

## From Field to Table in Labor History

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**F**ood studies is now a large and important field of research for scholars, journalists, activists, and others who have become increasingly interested in the history, culture, and politics of food. A sizable literature has emerged in the past two decades, largely from social scientists, which explores food from a multiplicity of angles, including foodways and identity, agricultural policy, the industrialization of food, nutrition, the body, commodity chains, alternative food systems, and globalization. Interestingly, however, very little of this recent work has taken a historical look at food and agriculture as sites of work. Workers remain marginalized in general, and historical treatments of labor and workplaces are even less common.

Labor historians, by contrast, have long considered food-related work sites. Classic studies of meatpacking occupy a central place within broader discussions of industrialization. An even larger literature has explored the variety of work and workers on farms, plantations, ranches, and haciendas throughout the Americas, shaping how we understand agrarian life and capitalist transitions. More recently, labor historians and others have moved further from agricultural production, beyond the farm or processing plant and into (food-related) domestic and service-sector work sites. Yet, for the most part, these studies do not engage with food itself, in a broader sense, as a critical element in class, gender, ethnic, or racial life.

Our aim in this special issue of *Labor* is to challenge labor historians to think about food and work in ways that not only include the production of food itself but also the production and reproduction of working-class life. We are interested in the work of food, its central location within the broader fabric of working-class life, and the relationship between the two, but also in the connections among the production of food, the reproduction of working people, and the very nature and trajectory of capitalism itself.

The explanation as to why workers and labor have been absent from much of food studies is addressed in the opening contribution to this collection, Brown and Besky's "Looking for Work: Placing Labor in Food Studies." The authors suggest that many food scholars have adopted an "agrarian imaginary," an understanding of rural life that manifests itself most often in the form of nostalgia for an imagined

pastoral system or as a utopian vision for a modern “sustainable” or “alternative” agricultural system. Starting from oversimplified dichotomies, whereby large-scale/industrial/global is “bad” and small-scale/artisanal/local is “good,” much of the literature works from a set of largely unexamined assumptions about agrarian life that make detailed research into food labor, working-class life, and even capitalism largely unnecessary. In a nostalgic past or a utopian future, workers are essentially hidden from view by a demonized (and largely unexplored) industrial food system or an idealized small-scale farmer. What is more, an agrarian imaginary sets consumers (largely from the global North) against “poor” producers (from the global South). In this scenario, also evident in the fair trade movement critiqued by Sarah Lyon in this volume, consumers’ buying behavior—rather than either worker actions or labor politics—appears as the solution to the problems of the poor producers. At best, the agrarian imaginary may revolve around images of the hardworking farmer and his family, but more often than not that farmer, whether in the US Midwest, the rural American South, the plains of Canada, the milpas of Mexico, or the plantations of Guatemala or Brazil, has depended upon wage laborers, sharecroppers, and migrant workers to bring in the harvest. What is more, that farmer almost surely relied on his wife and children to turn the crops into food and to engage in the market whether for “butter and eggs” or for canned goods, fuel, and kitchen utensils.<sup>1</sup>

A parallel “industrial imaginary” marks labor history. In the same way that the agricultural imaginary has left actual laborers out of the analysis, labor historians have left food—including such mundane activities as shopping, cooking, and serving—out of the picture. Despite the excellent studies of workers in meatpacking and poultry plants, fisheries and canneries, and banana, sugar, and coffee plantations, labor historians pay little attention to workers’ food and foodways. By defining *work* in particular ways connected to wages and manufacturing, the industrial imaginary leaves out exactly those workers whose invisible labor sustains working-class life. This becomes all the more problematic in light of the considerable attention labor historians pay to questions of working-class culture and identity. As anthropologists have long understood, food and commensality—what people eat, whom they eat with, who prepares and serves food—are central cultural markers and fundamental elements in identity, gender relations, race, and ethnicity.<sup>2</sup>

1. The “agrarian imaginary” has political as well as scholarly implications. Embedded in much of this work is an absolutism that at first glance appears radical in its rejection of all things large-scale, industrial, and global. Yet, because it often eschews detailed research and analysis, and instead works from a set of assumptions or simplified images about rural life and its connections to capitalist development, it often leads to a politics of personal purification, whereby politics becomes reduced to ethical decisions made by consumers acting alone in the shopping aisle (generally with the vague idea that such action will somehow undermine a caricatured version of industrial agriculture while supporting an equally caricatured version of small-scale agriculture).

