

FOOD



A salesperson shows an array of Westinghouse electric kitchen appliances, including a waffle-iron, egg-beater and iron, to two women who look surprised, at a 'big dividend sale,' from an advertisement in the late 1940s.

T I M E L I N E

1492-1830 ~ Frontier Foods in Colonial America



Chickens, hogs and fruit trees introduced to New England / Puritans adopt the Indians clambake method / West African slaves introduce new cooking methods / soft foods prepared for the many people with bad teeth

HISTORICAL EVENTS: Christopher Columbus • First settlers in Virginia
• American Revolution • Industrial Revolution • Small pox vaccination

1830-1900 ~ Impact of the Industrial Revolution

Refrigeration / Mass production / Snack Foods / Immigrant influence

HISTORICAL EVENTS: Steamboat travel • Transcontinental railroad
• Anesthesia • Darwin's theory of evolution • X-rays • Bacteria discovered



1900-1914 ~ Into the Twentieth Century



Canning / Rise of restaurants and cafeterias / Federal safety regulations / Scientific nutrition / Home economics

HISTORICAL EVENTS: Model T automobile • Wright Bros. Flight • Einstein's theory of relativity • First silent movie • Air mail • American Cancer Society founded

1914-1918 ~ World War I and the Hooverization of the American Diet

Nutritional campaigns

HISTORICAL EVENTS: Fighter planes • Poison gas warfare
• Pasteurization of milk • Vitamin D discovered • Great flu epidemic



1918-1929 ~ Postwar Trends



Prohibition / The “Newer nutrition” / Vitamin awareness / Supermarkets / Fast food chains

HISTORICAL EVENTS: Women’s suffrage • King Tut’s tomb • Lindbergh’s transatlantic flight • J. Edgar Hoover heads FBI • Penicillin discovered

1929-1945 ~ The Crisis Years: Depression and War

Depression diets / Food relief programs / Military rations / Food stamps

HISTORICAL EVENTS: Hitler comes to power • Empire State Building • Atomic bomb • Supersonic flight • Transistors • Alcoholic Anonymous founded



1945-1960 ~ Postwar Affluence



TV dinners, dried foods, plastic wrap / Fast food industry

HISTORICAL EVENTS: Baby boomers born • Korean War • Color tv • Polio vaccine • Disneyland • Sputnik

1960-1980 ~ The Age of Negative Nutrition

Food packaging / War on Poverty / Preventive nutrition / Politics of food

HISTORICAL EVENTS: Vietnam War • Moon landing • Kennedy and King assassinated • Civil Rights movement • Women’s movement • Oral contraceptives • Kidney, liver, lung, and heart transplants



1980-2000 ~ Diversity and Contradiction



Health awareness / Abundance of food / Popularity of cooking

HISTORICAL EVENTS: AIDs epidemic • Exxon Valdez oil spill • Gulf War • Shuttle space travel • Animal cloning • Genome mapping

INTRODUCTION

Is there a quintessential American diet? Soft drinks, hamburgers, and French fries may appear to be as American as apple pie, but this has not always been the case. The fast food industry that has popularized the burger as a lunchtime choice, the golden arches that dot our landscape, the familiar habits of eating out in restaurants, and taking out meals to eat at home are all products of the second half of the twentieth century. Whether we are talking about the fast food industry, the standardization of the American diet, increased nutritional awareness, the enormous variety of products available to us, the growth of such commercial interests as supermarkets, the application of high technology to food processing and cooking, the increased receptivity toward ethnic and exotic foods – each of these developments is rooted in a particular time and place.

ROOTS OF AMERICAN FOODWAYS, 1700S

1700s

Anthropologists use the term “foodways” to describe the eating habits and dietary customs of a group of people. American foodways of the twentieth century cannot be understood without an accompanying awareness of how those habits were made possible by nineteenth century developments. These include the standardization of food choices resulting from the invention, promotion, and use of packaged processed foods, changes in retailing and marketing operations, and the application of powerful advertising techniques to the food industry. Another extremely important development of the nineteenth century was changing immigration patterns that brought a new diversity to American eating habits. The melting pot metaphor certainly rings true when applied to food choices. Also true is the romanticized image of America as a land of plenty. The lure of a better life that drew many immigrants to these shores was reflected in the traditional American diet, abundant, calorie-laden, heavy in pork and subsequently beef. Substantial meals were the rule, even in

colonial America. A visitor to Boston in 1740 remarked on the abundance of poultry, fish, and venison. As early as 1793, an impressed French traveler commented that Americans ate seven to eight times as much meat as bread, a tradition that would persist for generations.

