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**The Dissertation Committee for Pauline Adema Certifies that this is the approved  
version of the following dissertation:**

**FESTIVE FOODSCAPES:  
ICONIZING FOOD AND  
THE SHAPING OF IDENTITY AND PLACE**

**Committee:**

---

Steven D. Hoelscher, Supervisor

---

Janet M. Davis

---

Deborah A. Kapchan

---

Mark C. Smith

---

Brian Stross

**Festive Foodscapes:  
Iconizing Food and  
the Shaping of Identity and Place**

**by**

**Pauline Adema, B.A., M.A.**

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Supervisor: Steven D. Hoelscher

This dissertation explores the deliberate symbolization of food as iconic of place and community identity through consideration of food-themed place branding. When the association between a place and a food item is abstracted and promoted, and the food becomes emblematic of the place, the communal landscape becomes a foodscape. When a locality stages a festive performance of its food-themed identity, it becomes a festive foodscape. Drawing on ethnographic studies of the successful Gilroy (CA) Garlic Festival and the failed Coppel (TX) PigFest, I demonstrate how image makers aim to generate a sense of place and a sense of community by commodifying place and identity

through place-based food festivals. Cooking contests and other competitive festival events provide affirmation of the food-place association. Locale aggrandizement, a neolocalist impulse articulated through claims of “world” capitaldom and performed through festivals, is an attempt to secure place differentiation through place branding. Through case studies of cities that claim spinach and peach capitaldom, I demonstrate, however, that the rhetoric of distinction can instead foster place brand similitude. Incorporating the French concept *terroir*, which recognizes agricultural products as unique to their specific geographic places of origin, into place branding rhetoric would give expression to the food voice that constitutes foodscape. In becoming place-specific symbolic and identity capital, food often is abstracted from its cycle of production, as well as from its associations with particular ethnic foodways. As my discussion of garlic’s transition from a food on the fringe of American foodways to a food fad evinces, through the re-contextualization of place branding, a food can become suitable for fetishization, iconization, and festivalization. The transactional character of food – its multivalence and malleability as a symbol – makes it an attractive focus for image makers charged with community building and place differentiation. Consumption of place and consumption of identity are made palatable in a festive foodscape.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **Foodscares: The Communicative Capacity of Food**

For those with sufficient food and economic resources, food is not merely a means for survival; it is encoded with symbolic significance and is a vehicle for communication. Episodes abound throughout American history that exemplify the symbolic capacity of food. Consider, for example: the Boston Tea Party, which was not about tea but taxes; a roast turkey served in late November, meant to embody the fictive first communal celebration between Pilgrims and Native Americans; enduring images of apple sellers and bread lines, symbolic of the rampant hunger and deprivation of the Great Depression; and Wonderbread® and Swanson TV Dinners, emblematic of 1950s food technology and changing domestic patterns.

Just as food can come to symbolize historical moments, food and place can become inscribed upon each other. Over time, through film, literature, advertising, and other media, food-place associations become ingrained in the popular imagination. Consider, for example, the widely accepted association of beef cattle and Texas, lobster and Maine, or gumbo and southern Louisiana. These associations embody complex histories, including forces of industrialization, immigration, commerce, natural resources,

tourism, and the changing American socio-cultural landscape. In such associations, however, the forces informing the food symbolization are condensed, and often completely abstracted: the historic, ethnic, and/or geographic sources of the association are blurred or obviated. Nevertheless, particular foods become iconic of specific places.

In the pages that follow, I scrutinize the deliberate signification of food as iconic of localities' communal identities, with particular attention to Gilroy, California, and Coppel, Texas. Additionally, I consider several other cities across the country that exemplify the ubiquity of food-themed local identity in America. I explore ways that community leaders choose to represent their locality – to themselves and to others – through selection of a particular food item grown or produced in the area. I am interested in how this relationship is commemorated, and how the chosen identification symbol is, as a tourist attraction, sacralized and becomes a defining element of the localities' identity.<sup>1</sup> I consider the creation of food-themed community identities, the image makers that inform them, and how the collective, mediated identities are promoted. While most attention is directed toward image makers and the food-focused identities they advance, implicated in these discussions are the voices and experiences of those who are not part of identity formation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1989); Beverly Stoeltje, "Festival in America," in *Handbook of American Folklore*, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this work, I use the term *image makers* to refer to community and business leaders, residents and non-residents of a locality, city officials, and/or public relations/media professionals engaged in the processes of creating and marketing a community's image or identity. Often at the other end of the image-

This dissertation is part of a larger consideration about how food discourses prevalent in American society inform identity on both individual and societal levels. By food discourses, I mean conversations taking place within contemporary America, in various media, in which food and food-related accoutrements are symbolic of individual and societal concerns. My interest is in the ways that we, as Americans, attend to food, not as alimentary sustenance, but as symbolic matter. Of greatest curiosity to me are food television, a related popular fascination with fictional and real culinary icons, and food as a theme for non-ethnic, place-specific collective identity.<sup>3</sup> It is the latter area that is the focus of this dissertation.

This study regards food not as physical sustenance, but as a medium for the creation of community identity. Eating is implicated in this work because eating is a primary pursuit at food festivals; privileged here, however, are the creation, festivalization, and consumption of food-themed places and communal identities. This

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production spectrum are those who toil behind the scenes creating the physical spaces being marketed. In his labor theory of landscape production, Don Mitchell stressed the importance of incorporating histories of the people who work to create imagined and physical landscapes. In the chapters that explore Gilroy, California, these often quiet workers are recognized. Don Mitchell, *The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Pauline Adema, "Betty Crocker," in *American Icons: The People, Places, and Things that have Shaped our Culture*, ed. Dennis Hall (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2006); ---, "Vicarious Consumption: Food Television and the Ambiguities of Modernity," *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures* 23, no. 3 (2000).

project is not about the festival experience, per se, but about a more generalized experience of branding a locality through food-place association.<sup>4</sup>

Several questions guide this dissertation. Why do some community leaders select a food item around which to build and maintain a collective identity? What is the process by which food becomes iconic and emblematic of community identity? How do the historic uses and symbolism of the iconized food shape acceptance of and responses to that food item as a marker of identity? How are place and identity realized through an association with a single food item? How do residents and visitors partake in the invention and subsequent consumption of a food-themed place? How do claims of “world capital” contribute to or detract from communal identity? Such questions of food-themed local identity lead to other concerns visible on the American cultural landscape: the apparent desires to be part of a community and have a connection to place. This project considers one manifestation of how some planners and merchandisers use specific foods to address ongoing uncertainties about community and place.

My work will aid future historians of the late twentieth century as well as students of contemporary culture concerned with issues of identity, cultural geography, American studies, festival, folklore, and foodways. Consideration of the construction of food-

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<sup>4</sup> The experience of consumption connotes the inclusion of desire, longing, nostalgia, as well as real and perceived pressures of consumerism. H. F. Moorhouse explores the *experience* of consumption in his analysis of a non-work, commodity-deploying recreational activity. See H. F. Moorehouse, *Driving Ambitions: An Analysis of the American Hot Rod Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991).

themed, place-specific social identities – one example of what I call foodscapes – will enable me to expand the literature on consumption of place.<sup>5</sup> I will propose new culturally-, geographically- and food-based ways to think about creating distinction.<sup>6</sup>

### **FOOD AS SYMBOL: THEORY AND PRAXIS**

Communities throughout the country host food festivals, many focusing on a single food item. Examples abound from all corners of the nation: from Gilroy, California, where visitors to the Gilroy Garlic Festival celebrate the most odorous member of the lily family, to Rockland, Maine, where people gather at the Maine Lobster Festival to commemorate and consume the beloved crustacean.

Why are food festivals so popular among community leaders seeking to distinguish their towns? Perhaps it is the absence of an historical event to commemorate, or not wanting to highlight a single ethnic group to the exclusion of others. Maybe it is recognizing the economic or nostalgic value of agricultural heritage, or knowing that visitors are drawn to food-themed events. Most likely, it is a combination of these considerations that accounts for the persistent popularity of food festivals among event

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Peter Jackson and Nigel Thrift, “Geographies of Consumption,” in *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies*, ed. Daniel Miller (London: Routledge, 1995); John Urry, *Consuming Places* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984). Bourdieu employed the term “distinction” in the context of individuals’ attempts to differentiate themselves as being in a higher class or social stratum; that is, displaying social capital to achieve class distinction. My use of the term is parallel to his, but I use it in the context of localities rather than individual people, whose image makers seek to differentiate it from other towns or cities as part of a strategy to attract tourism and commerce.

planners. Somehow, community leaders determine that a food item will stimulate enough interest to make such a festival worthwhile. The sheer ubiquity of festivals that iconize food on community calendars across America warrants critical attention.

Food and festivals embody both traditional and contemporary cultures; they are simultaneously personal and communal, global and local, dynamic and stable. Food and festivals are ephemeral cultural expressions, but, like tangible cultural products, the effects of food festivals extend beyond their physical presence. However temporary a place-based food festival may be, the effects of a deliberately created communal identity promoted through a festival potentially are enduring. The food-land-place association established through a place-based food festival may linger in the imaginations of local residents and visitors long after the festival, suggesting the tenacity of food as symbol.

Anthropology, geography, history, and sociology have strong histories of scholarship dealing with diet, ecology, nutrition, and food use. Sociologists increasingly are producing deliberations that attend to food and eating as the primary foci of study.<sup>7</sup> While food is an essential ingredient in historical narratives, rarely did patterns of

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<sup>7</sup> Among the wide range of food-focused historical and contemporary works of sociologists are Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine, and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 19982); Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985); Krishnendu Ray, *The Migrant's Table: Meals and Memories in Bengali-American Households* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004). Sociology's approaches to food studies are outlined in detail in Alan Beardsworth and Teresa Keil, *Sociology on the Menu: An Invitation to the Study of Food and Society* (London: Routledge, 1997); Stephen Mennell, Anne Murcott, and Anneke H. van Otterloo, *The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet and Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1992).

consumption warrant critical attention from social historians until recently.<sup>8</sup> Geographers concerned with dietary regime understand it as informed by environmental and ecological conditions as well as socio-cultural forces that shape all expressions of culture.<sup>9</sup> Food studies conducted under the rubric of geography privilege geographical influences over – but not to the exclusion of – cultural forces. Methods of food preparation and patterns of consumption have always been part of ethnographic studies. Only since the 1930s, however, has food as more than alimentary matter been an acceptable subject of study in and of itself.<sup>10</sup> In the 1970s, American folklorists turned their critical attention toward

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<sup>8</sup> Among the expanding literature of food-centered social histories, see Amy Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Barbara Haber, *From Hardtack to Home Fries: An Uncommon History of American Cooks and Meals* (New York: Free Press, 2002); Harvey Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003 [1993]); ---, *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); James E. McWilliams, *A Revolution in Eating: How the Quest for Food Shaped America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Laura Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1986).

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Max Sorre, “The Geography of Diet,” in *Readings in Cultural Geography*, ed. Philip L. Wagner and Marvin M. Mikesell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). Geographers’ contributions to a growing scholarly interest in food, consumption, and identity include two special collections of journal articles that explore the geography of food, *Social & Cultural Geography*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2003) and *Journal for the Study of Food and Society*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Winter 2002). See also David Bell and Gill Valentine, *Consuming Geographies: We Are Where We Eat* (London: Routledge, 1997); David Goodman, *Refashioning Nature: Food, Ecology and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991); Jackson and Thrift, “Geographies of Consumption.”; Barbara G. Shortridge and James R. Shortridge, eds., *The Taste of American Place: A Reader on Regional and Ethnic Foods* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Audrey Richards, Margaret Mead, Mary Douglas, Roland Barthes, and Claude Lévi-Strauss are among the seminal early contributors of scholarly treatises on food, eating, and culture to anthropological literature. Roland Barthes, “Ornamental Cookery,” in *Mythologies*, ed. Roland Barthes (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1957); ---, “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption,” in *European Diet from Pre-Industrial to Modern Times*, ed. Elborg Forster and Robert Forster (New York: Harper & Row, 1975); Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a meal,” *Daedalus. Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 101 (1972); ---, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Origin of Table Manners*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (London: Jonathan Cape, 1978[1968]); ---, “The Roast and the Boiled,” in *The*

foodways as expressive culture. By focusing on what Charles Camp called “food events” rather than just food items, folklorists and others could scrutinize the polysemous nature of food and culture without subordinating either.<sup>11</sup> More than ever, researchers in the humanities and social sciences are listening to the “food voice,” the capacity of food to signify and communicate meaning about social life and identity.<sup>12</sup>

With increasing vigor, contemporary scholars from many disciplines scrutinize identity issues such as gender, race, class, and ethnicity as symbolized and performed through foodways.<sup>13</sup> Some authors focus on food consumption or lack thereof, while

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*Anthropologists' Cookbook*, ed. Jessica Kuper (1977); Margaret Mead, “Dietary Patterns and Food Habits,” *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 19 (1943); ---, *Purity and Danger: An analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966); Audrey I. Richards, *Hunger and Work in a Savage Tribe* (London: Routledge, 1932); ---, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia: An Economic Study of the Bemba Tribe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939). Food exchange was a central theme in another seminal work: Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Form and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York: Norton, 1967[1925]).

<sup>11</sup> In a 1972 essay, Don Yoder noted that folk cookery and foodways as research fields had been “strangely neglected” within the United States. Within the next few years, the void was beginning to be addressed. In 1977, the Foodways Section of the American Folklore Society established a newsletter, *The Digest: A Newsletter for the Interdisciplinary Study of Food*. Charles Camp’s *American Foodways* was the first book on American foodways that was not an anthology or cookbook. He directed attention away from the food itself and emphasized the “food event,” the occasion in which food plays a starring role. Charles Camp, *American Foodways: What, When, Why, and How We Eat in America* (Little Rock: August House, 1989); ---, “Food in American Culture: A Bibliographic Essay,” *Journal of American Culture* 2 (1979); Don Yoder, “Folk Cookery,” in *Folklore and Folklife*, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

<sup>12</sup> As Annie Hauck-Lawson noted, the notion of foodways as a language is not recent or uniquely hers. The term “food voice,” however, is hers. See Annie Hauck-Lawson, “Introduction,” *Food, Culture, & Society* 7, no. 1 (2004); ---, “When Food is the Voice: A Case Study of a Polish-American Woman,” *Journal for the Study of Food and Society* 2, no. 1 (1998).