2. Anthropologists have long been intrigued by food from a variety of angles. Franz Boas’s painfully detailed treatment of Kwakiutl salmon recipes comes immediately to mind (1921), as does Claude Lévi-Strauss’s concept of a culinary triangle consisting of three types of cooking or Mary Douglass’s exploration of prohibited foods in her classic *Purity and Danger*. Boas, *Ethnology of the Kwakiutl* (Washington, DC: Bureau

Labor historians, of course, have a long and distinguished tradition of industrial studies focusing on food industries. Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, for example, graphically describes working conditions in Chicago's early twentieth-century meatpacking plants as well as life in the immigrant neighborhoods surrounding the packing houses. In what is arguably the book's most quoted passage, Sinclair tells us more than we want to know about what went into the production of sausage.<sup>3</sup> This passage was clearly aimed at middle-class consumers and rightly spurred the campaign for meat inspection and the pure-food act of 1906. Similarly, James Barrett's seminal study of *Work and Community in the Jungle* paints a detailed and nuanced portrait of community life, class and ethnic relations, and union organizing in a packing town. Likewise, Deborah Fink's study of Iowa meatpacking plants documents the brutality of the working conditions and the transformation of the workforce in America's rural communities.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the vivid pictures of workers' lives, and of sausage making, however, these works have little to say about what workers actually ate, how meals were prepared, who prepared them, or where the workers obtained their food. These questions are significant because food—as much as religion, ethnicity, class, or politics—is central to the building of family and communal life. What is more, food and the preparation of food reveal the hidden reproductive work that fundamentally shaped the nature of industrial life and ensured the success of capital and the very survival of laborers themselves. Barrett, for example, argues for the importance of saloons to working-class political life, but he tells us less about how women sustained family life on their husbands' wages. More recent studies of poultry processing, the seafood and cannery industries, and fast food center on the role of immigrant labor and immigrant cultures both in the workplace and in the community but pay little attention to the work of preparing and consuming meals.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, studies of migrant and

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of American Ethnology, 1921); Lévi-Strauss, "Le triangle culinaire," *L'Arc* 26 (1965): 19–29; and Douglass, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966). For a historiographical discussion, see Sidney Mintz and Christine Du Bois, "The Anthropology of Food and Eating," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31 (2002): 99–119.

3. Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1906; rep., New York: Dover, 2001). See especially chapter 14.

4. James R. Barrett, *Work and Community in the Jungle: Chicago's Packinghouse Workers, 1894–1922* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002). Deborah Fink, *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line: Workers and Change in the Rural Midwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). Also see Donald D. Stull, Michael J. Broadway, and David Griffith, *Any Way You Cut It: Meat Processing and Small Town America* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor: Black and White Workers in Chicago's Packinghouses, 1904–54* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 1997); and Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White, United and Fight! A Social History of Industrial Unionism in Meatpacking, 1930–1990* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1997). Shelton Stromquist and Marin Bergman, *Unionizing the Jungle: Labor and Community in the Twentieth-Century Meatpacking Industry* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997).

5. The literature on immigrant workers is vast. For just one example, see Donna Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta, eds., *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002). Because of the nature of the poultry industry, virtually all recent scholarship has

immigrant agricultural workers, while centered on the production of food, rarely discuss the workers' own diet and foodways.<sup>6</sup> Yet it is precisely in the realm of food cultures that some of the most fundamental clashes occur—witness, for example, the early twentieth-century Kosher meat boycott in New York City documented by Paula Hyman.<sup>7</sup> It is also in the realm of food that the most significant mixing and meeting of cultures occurs, whether in the lunchroom, the market, or the neighborhood.

Considering that food reveals the crucial but often hidden aspect of reproductive work, whether as an unremunerated element of working-class life, a poorly paid aspect of women's wage work, or a hidden cost of capital accumulation, thinking about food broadens our definition of work—and of who constitutes a “worker”—and challenges labor historians to explore nonindustrial sectors that remained part of early capitalist development and increasingly mark modern postindustrial economies. Labor is part of the cost of capital but the labor of food workers in the home is rarely considered important. In addition, capital now depends more on low-wage food workers in the service sector. While wages as well as the poverty line have traditionally been tied to the price of food, the work of food itself remains hidden.<sup>8</sup>