COLONIAL AND EARLY NATIONAL PERIODS ~

Prior to the nineteenth century, it is fair to say that there was no American diet, but a combination of regional ones. Local availability as well as the ethnic makeup of the regional population determined what was eaten. Native peoples ate maize, beans, squash, fish, and game. The newly arriving British colonists brought with them a diet based on grains, meat, and milk products, and introduced chickens, hogs, and fruit trees into New England. What became known as New England cooking, which one food historian has called “one of the most austere” in the western world, combined indigenous new world foods with those brought from Europe: shellfish, clambakes, succotash (beans and corn) johnnycake (a baked or fried kind of cornbread), codfish balls or cakes, Indian pudding milk and molasses,

cheese, salted fish, oatmeal, hard biscuit, raisins, prunes, and dates. Simplicity, frugality, and God-fearing customs all played a role in the New England diet. The Puritans adopted the Indian clam-bake technique and used it to make slow-simmered beans cooked in the Indian way – using a sealed bean pot buried overnight in a pit of embers. Baked beans, described by Lucy Larcom in nineteenth century as the “canonical dish of our forefathers” was prepared in advance to avoid cooking on the strictly observed Sabbath. The famous New England boiled dinner, based on carrots, potatoes, cabbage and corned beef (meat corned with salt as a preservative), was also simple to prepare, with all ingredients boiled together in unseasoned water. Pies baked like bread were made from whatever fruit was seasonally available. They were so popular that a Yankee came to be defined as someone who ate pie for breakfast.

In the coastal regions, oysters were considered a poor man’s dish. Lobsters were so abundant as to be practically valueless, and historians tell us that people were ashamed to eat them! Clams and cod went into pies or “cakes.”

West African slaves adopted many New World foods to old ways of frying, stewing, and making sauces. Africans were responsible for introducing flavorful varieties of greens (collard, turnips, okra) to the European diet. They grilled meats, wrapped food in cabbage leaves, and turned many of their classic dishes like rice and black-eyed peas into traditional Southern favorites like Hoppin’ John (blackeyed peas and hamhocks) and pilau, made with pork. The use of fatty rather than lean pork for slaves was justified by the conviction that fat provided energy needed for hard labor, and pork has remained a staple of traditional

Southern “soul food” right up to the present day. The experience many house slaves acquired in food preparation enabled them to continue in such roles after the Civil War. One food historian has noted that modern brand names like Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben appeal to this older tradition of the nurturing, food-serving African-American.

The Southern planter class demonstrated its status through conspicuous consumption and lavish dinner parties. Plantation dinners were elaborate, multi-course affairs. One of most extravagant examples of this was a Carolina wedding cake made in 1850. It was made from 20 pounds each of butter, sugar, flour, raisins, along with 20 nutmegs and 20 glasses of brandy. One author has estimated that it would have required 1500 eggs and probably weighed 900 pounds. One dinner on record featured ham, turkey, chicken, duck, corned beef, fish, sweet potatoes, “Irish” potatoes, cabbage, rice, beets, 8 pies, jelly, preserves, All washed down with peach brandy and corn whiskey

In the backcountry areas, the mountainous regions west of the original coastal zones, frontier settlers relied on a diet of oats, pork, potatoes, and various sorts of unleavened flat cakes cooked on a griddle. There was a heavy reliance on game during the earliest stages of settlement, and deer, bear, squirrels, opossums, raccoons all appeared on frontier tables.

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**One of the earliest African American
 Cookbooks was *Good Things to Eat:*
 As Suggested by Rufus (Estes),
 published in 1911.**
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Whiskey, first Scotch, then bourbon, was the beverage of choice.

Even in the eighteenth century, Americans seem to have enjoyed vegetables and fruits. Amelia Simmons, the author of an early American cookbook published in Hartford in 1796, assumed that any good meal included vegetables. Vegetables, however, were cooked for much longer periods than today, probably to accommodate those with few or no teeth.

One colonial cooking device can still be found in many of today's kitchens. This was a heavy, round cast-iron pot with a rim on the lid to hold coals. Called a "Dutch Oven," it was used to bake bread, roast meats, and make stews.

1800S • THE ROLE OF THE FRONTIER

~ The diet of farm and pioneer families was heavy and abundant. High-calorie diets were essential to generate the energy necessary for strenuous physical labor. The average male consumed about 4,000 calories per day, compared with a modern day recommendation of half that amount. John Mack Faragher in his *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* describes the daily regimen of a typical mid-nineteenth century farm family as follows: two kinds of meat, eggs, cheese, butter, cream, corn, bread, several vegetables, jellies, preserves, relishes, cake, pie, milk, coffee, tea. A staple of the plains pioneers was sourdough bread, leavened by a yeast starter that was kept active by periodic feedings of water and flour. Known from California to the Canadian wilderness, it formed the basis of loaves of bread, pancakes and sweet desserts.

Though corn and pork remained especially popular in the South, the midwestern production of beef and wheat changed the face of the American diet.

