

comprise the semantics and syntax that would define the food film genre. (Very useful selective lists of food films and food studies texts are provided in appendices.) Rather, the foodways approach offers a way to focus on how food may appear in singular scenes with meaningful import, and without food being discussed as central to how a film fits into a particular film genre.

The text does invoke established theoretical structures that define standard research agenda in film studies: historicist studies, genre studies, auteur studies, national cinema studies, and, primarily, ideological analysis. This compound structuralism is amplified by the structuralism of foodways studies, and especially on the common ground of ideological analysis. The movement in the discourse and its particular analyses thus consistently rises toward the general and abstract—how specific film events reflect a larger social ideological phenomenon. Even the exercise in auteurist readings points to how filmmakers' personal flair underscores aspects of social construction.

Within the conceptual apparatus that the text draws from food studies is the binary distinction between utopian and dystopian (pp.26–27). Utopian food films envision harmonious community in the sharing of food, while dystopian food films evince conflict relative to food. This distinction becomes an organizing principle for the chapters of the text, and it initiates detailed analysis of individual films. But as can be expected with any analytical binarism, it is the applicability of that conceptual structure to deeply variant multiplicities where it fails to capture nuance. In *Eat Drink Man Woman* (Ang Lee, 1994), widower master chef Chu prepares an elaborate Sunday dinner every week for his three grown daughters, nominally to affirm family cohesion. He is, though, painfully reluctant to explain to them that he aims to marry a woman who is far closer to their age than to his, and whom they treat as a sister. Secretly, he wishes that they would all leave the household so that both he and they could carry on with their separate lives. The onset of a complete loss of his ability to taste flavors nevertheless ruins all the food, which his daughters can hardly eat as a result. It is only when they have all moved out that the stress is relieved, and his taste returns. Therefore, it falls short to focus upon the food porn of the display of food in the opening scene and summarily to designate the film utopian (pp.20, 33, 83, 111).

Applying that same binary distinction to selected scenes in films by John Ford shows how difficult it is to make such a judgment when harmony and conflict intertwine, which is not uncommon for Ford films or for many films. Thus, it turns out that character interactions involving food registers somewhere vaguely on “the utopian/dystopian spectrum” in

particular scenes in Ford films (pp. 170–72). But this simple binary distinction does not suffice, with or without association with food, to identify all of what is harmonious and what all is conflicting in those scenes. Nor does the utopian/dystopian distinction suffice to penetrate all of what is happening dramatically in those scenes. Thus, in reference to some films, the application of the utopian/dystopian distinction becomes misleading rather than insightful. These are, though, brief discussions in passing, in comparison to the longer treatments, where this binarism is not the sole conceptual cue.

But these are minor limitations, only briefly evident, in a book that undertakes to show “how foodways analysis contributes to ideological studies” of film, so as to “show that personal food beliefs and behaviors are joined to cultural norms and values, and that, to varying degrees, personal food choices mirror or challenge dominant beliefs and practices” (pp.225–26). Baron, Carson, and Bernard have collaborated to construct a rich but lively exposition of how foodways elevate the study of food film to a level of greater sophistication and penetrating insight.

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Secrets from the Greek Kitchen: Cooking, Skills, and Everyday Life on an Aegean Island

David E. Sutton

Oakland: University of California Press, 2014

xv + 256 pp. Illustrations. \$34.95 (paper)

In his newest book about the Greek island of Kalymnos, *Secrets from the Greek Kitchen*, David E. Sutton gives cooking the place it deserves in anthropological research: at the center of studies of everyday life. For Kalymnians the flavor of food constitutes a core social value, and taste, Sutton argues further, is a total social fact. Studying cooking as a cultural practice thus also allows exploring cultural reproduction more generally. Using ethnographic observation to show how cooking matters on Kalymnos, the author argues against the claim of the demise of homemade food and the loss of cooking skills in contemporary Western societies.