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addressed immigration. On poultry plants, see Leon Fink, *The Maya of Morganton: Work and Community in the Nuevo New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Steve Striffler, *Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favorite Food* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); Timothy Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); and Angela Stuesse and Laura E. Helton, “Low-Wage Legacies, Race, and the Golden Chicken in Mississippi: Where Contemporary Immigration Meets African American Labor History,” *Southern Spaces* (December 2013), also available at [southernspaces.org/2013/low-wage-legacies-race-and-golden-chicken-mississippi](http://southernspaces.org/2013/low-wage-legacies-race-and-golden-chicken-mississippi). On fisheries and canneries, see Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Processing Industry, 1930–1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005); Chris Friday, *Organizing Asian-American Labor: The Pacific Coast Canned Salmon Industry, 1870–1942* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Lisa Norling, *Captain Ahab Had a Wife: New England Women and the Whalefishery, 1720–1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); David Griffith and Manuel Valdes Pizzini, *Fishers at Work, Workers at Sea: Puerto Rican Journey through Labor and Refuge* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002); K. Mack Campbell, *Cannery Village: Company Town, a History of British Columbia's Outlying Salmon Canneries* (Victoria, Canada: Trafford, 2004); and Marian Wright, *A Fishery for Modern Times: Industrialization of the Newfoundland Fishery, 1843–1968* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). On fast food, see Jennifer Parker Talwar, *Fast Food, Fast Track: Immigrants, Big Business, and the American Dream* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2002).

6. See, for example, Cindy Hahamovitch, *The Fruits of their Labor: Atlantic Coast Farmworkers and the Making of Migrant Poverty* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Cletus E. Daniel, *Bitter Harvest: A History of California Farmworkers, 1870–1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); and Matt Garcia, *From the Jaws of Victory: The Triumph and Tragedy of Cesar Chavez* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

7. Paula Hyman, “Immigrant Women and Consumer Protest: The New York Kosher Meat Boycott of 1902,” *American Jewish History* 70, no. 1 (1980): 91–105.

8. On food and the poverty line see Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002). Also see Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

Since Ava Baron's 1991 insistence that we engender labor history, a rich literature on women's industrial work, women's role in union organizing and in working-class politics, and gendered notions of work, family, and domesticity has developed.<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, however, even while including domestic work as "work" and breaking down the public/private binary, these studies too offer few discussions about the nature of arguably the most significant element in domestic work: food. Studies of waitresses, the barriers to women unionists, or even shrimp or chicken workers, rarely discuss food itself as an element in gender power relations or working-class culture.<sup>10</sup> In Dana Frank's important study of the politics of food boycotts, for example, the price of food figures prominently but the significance of particular foods takes a back stage to the socialist politics of the movement.<sup>11</sup>

And yet, food has always been a basic element in the value of wages and the measure of working-class living standards. If labor historians have neglected the significance of food itself in their studies of working-class culture and politics, they have nonetheless recognized the importance of working-class diets and household budgets. Beginning with the classic standard-of-living debate in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s, historians have acknowledged the importance of access to food and the consumer market.<sup>12</sup> Martha May, for example, brought us "the good manager" and pointed out the importance of women's domestic work in enabling families to live on industrial wages.<sup>13</sup> May used evidence collected from a generation of Progressive reformers—mostly women and often home economists—who meticulously studied household budgets, including food expenses and kitchen utensils. Home economists were particularly interested in working-class food consumption in their efforts to promote the new science of nutrition.<sup>14</sup> While these studies sometimes led to the

9. Ava Baron, ed., *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

10. See, for example, Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing It Out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); and E. Paul Durrenberger, *Gulf Coast Soundings: People and Policy in the Mississippi Shrimp Industry* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996). An interesting exception is Sonya Rose, *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

11. Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919–1929* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

12. Eric J. Hobsbawm, "The British Standard of Living, 1790–1850," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., X (1957): 46–68, and "The Standard of Living During the Industrial Revolution: A Discussion," *Economic History Review*, n.s., 16, no. 1 (1963): 119–46; A. J. Taylor, ed., *The Standard of Living in Britain in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1975); Stanley Engerman, "Reflections on the Standard of Living Debate: New Arguments and New Evidence," *Capitalism in Context: Essays on Economic Development and Cultural Change in Honour of R. M. Hartwell* (1994): 50–79; and Elizabeth Fox Genovese, "The Many Faces of Moral Economy: A Contribution to Debate," *Past and Present* 58 (1973): 161–68.