<sup>13</sup> This burgeoning area of scholarship includes several excellent anthologies exploring these issues. See, for example, Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton, eds., *Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Societies* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell, eds., *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984); Sherrie A. Inness, ed., *Kitchen Culture in America: Popular Representations of Food, Gender, and Race*

others focus on exchange and gifting, through which food itself can become an adversary, a mnemonic, an instrument of self-expression, and/or a vehicle for negotiating social relations.<sup>14</sup> National identity, political economy, social distinction, and belonging can be indicated through patterns of food preparation and consumption, and through changing food preferences.<sup>15</sup> Group or community identity can be consolidated into a food item, and, through that item, outsiders and insiders figuratively can consume the community while literally consuming their iconized food association.

That food is a metaphor for identity is readily accepted when related to regional and ethnic identity. Foodways are acknowledged “as a ticket to understand the power sustaining the continuity of ethnicity and region as matrices for the membership of

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(Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2001); Sherrie A. Inness, ed., *Cooking Lessons: The Politics of Gender and Food* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Joan Jacobs Brumberg, “The Appetite as Voice,” in *Fasting Girls: The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a Modern Disease*, ed. Joan Jacobs Brumberg (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Amy Shuman, “Food Gifts: Ritual Exchange and the Production of Excess Meaning,” *Journal of American Folklore* 113, no. 450 (2000); David E. Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (Oxford: Berg, 2001). For a challenge to modern criticisms of fatness, see Richard Klein, *Eat Fat* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, José E. Limón, “Carne, Carnales, and the Carnavalesque: Bakhtinian ‘Batos,’ Disorder, and Narrative Discourses,” *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 3 (1989); Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985); ---, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996); Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self: Japanese Identity Through Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *Que vivan los Tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); Elisa J. Sobo, “The Sweetness of Fat: Health, Procreation, and Sociability in Rural Jamaica,” in *Many Mirrors: Body Image and Social Relations*, ed. Nicole Sault (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

individuals in groups.”<sup>16</sup> Many contemporary scholars correctly recognize ethnicity as a social process rather than a fixed category, and situate foodways within the performative process of identity.<sup>17</sup> Associations of ethnic groups with particular foods, perpetuated through “ethnic” restaurants and at ethnic food festivals, reinforce a general perception, among members of the group as well as among outsiders or tourists, that food is emblematic of ethnic identity.<sup>18</sup> Whether consumed at an ethnic eatery or an ethnic food festival, food is a “safe” way to experience the exotic Other.<sup>19</sup>

It is not just tantalizing flavors that attract image makers to food as an organizational theme: the simultaneous intrigue and seeming symbolic neutrality of many food items are among its attractions. Because food is regarded as a safe medium for experiencing the Other, be it a people or a place, organizers can avoid potentially divisive issues such as ethnic identity or contested history. As Sally Moore and Barbara Myerhoff noted, “[c]eremonies that make visible a collective connection with some common symbol or activity can minimize for a ceremonial moment their disconnections and

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<sup>16</sup> Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell, “Introduction,” in *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*, ed. Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 3.

<sup>17</sup> Susan Kalčik, “Ethnic Foodways in America: Symbol and Performance of Identity,” in *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identities*, ed. Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell (Knoxville: University of Knoxville Press, 1984).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid; Sabina Magliocco, “Playing with Food: The Negotiation of Identity in the Ethnic Display Event by Italian Americans in Clinton, Indiana,” in *The Taste of American Place: A Reader on Regional and Ethnic Foods*, ed. Barbara G. Shortridge and James R. Shortridge (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998). Cf. Lisa Heldke, *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Jack Kugelmass, “Green Bagels: An Essay on Food, Nostalgia, and the Carnavalesque,” *Yivo Annual* 19 (1990); Penny Van Esterik, “Celebrating Ethnicity: Ethnic Flavor in an Urban Festival,” *Ethnic Groups* 4 (1982).

conflicts in a crowd, even while depicting them.”<sup>20</sup> Food festivals can do just that. Festival organizers create food festivals in hopes of drawing people together, even temporarily, to generate a sense of communal spirit and identity based on the perceived accessibility of food. Food is symbolically charged, however. In the chapters that investigate Gilroy’s Garlic Festival and Coppel’s PigFest, I peek inside the iconized food items’ symbolic and cultural histories.

Howard Marshall noted that “like dialect and architecture, food traditions are a main component in the intricate and impulsive system that joins culture and geography into regional character.”<sup>21</sup> Over time and through intergroup interactions, traditional foods of one group, be it a cultural or a geographic group, may take on varied or new meanings: encoded meanings can change, reinforcing the dynamic character of symbolic signification. The post-Civil War transition of Maine lobster from a low- to high-status food exemplifies the changeability of food’s emblematic significance.<sup>22</sup> Place-food associations, such as Maine and lobsters or Michigan and cherries, like many ethnic-food associations, are often unquestioningly accepted. As natural as they may appear, however, place-food associations become familiar through deliberate manipulation and promotion of them. A casual tour through any grocery store reveals labels promoting a

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<sup>20</sup> Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff, “Introduction: Secular Ritual: Forms and Meaning,” in *Secular Ritual*, ed. Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff (Assen/Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977), 6.

<sup>21</sup> Howard Marshall, “Meat Preservation on the Farm in Missouri’s ‘Little Dixie’,” *Journal of American Folklore* 92, no. 366 (1979): 400.

relationship between place and food product. Even the produce section, mostly devoid of labels, bears witness to the custom of associating certain products with specific places. For example, the consumer might find Idaho baking potatoes, California berries, New York and Washington state apples. Regional specialties increasingly find homes in mainstream markets, but in general the markets continue to stock items popularly associated with specific places. Place-food associations are promoted and reinforced through commodification, from food labels to festive foodscapes, as I demonstrate in the work that follows.<sup>23</sup>

#### **FOODSCAPE: AN EMULSION OF FOOD AND LANDSCAPE**

People and the lore they create, including foodways, cannot be separated from the socio-cultural and physical environments in which they are created. People ascribe meaning to the physical spaces they inhabit. Foodscapes, articulated through place-specific food associations, are one example of such ascription. Expanding on Appadurai's application of the suffix *-scape* to explore "perspectival constructs, influenced by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors . . .", the term foodscape is gaining increasing popularity in the parlance of scholars concerned with

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<sup>22</sup> George H. Lewis, "The Maine Lobster as Regional Icon: Competing Images Over Time and Social Class," in *The Taste of American Place: A Reader on Regional and Ethnic Foods*, ed. Barbara G. Shortridge and James R. Shortridge (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Cary W. de Wit, "Food-Place Associations on American Product Labels," *Ibid.*

food.<sup>24</sup> Foodscapes are social, cultural, political, economic, or historical landscapes that, in one way or another, are about food. The concept incorporates the dynamics of global exchange, including the translocal and transnational character of modern food practices.

Foodscape, broadly conceived, represents a marriage between food and landscape, both the conceptual notion of landscape and actual, physical landscapes. Foodscape refers to the food(s) peculiar to the locality and/or people under consideration, sites as well as activities like methods of procurement and preparation, and modes of display and performance related to those foods or practiced by those people. The concept provides a useful framework for discourses about food and landscape of any scale. Foodscape is applicable to sites of various sizes and scales, ranging from the personal space of a body, to the social spaces of a kitchen or community, to the public spaces of a city, region, or nation. Foodscapes are expressions of people's relationships with food in various social and individual contexts, relationships that are variously manifested in the diverse *-scapes* of modern life. The interpretive framework of foodscape reads physical landscapes, from body-scapes to nation-scapes, that have been transformed ideologically and/or literally

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<sup>24</sup> Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Theory, Culture & Society* 7 (1990): 296. Foodscape was the organizing concept of the "Culinary Landscapes" panel at the American Folklore Society annual meeting in 2004. Sylvia Ferrero similarly extended Appadurai's notion in her interrogation of food consumption as transnational enactments of ethnic identity; see Sylvia Ferrero, "Comida Sin Par. Consumption of Mexican Food in Los Angeles: 'Foodscapes' in a Transnational Consumer Society," in *Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Society*, ed. Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton (New York: Routledge, 2002). The term is used without defining clarification in Steven Cummins and Sally Macintyre, "A Systematic Study of Urban Foodscape: The Price and Availability of Food in Greater Glasgow," *Urban Studies* 39, no. 11 (2002). It's acceptance is international and cross-disciplinary: see, for example, Rick Dolphijn, *Foodscapes: Towards a Deleuzian Ethics of Consumption*

into food-centered spaces while necessarily attending to human interaction with the physical spaces that constitute the foodscape.

Like many ontological concepts, landscape has a tangible manifestation that can be touched, smelled, and heard. It also has an intangible essence that can evoke affective responses, memories, and spark imagination.<sup>25</sup> Foodscape, like landscape, is much more than just the physical space to which it can refer: the term also refers to an intangible association between a place and a food. The connection may not refer to a specific patch of land, but more generally to an unbounded place, a geographic region, or an imagined place. The foodscape may not be readily visible on the physical landscape but firmly implanted in people's imaginations in the form of a food-place association.

Taking advantage of the concept's multivalence, I use it to refer to food-themed communal identities as well as to the physical spaces occupied by the cities that promote such identities. Among these cities, several of them hold food-themed festivals.

Landscape is an essential component of food festivals for the most fundamental reason:

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(Delft: Eburon, 2005). The term used within the food industry as well: "foodscape.com" is purchasing and informational software for food service operators.

<sup>25</sup> Several authors embrace the multiple sensory textures offered by landscapes, expanding beyond visual readings and toward fuller sensory awareness of them. See, for example, Graham M.S. Dann and Jens Kristian Steen Jacobsen, "Tourism Smellscapes," *Tourism Geographies* 5, no. 1 (2003); Douglas Pocock, "The Senses in Focus," *Area* 25 (1995); J. Douglas Porteous, *Landscapes of the Mind: Worlds of Sense and Metaphor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); ---, "Smellscape," *Progress in Human Geography* 9, no. 3 (1985); Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Paul Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place* (London: Routledge, 1994). Through an understanding of the multi-sensory language of landscapes comes awareness of how landscapes "evoke feelings and instill memory." Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Language of Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 81.

most food is derived from the earth. The festivals I discuss have direct connections to the physical and economic landscapes of their host communities.

Human use of land – as an agricultural area, as residential and commercial spaces, as festival grounds – writes meaning onto the land. Use of a plot of land as festival grounds may be ephemeral, but, with repeated use, the space can become symbolically charged as festival place. A successful food-place association commemorated through a food festival can come to signify a city, town, community, or region. A city or a neighborhood can be a festive foodscape, known among residents and non-residents for a particular food item and/or the festival commemorating it. When concerned with community foodscapes, or locality as foodscape, as this project is, the object of consideration is not individual actors, but a collective image, the created and perceived images of a place. In this sense, festive foodscapes, like other –scapes defined by Appadurai, are “imagined worlds . . . that are constituted by historically situated imaginations of persons and groups.”<sup>26</sup> Denis Cosgrove might consider foodscapes “ideological landscapes,” because foodscapes reflect and reinforce the power relations of the multiple communities co-existing within the host locales.<sup>27</sup> Importantly, foodscapes also reference one aspect of organizers’ imagined relationship with nature as agricultural space. Both Appadurai and Cosgrove, I suspect, would agree that foodscapes are

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<sup>26</sup> Appadurai made this observation in his study of the –scapes of shifting, post-national worlds; it is applicable when considering –scapes on the communal level as well. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 33.

symbolic of place, real and desired identities, and social/spatial relations articulated through an iconized food.

Creating a foodscape can be part of the spectaclization of place: designating a place as special in order to create spectacle where one previously did not exist. Place spectaclization is about differentiation of and among places, and is the foundation of each locality's promotion of a food-centered identity or other themed, mediated identity. The concept *mediated identity* exploits the multivalence of "mediate." A mediated identity results, literally, from processes of mediation among residents, town leaders, and other image makers, and those to whom the negotiated identity is being marketed. It also recognizes that identity is constructed in the dialogical interaction between the individual or collective Self and Other. Mediated also refers to the unavoidable collaboration between the city leaders and image makers seeking to differentiate a place by creating and promoting an identity, and contemporary media culture that promotes the place-identity. From fliers distributed at local schools to national television spots about a festival or food-place association, various media are necessarily involved in the dissemination of communal identity.

Creation and promotion of mediated identities are part of what Mark Gottdiener identified as theming.<sup>28</sup> Symbolic theming of place, whether it is a Nike store or a city, is

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<sup>27</sup> Denis E Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (London: Croom Helm, 1984).

<sup>28</sup> Mark Gottdiener, *The Theming of America: Dreams, Visions and Commercial Spaces* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997).

a constitutive part of contemporary consumer society. As such, he argued, theming “acts *in concert* with other aspects of political economy, especially production, in the ongoing effort of capital to accumulate wealth, on the one hand, and with cognitive and emotional elements, on the other, in a quest for identity and self-expression.”<sup>29</sup> Deliberate creation and promotion of a place as foodscape is often one element of the community’s or city’s quest for identity. By differentiating the place from other places, image makers intend not only to boost pride among locals but to attract visitors – i.e., economic capital – to the locale.

#### **FESTIVAL AS CULTURAL PERFORMANCE: PERFORMANCE THEORY**

The processes of promoting and celebrating collective identities simultaneously shape and modify those identities; these processes constitute community cultural performance. I interpret mediated food-themed collective identities and place-based food festivals orchestrated to promote those identities as cultural performances. As Roger Abrahams noted, festivals “provide *the* occasion whereby a community may call attention to itself and, perhaps more important in our time, its willingness to display itself openly.”<sup>30</sup> Community festivals are performances of collective identities, or, more

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<sup>29</sup> Mark Gottdiener, “Approaches to Consumption: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives,” in *New Forms of Consumption: Consumers, Culture, and Commodification*, ed. Mark Gottdiener (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 28. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>30</sup> Roger Abrahams, “An American Vocabulary of Celebration,” in *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival*, ed. Alessandro Falassi (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 181. Emphasis in the original.

specifically, of multi-dimensional, desired collective identities determined by image makers.