Southwest cattle drives and the development of the Chicago stockyards made enormous quantities of beef available to the American consumer. Chicago's stockyards modernized in the 1860s and by 1875 manufacturers such as Swift and Armour boasted of the cleanliness of their production facilities. Railroads facilitated beef distribution to all parts of the country. Contemporaries were well aware of the changing nature of the American palate. One newspaper of the mid nineteenth century proudly boasted: "We are essentially a hungry, beef-eating people who live by eating." Thus began the American taste for beef as a distinctive feature of the American diet, a penchant lampooned by one critic as "the great American steak religion."

As Americans expanded into the Southwest, Spanish recipes and traditions entered our culinary repertoire. By 1896 an Army cookbook included Spanish recipes that were actually Mexican in origin: tamales, tortillas, chiles rellenos and refried beans with cheese.

THE IMPACT OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, 1830-1900

This regional, localized diet began to change in the early nineteenth century, with the impact of the Industrial Revolution. Many technological inventions were responsible for revolutionizing the American diet. The cast-iron stove meant that women no longer needed open fires for cooking, making work in the kitchen safer for women who no longer had to worry about burns or even death from open flames. New mechanized roller mills manufactured white flour that was not only cheaper than brown flour, but also kept longer, made



The perfect post-World War II housewife and children advertise this deluxe model refrigerator, complete with freezing compartment and crammed with an abundance of food.

loaves of bread that rose higher, and was easier to digest. It also made better sauces and pastries.

Home canning of foods became safer and more reliable with the invention of screw-type Mason and Bell jars in 1858 and the Shriver pressure cooker (or “retort”), introduced in the nineteenth century. The first tin cans were hand-made but the invention in 1849 of a machine that could produce them spurred the age of factory canning. The most significant food to be canned was milk, a process pioneered by Gail Borden and patented in 1856. His firm supplied large amounts of canned milk and juice to the Union Army during the Civil War.

1850–1900 • REFRIGERATION ~ By the 1830s, expanding railroad networks enabled easier and faster ways of carrying products from the country to the city, and opened regional and local markets to competition from producers all across the nation. The invention of the icebox (probably occurring in Maryland at the beginning of the century) enabled food to be kept safe for longer periods. While the ice had to be changed frequently, other innovations — the discovery of the vapor-refrigeration principle and the invention of various compression machines — were initial steps toward more permanent forms of refrigeration. By the end of the Civil War, ice-making machines existed, and by 1880 some

1850-1900

3,000 patents related to the topic of refrigeration had been issued by the U.S. government.

The development of refrigerated rail-cars (and ships) in the 1870s and 1880s permitted the slaughter and processing of animals near where they had been raised. In 1879 Gustavus Swift developed a system that allowed beef to be fattened and slaughtered in Chicago and shipped East in refrigerated cars, a process that catapulted him to fame as a meat packing and processing giant. Fresh meat, much more nutritious than the salted and preserved meats of colonial days, became more widely available, as did fresh milk.

Refrigerated transport also allowed for the distribution of a wider variety of citrus fruits and vegetables. Such foods had until then played only a limited role in the American diet. Navel oranges from Bahia, Brazil were planted in Florida in 1870 and in California in 1873. In 1887 California shipped 2212 railcar loads of citrus fruit, mostly oranges. By 1892, this number had risen to 5871 carloads of oranges, and 65 of lemons. Grapefruits and bananas also became popular. In 1903, agricultural scientists developed iceberg lettuce which was very hardy and held up well in shipping and storage.

EARLY 1900S • AGRICULTURAL CHANGES ~ Mechanization and technology also affected changes on the American farm. Steam powered implements, used since the nineteenth century, were later replaced by gasoline powered vehicles. Although horses remained important, by the early 1900s engineers had designed powerful new tractors. These gasoline and steam powered vehicles were capable of pulling 16 plows, four harrows, and a seed drill, simultaneously breaking and planting as much as 50 acres per day.

Overall, mechanization and new farming techniques – dry farming, the machine harvesting of wheat, the use of mechanical twine binders, threshing machines, and new and better plows – served to increase agricultural productivity.

MASS PRODUCTION AND STANDARDIZATION ~ The new machines of the nineteenth century provided the mechanical power necessary to produce new consumer goods in quantity, and mechanization brought widespread dietary changes. The period saw new manufactured products and services replace traditional domestic production. New processed foods were more convenient to use, especially for residents of America's growing cities. Some of the products developed by emerging food industry giants like Heinz, Nabisco, Kellogg, and Campbell have remained staples of the American diet.

1870–1900 • CANNING AND CONDIMENTS ~ One of the first to realize the size of the potential market for preserved and canned food was Henry J. Heinz. By the late 1870s, new methods of packing under steam pressure greatly reduced heating time and made large scale production of glass jarred pickles possible. Through brilliant promotion, Heinz capitalized on the American taste for sweet and sour condiments by persuading American housewives that his pickles and other condiments were just as tasty, yet healthier and more convenient, than homemade.