13. Martha May, "The Historical Problem of the Family Wage: The Ford Motor Company and the Five Dollar Day," *Feminist Studies* 8, no. 2 (1982): 399–424, and "Married Working Class Women and Family Budget Studies, 1895–1915," *Labor History* 25, no. 3 (1984): 351–72.

14. See, for example, Sophonisba Breckinridge, *New Homes for Old* (New York: Harper, 1921).

conclusion that workers could “eat better for less” if they understood the principles of substitution—cheap cuts of meat or beans provided as much nutrition as expensive steaks—the studies were also adopted by trade unions in their campaigns for a living wage.<sup>15</sup>

The one arena in which food has played a significant role has been in studies of slavery. Going back to the 1970s debates about slave diets in the United States, historians agree that food was crucial to the survival of the slave labor force and to the reproduction of the slave populations. Fogel and Engerman’s 1974 study, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*, analyzed slave diets and argued that American slavery was profitable exactly because the slaves kept vegetable plots and had a day of rest. Herbert Gutman’s passionate rejoinder, *Slavery and the Numbers Game: A Critique of Time on the Cross*, took Fogel and Engerman to task on their use of statistics, most notably their figures on the frequency of whippings, and argued that their fundamental question—how were slaves treated—held within it the assumption that slaves themselves had no agency or culture. In Gutman’s monumental volume, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom 1750–1925* (1976), he used both historical and anthropological methods to argue that slaves developed their own culture and agency. But despite his nuanced discussion of slave culture and family life, Gutman largely ignored food and foodways.<sup>16</sup> Later historians elaborated on the nature of slave culture, discussing religion, humor, music, folklore, work, and resistance.<sup>17</sup> Yet none of these works dealt specifically with the role of food in shaping slave culture or the role of slaves in shaping food and foodways in the new world. That work was left largely to anthropologists and geographers, who have more recently explored the ways Africans’ diets and knowledge of food crops such as rice shaped colonial economies and contributed both to valuable commodity production and the development of New World foodways.<sup>18</sup>

Similar trends have characterized scholarship on food and labor in Latin America and the Caribbean. Labor history as a field of study, and rural labor his-

15. See Harvey Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), and *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

16. Robert Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974); Herbert Gutman, *Slavery and the Numbers Game: A Critique of Time on the Cross* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), and *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York: Random House, 1976).

17. See, for example, George Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1973); Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); and Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

18. See, for example, Judith A. Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Arturo Warman, *Corn and Capitalism: How a Botanical Bastard Grew to Global Dominance* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003); and Judith Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa’s Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

tory in particular, are much less marginalized within the broader discipline of history there than in the United States. Historians, and scholars of labor from other disciplines, have paid a great deal of attention to workers, workplaces, and working-class life, particularly to food-related work sites. Peasants, rural workers, and the production of both food exports such as coffee, sugar, and bananas and domestic crops such as corn, beans, and potatoes have been central to scholarship on the region. This is partly because producers of food have made themselves so conspicuously central to the politics and history of Latin America.<sup>19</sup>

And yet, like their counterparts in the United States, Latin American and Caribbean labor scholars' interest in food has largely revolved around the politics and economics of production. As April Merleaux's piece in this volume shows, even Sidney Mintz, whose groundbreaking *Sweetness and Power* linked sugar production in the colonies to the diet and health of industrial workers in the metropol, missed the importance of sugar in Puerto Rican workers' diets and culture. This omission, Merleaux suggests, masked the impact of politics (the sugar tariff), development strategies