Cultural performances are culture in action. They are not simply mirrors of contemporary life, but events constructed from the same complex historical, political, and social processes that inform daily life, aesthetically reconfiguring the worlds of those who produce them; they are collective representations of social desires, sacred longings, and personal motivations of their performance communities.<sup>31</sup> As cultural performances, festivals embody those processes.

The lineage of “cultural performance” as an interpretive approach is rich; included among its intellectual ancestors are Barbara Babcock, Gregory Bateson, Erving Goffman, Dell Hymes, Milton Singer, and Victor Turner.<sup>32</sup> A cultural performance model

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<sup>31</sup> Richard R. Flores, *Los Pastores: History and Performance in the Mexican Shepherds' Play of South Texas* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

<sup>32</sup> Barbara A. Babcock, “Reflexivity: Definitions and Discriminations,” *Semiotica* 30, no. 1/2 (1980); Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York: Balantine Books, 1972); Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Dell Hymes, “Breakthrough into Performance,” in *Folklore: Performance and Communication*, ed. Dan Ben-Amos and Kenneth Goldstein (The Hague: Mouton, 1975); ---, “Competence and Performance in Linguistic Theory,” in *Language Acquisition: Models and Methods*, ed. Renira Huxley and Elisabeth Ingram (London: Academic Press, 1971); Milton B. Singer, *Traditional India: Structure and Change* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1959); ---, *When a Great Tradition Modernizes* (New York: Praeger, 1972); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979 [1969]); ---, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society: A Study of Ndembu Village Life* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, for the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 1957). In addition to the writings of these seminal scholars, my approach to performance theory was informed by the thinking and teaching of Richard Bauman and Deborah Kapchan; see especially Richard Bauman, “Verbal Art as Performance,” in *Verbal Art as Performance*, ed. Richard Bauman (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1977); Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, “Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19 (1990); Deborah A. Kapchan, *Gender on the Market: Moroccan Women and the Revoicing of Tradition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); ---, “Performance,” *Journal of American Folklore* (1995). Several anthologies illustrate the

recognizes dramatic displays as reflecting, interpreting, and influencing the society matrix within which they are enacted. They are “occasions in which as a culture or society we reflect upon and define ourselves, dramatize our collective myths and history, present ourselves with alternatives, and eventually change in some ways while remaining the same in others.”<sup>33</sup> This approach facilitates interpretations of social dramas, spectacles, rites, festivals, and other performative events as part of the ongoing processes of identity formation and negotiation. Such multidimensional events warrant multilayered readings. John MacAloon’s analysis of the Olympic Games exemplifies this approach: in developing a theoretical paradigm for complex performative events, he outlined the synchronism of the four central performative genres (spectacle, festival, ritual, game) that co-exist within the metagenre of the Games.<sup>34</sup>

Much of performance theory draws on symbolic anthropology; theorists interpret performative events as negotiations of social practices. Performance theorists approach performative events as semiotic texts from which meanings can be “read.” They often

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development of performance theory and suggest the broad applicability of the concept. See in particular John J. MacAloon, ed., *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984); Frank Manning, ed., *The Celebration of Society: Perspectives on Contemporary Cultural Performance* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1983); Américo Paredes and Richard Bauman, eds., *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore* (Austin: University of Texas Press for the American Folklore Society, 1972).

<sup>33</sup> This passage is from pre-conference literature given to participants of an international symposium that explored anthropological and performative theory; quoted in John J. MacAloon, “Introduction: Cultural Performance, Culture Theory,” in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance*, ed. John J MacAloon (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984), 1.

employ the familiar tropes of metaphor and, drawing on M.M. Bakhtin, the carnivalesque, correctly recognizing that these two processes, as well as others, can occur within the same event.<sup>35</sup> Scholars variously interpret cultural performances as part of a dialectic between structure and agency, as symbolic reversal of hegemonic social and power relations, as expressions of identity, as liminal and therefore potentially transformational, as counter-hegemonic, or as providing affirmation of the existing social order.<sup>36</sup>

My use of a performative framework recognizes the emergent character of the performance sequence, from the “rehearsal” through the “finished” production and,

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<sup>34</sup> John J. MacAloon, “Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Societies,” in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance*, ed. John J. MacAloon (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984).

<sup>35</sup> Rodger Lyle Brown, *Ghost Dancing on the Cracker Circuit: The Culture of Festivals in the American South* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1997); Clifford Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Don Handelman, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Robert H. Lavenda, *Corn Fests and Water Carnivals: Celebrating Community in Minnesota* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); ---, “‘It’s Not a Beauty Pageant!’ Hybrid Ideology in Minnesota Community Queen Pageants,” in *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power*, ed. Colleen Ballerino Cohen, et al. (New York: Routledge, 1996); MacAloon, “Introduction: Cultural Performance, Culture Theory.”; Dorothy Noyes, “Contesting the Body Politic: The Patum of Berga,” in *Bodylore*, ed. Katharine Young (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1993); Leslie Prosterman, *Ordinary Life, Festival Days: Aesthetics in the Midwestern County Fair* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> Stanley H. Brandes, *Power and Persuasion: Fiestas and Social Control in Rural Mexico* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); Veit Erlman, *Night song: Performance, Power, and Practice in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Johannes Fabian, *Power and Performance: Ethnographic Explorations Through Proverbial Wisdom and Theater in Zaire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); James W Fernandez, *Persuasions and Performances: The Play of Tropes in Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Limón, “Carne, Carnales, and the Carnavalesque: Bakhtinian ‘Batos,’ Disorder, and Narrative Discourses.”; Victor Turner, ed., *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982).

importantly, actions and reactions subsequent to the event.<sup>37</sup> The quest for and subsequent promotion of a food-centered communal identity are part of the rehearsal process; the place-based food festival and ongoing media promoting the food-place association are the “finished” – yet ongoing – performance. Whether or not the food-place association adheres to the host locality, and how that association is perpetuated over time, are significant post-event factors. Especially when considering a recurring performative event, post-event responses of participants, organizers, and attendees are as essential to understanding the event itself as are the pre-event processes of production. Inclusion of subsequent recurring events in documenting identity performance is part of the essential contextualization that recognizes agency and the active processes of negotiation. Performance as an interpretive framework allows for recognition that “performers” – community leaders, image makers, festival organizers and participants – and members of the “audience” – residents and non-residents, viewers of promotional materials, potential and actual festival attendees – are essential in understanding the motivations behind each festival.

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<sup>37</sup> Recognizing rehearsal as part of the performative event is from Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

## THE FESTIVAL FRAME: TIME OUT OF TIME AND EVERYDAY LIFE

One special kind of cultural performance is the community festival. Festivals are a “time out of time,’ a special temporal dimension devoted to special activities.”<sup>38</sup> That festivals are a time out of time does not diminish their importance as part of daily life of the host community. On the contrary; they often embody a hyper-awareness of communal life or of an idealized cohesion as residents and visitors come together in the spirit of play, suspend the rigors and conflicts of daily life and, for a short time, participate as a collective of individuals in an experience that reinforces a sense of a shared past and present.

*Festival* denotes a particular framed experience as well as an interpretive framework through which this articulation of expressive culture can be studied.<sup>39</sup> The festival frame is metacommunicative.<sup>40</sup> Just as a picture frame delimits background and directs the viewer’s focus and perception, the festival frame informs the way attendees experience the festival. The festival frame keys participants’ and observers’ expectations, making the medium part of the message. Scholars recognize that a structured expressive form, whether it is framed as ritual, play, or a hybrid genre, is “a deliberate and artificial demarcation” that brackets behavior, defines meaning, and “is always an essential carrier

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<sup>38</sup> Alessandro Falassi, “Festival: Definition and Morphology,” in *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival*, ed. Alessandro Falassi (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 4.

<sup>39</sup> My use of the concepts “frame” and “key” are drawn from the Erving Goffman’s seminal work, *Frame Analysis*.

<sup>40</sup> Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*.

of its unique message.”<sup>41</sup> To participants and observers, *festival* implies that predictable, though variable, activities will take place during a distinct time period, in a demarcated space.

The festival frame is affectively charged with positive energy, connotes rules for behavior different from daily non-festival life, and predicts playful and positive moods.<sup>42</sup> Within the festival frame, that is, during the bracketed festival time, there is the potential for affirmation of, challenges to, and inversions of social norms. Until social inversion happens, and often even when it does, the positive affective mood of the festival frame dominates participants’ and visitors’ expectations. Participants’ and observers’ experiences at festivals are informed by their preconceived expectations, thus perpetuating the expectation that festivals are appealing, fun, and affirmative events. And their experiences affirm the mediated identity being commemorated through the festivities.

Festival also implies social interaction, social license, fun, and foods different from those that comprise most daily diets. As with other performative genres, festivals “provide an intricate counterpoint to the unconscious practices of everyday life insofar as

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<sup>41</sup> Examples abound within anthropological literature that demonstrate such a Goffmanesque approach to framed experience. The quotations are from Moore and Myerhoff, “Introduction: Secular Ritual: Forms and Meaning,” 19; Barbara G. Myerhoff, “We Don’t Wrap Herring in a Printed Page: Fusion, Fiction and Continuity in Secular Ritual,” in *Secular Ritual*, ed. Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff (Assen/Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977), 200.

<sup>42</sup> In differentiating between festival and spectacle, John MacAloon considered the etymology of “festival,” attributing the “joyous mood” of festival to its Latin origins of *festivus* (“gay, merry, lighthearted”) and

they are stylistically marked expressions of otherness” that situate habitual activities in an alternate frame; as such they “are characterized by a higher than usual degree of reflexivity.”<sup>43</sup> Leslie Prosterman commented on the reflexivity inherent in county fair domestic arts competitions: “[b]y locating in a time and space dedicated to a special purpose related to but removed from everyday life and by adopting stylized procedures, judging and exhibition reorder, highlight and comment on the everyday occupational and domestic experiences of fairgoers’ lives.”<sup>44</sup> In addition, within the festival frame, participation in quotidian activities like eating and cooking temporarily are reframed: there is license to abandon normative food-related behavior, thus allowing for enjoyment of exotic or unhealthy foods (e.g. garlic ice cream, funnel cakes), excessive consumption, and spectaclized eating and cooking through contests.

While annual festivals are “a time out of time,” as recurring events they also are part of the host locale’s community calendar, and thus are part of its routine life. That festivals function in part to affirm communal identities makes festival time part of everyday life. Although it may seem contradictory, festivals are both within the realm of the everyday and special, differentiated experiences outside the realm of the everyday. I

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*festum* (“festival” or “festival time”). MacAloon, “Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Societies,” 246.

<sup>43</sup> Kapchan, “Performance,” 479.

<sup>44</sup> Prosterman, *Ordinary Life, Festival Days: Aesthetics in the Midwestern County Fair*, 16.

contend that the constructs *everyday life* and *special events* are not mutually exclusive.<sup>45</sup> In fact, one factor that contributes to the success of the festival genre as a strategy for identity affirmation is the juxtaposition of everyday/special that coalesces in this traditional form. Roger Abrahams articulated a similar view when he noted that “there is a continuity and a dialectic between everyday activities and these [enactments or marked behavior such as festival and rituals] heightened events.”<sup>46</sup> Constitutive festival continuity and dialectic continue as long as a festival remains vital to its host community.

An unsuccessful event interrupts continuity of identity formation not only by disrupting the community’s calendar but by derailing organizers’ attempt, through the festival, to create historical continuity for the community and to affirm a promoted identity. Even if a festival does not evoke a specific moment in the locality’s past, its promotion as an “annual” event implies a connection to the past and to the future. The higher the number of years an annual festival can claim, the greater its implicit and

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<sup>45</sup> Giovanna Del Negro and Harris Berger argued that there is no essential “everyday,” that the notion is an interpretive framework rather than a structural feature defined by dialectical opposition to special events. I concur that it is an interpretive framework and suspect they would agree with my contention that the two modes of classifying time and events are not mutually exclusive. In comparison, David Sutton encouraged differentiation between everyday and ritual events, though he argued for inclusion of both in ethnographic studies. See Giovanna P. Del Negro and Harris M. Berger, “New Directions in the Study of Everyday Life: Expressive Culture and the Interpretation of Practice,” in *Identity and Everyday Life: Essays in the Study of Folklore, Music, and Popular Culture*, ed. Harris M. Berger and Giovanna P. Del Negro (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004); Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory*.

<sup>46</sup> Roger D Abrahams, “Toward an Enactment-Centered Theory of Folklore,” in *Frontiers in Folklore*, ed. William R. Bascom (Boulder: Westview Press for the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1977), 200.

explicit links to the past. Historic continuity might be largely fictitious, but that may be of little concern to organizers or attendees.<sup>47</sup>

Complementary to the notion of invented traditions is that of a “usable past” that can be evoked on national, regional, and local levels.<sup>48</sup> A “usable past” is the application of creative imaging to the interpretation of a group’s heritage and collective memory that results in re-presentations of a potentially artificially constructed past in the service of community building.<sup>49</sup> The invention of communal traditions as an element of identity negotiation and affirmation is one possible strategy utilized by community leaders and sometimes embraced by individuals to ascribe meaning and establish a sense of communal identity and place.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The authors in Hobsbawm and Ranger’s influential anthology demonstrated that historical or cultural continuity may be deliberately invented. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>48</sup> As a counter to Hobsbawm and Ranger’s seminal work on invented traditions, Tad Tuleja argued that the processes of inventing tradition are not limited to “top down” transactions, nor do they occur only on a national level. See Tad Tuleja, “Making Ourselves Up: On the Manipulation of Tradition in Small Groups,” in *Useable Pasts: Traditions and Group Expressions in North America*, ed. Tad Tuleja (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997).

<sup>49</sup> For other examples, see John Gillis, *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Michael Kammen, ed., *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1991).

<sup>50</sup> That invented traditions function to provide a refuge amid rapid social change and affirm local identity, especially when external forces seem to threaten it, has been observed by several scholars. See, for example, Regina Bendix, “Tourism and Cultural Displays: Inventing Tradition for Whom?” *Journal of American Folklore* 102, no. 404 (1989); Kathleen Neils Conzen, “Ethnicity as Festive Culture: Nineteenth-Century German America on Parade,” in *The Invention of Ethnicity*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Steven D. Hoelscher, *Heritage on Stage: The Invention of Ethnic Place in America's Little Switzerland* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

As part of the process of self-authentication, community festivals celebrate as well as enhance group and place identities.<sup>51</sup> Festivals become a means of integrating individuals into the fabric of collective identity.<sup>52</sup> They facilitate not only individual but collective or communal self-authentication. Through a festival, a locale calls attention to itself.<sup>53</sup> Festivals serve multiple functions in the economic and symbolic lives of locales, in terms of recurring events that bring people together at a definite time and place, in terms of presumed financial gain, and in terms of generating a sense of community.