Heinz had his competitors. The addition of pureed tomatoes to canned salt pork and beans soon made Van Camp's another market leader. In 1887 the Biardot family started the first commercial canned soup operation in Jersey City, New Jersey. Capitalizing on the newly

elevated status of French cooking, they adopted the Franco-American label for their line of canned soups. Another giant of the canned food industry emerged in 1898. The Joseph P. Campbell Co. of Camden, New Jersey owed its success to chemist John T. Torrance, who in 1897 used his scientific knowledge to streamline bulky cans with his invention of condensed soup.

CRACKERS ~ New companies aiming for a nationwide market competed with local and regional providers. One of the most famous companies to emerge from the competitive scramble was the National Biscuit Company. Soda crackers and biscuits had a long history as American staples, with cracker barrels the traditional center of the oldtime general store. Most crackers had been supplied by wholesalers who distributed crackers and biscuits by region, but the railroads had opened these local providers to competition from biscuit bakers all across the country. The resulting competitive scramble resulted in a series of mergers by large manufacturers attempting to limit competition. The National Biscuit Company, one of the most famous examples of this trend, accounted for 70% of the entire industry's sales by the end of the nineteenth century.

1870-1900 • NEW "OLD FAVORITES" ~ Many other familiar products appeared in the late nineteenth century:

- Coca-Cola, one of the most ubiquitous symbols of the American diet, was developed in Atlanta in 1886. Devised by druggist John S. Pemberton from extracts of coca leaves and cola nuts, it was originally prescribed as a remedy for headaches and hangovers.

- By 1876 America was producing millions of pounds of "butterine" (or margarine), a new product made from waste animal fat. Crisco, a mixture of fats, became highly popular product because it freed housewives from having to render or strain hot grease
- A process for making granulated commercial gelatin was perfected by Charles Knox. Once again, the new powdered gelatin was a time saver, eliminating the labor of boiling calves feet.

1880-1915 • CANDY ~ Candymaking developed into a popular industry in the nineteenth century, with the discovery of sugar beet juice and the advance of mechanical appliances. The first candy machines displaced tedious mortar and pestle techniques for making lozenges. Combined with the spread of sugarcane cultivation to tropical areas, these mechanical innovations made candy available and affordably priced. Sales of sugar doubled between 1880 and 1915, and new sweets began to appear. By the late nineteenth century, lemon drops and peppermints were sold from glass cases in drugstores and markets. Chocolate was first made into candy in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Milk chocolate was introduced in 1875, through the efforts of Henry Nestle, a maker of evaporated milk, and Daniel Peter, a chocolate maker. Fudge was invented by accident in 1886 when candymakers in Baltimore and Philadelphia made the mistake of allowing caramels to crystallize too early.

The most famous candymaker of them all was Milton S. Hershey, the inventor of the candy bar, who parlayed the emerging national taste for chocolate into a personal empire. Having first made his fortune in caramels, Hershey turned

to chocolate making after having seen a chocolate making machine on display at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Installing similar machinery in his Lancaster, Pennsylvania factory, he produced the first chocolate bar at the turn of the century.

Tootsie Rolls were America's first penny candy to be individually wrapped. In 1896, Austrian immigrant Leo Hirshfield brought his recipe for a chewy chocolate confection to the United States. Beginning production in a small New York shop, he named the new treat after his five-year-old daughter, nicknamed "Tootsie." Lollipops also owe their origin to an inventive immigrant. In 1916, Samuel Born, a Russian, invented a machine to mechanically insert sticks into hard candy, and the lollipop (allegedly named after the famous turn of the century racehorse Lolly Pop) was born.

A one-time soap salesman from Philadelphia named William Wrigley, Jr. promoted a candy-flavored novelty chewing gum in the last decades of the century. He attributed shrewd advertising to his success. "Tell 'em quick and tell 'em often," was the formula.

1880 • COFFEE ~ Until the last decades of the nineteenth century, coffee was usually made in the traditional way, by roasting beans over a fire or on the stove and grinding them at home. As with other foodstuffs in the era of industrialization, inventors turned their attention to improvements in coffee processing. In 1880, Joel Cheek of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company developed a coffee roaster that allowed less flavor to escape during the roasting process. He marketed the coffee produced by this new method in his company's stores, naming the brand after the

Maxwell House Hotel in Nashville where it was first served.

By 1900 the American food processing industry had become a very big business, accounting for 20% of the nation's manufacturing. Its top four sectors were meat packing, flour milling, sugar refining, and baking.

LATE 1800S • FOOD AND ADVERTISING

~ By the late nineteenth century, giant food processors had begun to harness their power to the growing importance of advertising. Food advertising became increasingly central to the work of national advertising companies like N.W. Ayer. In 1877, food ads had represented less than 1% of the agency's business; by 1901 this had increased to almost 15%. Food remained the single most advertised class of commodity until overtaken by the automobile in the 1930s.