19. The lines between peasant/agrarian studies, which include agricultural workers, and much more traditional urban/working-class labor history are blurry in Latin America. In part because peasants were so central to revolution in Latin America, scholarly attention (particularly from those with a labor bent) was overwhelming focused on rural areas through the 1970s. It was really only in the 1980s that labor history, as urban/working-class history, came of age within Latin American scholarship. On banana workers, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Peasants and Capital: Dominica in the World Economy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988); Philippe Bourgois, *Ethnicity at Work: Divided Labor on a Central American Plantation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); Aviva Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica, 1870–1940* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University State Press, 1995); Mark Moberg, *Myths of Ethnicity and Nation: Immigration, Work, and Identity in the Belize Banana Industry* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997); Steve Striffler, *In the Shadows of State and Capital: The United Fruit Company, Agrarian Restructuring, and Popular Struggle in Ecuador, 1900–1995* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Lara Putnam, *The Company They Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870–1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); and John Soluri, *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006). On sugar, see Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books 1986); Dale A. Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar: Martinique and the World Economy, 1830–1848* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Walton Look Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar: Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies, 1838–1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Luis A. Figueroa, *Sugar, Slavery, and Freedom in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); and Thomas D. Rogers, *The Deepest Wounds: A Labor and Environmental History of Sugar in Northeast Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). On coffee, see Thomas H. Holloway, *Immigrants on the Land: Coffee and Society in São Paulo, 1886–1934* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); William Roseberry, *Coffee and Capitalism in the Venezuelan Andes* (Austin: University of Texas Press 1984); William Roseberry, Lowell Gudmundson, and Mario Samper Kutschbach, *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Mauricio A. Font, *Coffee and Transformation in Sao Paulo, Brazil* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010); Daniel R. Reichman, *The Broken Village: Coffee, Migration, and Globalization in Honduras* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 2011); and Heather Fowler-Salamini, *Working Women, Entrepreneurs, and the Mexican Revolution: The Coffee Culture of Cordoba, Veracruz* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013).

(especially agricultural and environmental transformation), and the relation between production and social reproduction (or producer and consumer) on the island. Some exceptions, particularly from scholars working on household economies and market women, as well as scholarship on domestic food crops such as maize, exist, but by and large Latin American labor historians have not thought about food more broadly than those working on labor histories of the United States.<sup>20</sup>

For its part, “food studies” on Latin America remains relatively underdeveloped. There are a significant number of commodity-focused studies, a growing body of research on food and identity, as well as research on industrialization, alternatives such as fair trade, and food-related policy.<sup>21</sup> But this literature, largely coming from social scientists working outside of labor studies, is much smaller and narrower than in the United States, in part because the breadth of food studies in the United States is a reflection of a series of food issues and obsessions that are not as intensely present in Latin America.<sup>22</sup> The thorough industrialization of US agriculture and

20. This is a large literature, with a great starting point being Carmen Diana Deere, *Household and Class Relations: Peasants and Landlords in Northern Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Also see Enrique Mayer, *The Articulated Peasant: Household Economies in the Andes* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001). There is also a very large literature on market women in Latin America and the Caribbean. A classic is Florence E. Babb, *Between Field and Cooking Pot: The Political Economy of Marketwomen in Peru* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989). Certain foods, such as maize and potatoes, occupy such a central place in Latin American cultural life that they invite, almost force, a broader discussion of food. This literature tends not to come from labor historians. Elizabeth Fitting does a nice job bringing together peasant-labor history with a broader discussion of agricultural policy and the culture of maize: *The Struggle for Maize: Campesinos, Workers, and Transgenic Corn in the Mexican Countryside* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

21. Much of this literature shares a politics with labor history, though often with less focus on the lives of workers. There are now multiple histories on all of Latin America’s classic export crops (coffee, bananas, sugar, chocolate, etc.). For an overview, see Steven Topik, Zephyr Frank, and Carlos Marichal, *From Silver to Cocaine: Latin American Commodity Chains and the Building of the World Economy, 1500–2000* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006). Increasingly this literature thinks about food from the perspectives of both Latin American and US consumption. For example, Edward F. Fischer, *Broccoli and Desire: Global Connections and Maya Struggles in Postwar Guatemala* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006). On food and identity in particular, see Jeffrey Pilcher, *Que Vivan Los Tamales: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); and Cruz Miguel Ortíz Cuadra, *Eating Puerto Rico: A History of Food, Culture, and Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). On fair trade see Daniel Jaffee, *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability, and Survival* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Sarah Lyon, *Coffee and Community: Maya Farmers and Fair Trade Markets* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2010); Sarah Lyon and Mark Moberg, *Fair Trade and Social Justice: Global Ethnographies* (New York: NYU Press, 2010); Mark Moberg, *Slipping Away: Banana Politics and Fair Trade in the Eastern Caribbean* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010). The food policy literature is extensive, in part because free trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are so fundamentally about agricultural policy.

22. Although not a labor historian, Jeffrey Pilcher’s historical research has been particularly innovative in terms of pushing a wider understanding of food. In addition to *Que Vivan Los Tamales*, see *The Sausage Rebellion: Public Health, Private Enterprise, and Meat in Mexico City, 1890–1917* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); and *Planet Taco: A Global History of Mexican Food* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).



