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Food & Society: Principles and Paradoxes (3rd Ed.)
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Food & Society Book Review

Food is a significant driver, and indicator, of cultural understandings. The food systems in which food is produced informs the way it is consumed – and consumption is a key cultural communicator. Consider regional differences in food choice which indicate ideas of sameness or difference, perceptions of quality and cost which demarcate classed groups, or dietary choices which inform gendered food intake. Food & Society begins from the understanding that food's biological and economic materiality always relate to the social; lifestyles, divisions, and notions of togetherness.

The book begins from a sociological viewpoint and uses key principles and paradoxes (as the name suggests) to structure the content - the book opens with discussion of food's symbolic importance and the tension between food being both inherently social and peculiarly individual simultaneously. Incorporating representatives from a wide range of perspectives, chapters use case studies to introduce familiar theorists and their ideas: Alan Warde, Mark Granovetter and Pierre Bourdieu in Sociology, Carole Counihan and Karl Polanyi in Anthropology, La Via Campesina in Human Geography. In some ways this makes Food & Society challenging to pin down in terms of approach, though by the same token this also means that it is an effective introductory book for anyone beginning food studies, serving as an advertisement for food studies itself. The information presented is engaging, clear and accessible, moving through several contextualised ideas with ease. To further enable student engagement, key terms are in bold throughout, so although more complex than a textbook, it is easy to navigate.

Food & Society would suit a range of students at different levels within higher education but crucially students should be those that are relatively new to food studies. Practitioners might also find interest in this book, though it would be reading-for-interest rather than for in-depth policy developments. Given the emphases placed on sociology and human geography ideas in the book, it would also be appropriate for students looking at food from these perspectives. The book, and all previous editions, aim to provide a more general framework or overview of key features in the study of food. In the pursuit of this goal, some theories are not present, and there is relatively limited detail in regard to critical engagement within certain fields. To give an example, practice theory and practice theorists are not explicitly mentioned, though the approach that practice theory takes is introduced through discussion of consumption and consumer practices. Bourdieu (1984) is introduced also, but only in discussion of cultural capital. Thus, the reader will find limited depth and critical appraisal in this book, enabling it to act as an interesting and engaging overview applicable to several countries and disciplines. This is a commendable achievement in itself.

As aforementioned, this edition has undergone a number of timely and appropriate amendments. Sources used have been updated and the text reflects new understandings throughout, for example, in the Food and Society chapter, Bauman and Johnston's (2015) work highlights how much domestic foodwork often reinforces gendered roles, despite changing expectations of equitable division. Readers will also find a number of more substantial changes, including, firstly, incorporating the COVID-19 pandemic, and secondly, re-framing food-based activism/social movements as an 'incremental revolution', rather than a simple diversification of profit-orientated food labelling strategies. COVID-19 is used as a vantage point from which to examine food system resilience, and in turn the authors highlight the role that the global food system plays in food logistics, and, within this, the power that retailers have. As discussed earlier, a more critical appraisal could be appropriate here, but that would move this publication away from its

introductory role. The second change is relatively subtle but changes the orientation of the final chapter entirely. Referring to contemporary supermarket food labels as 'value-based labelling' (pp. 223 - consider "organic" or "fair trade"), the chapter links these to movements such as food democracy and alternative consumptions. The previous edition of this book acknowledged these links, but linking this information to a new case study touching on the work of Native American organisations and explicitly tying these ideas to the notion of revolution is an exciting and timely update.

Overall, the third edition of this book maintains its position as a principal introduction to food studies. This edition contains a greater awareness of the global food system as revealed to many through the COVID-19 pandemic, and offers an updated discussion of the wider role of food labels and their connection to important social movements. The book can be read as a whole, or, further reading suggestions at the end of each chapter enable chapters to act as independent 'jumping off' points for particular areas. *Food & Society* links food studies back to the cultural importance that food holds, and so it would be of great interest to readers of Cultural Sociology.

Reference List:

Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press