1880-1925 • ROLE OF IMMIGRANT GROUPS

~ Social historians speak of the changes wrought by the new immigration of the period 1880-1924, when new groups of Europeans, primarily from the Southern and Mediterranean regions, changed the face of American urban life. Before this, most immigrants had come from northern Europe, with the Irish and the Germans most prominent. Like the English, the Irish had little tradition of refined cuisine. The typical Irish diet consisted of up to 10 pounds of potatoes per day, often with little else but milk or cabbage. "Colcannon," a mixture of mashed potatoes, kale (or cabbage) and butter, was popular. German fare was also characterized by large quantities of potatoes and cabbage, along with other vegetables like beets and onions that kept well without refrigeration. Pork was the meat of choice.

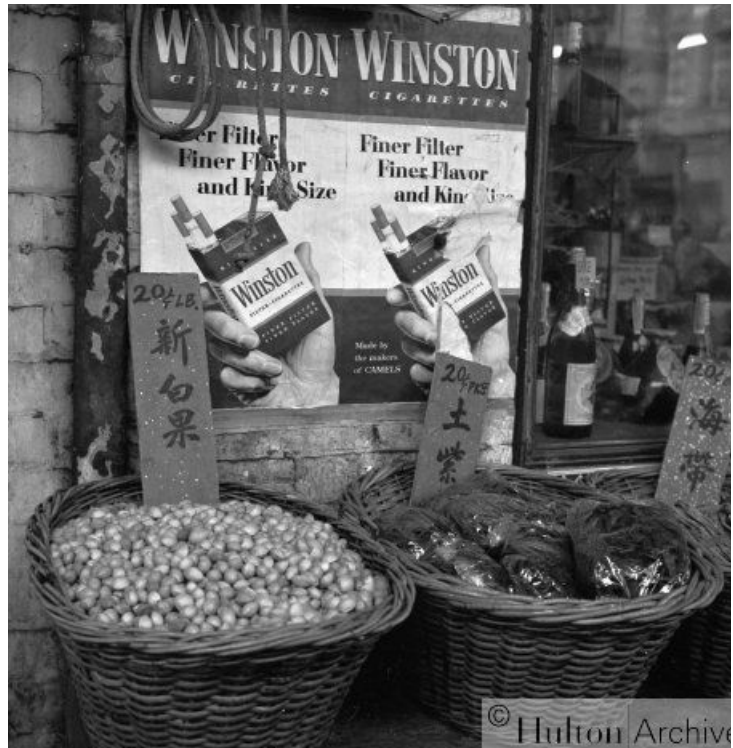
What came to be known as Jewish cooking was actually a combination of various traditions brought by German, Romanian, Hungarian, and Slavic emigrants. Pastrami, corned beef, potato pancakes (latke), borscht (beet) soup and chicken soup remain popular in the delicatessen fare of today.

LATE 1800S • ITALIAN INFLUENCE ~

Although originally derided as “garlic eaters,” Italians were among the most influential of the new immigrant groups in terms of their impact on the American diet. The tomato had first been introduced to Europe as a result of the Columbian exchange, and by the time of Jefferson, some Americans were growing tomatoes and cooking pasta. It is said that Jefferson brought a pasta-making machine back to Virginia from Italy. What differentiated Italians of Northern cities was the desire to continue reliance on the fresh vegetables (especially tomatoes of their homeland). Home gardening (along with canning) was common. During Depression of the early 1890s, the city of Detroit offered gardeners the use of vacant lots. By 1896 the practice had spread to some 20 other cities, notably New York, where reporters commented on the lavish plots of tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant grown by Italian migrants. Italians have also been credited with

planting and cultivating the vineyards of California, where they were an identifiable presence since the time of the gold rush. There they also came to be involved in the restaurant business.

1830–1850 • NINETEENTH CENTURY FOOD REFORMERS ~ As is true with so many other aspects of modern life, the nutrition-mindedness of the last decades



A scene of east meets west in San Francisco's Chinatown, where a poster advertising American cigarettes stands behind baskets of the traditional Chinese soup ingredients of kelp and white fruit nuts or bok gaw, on sale outside the Chong Kee Jan Company shop.