#### **A TASTE OF THINGS TO COME**

Essential ingredients in recipes for the creation and promotion of place-based identities are the concepts *community*, *place*, *sense of community*, and *sense of place*. In Chapter Two I deconstruct these concepts, considering how they have been conceptualized by some scholars and applied through praxis. They require such illumination because they are the foundation of this project. In addition, I explore the

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<sup>51</sup> Karen de Bres and James Davis, "Celebrating Group and Place Identity: A Case Study of a New Regional Festival," *Tourism Geographies* 3, no. 3 (2001).

<sup>52</sup> Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture: Nineteenth-Century German America on Parade.," April R. Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian-American through Celebration* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994).

<sup>53</sup> This is not to suggest that festival is the only means at the disposal of a locale to call attention to itself; it is not. Business opportunities and environmental features are among many other possible avenues a locale could explore in its quest for self-authentication and self-promotion.

commodification of community and suggest that the notion of *terroir* has relevance in food-place discourses.

Over the years of working on this project, I talked with many people about my interest in food and community identity, especially as articulated through place-based food festivals. Inevitably, the persons with whom I was speaking told me of other similar festivals throughout the country that I *must* include, from the Poteet (Texas) Strawberry Festival to the Olathe (Colorado) Sweet Corn Festival to the Barnsville (Minnesota) Potato Festival. Although I've had the pleasure of attending many such festivals, there are even more that I have yet to experience. As important, fun, and exhausting as it could be to visit all the food festivals in the country for comparative research, practical constraints kept me from doing that. Through detailed consideration of two festivals – the Gilroy Garlic Festival and the Coppell PigFest – I explore the invention and subsequent consumption of food-themed place and communal identities, of foodscapes. I do not offer a structural analysis of these food-themed festivals, however, because this is not an ethnography of festivals per se. The festivals considered here are one articulation through which to consider the theme of cultural productions as collective self-inscriptions. They are read as part of locality specific, place making narratives. Place-based food festivals, and the promotional materials produced by image makers for the cities and their festivals, are examples of what John Dorst termed auto-ethnographies: materials image makers and civic power brokers put forth when presenting a city, materials that portray their desired

collective identity or communal Self.<sup>54</sup> By hosting festivals that celebrate a food item with a direct connection to the physical landscape, image makers hope to evoke a land-food association. Although this relationship often is abstracted within the festival frame, I postulate that there is something potentially advantageous in place-making that highlights an agricultural past or present.

Place-based food festivals involve the theming of place as well as the theming of identity. The end result of successful food-themed place branding is a mediated foodscape that is at the heart – or stomach – of an ongoing campaign for selling place and identity. Gilroy, California, provides an example of successful place marketing based on a particular food; that is, branding a small city by iconizing a food produced there. Chapter Three introduces Gilroy, the origins of its garlic-themed identity, and the significant role media has in affirming that identity. Integral to understanding Gilroy's success as a garlic foodscape is consideration of garlic's transformation from a foreign to a fad food; this is outlined in Chapter Three. Chapter Four explores place branding and marketing collective identity, using Gilroy as a case study. Chapter Five problematizes particular components of the Gilroy Garlic Festival, exploring the negotiation of identities, diverse communities, and social relations that take place within the metagenre of festival.

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<sup>54</sup> John D. Dorst, *The Written Suburb: An American Site, An Ethnographic Dilemma* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

The Gilroy Garlic Festival is particularly appropriate to include in this study because of its rapid and tenacious success, and the fact that other festival organizers look to the Gilroy Garlic Festival as a highly successful model. Gilroy and its Festival were included in a publication “The Urban Fair: How Cities Celebrate Themselves,” published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.<sup>55</sup> As the title suggests, fairs and festivals are regarded as vehicles for communal self-affirmation through celebration of community identity. The publication is designed to facilitate self-evaluation of existing urban festivals, and aid city leaders who want to organize new ones, for “the betterment of the community.”<sup>56</sup> Inclusion of Gilroy in this publication provided official, external validation of and for the festival as well-run, and as a model of successful city-boosterism.

If imitation is the most sincere form of flattery, organizers of Gilroy’s Festival indeed should be flattered. Further validating Gilroy Garlic Festival’s success is its acceptance among festival planners from other cities as a model to emulate. Visitors from across the country and throughout the world study Gilroy’s Festival. For example, in 2002, representatives from the Philippines Province of Llocos, including officials from the Philippine Department of Tourism, visited the Festival. Other years, members of CalFest, the Californian & Nevada Festival and Events Association, have come to study

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<sup>55</sup> Office of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, “The Urban Fair: How Cities Celebrate Themselves,” (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

the intricacies of producing this Festival. In anticipation of interpreting or mimicking the Gilroy model for the betterment of their hometowns' celebrations, visiting festival organizers meet with Festival administration, talk with volunteers, and take behind-the-scenes tours.<sup>57</sup>

In towns across the United States, and throughout the world, people commemorate their link with the earth and its bounty through agricultural fairs and place-based food festivals. Not all festivals can be as successful, in the grand sense of the word, as is the Gilroy Garlic Festival. In an attempt to foster a community identity among city residents and invent a distinctive identity among people in the surrounding area, leaders in Coppell, Texas, organized PigFest. The pig-themed festival's short-lived run stands in stark contrast to the ongoing success of Gilroy's Festival. Chapter Six explores multiple factors that contributed to the creation of PigFest and its subsequent erasure from Coppell's calendar.

Following the case studies of the Gilroy Garlic Festival and the Coppell PigFest, I consider multiple sites to discuss a constitutive element of community festivals, *aggrandizement*. Chapter Seven introduces and explores *aggrandizement* as a strategy of

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<sup>57</sup> During the 2005 Festival, I joined a representative from the Delray Beach, Florida, Chamber of Commerce on a VIP tour, led by Gilroy volunteer Jodi Heinzen. During the tour we had access to areas off-limits to regular Festival attendees and were encouraged to ask questions about all aspects of Festival production. Information about other official visitors from Chris Filice, Gilroy Garlic Festival Office Manager, personal correspondence, multiple dates. As an example of imitation bordering on repetition, consider nearby Stockton's Asparagus Festival, complete with their vegetable-themed version of Gilroy's famed Gourmet Alley, "Asparagus Alley." George H. Lewis, "Celebrating Asparagus: Community and the Rationally Constructed Food Festival," *Journal of American Culture* 20, no. 4 (1997).

locale differentiation in the service of place promotion. One articulation of aggrandizement is an assertion of capitaldom.<sup>58</sup> More specifically, aggrandizement refers to the way image makers, event organizers and/or town leaders attempt, through rhetorical claims, to distinguish their event or town from others. Communal aggrandizement is expressed through claims like “World Capital,” “Biggest,” “Best,” “Oldest.” Such claims are part of what Abrahams called the “vocabulary of intensification.”<sup>59</sup> Often aggrandizement is, or is intended to be, humorous; other times a claim is taken quite seriously by those who make it. Seeking distinction through claims that something is the largest, the best, the scariest, the ugliest, or the most beautiful, I suggest, is part of what Pauline Rosenau argued is an American tradition of competition.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The word *capitaldom* refers to a locality’s claims to be the capital of something, such as the moniker “Gilroy, Garlic Capital of the World” is an example of Gilroy asserting its capitaldom, its reign as a capital.

<sup>59</sup> Roger Abrahams, “The Language of Festivals: Celebrating the Economy,” in *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual*, ed. Victor Turner (Washington: Smithsonian Press, 1982).

<sup>60</sup> Pauline Vaillancourt Rosenau, *The Competition Paradigm: America's Romance with Conflict, Contest, and Commerce* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

## Chapter Two

### Sense of Community, Sense of Place:

#### Community, Commodification, and Place-Based Food Festivals

Running implicitly throughout this work are questions about *sense of community* and *sense of place*: what is meant by these phrases and why are they important? Those questions are fundamental to research on community, identity, and food festivals because, as I demonstrate, one of the primary reasons festivals are held is to generate, on multiple levels, community identities.

In this chapter I explore the semantically complex notions of *community*, *place*, *sense of place*, and *sense of community* as theoretical constructs and as probable social realities. I qualify the probability of their existence because what constitutes *sense of community* and *sense of place* are social constructions. Frequent and ambiguous use of these terms and the essences they represent muddle their meaning, while also enhancing their appeal. A community, a collective of individuals who share something in common and whose participants perceive a bond, is presumed to have an identity of its own. Although intangible, regional identity, ethnic identity, and national identity readily are conceived of as intrinsic. Places generally are regarded as having an identity as well, an intrinsic and perceptible essence. A neighborhood or suburb can have an identity of its own, a sub-category of the metropolitan area's identity.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the definitional ambiguities of the concepts deconstructed in the first half of this chapter, these terms are readily, but not unproblematically, incorporated into ethnographic narratives and place promotion literature. The latter part of this chapter introduces another theme that runs throughout this work: the commodification of community identity and place. When food is added to the recipe for imagining place and community, the commodification of them becomes more complex. Because food is encoded with multi-layered systems of meaning and symbolism, “food is different from run-of-the-mill commodities, both in the depth of meanings ascribed to it and in the complexity of the system that produces it.”<sup>1</sup> The fact that food is regarded as a malleable commodity is a critical reason for its frequent use as an icon in the processes of inventing tradition, affirming identity, and commodifying place.

## **COMMUNITY: THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL ESSENCE**

### ***Community as Theoretical Construct***

*Community* as a concept and as social reality is nebulous, multi-dimensional, and extremely important. As a theoretical construct and rhetorical descriptor, *community* takes on a multitude of meanings depending on its use and users. The term is loosely

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Charles, “Searching for Gold in Guacamole: California Growers Market the Avocado, 1910-1994,” in *Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Societies*, ed. Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton

applied to geographically as well as non-geographically situated groups, further muddling its meaning. *Community* can be a noun or an adjective. In either case the term implies some degree of collectivity: community center, a community college, speech communities, a gated community, the international community, a couple's community property, community service, or the European Economic Community. In most instances, *community* has come to convey positive nuances and associations.

Ferdinand Tönnies' seminal theory, which appeared amid Europe's nineteenth-century's rapid urbanization, dichotomized social groupings into *Gemeinschaft* (a grouping based on a feeling of togetherness, translated as community) and *Gesellschaft* (a grouping based on a common instrumental goal, translated as society).<sup>2</sup> His binary model shaped decades of academic training and scholarly analysis. Accepting these two categories as mutually exclusive precluded the possibility of interpreting community as dynamic, emergent, and contingent within changing, modernizing society. Accordingly, argued Thomas Bender, many historians informed by Tönnies' theory accept American society as bifurcated; they focus on what they regard as a negative shift from

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(New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Tönnies conceived of the two categories as mutually exclusive and in theoretical sociology they may be; in the empirical world, however, they are not. *Gesellschaft*, often and imprecisely translated simply as "society," literally means company, as in a corporate firm. It also refers to society on a formal level. In German society, especially during the nineteenth century when Tönnies was writing, one did not socialize readily with professional associates. This professional social decorum continues in contemporary German society, though certainly such rigidities have been somewhat relaxed. Nevertheless, German social conventions continue to be formal, so the distinction between formal and corporate society and informal community is relevant. Because American society, in general, is less formal than German society, the

interpersonal and community-oriented interaction to impersonal and individualistic interaction. Instead, Bender suggested, scholars should attend to the tension and interplay between these two aspects of social relations.<sup>3</sup>

The nature and forms of community are affected by the forces of globalization, as are all aspects of social and economic life.<sup>4</sup> Some scholars argue that the forces of globalization are diluting and even destroying local and national cultures, and consequently traditional communities and the institutions that support them. The forces of modernity, in particular those associated with increased cultural flows facilitated by contemporary globalization, do indeed challenge traditional notions of community. They create global communities; interactions among global communities produce, among other things, new cuisines, new dialects, new music, new political climates, and different forms

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model is not necessarily appropriate for application to American culture. Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1988 [1887]).

<sup>3</sup> In the latter years of the twentieth century social theory expanded to incorporate globalization, a critical approach that at the time of Bender's writing was missing, thus finally attending to the tension between local and global forces. Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> Globalization is not a modern process; what is modern is the scale and speed with which information and people flow around the world. Globalism and globalization are, like other concepts being explored in this chapter, ambiguous yet prolific terms readily incorporated into contemporary social and cultural theory. Globalization has been embraced as a conceptual paradigm since the early 1990s. Mike Featherstone suggested it is the theoretical successor to "modernity" and "postmodernity." Although thankfully the debate between the latter two concepts has faded from the spotlight of social theory, it continues as a thematic framework with the added element of globalism. My perspective on globalization and globalism is informed by multiple social and cultural theorists, in particular Featherstone, who eschewed the binaries of heterogeneity/homogeneity and cultural integration/disintegration in favor of conceiving of global exchanges as "generative processes." Like geographers who situate their subject matter, Featherstone advocated appreciation of spatialized global modernities. See Mike Featherstone, "Global Culture: An Introduction," in *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, ed. Mike Featherstone (London: Sage Publications, 1990); Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash, "Globalization, Modernity and the

of community. These modern forces are historically rooted but are perceived as new threats to conceptions of idealized community.

Certainly urbanization, suburbanization, and globalization contribute to changes in traditional community building institutions. Resulting new modalities of interaction facilitate new communities and forge new identities. Richard Wilk argued that, while the globalization debate taking place (globalization as homogenizing or heterogenizing) “makes for a satisfying story . . . it is very deceptive, if not downright wrong.”<sup>5</sup> He asserted that a historical perspective illustrates “that there have been many different periods of globalization in world history; the current phase may be different in degree rather than in kind from what has come before.”<sup>6</sup> In an effort to acknowledge the mutual influence global and local forces have on each other, Roland Robertson introduced the term *glocalization*.<sup>7</sup> The glocalization paradigm recognizes local forces as part of the global dynamic and vice-versa. Although the term has yet to be incorporated into social theory vernacular, the idea has become an undercurrent of contemporary social theory. Implicit in my conception of local identity as symbolized through iconized food is the symbiosis between global and local forces.

