opposing

traditions of lightness. On the one hand, lightness can suggest a certain bubbly effervescence, hedonism, self-indulgence, as in John Milton's *L'Allegro*:

> *Come and trip it as you go*
> *On the light fantastic toe.*

On the other hand, when compounded in "enlightenment," "lucidity," or "illumination," light could suggest a transcendent consciousness best attainable through self-sacrifice, abstinence, and renunciation. Ascetic sages had long advised that to see the light, one needed to travel light. Earlier truth seekers thus usually gave up hedonism for enlightenment, fleshly pleasures for spiritual insights, but not so in the 1960s. In the hip pastorale, there was a middle ground that might be reached at once—a way simultaneously to have fun and live conscientiously, to get high and stay close to the earth. And the place to begin, Snyder suggested, was with food. "Simplicity and mindfulness in diet is perhaps the starting point for most people." But unlike most schemes of dietary simplification, this time there would be no self-mortification, no sacrifice.

This, then, was the charm and fragility of the countercuisine. As David Shi illustrates in *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture,* the dream of a "broad and middle way" between orgiastic and monastic extremes was by no means new. And as in previous waves of "high thinking," there were hopes that maybe this time the dream could come true, that the contradictions would not take their toll.[50]