

Histories of American Foodways

Annual Meeting of the Historians in the German Association of American Studies 2015

Coordinated by Nina Mackert & Jürgen Martschukat (Erfurt University)

Erfurt, Augustinerkloster

Feb 13-15, 2015

Eating right has become a tough challenge in modern America. Every day, Americans face a vast number of food choices, from gene-modified corn and processed lasagna to locally grown vegetables, organic meat and homemade jam. These foodstuffs are produced and sold in a myriad of places, from suburban superstores to the neighborhood's farmer's market, from basement food courts to fancy rooftop restaurants. Yet, the American foodscape is even richer than that: It is also a patchwork of traditional and ethnic foodstyles in a society that is local and global at the same time and looks back on a long history of migration, encounter and exchange. Consumers' choices depend on their cultural traditions, their wealth, their gender, race, age and religion, the status of their health and many other factors. Choosing "right" demands knowledge about personal preferences, the tastes and origins of foodstuffs, their nutritional value, the pleasures and the dangers they provide for individual bodies and the nation.

"Food is good to think with," French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss pointed out half a century ago. And it is also good to study and write history with. Food provides a variety of paths to the values and structures, patterns, politics and power structures, conflicts and choices of a society. Also, it is the ubiquity and everydayness of eating, which make understanding the history of American foodways so important. Within the recent two decades, food has become a booming topic of historical inquiry on America. Food has been explored in its importance for the colonization processes from the first encounters between Europeans and Americans to the highly globalized world of the 21st century. Both European and American diets looked different before Columbus sailed to America. Historians have also studied food's relationship to industrialization, with the many changes in processes of food production, allocation and marketing. They have looked at the related transformations of the American diet, the emergence of home economics and nutritional thinking and the changing fears and promises related to various kinds of food, substances and bodies. The historical study of American regional foods and of America's ethnic foodways and how they relate to the history of immigration and identity has also been an important field of research lately. Furthermore, scholars have studied the histories of various substances and foodstuffs, from vitamins to meat and Iceberg lettuce, and how their production and consumption changed neighborhoods, cities, regions or the whole nation, its taste, technology, and transportation networks. Other research has addressed the moral meanings of foodstuffs, the history of dieting and fasting and the current "obesity crisis" and its meanings for America in the world.

The conference will explore "Histories of American Foodways" in five panels, covering a wide range of topics. Invited keynote speakers will be internationally renowned food historians Prof. Charlotte Biltekoff (UC Davis) and Prof. Bryant Simon (Temple University).

FRIDAY, February 13, 2015

14.00 Arrival, registration, coffee and tea in the lobby

15.00 Welcome – Introduction

Nina Mackert/Jürgen Martschukat (Erfurt University)

15:30 – 18:15 Session 1: Immigrant Foodways

Chair: Anke Ortlepp (Kassel University)

German Immigrant Gastronomy at the Golden Gate: Beer Gardens, Cafés, and Restaurants in San Francisco, 1865-1939

Leonard Schmieding (Georgetown University)

“The Art of Brewing Was Developed by the Germans”: Wisconsin’s Beer Barons and the Shaping of a German-American Drinking Culture in Pre-Prohibition USA

Jana Weiß (WWU Münster)

Foodscapes of Chinese America: the Transformation of Chinese American Culinary Culture in Metropolitan California and America – a Cultural History

Xiaohui Liu (LMU Munich)

Eating in Exile: The Politics of Food Production and Food Consumption in a Relocation Camp for Japanese Americans

Konrad Linke (Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena)

18.30 Dinner

20:00-21:15 Keynote address:

Food and the Reverse Fordist Political Economy of Cheap

Bryant Simon (Temple University)

Chair: Nina Mackert (Erfurt University)

SATURDAY, February 14, 2015

8.00 Breakfast

9:00 – 11:00 Session 2: The Knowledge of Eating Right

Chair: Barbara Lüthi (Cologne University)

Feeding the Poor: Home Economics and the Space of Class

Felix Krämer (Kassel University)/Nina Mackert (Erfurt University)

Nutrition and Crime? Food in the Americanization Programs for Mexican Immigrant Families in the American Southwest, 1920-1950

Claudia Roesch (WWU Münster)

Alcoholic Beverages and Changing Scientific Understandings of Eating Right and Eating for Pleasure

Lisa Jacobson (University of California at Santa Barbara)

11:00 Coffee and tea break

11:30 – 12:45 Keynote Address

Eating Right in America: The History of Dietary Ideals as Social Ideals

Charlotte Biltekoff (UC Davis)

Chair: Jürgen Martschukat (Erfurt University)

13.00: Lunch

14:30-16:00 Young Academics Forum: Parallel Workshops

Workshop 1: Transnational History (Christoph Ellßel, LMU Munich/Nadja Klopprogge, FU Berlin/David Möller, Erfurt University)

Workshop 2: Social History (Elise Kammerer, Cologne University/Elena Torres Ruiz, LMU Munich/Matthias Vogt, Frankfurt University)

16:00-16.30 Coffee and tea break

16:30-18:30 Session 3: The Politics of Sweetness

Chair: Simon Wendt (Johann Wolfgang Goethe University at Frankfurt/M.)

Sugar: Capitalism and Slavery

Nadja Gernalzick (Mannheim University)

Food and Race: Chocolate as an „Afrodiziac“?

Silke Hackenesch (Kassel University)

Sugar, Sexuality, and Slave Labor: Kara Walker's "Marvelous Sugar Baby"

Ilka Saal (Erfurt University)

18.30 Dinner

20.00 Business meeting

SUNDAY, February 15, 2015

8.15 Breakfast

9:00-10:30 Session 4: Practices of Cooking Food

Chair: Olaf Stieglitz (Cologne University)

Chopping Onions, Taking Notes: Restaurants and the Art of Participant Observation

Christoph Ribbat (Paderborn University)

Cookin' with Honey, or What Lesbians Eat

Katharina Vester (American University)

10:30-11:00 Coffee

11.00-12.30 Session 5: Feeding America, Feeding the World

Chair: Andreas Etges (LMU Munich)

Food and Agriculture in the Cold War World

Susan Levine (University of Illinois at Chicago)

Soy in the American Diet after World War II

Ines Prodöhl (German Historical Institute, Washington, DC)