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Spatialization of Social Theory: An Introduction,” in *Global Modernities*, ed. Mike Featherstone, *et al.* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Richard R. Wilk, “Food and Nationalism: The Origins of ‘Belizean Food’,” in *Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Societies*, ed. Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton (New York: Routledge, 2002), 68.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Roland Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” in *Global Modernities*, ed. Mike Featherstone, *et al.* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

### *Invention and Imagination: Community as Phenomenological Essence*

While ruminating on popular perceptions of the term, Zygmunt Bauman reflected that “[c]ommunity’ feels good because of the meanings the word ‘community’ conveys – all of them promising pleasures, and more often and not, the kinds of pleasures we would like to experience but seem to miss.”<sup>8</sup> Particularly noteworthy in Bauman’s statement is the observation that “promising pleasures” known or presumed from the past are missed and longed for. Expanding on Raymond Williams’ observation that community is presumed to have existed in the past, Bauman asserted that the enviable connotations of the concept “community” shape future communities. The sentiment that lingers in the popular imagination is that *community*, whatever *it* is, is assumed to have existed previously, is desirable, and can be orchestrated when or where it does not already exist.

To conceive of community as constructed, as something that can be invented, may seem oxymoronic, yet the invention of community is analogous to the “invention of ethnicity.”<sup>9</sup> As an emergent phenomenon, ethnicity is negotiated and renegotiated,

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<sup>8</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 1. Bauman compared multiple conceptions of *community*, including those of Eric Hobsbawm, Robert Redfield, Ferdinand Tönnies, Raymond Williams and others, in the introduction to this important book. See in particular, pages 1-16.

<sup>9</sup> Kathleen Neils Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli, “The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12, no. 1 (1992); Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); ---, ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); William L. Yancey, Eugene P. Ericksen, and Richard N. Juliani, “Emergent Ethnicity: A Review and Reformulation,” *American Sociological Review* 41, no. 3 (1976).

defined and redefined. Much of the scholarship on ethnicity and ethnic re-construction is applicable for community studies, which also explores the processes of identity formation and negotiation, and the presentation of a collective Self to Others. Woven throughout theories on ethnicity is the thread of change; whether it is through the processes of assimilation, accommodation, compromise, conflict, resistance, or manipulation, change is present. A similarly dynamic conception of community recognizes the potential for its invention or gradual emergence, and requires an appreciation that any community is affected by local and global forces.

Recognizing that the term is a hermeneutic construct does not eliminate the need to establish a general understanding of what constitutes community. Communities exist to the degree that people recognize affiliation or, as Benedict Anderson called it, an imagined comradeship.<sup>10</sup> In explaining his conception of the nation as an imagined political community, Anderson expounded that the national community

*is imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 15. Emphasis in the original.

Accordingly, what constitutes community is a matter of judgment and interpretation by members of the group of affiliated individuals.

Acknowledging the variable and changeable forms community can take, Bender defined community as “a network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds” independent of particular structures, held together by shared understandings and sense of obligation.<sup>12</sup> Such fraternity is difficult to articulate but perceived as marking membership in or exclusion from a group. Both a “network approach” and the notion of communities as imagined are sensitive to context, for it is through the contexts of convergence and divergence among social groups that the invention and imagination of community takes place.

### **THE PERCEIVED DECLINE OF COMMUNITY**

In his widely discussed book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Robert Putnam explored the decline of civic engagement among Americans in the latter third of the twentieth century.<sup>13</sup> *Bowling alone* was Putnam’s metaphor for a downward trend in social activity, politics, trust, and other behaviors that facilitate social cohesion. Putnam yearned for a “bridging” social capital, which he defined as connections among individuals whose membership in social networks

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<sup>12</sup> Bender, *Community and Social Change in America*, 7. Bender’s mutuality is similar to what Anderson termed “horizontal comradeship.” Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*.

increases the spirit and productivity of communities.<sup>14</sup> For Putnam, declining civic engagement led to an erosion of social cohesion and all that is good about community in American society.

Putnam's work on community was acclaimed as representing "a sea change in intellectuals' evaluation of postwar America's associational life."<sup>15</sup> He is one of several scholars who have articulated concerns about the decline of, and nostalgia for, the bonds of American communal life.<sup>16</sup> Unlike some historians who analyzed postwar associational life, Putnam "respected rather than disdained voluntary organizations."<sup>17</sup> His treatise embraced an expansive view of political and social life, and considered social change as reflective of larger socio-cultural currents. Importantly, his critique not only offered reasons for the decline in social connectedness, but also proposed curative measures.

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<sup>13</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Putnam expanded on the notion of social capital introduced by Progressive Era reformers and incorporated by social theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu. For Putnam social capital "refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>15</sup> Robyn Muncy, "Disconnecting: Social and Civic Life in America Since 1965," *Reviews in American History* 29, no. 1 (2001): 141.

<sup>16</sup> Two of the most widely cited works that articulated this concern prior to Putnam are Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986 [1985]); David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950).

<sup>17</sup> Muncy, "Disconnecting: Social and Civic Life in America Since 1965," 141. Scholars who expressed disdain for postwar civic and voluntary organizations mentioned by Muncy are Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988); David

Among the specific arguments against Putnam's decline thesis were assertions that he was nostalgic toward a recently-ended era of engagement, and that he was unwilling to acknowledge that newer forms of participation might replace traditional forms.<sup>18</sup> Critics of Putnam's work astutely noted that the decline thesis has been present in intellectual circles since the nineteenth century among writers who pondered the deleterious effects of modernization. The lure of nostalgia about *community* results from its perceived disappearance, the diminution of the positive social and political essences that people associate with the notion of community, or in response to a modern hyper-individualism.<sup>19</sup> From the earliest settlers in the colonial New World to the supposed closing of the frontier to the suburbanization and subsequent re-urbanization of American cities, residents of the United States have been concerned about perceived threats to *community*.

Claims about the decline or absence of community in America fail to recognize the created and dynamic nature of communities. Since the country's founding, some

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Riesman, "The Suburban Sadness," in *The Suburban Community*, ed. William M. Dobriner (New York: Putnam, 1958).

<sup>18</sup> For a thorough critique of Putnam's work, including extensive discussion and evaluation of arguments against it, see Dietlind Stolle and Marc Hooghe, "Review article: inaccurate, exceptional, one-sided or irrelevant? The debate about the alleged decline of social capital and civic engagement in Western Societies," *British Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 1 (2005).

<sup>19</sup> Putnam noted these same forces in his critique about the collapse of traditional communities. David Karp noted that amid contemporary self-centeredness, "the idea of community, with its promise of a better society, has reemerged." Published the same year as Putnam's book, David Karp's study documented the emergence of non-traditional communities in which members worked through the innate ambivalences of community relations. Karp's work challenged Putnam's critique by demonstrating that Americans continue to gravitate toward the "thick network of associations" that constitutes the experience of community. See

colonists and then citizens banded together to form what they hoped would be a more perfect union. As established citizens and newcomers struggled with immigration and assimilation, manifestations of community took on different and increasingly differentiated forms. From immigrant tenements to gated suburban neighborhoods, distinct physical places came to be understood as hosting communities. There have been and continue to be pluralities of communities within American life.

Modern expressions of community are increasingly non-geographically fixed. As Nicholas Jankowski discussed, the concept of community has transformed from locality-oriented to multidisciplinary perspectives for which a geographical 'place' is absent.<sup>20</sup> Media such as radio, television, and the internet can function as social contexts and centers of meaning, thus creating communities not confined by traditional political or geographic boundaries. While important to community studies, the inclusion of non-locality oriented communities is beyond the scope of this project. Nevertheless, a re-conception of the physical spaces so long presumed to contain communities, which results in new spatial renderings of those communities, is relevant to contemporary locality-based collective identities. Such a re-conceptualization of community involves a

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David L. Karp, *Almost Home: America's Love-Hate Relationship with Community* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 16.

<sup>20</sup> Nicholas W. Jankowski, "Creating Community with Media: History, Theories and Scientific Investigations," in *Handbook of New Media: Social Shaping and Consequences of ICTs*, ed. Leah A. Lievrouw and Sonia Livingstone (London: Sage Publications, 2002). For an introduction to media-centered community studies, see Paul Adams, "Television as Gathering Place," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82, no. 1 (1992); Wayne McIntosh and Paul Harwood, "The Internet and America's Changing Sense of Community," *The Good Society* 11, no. 3 (2002).

similar re-envisaging of the contexts or landscapes that foster community. A paradigmatic shift in how landscape is envisaged accepts that the trope of landscape is not necessarily geographically situated. Through and within various –*scapes*, like Appadurai’s mediascapes and my foodscapes, information and ideas flow in various directions, informing identities and other cultural realities.<sup>21</sup> These –*scapes*, including foodscapes, are the building blocks of contemporary imagined communities.

### **SENSE OF COMMUNITY, SENSE OF PLACE, AND THE PARADOX OF MODERNITY**

Ethnographers face a definitional predicament: there is a generalized understanding of what is meant by *sense of community*, but a precise definition is elusive. The primary reason for this quandary is that sense of community is a value judgment based on sentiment and affect, articulated through behavior such as participation in group activities. Often discussions of sense of community fail to specify that the concept represents a collective of individual responses. Presumably a sense of community is a positive outcome of group membership. Once established or felt, ideally it will continue to grow and perpetuate itself. It results from and fosters feelings of investment in the collective that comprises a community. Sense of community thrives when individual members want to invest their time and energies for the betterment of their lives as

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<sup>21</sup> Although globalization is destructive to the traditional, place-bound conception of national community, Appadurai argued that feelings of national connection continue to exist, reaching across politically-defined borders that delineate the nation-state. Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy.”

members of the group and for the betterment of the group, the community. The concept cannot help but be explained by the conundrum of seemingly circular logic.

Because people participate in a variety of communities, *sense of community* is experienced in varying degrees. The concept and sentiment are applicable to extended family, occupational associations, religious congregations, special interest groups such as political parties or hobby clubs, and other instances of collective participation. Ritual and ceremony are important for affirming group identity; the same is true for affirming and perpetuating a sense of community. Kathy Neustadt's consideration of an annual food event that creates and maintains a sense of community, both among members of their religious group and in relation to the wider town in which they live and interact, exemplifies the identity affirming capacity of ritualized celebratory events.<sup>22</sup> As Neustadt demonstrated, through their annual clambake, the Bedford, Massachusetts, Allen's Neck Quaker Meeting members' identities are affirmed as Quakers, as Yankees, as fishermen, as links to the past and the future, and perhaps most importantly, as connected to each other.

Geographers and other social scientists face a similar definitional predicament when it comes to defining *sense of place*. Sense of place, like sense of community, is also subjectively experienced and interpreted. Expanding on an Aristotelian notion of place as a precise physical location that is a neutral container, *place* has been re-conceptualized

within contemporary geography as sensory and experiential.<sup>23</sup> Representing this shift, Eugene Walters defined place as a “location of experience. It evokes memories, images, feelings, sentiments, meanings, and the work of imagination. The feelings of a place are indeed the mental projections of individuals, but they come from collective experience and they do not happen anywhere else.”<sup>24</sup> A sense of place, then, stems from the collective of individual experiences. Just as the *genius loci* of a place may resonate with an individual or a group, sense of place is related to individual and the collective of community imagination: “[t]he whole synthesis of located experience – including what we imagine as well as the sights, stories, feelings, and concepts – gives us the sense of a place.”<sup>25</sup>

Sense of place is manifest in forms of creative expression, from regional foodways to architecture, from painting to poetry, from local festivals to yard art.

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<sup>22</sup> Kathy Neustadt, *Clambake: A History and Celebration of an American Tradition* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992).

<sup>23</sup> John K. Wright was an early exponent of the importance of imagination and perception in understanding the human attachment to land. John K. Wright, “Terra Incognita,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 37 (1947). Far from being a comprehensive list, the following cultural and humanistic geographers regard place as experiential; their work informed my approach to place and place making: Paul Adams, Steven D. Hoelscher, and Karen E. Till, eds., *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2001); John Allen, Doreen Massey, and Allan Cochrane, eds., *Rethinking the Region* (London: Routledge, 1998); Anne Buttner and David Seamon, eds., *The Human Experience of Space and Place* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1980); Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*; David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); David Lowenthal and Marty J. Bowden, eds., *Geographies of the Mind: Essays in Historical Geosophy in Honor of John Kirtland Wright* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994); Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

<sup>24</sup> Eugene Victor Walter, *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 21.

Tangible and intangible creative forms of expression represent people's connections to each other and to their physical surroundings; they articulate a sense of belonging, a sense of place. Barbara Allen defined a sense of place as "a consciousness of one's physical surroundings."<sup>26</sup> She noted that it "seems to be especially strong where people . . . possess a collective awareness of place and express it in their cultural forms."<sup>27</sup> Richard Meyer's definition of regional consciousness as "a region's collective self-concept" is applicable to all identity studies.<sup>28</sup> These two definitions recognize the collectivity and reflexivity of the concept.

Just as globalization impacts concepts and manifestations of community, it also affects the concept of and attitudes toward place. Amid the time-space compressed global market economy, Zygmunt Bauman noted that there is an increased value of *place*.<sup>29</sup> The importance of place, Yi-Fu Tuan observed, is that it "supports the human need to belong to a meaningful and reasonably stable world . . . . Place helps us forget our separateness and the world's indifference."<sup>30</sup> The sentimental value of place is analogous to nostalgic

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>26</sup> Barbara Allen, "Regional Studies in American Folklore Scholarship," in *Sense of Place: American Regional Cultures*, ed. Barbara Allen and Thomas J. Schlereth (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1990), 1.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Richard E. Meyers, "'Image and Identity in Oregon's Pioneer Cemeteries,'" Ibid., 90.