Chinese Restaurants



Along with Italians, the Chinese are usually credited with developing the first American restaurants. The first Chinese arrived in America in the 1820s, and their numbers, too, accelerated during the California gold rush. Mostly Cantonese, they grew Asian vegetables in garden plots, introduced the use of new seasonings like ginger, and introduced new cooking techniques like stir frying.

of the twentieth century also has its roots in the nineteenth century, which saw some celebrated and colorful challenges to the typical calorie-heavy diet. The first food reform movement began in the 1830s. Among the most famous and influential of reformers were:

- Presbyterian minister William Sylvester Graham (1794-1851), called the “prophet of brown bread and pumpkins” and the father of the Graham cracker. Stemming from “vitalist” theories then prevalent in France, his crusade was based on the idea that the nervous system contained a force on which all life depended. This force would be debased and debilitated by the consumption of meats and spices, by sexual activity, and by the use of stimulants like alcohol. Graham was also suspicious of any food that had been altered from its natural state. Critical of Americans for forsaking breads made of corn, rye, and whole wheat, he was best known for condemning the new white breads made from refined or “bolted” flours.
- John Harvey Kellogg (1852-1943) co-inventor with his brother William of cold breakfast cereal. The “corn-flakes” for which he became famous were a staple at the famous sanatorium at Battle Creek, Michigan, which he directed. This was a vegetarian health resort founded by the Seventh Day Adventists, a Protestant sect originating in 1863 that made food reform part of their religious creed. Like Graham, Kellogg warned against eating foods that overstimulated the nervous system. Condemning meat, spices, tea, coffee, tobacco, and alcohol as unhealthy and immoral, he promoted “foods of vegetable origin” as those most likely to pave the way to salvation and “God-given health and happiness.”
- C.W. Post (1854-1914), an early client of Kellogg and patron of Battle Creek. Another contributor to the new search for moral and healthy eating, Post developed “Postum,” a coffee substitute, in 1895 and the more famous “grapenuts” flakes in 1898.
- Henry Perkey, an entrepreneur, who gave us Shredded Wheat, another healthy breakfast food, in 1891.
- Horace Fletcher, a wealthy American businessman and food faddist. Fletcher was an advocate of “thorough mastication,” explaining that each mouthful of food should be chewed 100 times. He also promoted radical reduction of food intake, arguing that people should eat only when hungry and then only enough to satisfy that hunger.

INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, 1900-1914

DIETARY HABITS ~ These nineteenth century developments continued to shape the American diet as the twentieth century opened. By 1900, the health and stature of Americans appeared to be improving as a result of these nineteenth century trends. The diets of ordinary people improved as more and more could afford to take advantage of the new products made available by advances in transportation, refrigeration, production, and processing. Improvements in canning techniques continued to increase the productivity of canners. By 1910, over 3 billion cans of foods were being produced

annually by American plants. This meant that many Americans were no longer restricted to eating seasonal fruits and vegetables. Grocery shops had grown enormously in number since the 1880s and in all but the most remote rural areas replaced the old general store.

Except for the very poor, most people probably ate more food than necessary. Obesity and digestive problems related to overeating were common. Affluence explained the overindulgence of the upper classes. In 1913 a New York dinner hosted by Frank Woolworth of dime store fame featured caviar, oysters, turtle soup, pompano with potatoes, guinea hen, terrapin, squab, grapefruit-walnut salad, ice

cream, coffee, punch, and wine. The lower classes also relied on a calorie-heavy diet because of the hard physical labor they were expected to do. Bread, potatoes, cabbage, and onions were staples of the workingman's diet. In the early part of the century steelworkers in Pennsylvania ate a typical American supper of meat, beans, potatoes, fruit, beets, and pickles. First generation immigrants focused on food, because hunger and scarcity had been one of the prime factors encouraging their migration to America. Their diets tended to include more meat than they had been used to eating in their homelands. The new immigrants were also fond of one-dish items like



A young girl licks frosting from a bowl as she helps her smiling mother frost a cake in the kitchen.

stews, goulashes, and pasta with meat and tomato sauces. Bread, usually purchased from ethnic bakeries, was a staple of importance. Pork was still the country's most popular meat.

The diets of skilled and semiskilled workers were more varied, reflecting their economic situation and the good selection of products available. Common in the diets of the better off urban classes were fresh meat, eggs, white sauces, potatoes, fruits, vegetables, and desserts. While the more affluent families tended to use the new commercially canned fruits and vegetables (which became symbols of wealth, a progressive mindset, and status), immigrant women relied more on home canning.

The diets of rural Americans varied widely. Tenant farmers and sharecroppers, forced to rely on cash crops, usually had inadequate diets. Pellagra, a chronic disease causing digestive and nervous disturbances, was common. By contrast, more affluent farmers, especially those who had their own farms, tended to eat a wide variety of nutritious foods.

LATE 1800S • THE RISE OF THE RESTAURANT ~ Although inns and taverns had traditionally offered food since the colonial period, widespread restaurant eating is really a phenomenon of the twentieth century. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, virtually no restaurants existed outside eastern cities which had grand hotels. The most famous restaurant in the Northeast was Delmonico's, which opened in 1825 and served a Frenchified menu. The Chinese had pioneered restaurants on the west coast, specializing in Chinese-American dishes like chop suey and chow mein. Many Americans, however, were apprehensive about eating in these

restaurants, affected by rumors accusing the Chinese of eating dogs and cats. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, some Italians had also begun opening restaurants in urban areas. The first national restaurant chain, Harvey House, was founded in 1876 and served standardized fare in locations along railway lines. Peter Luger's, the famous Brooklyn steakhouse, opened in 1887 and reflected the growing national appetite for beef. Until the onset of Prohibition, the most popular place for a free lunch in the early 20th century was the saloon, which offered free food to customers who purchased alcohol.