Theoretically, Sutton situates his project within material culture studies, anthropology of the senses, and anthropology of learning and skill. He proposes a synesthetic or “gustemological” approach to studying cooking (see also Sutton 2010), which he puts into practice by using video recording. Since these videos are accessible online (on UC Press’s website and on YouTube) they also present his research in an innovative way. Despite an evocative description of the multisensory and synesthetic dimensions of cooking knowledge, however, his

methodology seems mostly visual and verbal. Except for the example of rolling phyllo dough, where he “attempt[s] to get a *feel* for the process” (p.56, emphasis added), we do not find out whether Sutton systematically participated in cooking and how his bodily experience helped him to understand in conjunction with his observations and conversations.

The first chapter takes the reader to Kalymnos and shows how food values reflect broader social and moral values on the island. For instance, by choosing local food sellers or exchanging food products with neighbors or friends, Kalymnians enact the key values of reciprocity and generosity. Food choices, Sutton concludes, have an “existential quality” (p.47), because through them one also chooses what kind of person one wants to be and what society to live in.

Prompted by close observation of cutting in one’s hand, rolling dough, and using a can opener, in chapter 2 Sutton demonstrates that cooking is a reflexive, anticipatory skill that is guided by a synesthetic evaluation of different materials’ behavior. He recognizes the “distributed agency” (p.63) between a cook, her tools, and the cooking environment: different tools or environments afford different possibilities. Similar to food choices, by choosing tools Kalymnians make existential choices, exemplified by Katerina, “when I am with the new can opener I am not a skillful person” (p.63). Skill “is not something one has . . . but something that one is” (p.63).

With its focus on a daughter and her aging mother, chapter 3 presents the book’s most comprehensive exploration. In it Sutton grounds his central questions ethnographically: what is cooking knowledge and how is it reproduced. Preparing food requires multiple negotiations, incorporating both personal and collective preferences, and is fraught with challenges. The chapter further illustrates how values are interlinked with ambiguous notions of power and control, which are relinquished only reluctantly by older cooks. Relating to Sutton’s earlier book on Kalymnian food and memory (2001), it also shows how memory and an anticipated future are conjoined in present dishes.

Building on chapter 3, Sutton in the following two chapters makes his central argument that cooking knowledge is not simply passed on from one generation to the next, but actively reproduced and remade through daily negotiations between mothers and daughters, as well as through direct or indirect conversation with friends, neighbors, and cooking shows on television. Not only do young women want to learn cooking and consider it part of their identity, they have to actively appropriate skill through a synesthetic adaptation to unpredictable and complex food environments. Sutton also argues against the claim that the popularity of

cooking shows on television is a sign of the demise of home cooking.

Sutton’s final chapter proposes that we think of individuals as synthesizing larger, shared cultural patterns. Through portraits of different cooks and their individual concerns, he illustrates the differing but interrelated meanings and values that each cook attaches to cooking and relates these to larger issues such as health, social aspects of cooking, and the roles of tradition and convenience. While his portrait of male cooks demonstrates the role of men in provisioning and processing foods, he concludes that the main responsibility for cooking remains with women.

In this engaging ethnography Sutton demonstrates how the mundane practice of cooking, both in and of itself, and because it is deeply intertwined with and partially represents cultural reproduction, provides a fruitful field for anthropological research. The book builds on his long-term research and familiarity with the island, making for an enticing read while connecting it to larger anthropological concerns. Beyond students interested in food or the region, this book will therefore also benefit those interested in the politics of social change, knowledge and skill, material culture studies, and the body and gender.

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- Sutton, David E. 2001. *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory*. Oxford: Berg.
 ——. 2010. “Food and the Senses.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39: 209–23.

Books that Cook: The Making of a Literary Meal

Jennifer Cognard-Black and Melissa A. Goldthwaite, editors
 New York: New York University Press, 2014
 xx + 343 pp. \$30 (cloth)

Food Studies lends itself to anthologizing. Because scholars who have trained in so many different disciplines work on food but the field remains relatively small, we hear each other’s voices perhaps more clearly than those working in older fields who have larger cohorts within their own disciplines to converse with and specialized journals in which to hold those uni-disciplinary conversations. Food Studies journals and conferences are multi-disciplinary but reveal common threads. Anthologies in food studies serve practitioners well when we can use them to wander into each other’s fields. Entering the excellent 2013 anthology, *Eating Asian*