<sup>29</sup> Bauman, *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>30</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, "Place and Culture: Analeptic for Individuality and the World's Indifference," in *Mapping American Culture*, ed. Wayne Franklin and Michael Steiner (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 44.

attitudes toward community. Both are part of what Marshall Berman called the paradox of modernity:

[o]ur desire to be rooted in a stable and coherent personal and social past, and our insatiable desire for growth – not merely for economic growth but for growth of experience, in pleasure, in knowledge, in sensibility – growth that destroys both the physical and social landscapes of the past, and our emotional links with those lost worlds. . .<sup>31</sup>

Contemporary interest in place in both the public and academic sectors is a manifestation of the paradox.<sup>32</sup> Deflating the exhilaration of modern possibility is a sense of loss and longing. This ambivalence results in a generalized nostalgia for what *place* and *community* connote, which effects an increased valuation of the experiential *sense of place* and *sense of community*. One consequence of these sentiments is the commodification of *community* and *place*.

### COMMODIFICATION OF COMMUNITY AND PLACE

Recognizing the community-building capacity of community events, towns and cities across the country often have event coordinators within their administration. The fact that town leaders perceive a *sense of community* as something important and that it could be cultivated is significant. This suggests that sense of community is identifiable, noticeable by its absence, perceived as desirable, and something that can be

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<sup>31</sup> Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 35.

<sup>32</sup> Timothy Oakes, "Place and the Paradox of Modernity," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87, no. 3 (1997).

manufactured. Deliberate efforts to fabricate and promote this experiential essence indicate that its role in the market economy has shifted: it has entered the realm of commodity. *Sense of community*, like other commodities, is marketable.

One noteworthy example of the trend to market a sense of community is New Urbanism. New Urbanism is an urban design movement that gained popularity through the 1980s and 1990s, intended to retard the spread of dehumanizing suburban sprawl. The movement focuses on “the revival of our lost art of *place-making*, and is essentially a re-ordering of the built environment into the form of complete cities, towns, villages, and neighborhoods – the way *communities have been built* for centuries around the world.”<sup>33</sup> Although an oversimplification of the movement’s principles, the aspect most relevant to this discussion can be summarized as follows: by adhering to the public policy principles and design guidelines of New Urbanism, including creating mixed-use neighborhoods that are pedestrian friendly, town planners and developers can reduce negative impact on the environment and facilitate a sense of community among residents, thereby improving their quality of life. According to its proponents, New Urbanism facilitates a measurable a sense of community.<sup>34</sup> Implicit in the doctrine of New

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<sup>33</sup> “New Urbanism” (New Urbanism web site), available from <http://www.newurbanism.org/pages/416429/index.htm>, accessed November 21, 2005. Emphasis added.

<sup>34</sup> A seminal text of New Urbanism is Andrés Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream* (New York: North Point Press, 2000). There is inconsistency within scholarship on the movement as to whether or not the term is capitalized. I choose to follow the lead of the movement’s founders and adopt the spelling New Urbanism (unless quoting from a source that does not capitalize the term), further indicating its status as a movement rather than a passing fad. Unlike social scientists, whose qualitative ethnographic work notes the presence of,

Urbanism is an understanding that *sense of community* is positive, desirable, and able to be created.<sup>35</sup> As testament to the planning movement's success, the organization boasts that "there are over 500 New Urbanist projects planned or under construction in the United States alone."<sup>36</sup>

It is not only New Urbanists who have become increasingly concerned about the disappearance of traditional communal spirit, a spirit fostered and reinforced by interacting with neighbors. Nor is it only New Urbanists who recognize the development potential of building community. In many contemporary American urban and suburban settings, interaction with neighbors who live in close proximity is discouraged by a modern, unspoken code: keep to one's self for safety and privacy. To combat this, a business has emerged that aims to create a *sense of community*, and in so doing attract and secure residents. For example, to reduce tenant turnover in some apartment

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absence of, and politics informing a sense of community, practitioners of New Urbanism want to quantify the correlation between the practice and its desired outcome. See, for example, Joongsub Kim and Rachel Kaplan, "Physical and Psychological Factors in Sense of Community: New Urbanist Kentlands and Nearby Orchard Village," *Environment and Behavior* 36, no. 3 (2004).

<sup>35</sup> The sense of community advocated by New Urbanism, though rarely defined, seems to expand on the definition put forth by David McMillan and David Chavis. Their theory outlined four constitutive dimensions of a sense of community: membership, mutual influence, needs fulfillment, and emotional connection. These four aspects contribute to what I regard as the experiential essence of sense of community and sense of place. See David W. McMillan and David Chavis, "Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory," *Journal of Community Psychology* 14 (1986). Although David McMillan revisited the theory a decade later, his later thoughts have not been absorbed by empirical researchers as readily as were the earlier definition and theory (David W. McMillan, "Sense of Community," *Journal of Community Psychology* 24, no. 4 (1996)). David Harvey's critique of New Urbanism's "nostalgic appeal to 'community'" echoes the skeptical caution with which I approach New Urbanism, which seems inclined to embrace the ideal or image of community without critically evaluating the complexity and implications of the concept. David Harvey, "The New Urbanism and the Communitarian Trap," *Harvard Design Magazine*, Winter/Spring 1997, 3.

<sup>36</sup> "New Urbanism" (New Urbanism web site).

complexes, real estate companies nationwide employ Community Activities Resident Service Teams (CARES Teams).<sup>37</sup> The teams reside in the complexes and often live rent-free in exchange for organizing events designed to create a sense of community among tenants. President and Founder Stan Dobbs noted that interpersonal and relational amenities will not only attract and retain tenants, but will foster a caring community.<sup>38</sup> To reinforce the moral benefit and economic viability of building community, corporate materials remind potential clients that “[c]aring is not only the right thing to do but makes business sense as well.”<sup>39</sup> The Apartment Life corporation exemplifies the commodification of community, neatly encapsulated within apartment complexes.<sup>40</sup> Cynical though it may be, *community* has become another marketable feature of American life, a commodity form that can be produced, or so CARES Teams have us believe.

In discussing the essence of the commodity form, Robert Goldman and John Wilson noted that advertising “enhances the exchange value of existing goods and

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<sup>37</sup> The CARES program was conceived of and is administered by Apartment Life, a Christian non-profit corporation. General information about CARES can be found at the corporate web site: <http://www.apartmentlife.org>. My attention was drawn to this commodification of community through a newspaper article: Dawn Wotapka, “Free rent -- but at a price,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 5, 2003. About eighteen months after learning about CARES I moved into an apartment complex that has a CARES team, so I’ve seen first-hand their community building efforts.

<sup>38</sup> “Message from the President” (Apartment Life web site), available from <http://www.apartmentlife.org>, accessed April 11, 2004.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Apartment Life also complicates *community* by partnering religious motivations with market discourses. This fascinating relationship is worthy of further exploration but is beyond the scope of the present discussion.

transforms into commodities those goods and services we might not have considered commodities before.”<sup>41</sup> Their statement articulates the transformative capacity of marketing and is applicable to commodities as diverse as perfume (the subject of their interrogation), sense of community, food, place, and identity. As Sylvia Rodriguez determined in her study of contemporary Taos, the reinvigoration of ethnicity or ethnic identity can become social and economic capital as part of a tourism economy.<sup>42</sup> Whether it is by magnification of ethnic identity or promotion of a food-place association, local identity can be commodified. Through self-inscription and promotional materials, the celebrated identity becomes social, symbolic, and economic capital.<sup>43</sup>

Since the mid-nineteenth century, town leaders throughout American have recognized the capacity of festivals to evoke civic pride, affirm community solidarity, and differentiate one locality from another. Festivals were organized, particularly throughout the American West, for example, to differentiate the emerging young cities

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<sup>41</sup> Robert Goldman and John Wilson, “Appearance and Essence: The Commodity Form Revealed in Perfume Advertisements,” *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* 4 (1983).

<sup>42</sup> Sylvia Rodriguez, “Ethnic Reconstruction in Contemporary Taos,” *Journal of the Southwest* 32, no. 4 (1990). The relationship between tourism economy and the creation or magnification of ethnic identity has been explored by several scholars. See, for example, Stephen Frenkel and Judy Walton, “Bavarian Leavenworth and the Symbolic Economy of a Theme Town,” *Geographical Review* 90, no. 4 (2000); Hoelscher, *Heritage on Stage: The Invention of Ethnic Place in America's Little Switzerland*; Dean MacCannell, “Reconstructed Identity: Tourism and Cultural Identity in Third World Communities,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 11, no. 3 (1984).

<sup>43</sup> I am using social capital in a Bourdieuan sense, as a means of asserting distinction. Symbolic capital is the employment of symbols in efforts to mark differentiation among people, places, or things. For an exegesis on the relationship between capital and distinction, see Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.

with the goal of attracting new residents.<sup>44</sup> Festivals still are regarded as a strategy for economic boosterism and for building and affirming collective identity.

## **PLACE-BASED FOOD FESTIVALS: FOOD, LOCALITY, AND THE THEMING OF IDENTITY**

One example of a deliberate effort to create a sense of place and/or a sense of community is the place-based food festival. In this project I explore what I term “place-based food festivals.” Such festivals are organized by community leaders in a particular town, themed, held in that locale, and iconize specific food items. A place-based food festival is similar to what George H. Lewis called a “rationally constructed food festival.”<sup>45</sup> He explained such festivals are not linked to an ethnic heritage, “but instead ‘celebrate’ a particular foodstuff, and by so doing, attempt to link this foodstuff to a particular community, or region.”<sup>46</sup> I refine his concept of rationally constructed food festivals by considering only those food festivals for which the food item has a physical connection to the landscape: the food is or was grown or produced there.<sup>47</sup> The link may

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<sup>44</sup> Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983).

<sup>45</sup> Lewis, “Celebrating Asparagus: Community and the Rationally Constructed Food Festival.”

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73-74.

<sup>47</sup> Originally I intended to focus on festivals that celebrated an active agricultural relationship between a locality and the selected food item. In several instances during preliminary fieldwork, when I attended as many place-based food festivals as possible, I found that the connection being commemorated in such festivals was often more historic than contemporary. In many instances, the food item was still an important component of local identity, an identity affirmed through an annual celebration of the food item. That said, there are ample examples of such festivals taking place in localities where the food product continues to be grown and processed. The concept place-based food festival thus is applicable to events that commemorate a contemporary and/or an historic connection between a locality and a food item.

be historic or current, agricultural or industrial; it may be largely nostalgic. By focusing on festivals that celebrate a food item with a direct connection to the land, I emphasize the potentially advantageous place-making capacity of highlighting an agricultural past or present. I deliberately do not consider ethnic festivals and Chili Cookoffs as place-based food festivals because they do not have a direct connection to the landscape.<sup>48</sup>

Place-based food festivals in particular, like contemporary community festivals in general, are descended from traditional agricultural fairs. The American agricultural fair is a composite social institution, “part Roman carnival, part medieval market fair, and part English cattle show.”<sup>49</sup> American agricultural associations, which emerged in great numbers after the 1840s, and the agricultural fairs they spawned, are regarded as “the paramount forms of collective activity among the rural population and the fair the dominant institutionalized expression of that activity.”<sup>50</sup> The evolution of the agricultural fair over the course of the nineteenth century from a “practical farming community event into a more complex leisure and profit-oriented event” reflects the century’s general

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<sup>48</sup> Arguably, some ethnic food festivals have this sort of connection to the land. Early immigrants may have settled in certain areas in part because they felt an affinity for the landscape and topography. I avoid festivals that are primarily defined by or promoted as celebrating a single ethnic or cultural group.

<sup>49</sup> Karal Ann Marling, *Blue Ribbon: A Social and Pictorial History of the Minnesota State Fair* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1990), 77. In her presentation of the Minnesota State Fair, Marling encapsulated the transition undergone by American community festivities from agricultural fair to modern community festival. Aspects of the traditional agricultural fair continue to thrive at some community fairs, particularly state and county fairs.

<sup>50</sup> Wayne Caldwell Neely, *The Agricultural Fair* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), 89.

societal, economic, and population shifts.<sup>51</sup> Even as populations relocated increasingly to cities during the late-nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, agricultural fairs retained their appeal: in 1935, Wayne Caldwell Neely observed that fairs had become “an intimate part of the immediate social scheme.”<sup>52</sup> In fact, “‘Going to the fair’ ha[d] become a significant recreational event in the social life of many generations of the human family.”<sup>53</sup> Contemporary community festivals persist in being significant recreational events for many families, and their ubiquity on community calendars across the country suggests that civic leaders recognize their appeal.

If the nineteenth-century American agricultural fair was a metaphor for rural society, as Linda Borish asserted, the modern community festival is a metaphor for contemporary society.<sup>54</sup> At community festivals, as in urban and suburban America, agricultural elements are enclosed, contained, and spectaclized (e.g., petting zoo), consumption of food and entertainment are highlighted, and competition is privileged in carnival amusements and themed contests. Community festivals continue to be a metaphor and an articulation of the host-locales’ collective identity, or, rather, the identity that image makers and festival organizers hope to affirm among residents and have associated with the locale for visitors.

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<sup>51</sup> Linda J. Borish, “‘A Fair, Without *the* Fair, is No Fair at All’: Women and the New England Agricultural Fair in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Sport History* 24, no. 2 (1997): 155.

<sup>52</sup> Neely, *The Agricultural Fair*, 184.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

In studying place-based food festivals, my focus is on the way collective identities – past, present, and future – are presented and commodified through food events. Because of its ambiguity, I avoid using the term community to refer to people living in geographic proximity, favoring instead locality, which implies physical proximity, and connotes site specificity.<sup>55</sup> The concept of locality, like the concept of region, must be understood as relational to space and place.<sup>56</sup> John Urry defined locality as referring “to two interconnected sets of processes, the social and the spatial, which happen to produce particular combinations of social relations within a given geographically delimited area,” including external and internal factors that influence social and spatial relations.<sup>57</sup> His definition, intended to provide clarity, remains ambiguous: since all social processes are contextualized, his definition could apply to region or other terms of spatial classification. Recognizing that, it is essential to clarify further what is meant by locality.

Locality is constituted of changeable, spatialized social, economic, and political relations that shape and reshape individual and collective identities. I understand locality

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<sup>54</sup> Borish, “‘A Fair, Without *the* Fair, is No Fair at All’: Women and the New England Agricultural Fair in the Mid-Nineteenth Century.”

<sup>55</sup> Although both *locality* and *place* imply physical situatedness and are understood as subjectively defined, my use of *sense of place* inclined me to embrace a term other than *place* to refer to the peopled sites being discussed.