US food policy have produced a series of problems tied to overconsumption (i.e., fast food, obesity, and other nutritional issues), which in turn have produced a whole series of responses (i.e., slow food, local food, organic, etc.) that are less prominent in Latin America but in many ways drive contemporary US food studies.

The articles in this issue offer a foray into what we hope will become a wider exploration into the relationship between food and work. Rachel Herrmann and William Bauer discuss the roles of food work in Native American communities. While their subjects are far apart in time—Herrmann looks at food work in a seventeenth-century captivity narrative and Bauer explores the production of hops in the nineteenth-century Pacific Northwest—both demonstrate how food production provided a vehicle through which individuals and communities could exercise agency, even within the context of exploitation and violence. In the case of Mary Rowlandson, food production and the exchange of food for work functioned as a survival strategy even as her food experiences—eating horse liver or a deer fetus, for example—forced her to accommodate to an unfamiliar culture. Herrmann's account points to the significance of food work to the larger political relations among Native Americans and Europeans. The Pacific Coast hops harvesters, on the other hand, used the production of food—in this case, beer—to accumulate resources and maintain some degree of independence and agency. If beer and alcohol generally spelled disaster for Native American communities, in this case the hops workers were able to turn the products of their labor to their own advantage.

If food could serve as a mode of resistance it could also act as a vehicle for class mobility and a marker for hidden assumptions about gender. Vanessa May's essay and her selected documents from *The Philadelphia Negro* ask us to look again at W. E. B. Du Bois's study and the role that food workers played in African American communities. Du Bois documented the ways that Philadelphia's cooks, caterers, and waiters not only afforded African Americans the skills and resources with which they were able to maintain their families and communities but also allowed them to accumulate capital. Black cooks, like other workers (male or female), faced the challenges of low wages, difficult physical as well as sexual working conditions, and few avenues for advancement. Nonetheless, Philadelphia caterers were able to build their own empire in the city's economic structure, providing an essential and skilled service to a growing urban, industrial population. May points out, however, the gendered hierarchy of food work embedded in Du Bois's own assumptions about domestic work, male breadwinner roles, and the structure of black family economies.

Felicia Kornbluh's contribution on the politics of food in the US civil rights movement emphasizes the significance of food as politics. Kornbluh reminds us of the centrality of food and food relief to demands for political rights in the US South. Beyond that, however, she also expands our definition of who constitutes a "worker" to include poor tenant farmers as well as the civil rights attorneys and activists themselves. By reminding us about the food demands of the civil rights movement, Kornbluh suggests that the political economy of food and work directly connects the kitchen with wage work, the market, and the ballot box. Indeed, as she points out,

food and hunger became key elements in liberal politics but the policies crafted to relieve hunger failed to connect access to food with fundamental political and economic structures that defined workers' lives.

One of the most difficult and yet most rewarding aspects of working on this volume has been the engagement with work across disciplines. Brown and Besky challenge anthropologists to include labor in their discussions of food and agriculture. Their discussion raises some important methodological and theoretical questions for labor historians, namely how to incorporate ethnographies and culture more fully into discussions of work and workers' communities. Sarah Lyon highlights the significance of agricultural labor in the contemporary fair trade economy. While her style of narrative and ethnographic method differs considerably from the work of most historians, the issues she raises about wage workers and their relation both to small growers and large plantation employers will speak to labor historians' concerns about the nature of wage work and the role of unions in fair trade politics. Lyon's piece complicates the politics of the fair trade movement among workers and consumers in the global North and places labor questions at the heart of the new food politics.

The articles in this issue suggest that food and work together raise significant questions about the industrial imaginary, gender and labor, the hidden nature of reproductive labor, the history of markets, and the relationship between agricultural and industrial labor. We clearly need more histories of the food industry—not only farm workers and migrant labor or meatpacking and poultry plants but the giant food processing, distribution, and retail industries that took form during the twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> We also need new studies exploring the role of food in shaping both individual identities and communal relations of class, gender, ethnicity, and race. Similarly, we need new considerations of labor and workers' communities as we try to understand contemporary global commodity chains and food systems. Indeed, if we are to envision a new labor movement or a sustainable food politics, labor historians' work needs to include a field to table menu. ■

23. Some starts in that direction include Shane Hamilton, *Trucking Country: The Road to America's Wal-Mart Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Retail Revolution: How Wal-Mart Created a Brave New World of Business* (New York: Henry Holt, 2009); and Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Walmart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).