EARLY 1900S • CAFETERIAS AND AUTOMATS ~

By the late nineteenth and early 20th century, novel forms of serving food attracted new customers to eating establishments. Restaurants serving both male and female customers, especially the new urban middle classes seeking acceptable places to eat a noon-time meal, became increasingly common. Cafeterias became very popular, tracing their origin to the Exchange Buffet which opened in the commercial district of New York in 1885. Patrons, men only, helped themselves and ate standing up. Several social and philanthropic organizations run by women established cafeterias in Chicago in the 1890s, and the concept of "see and select" your food became increasingly popular. By 1915, cafeterias existed in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington D.C. Clean, respectable, fast, and convenient, cafeterias became even more attractive with the invention of steam tables that could provide the hot foods then considered necessary at midday.

Another new and popular development was the Automat, popularized by



Impoverished men eat a meal consisting of a soup and sandwich in a cafeteria-style restaurant on the Bowery in New York City.

Horn and Hardart. A system of Swedish and German origin, the concept first appeared in Philadelphia in the years before the war. Open to both sexes, automats seemed at the time to embody the ultimate in hygienic, fast, and convenient service. Food was exposed behind glass openings, and a nickel dropped in the slot provided your selection.

In 1916, the “hamburger steak” that had first become popular in the nineteenth century was made into a sandwich by Billy Ingram and Walter Anderson, the founders of the White Castle chain. America’s fascination with fast food had begun.

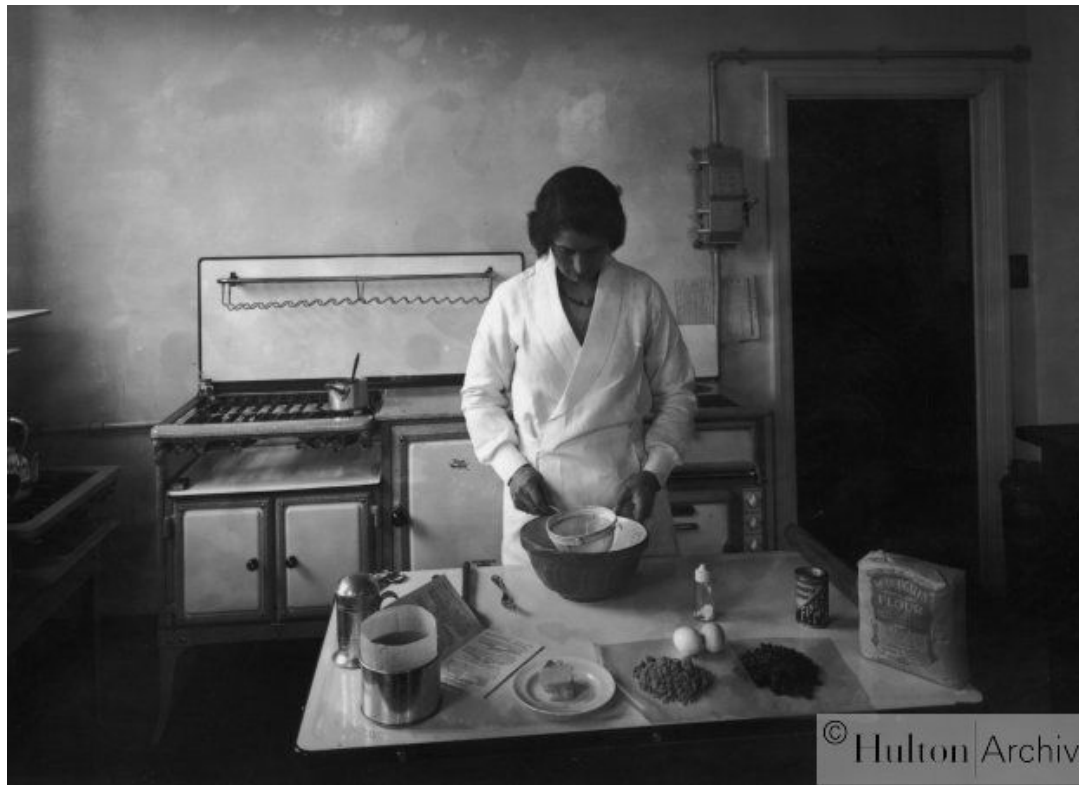
In March of 1919, Kansas City restaurateurs held the first meeting of what would become the National Restaurant Association. At that time, the fledgling organization represented an industry of 43,000 establishments.