<sup>56</sup> My approach to locality is informed by “locality concept” theory as well as the complementary “global-localism” theory vigorously pursued by some geographers in the 1980s and 1990s. Among the notable contributions made by these approaches is recognition of agency at local levels and of the dialogic interaction between global and local processes. Allen, Massey, and Cochrane, eds., *Rethinking the Region*; T.C. Chang, “Local Uniqueness in the Global Village: Heritage Tourism in Singapore,” *Professional Geographer* 51, no. 1 (1999). See also works on globalism cited in Note 4.

<sup>57</sup> John Urry, “Society, Space, and Locality,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 5 (1987): 435.

to be dynamic, informed by, and informative of the physical spaces that comprise it as well as the people who reside in and pass through it. Locality and locale, as I use the terms, refer to physically and politically conceptualized inhabited places, as well as the clusters of people who reside there in geographical proximity. They are not physically bounded areas but complex articulations of power, identities, ideas, and expectations. The delimiter “geographical proximity” must remain undefined because each town’s or city’s physical and imagined borders vary and are subject to change resulting from factors such as population growth and decline, property annexation, and economic development. Conceiving of locality and place in terms of social and spatial relations can shed light on the created nature of place and on the formation of identities associated with them.

Locality as a concept also stands for something intangible, in flux, under continuous negotiation and renegotiation. It can be understood as a “structure of feeling.”<sup>58</sup> Arjun Appadurai’s consideration of deterritorialized ethnoscaples leads him to assert that locality is relational and contextual, not spatial and scalar. By comparison I consider locality, like landscape, as having both phenomenological as well as dimensional qualities. The former is situation or contextually relative, acknowledging that people develop attitudes about places with which they interact or ideas of particular

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<sup>58</sup> Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. This conception of locality parallels the definition of place held by Tuan and many other humanist geographers: places are created through sensory perception and social activities, both of which contribute to the assignation of values to space, thus transforming space into meaningful place. Yi-Fu Tuan, “Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative-Descriptive Approach,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81, no. 4 (1991); Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*.

places. The latter, the dimensional quality, is a site-relational, spatial orientation acknowledging that people and places are understood, at least in part, by their interaction with physical space, even if the interaction is negative or not readily visible. It is essential to remember that *locality* refers to a structure of feelings and represents a theoretical construct. Like the other terms being interrogated in this chapter, locality is a hermeneutic tool rather than an organic entity.

A place-based food festival most often is organized in the service of creating place-identity for a specific locality. A derivative of the traditional fair held to celebrate agricultural production and bounty, the modern food festival is less about displays of production and more about displays of consumption.<sup>59</sup> Although ephemeral, the food festival is central to the processes of community building. It reinforces and contributes to collective memory; it provides a sense of history for current residents. And it allows current residents to be part of tomorrow's history by including them in the history-making activities of the festival. What fosters a sense of community is an awareness of this past, a sense that it informs the present and will shape the future. Such communities are involved in retelling their stories, be it constitutive narratives as Bellah et al. explore, or a smaller chapter of the story, as symbolically represented in a place-based food festival.<sup>60</sup> In the case of a place-based food festival, the collective story is not about

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<sup>59</sup> Abrahams, "An American Vocabulary of Celebration."

<sup>60</sup> Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*.

exemplary individuals but about a food product that is or was important at some time in that locale.

Place-based food festivals involve the theming of a place as well as the theming of identity. For example, in Gilroy, California, home of the Gilroy Garlic Festival, Festival organizers and image makers created a themed identity by promoting the association between Gilroy and garlic, between the city and a product grown and processed in the Santa Clara Valley. Gilroy leaders downplay the reality that more garlic is grown in surrounding counties than in Santa Clara County by omitting such information from promotional materials. Doing so indicates that they do not base their deliberate food-place identity on nostalgia for the area's agricultural past. Instead, the promoted association between Gilroy and garlic is based on the fact that most of the garlic grown in the region comes to Gilroy for processing. Because Gilroy is a center of garlic production, packaging and dehydration, promotional materials are factual when they note that Gilroy is "supplying about 90% of garlic in the United States."<sup>61</sup> Through association of the place with the food item, the town became a foodscape. The garlic theme subsequently shaped and continues to shape people's perceptions of the place. Gilroy has become a festive foodscape among people who have heard about or seen promotions for the Festival.

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<sup>61</sup> "Garlic" brochure produced by Christopher Ranch. Author's files.

Implicit in the theming of place is the exclusion of other possible markers of identity or themes that were not selected. T.C. Chang observed that the theming of places leads to a taming of those places, subsequently diluting or dimming the complexities of cultural identity.<sup>62</sup> He asserted that by theming places, “planners inadvertently freeze their identities and stultify their potential to evolve organically, effacing their myriad histories on the one hand while confining their future to a pre-ordained narrative on the other.”<sup>63</sup> A food-themed identity will necessarily divert away from other potentially identity-defining features, such as cultural diversity, topographic features, history, or other local industries. Over time, the locale is equated with and branded by its association with the iconic food so that the theme overrides the complex identity landscape.

### **PLACE BRANDING AND TERROIR**

In his critique of geographically fragmented, commodified places, Edward Relph described a vapid placelessness. He argued that commodification of place qualities, in its attempt to distinguish place, can “illustrate the lack of distinctiveness . . . for there is nothing in them [the marked places] to promote affection or a sense of belonging.”<sup>64</sup> An

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<sup>62</sup> T.C. Chang, “Theming Cities, Taming Places: Insights from Singapore,” *Geografiska Annaler* 82 B, no. 1 (2000).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*: 35.

<sup>64</sup> Edward C. Relph, “Modernity and the Reclamation of Place,” in *From Dwelling, Seeing, and Designing: Toward a Phenomenological Ecology*, ed. David Seamon (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 32. See also Edward C. Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, Ltd., 1976).

excess of marked places might seem to address Relph's placelessness criticism but, in fact, it does just the opposite: it produces an excess of superficially differentiated places.

Late in the twentieth century, a public relations and advertising sub-field known as brand management morphed into another field called place branding.<sup>65</sup> Place branding manipulates "place" through marketing and is contingent on incorporation and use of "what it considers real, authentic places."<sup>66</sup> Steve Hoelscher suggested that the concept of authenticity is "perhaps the most central to the relationship of place to commodification."<sup>67</sup> This is true when considering how places are presented as commodified forms meant to represent something they are not, such as New Glarus, Wisconsin, the focus of Hoelscher's research, where staged ethnic authenticity is interpreted as a "real" "Swissness." The complexity of issues about projected and perceived authenticity is relevant to the commodification of identity and place, especially for studies concerned with ethnic and historic representation.

Many scholars correctly bracket the term authenticity, recognizing its ambiguity and the potentially dangerous connotations of the authentic/inauthentic dichotomy.<sup>68</sup> Like

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<sup>65</sup> For a brief overview of the nascent field of place branding and associated academic literature, see John Hannigan, "Symposium on Branding, the Entertainment Economy and Urban Place Building: An Introduction," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 2 (2003); Søren Buhl Pedersen, "Place Branding: Giving the Region of Øresund a Competitive Edge," *Journal of Urban Technology* 11, no. 1 (2004).

<sup>66</sup> Pedersen, "Place Branding: Giving the Region of Øresund a Competitive Edge," 77.

<sup>67</sup> Hoelscher, *Heritage on Stage: The Invention of Ethnic Place in America's Little Switzerland*, 22-23.

<sup>68</sup> Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); Edward Bruner, "Abraham Lincoln as Authentic Reproduction: A Critique of

those who suggest we transcend the dichotomy, I regard authenticity as subjectively experienced, situational, and emergent. This study eschews discussion of authenticity because the concept did not emerge in the course of ethnographic research, indicating to me that it was not relevant to the people, events, and places with which I am working.

Place connotes physical, spatial dimensions as well as conceptual, ideational dimensions. A branded place exists vis-à-vis its acceptance by those to whom the place brand is marketed. Place branding aims to facilitate what Søren Buhl Pedersen called the “legibility of a location,” something assumed by ethnographers and cultural geographers who, for generations, have ‘read’ landscape.<sup>69</sup> Through marketing, place branding aspires to create a viable collective identity, an identity that will be accepted by locals and believed by non-locals. Although the community identities I introduce in subsequent chapters were not generated by professional place branders, the rhetoric of that field parallels the processes civic-minded image makers employ in the service of community building.

The examples explored in subsequent chapters are only a small sampling of the seemingly ubiquitous phenomenon of towns, cities, even regions, becoming associated with particular foods. Regional foodways become markers of regional identity, much as built structures come to symbolize cities in or near which they stand, for example, Time

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Postmodernism,” *American Anthropologist* 96 (1994); Erik Cohen, “Authenticity and Commodification in Tourism,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 15 (1988).

<sup>69</sup> Pedersen, “Place Branding: Giving the Region of Øresund a Competitive Edge,” 78.

Square for New York City, the Golden Gate Bridge for San Francisco. Such symbolic markers are necessarily selective and therefore are limited representations of the complex sites they represent. Nevertheless, they are tenacious, reinforced by visual and rhetorical representations such as tourist postcards, commercial travel literature, and media that incorporate and perpetuate such associations. In the work that follows, I explore how some food-place associations are created where they previously did not exist. While the association of Gilroy and garlic may seem organic, it is not; the process of its realization is a superb study in place branding through iconizing food.

Noticeably absent from most discussions of food-place associations in the United States is the French concept of *terroir*. *Terroir*, which has no precise equivalent in the English language, refers primarily to the influences soil characteristics and geology have in shaping flavor typicity and consequently the perceived quality of French wines.<sup>70</sup> The concept also connotes other flavor-informing factors, most importantly environmental (microclimate), biological (grape variety and rootstock) and human (historic influences)

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<sup>70</sup> Despite the absence of a precise meaning, *terroir* is accepted as present in wine and certain foods. Although there are different approaches to understanding *terroir*, ranging from philosophical to scientific, there is a shared understanding that the term encompasses various factors that contribute to identifiable geographic flavor typicity. Although *terroir* fundamentally refers specifically to soil and climate characteristics, generally it is understood as encompassing human as well as site specific variables. My understanding of *terroir* is derived from years of learning about wine, conversations with wine professionals, and the following sources: Kolleen M. Guy, "Rituals of Pleasure: Wine Consumption and the Making of French Identity in the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Society*, ed. Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton (New York: Routledge, 2002); ---, *When Champagne Became French: Wine and the Making of a National Identity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003); Robert E. White, *Soils for Wines* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); James E. Wilson, *Terroir: The Role of Geology, Climate, and Culture in the Making of French Wines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

variables.<sup>71</sup> The distinctive characteristics of European wines have long been attributed to the inherent *terroir* of their production, with emphasis on the distinct soils in which the grape-producing vines are grown. Until recently, New World wine producers and wine writers have focused less on *terroir* and more on grape type and production technology as central to determining flavor profiles. As competition for consumers grows along side an apparent interest in using place as a marker of differentiation and distinction, New World viticulturalists and wine writers increasingly incorporate *terroir* into their vernacular.<sup>72</sup> It is becoming so familiar that some suggest the nostalgic implications of *terroir* are being used for marketing and even political purposes.<sup>73</sup> The term, now prevalent in global oenophilic circles, has seeped into the parlance of gourmet food cognoscenti who recognize that the notion of site characterization is applicable to more than grape vines

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<sup>71</sup> The inclusion of a human aspect in *terroir* is problematic, especially as the term is used by New World wine makers. There is no word for “wine maker” in French, nor in German, Italian, or Spanish. *Vignerons* is the French term for grape growers, historically the same people who made wine. Wine educator Brian Smith noted *vigneron* implies that the grape farmer is a partner with the earth and that he is at the mercy of what it offers or delivers. This conception of wine production as a partnership between grape grower and the earth deprives the wine “maker” agency, but that is the point – *terroir* is not about techniques of wine production: it is about the characteristics the earth imparts into the grapes. The person transforming the grapes into a fermented beverage allows the placeness of those grapes to shine. Smith noted that “[t]he danger of including the human element in *terroir* in modern winemaking is that it allows the scientific fact of making the wine to be considered as part of *terroir*.” To avoid that, the human aspect has been creatively represented by Hugh Johnson as “the soul of the *vigneron*.” Brian H. Smith, personal communication, October 29, 2005; Hugh Johnson, Foreword to Wilson, *Terroir: The Role of Geology, Climate, and Culture in the Making of French Wines*, 4.

<sup>72</sup> Recent titles that suggest increased attention to and incorporation of *terroir* in discussions of New World grape growing and wine include Gerald D. Boyd, *The Science Behind the Napa Valley Appellation* (St. Helena: Napa Valley Vintners, 2004); John Gladstones, *Viticulture and Environment* (Adelaide: Wine Titles, 1992); Jonathan Swinchatt and David G. Howell, *The Winemaker's Dance: Exploring Terroir in Napa Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>73</sup> Although he does not ascribe to that theory, Robert E. White noted in his overview of French *vignerons*' and scientists' views of *terroir* that some critics do. White, *Soils for Wines*.

and their resulting wines. Noting its success within the world of wine, particularly among esteemed French wine producers, some makers of artisanal foods have adopted *terroir* in describing their products.<sup>74</sup>

The absence of *terroir*, or similar concepts, in most scholarship of the commodification of place reflects its absence among image makers and those concerned with place branding through food. Yet the concept is pertinent to food-place discourses. In Chapter Six I consider how it may be applied to enhance attempts at place differentiation.

## CONCLUSION

Through common usage, the concepts problematized in this chapter have come to represent seemingly stable and fixed entities. They must not be conceived as self-sustaining organisms, however. It is important to differentiate between a physical, situated understanding of the terms and the phenomenological and affective essences of the terms. Because of the ambiguities presented, I particularly am cautious about using the term *community* in the pages that follow. Unless otherwise noted, when I do use it I am referring to the experiential essence that the word connotes.

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<sup>74</sup> Artisanal Restaurant and its affiliated Artisanal Cheese Center in New York City exemplify how the concept of *terroir* has been embraced and marketed by producers, distributors, and admirers of artisanal cheeses made throughout the world. Florid descriptions of some fine cultured milk products, can be found on the Artisanal Cheese Center's web site. "Our Selection" (Artisanal Cheese Center web site), available from <http://www.artisanalcheese.com/artisanal/index.cfm>, accessed October 28, 2005.