1880–1920 • THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT AND SAFETY CONCERNS

1880-1920

~ The food industry was directly affected by the Progressive ethos of the time. Investigative journalists, the famous muckrakers of the day, drew public attention to a variety of social ills.

The U.S. government’s interest in food safety and nutrition had been sparked by the “embalmed beef” scandal of the Spanish-American War, when charges arose that thousands of cans of rotten beef had been served to troops in Cuba. In response to the subsequent uproar, the government announced that a new emergency ration for men in the field had been developed. The 1902 announcement reflected the findings of a new, increasingly influential group of nutritionists. The new product, the army was proud to note, had been figured out by physiological mathematicians and



A typical 1920s kitchen with primitive furniture, sink and stove, and simple cooking utensils.

carefully reduced “to grams and calories the protein, the fats, the carbohydrates, and fuel value of the ration.”

As food processing, meatpacking, and commercial canning became more commonplace, growing attention came to be paid to the healthfulness of the new products. Concerns were raised about the conditions under which food was processed and marketed, the safety of ingredient, and the probability of spoilage. The drive for meat inspection, which had begun in the 1880s, led to passage of a federal meat inspection law in 1891. This was followed by a tougher Meat Inspection Act in 1906 and by one of the most famous of Progressive reforms, the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906.

Although much credit for the latter is usually given to the Upton Sinclair’s muckraking novel *The Jungle*, with its revolting description of conditions in Chicago’s meatpacking plants, other pub-

licists were also important. Dr. Harvey Wiley, chief chemist of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, was a leading crusader in the movement to obtain federal regulation of food additives and compulsory labeling of ingredients. In 1908, concern over the purity of milk led to enactment of the first compulsory pasteurization law in Chicago. By 1920, many similar laws had been passed on the local and state levels. Because many smaller companies often could not afford the investments necessary for the equipment and monitoring required to comply with the new laws, the period saw a continued trend toward merger and acquisition of these smaller companies by larger ones.

THE RISE OF SCIENTIFIC EATING AND THE NEW NUTRITION ~ The early decades of the twentieth century also saw a growing interest in home economics and nutrition, especially among the middle

classes. Food historians have christened this period the age of “scientific eating” or the era of the “New Nutrition.” The movement had several causative roots. Building on the activities of early food reformers, the new domestic science of the late nineteenth century was an attempt to apply science to the kitchen. The movement was attractive to middle class women anxious to gain a new professional status. In a period of increasing feminist agitation, domestic science was clearly a less radical and threatening way for such women to demonstrate their usefulness to society. Women like Catherine Beecher, author of a book on “frugal housewifery” urged women to take control of the household economy in order to save money on food and other expenses, and increasing numbers of women enrolled in cooking classes to learn the new methods.

HOME ECONOMICS ~ The newly christened “home economics” movement, a term first used in 1899, placed many women in university positions and cooking schools. Such schools originally aimed at providing working class girls with commercially and domestically useful skills, but soon grew popular among the middle class as well. One of first of such schools was the Boston Cooking School, founded in 1879. Its most distinguished graduate was Fanny Farmer, whose *Boston Cooking School Cook Book*, first published in 1896, registered sales of over one-third of a million copies by the time of her death in 1915. Although recipe books had been in circulation since the colonial era, hers was the first to approach food preparation in a more practical, scientific way.

COOKBOOKS ~ The establishment of the International Bureau of Weights and

Measures in 1875 contributed to the rise of “scientific eating” by the standardization of cup and spoon measures. Along with the production of machine made culinary tools, the nineteenth century had also seen improvements in the mechanization and automation of printing. Taken together, these developments made possible the success and popularity of cookbooks. Food historians consider the first quarter of the twentieth century to be the “golden age of cookbooks” as recipes became more standardized and reliable. Some have argued that during this period Americans relied on cookbooks more than ever before or after. They now had better resources for sharing methods of food preparation, while resources for avoiding cooking (microwaves, TV dinners, fast food joints) were not yet created.

Cookbooks of the first half of the twentieth century aimed to teach Americans the basics of food preparation. Works like *The Joy of Cooking* (1931) and the *Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook* (1950) became standards in American homes. Only later in the century would cookbooks reflect more sophisticated and upscale tastes. The mere ownership of such volumes, as opposed to their actual use, would become a mark of social status.

NUTRITION REFORMERS ~ Interest in the new nutrition also drew strength from Progressive concerns about social problems. Reformers investigating the lifestyles of new immigrants and the urban poor drew attention to the lack of milk, fruits, and vegetables in the diets of city dwellers. In 1904, a study of poverty in New York City (*Poverty*, by Robert Hunter) estimated that 60-70,000 schoolchildren went to school hungry each day. The book was a strong influ-