For all the pessimism about the collapse of community, there is as much optimism visible through paradigmatic shifts in social theory. Edward Relph noted that the difficulty of many who wrote about “the disappearance of places, is that their thinking and their language have failed to keep pace with changes in the world.”<sup>75</sup> The remedy, Relph continued, is to accept that the world is changing, to understand the reconstituted geographies that result from the changes, and to be aware of the interrelationships that inform contemporary senses of place. Accepting that community and its meanings also change over time, Bender criticized that the metaphor of social change leading to the collapse of community is highly deterministic. Instead of falling prey to an inaccurate interpretation of reality, he urged scholars to focus on the tension and interaction within and between society and community rather than on the collapse or decline of them.<sup>76</sup>

Clearly this chapter has not presented a comprehensive examination of *community*, *place*, *sense of community*, or *sense of place*. Instead I’ve presented a focused consideration of the terms and their implications in research and praxis. Since it is impossible to offer absolute definitions of the concepts, I suggest instead that it is precisely their ambiguity and malleability that make them so attractive and tenacious. The multifarious and ambiguous terms examined above are present, by implication if not

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<sup>75</sup> Edward C. Relph, “Sense of Place,” in *Ten Geographic Ideas that Changed the World*, ed. Susan Hanson (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 224.

explicitly, in the following chapters, ethnographic explorations of the iconization of food in the service of community building and place branding.

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<sup>76</sup> Bender, *Community and Social Change in America*.

## Chapter Three

### Evolution of Identities: Gilroy and the Iconization of Garlic

You smell Gilroy before you see it. As you drive south from San Jose on California's Highway 101, a few miles north of the city the air changes. When you roll down the car window and inhale, you are aware of a distinctive aroma. It reminds you of something. It is not unpleasant. It is familiar, yet somehow elusive. Residents used to joke that one could make garlic bread by waving a fresh loaf of bread out the window during the garlic processing season.<sup>1</sup> Yes, that is the smell, garlic – not burnt and acrid, not raw and peppery, but toasted and soft.

Miles of highway bisect the expansive Santa Clara Valley. To the east and west of the thoroughfare near Gilroy are nurseries, tree farms, orchards, horse farms, and other visual signs that agriculture is a vital component of the area's economy. Along one stretch on the west side of the highway north of Gilroy is a golf course, the manicured fairways of which seem a stark juxtaposition against the fields and buildings that comprise the agricultural landscape. Barely visible in the distance off to the west are steeply angled roofs of recent housing subdivisions that suggest the changing character of the area.

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Walker, "Vichy, Capital of Free France compared to Gilroy, Garlic Capital of the World, 20-Sept-2003" (Trekshare web site), available from <http://www.trekshare.com/index.cfm?p1=48&journalid=7657>, accessed March 15, 2004.

Every year during the last full weekend in July, traffic along Highway 101 backs up each morning and remains congested throughout the day, as thousands of people descend on the otherwise quiet city of Gilroy to eat garlic, braid garlic, observe a garlic cooking contest and cooking demonstrations, watch garlic being topped, and buy garlic-themed ephemera. How did Gilroy image makers settle upon a food item in general, and garlic in particular, as the icon around which to build a communal identity? How has the association of Gilroy with garlic and the yearly Festival celebrating that association transformed Gilroy into a festive foodscape? Why is a festival venerating these small, non-indigenous cloves long eschewed by Anglo-Americans so popular? This chapter will explore these questions and more.

In this chapter I consider the creation of Gilroy's identity as a food-themed place.<sup>2</sup> Civic and local business leaders created a themed identity by promoting an association between garlic, which is grown and processed in Gilroy, and the city of Gilroy. Although Gilroy's economy comprises much more than garlic, it is the garlic association that is marketed in diverse media. Consequently, garlic tends to be what people know about Gilroy, whether or not they have attended the Festival.<sup>3</sup> Garlic and the Festival put Gilroy on the tourism map and into the popular imagination. Gilroy is not a themed city like Las Vegas, but the tenacious association between garlic and Gilroy enables me to

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<sup>2</sup> My observations and analysis of Gilroy are based on multiple visits to the city between 1999 and 2005, formal interviews and informal conversations with residents of and visitors to Gilroy, archival research, and annual attendance at the Gilroy Garlic Festival.

<sup>3</sup> In the seven years that I have been researching, writing about, and attending the Gilroy Garlic Festival, I have mentioned it to hundreds of people. Most often, my mention of the festival was met with recognition. Even if the speaker had never attended the festival, s/he was familiar with the food-place association. This was especially true among former and current Bay area residents, and foodies. The former, no doubt, have

assert with confidence that it is a *branded* city. It is a foodscape because its identity as a place is marketed to and often recalled among a diverse public by its association with a food item. Furthermore, I suggest that Gilroy is a festive foodscape: through frequent and successful promotion of the Festival by image makers, including city leaders, the Visitors Bureau, and media that feature stories about the Festival, what people “know” about Gilroy is that it hosts the Gilroy Garlic Festival.

This chapter is about how image makers present Gilroy, through the Festival in particular, to the outside world. I explore how image makers, who have selected a food item grown and processed in Gilroy around which to construct a communal identity, use the festival frame to perpetuate the locality’s branded identity. In this and subsequent chapters, I read the Gilroy Garlic Festival as a text that provides insights into the construction and maintenance of Gilroy’s identity as a locale, and shapes several sub-locale communities created and sustained through the Festival. I situate consideration of the appropriation of garlic as the Gilroy’s identificational symbol alongside garlic’s transition from an ingredient iconic of a particular immigrant population to its gradual incorporation into American foodways and its iconization by Gilroy image makers. The prevalence of a diverse range of garlic-centric consumer goods like garlic cookbooks, garlic-infused oils, and homeopathic garlic tablets indicate that Americans have come to accept garlic. This transition is an important aspect of Gilroy’s selection of and success with branding itself Garlic Capital of the World. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the iconization of garlic as the basis of Gilroy’s identity as a foodscape.

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seen marketing that targets them as potential festival goers; the latter tend to know about food-themed

## GILROY, CALIFORNIA: PAST AND PRESENT

Gilroy, California, is located in southern Santa Clara County, approximately eighty miles south of San Francisco. (Figure 3.1) Santa Clara County is home to the Silicon Valley and substantial agribusiness.<sup>4</sup> The Santa Clara Valley around Gilroy is a fertile plain enclosed on the northeast by the Contra Costa Mountain range and on the west by the Coast Range Mountains. Its moderate climate is attributable to the melding of sea breezes from the San Francisco and Monterey Bays with the arid heat of the valley. Previously known for its prolific pitted fruit production and dairy industry, Gilroy is now world renowned for its annual garlic festival.



**FIGURE 3.1. GILROY, CALIFORNIA**

events because of the exposure such events receive in food-niche media.

<sup>4</sup> Silicon Valley is the colloquial nickname for San Jose and the surrounding area, so assigned because the city is a center for high technology innovation and industries. Silicon in the name refers an ingredient used in making the semiconductors that are used in computers.

In the early- to mid-nineteenth century, the area around Gilroy was home to thriving ranching, grain farming, and logging and lumber industries.<sup>5</sup> The town itself emerged in the 1850s as a stagecoach stop along the San Jose to Monterey Road. Initially known as the township of Pleasant Valley, it was incorporated as the Town of Gilroy in 1868. Two years later it was incorporated as the City of Gilroy by the California State Legislature.<sup>6</sup> Following the arrival of the railroad in 1869 Gilroy experienced associated commercial growth, as did many small cities throughout the west in this era. During the last third of the nineteenth century, Gilroy began its transition from a rural, farming town to a regional agricultural, commercial, and industrial center.

Local recorded history notes that the southern Europeans who arrived in Gilroy in the 1890s planted row crops for their own consumption. Among their homegrown foods were tomatoes, peppers, onions, and garlic. Foreshadowing the city's industrial and identificational future, in 1897 the first commercial dehydrator was built, though at that time its use was not specifically for garlic. That early operation grew into what is today Gilroy Foods, a division of ConAgra. Italian residents of Gilroy who planted garlic for their own use were the main garlic growers in the area until Japanese farmers arrived in 1918 and began to grow it for commercial purposes. By 1940 Gilroy could boast that it

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<sup>5</sup> Throughout most of the twentieth century, Gilroy's economy was dominated by agriculture and agricultural processing. The primary crops changed with time, as did agricultural technology, and consumer demands and desires. Condensed versions of the town's agricultural and settlement histories are found in "City of Gilroy Consolidated Plan July 1, 1995 to June 30, 2000," (City of Gilroy, 1995); Patricia Baldwin Escamilla, *Gilroy, California: A Short History* (Gilroy: Gilroy Historical Museum, 1997). My overview of Gilroy's history is drawn from these sources, newspaper articles and other historical source materials in the Gilroy Historical Museum, and interviews of Gilroyans during the course of my field research.

<sup>6</sup> Although Gilroy, with a population of just over 300 people, was established by 1867, it was not until February 18, 1868, that the Town of Gilroy was incorporated by the Santa Clara County Board of

was home to the largest commercial garlic farm in the United States. Farms raising food crops shared the valley with fields of floral crops being grown for a burgeoning commercial seed industry. Following the early success of the now-defunct Pieters-Wheeler Seed Company, founded in 1911, commercial seed farm operations such as Goldsmith Plants, Inc. continue to thrive in the Valley around Gilroy.

Since the late 1940s, Gilroy's population has consistently expanded and its economic base has changed accordingly. The first wave of growth reflects the national post-World War II population trend as families of military men left their bases and settled in nearby towns.<sup>7</sup> (Tables 3.1, 3.2) The subsequent baby boom contributed to Gilroy's remarkable population increases through the 1950s. Gilroy's rapid population growth through the 1970s and 1980s is attributable to explosive growth of the high technology sector in neighboring San Jose. The city's population steadily increased as it evolved into a bedroom community for San Jose. As the high technology industry boomed, people working in San Jose looked south for land on which to build large, single-family homes. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, agricultural ranches increasingly were converted into single-family home subdivisions, development that continues apace into the early years of the twenty-first century. Repeated visits to Gilroy suggest that the land immediately around the swelling city is more valuable for housing, retail, and industry than it is for farming. Accompanying the upscale housing boom has been the appearance of upscale

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Supervisors. On March 12, 1870, the City of Gilroy was incorporated by the California State Legislature. By this time the young city had grown to 3,000 residents. Escamilla, *Gilroy, California: A Short History*.

<sup>7</sup> Monterey Bay, just 40 miles from Gilroy, was home to Fort Ord as well as a United States Naval Reservation. Like many other towns in the area, Gilroy experienced a significant post-World War II flow of military personnel from Monterey Bay.

specialty markets and national chain retail outlets as previously open spaces continue to be transformed into spaces of domestic and retail consumption.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Mark Gottdiener differentiated between “consumption of space” for business or residential or tourism purposes, and “spaces of consumption,” which are engineered, themed spaces. Mark Gottdiener, “The Consumption of Space and the Spaces of Consumption,” in *New Forms of Consumption: Consumers, Culture, and Commodification*, ed. Mark Gottdiener (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

**TABLE 3.1. GILROY POPULATION, 1940-2000**

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<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>% Change_</u> <u>within Gilroy</u>	<u>% Change</u> <u>within Santa_</u> <u>Clara County</u>
1940	3,615	+3.2	---
1950	4,951	+12.8	+66.1
1960	7,348	+22.1	+121.0
1970	12,665	+72.4	+65.8
1980	21,641	+70.8	+ .09
1990	31,487	+45.5	+15.6
2000	41,464	+31.4	+12.1

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Sources: Doug Kuczynski, California Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit, personal communication, December 6, 2005; California State Department of Finance, “Historical Census Populations of California State, Counties, Cities, Places, and Towns, 1850-2000 ” (California State Department of Finance web site), available from <http://www.dof.ca.gov/HTML/DEMOGRAP/CALHIST2a.XLS>, accessed June 20, 2005; U.S. Census Bureau, “California 1990, 2000 Census Comparison Tables” (U.S. Census Bureau web site), available from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/0629504.html>, accessed June 20, 2005; ----, “Gilroy (city), California” (U.S. Census Bureau web site), available from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/0629504.html>, accessed June 20, 2005.

**TABLE 3.2. RACIAL COMPOSITION OF GILROY, 2000<sup>9</sup>**

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<u>Racial category</u>	<u>Number of respondents</u>	<u>% of local population</u>
White	24,426	58.9
Asian	1,810	4.4
Black or African American	745	1.8
American Indian and Alaska Native	661	1.6
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	105	0.3
Other races	11,499	27.7
Two or more races	2,218	5.3
Total population	41,464	100

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Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, “QT-P3. Race and Hispanic or Latino: 2000, Gilroy city, California ” (U.S. Census Bureau web site), available from [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=16000US0629504&-qr\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_U\\_QTP3&-ds\\_name=D&-\\_lang=en&-redoLog=false](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=16000US0629504&-qr_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U_QTP3&-ds_name=D&-_lang=en&-redoLog=false), accessed August 30, 2004.

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<sup>9</sup> According to self-identification data provided by Census 2000 respondents. Inconsistencies in the number totals are a confusing aspect of census data. Percentage numbers may equal less or more than 100% because individual respondents may report more than one race. Such inconsistencies in numbers are explained as “nonsampling error.” These numbers potentially are a problematic and inaccurate reflection of Gilroy’s real population. For numerous reasons, including in particular fear of legal repercussions in the case of undocumented agricultural laborers, people may not complete census information or may not report accurately. City officials may not challenge inaccuracies because, as Don Mitchell demonstrated, historically, non-white Latino workers have been undercounted and “lumped together” by power brokers in the interest of creating representations of California’s beautiful landscape. See Mitchell, *The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape*.

The City Council had the foresight to incorporate growth-controlling limits amid increasing conversion of ranch land into upscale planned residential communities. Beginning in 1979 with Ordinance 79-28, the Council adopted its first Residential Development Ordinance (RDO) intended to control growth and to balance land use, jobs, and “community,” though the document neglects to define what is meant by the last term. Initially reviewed annually, the “modern RDO,” as it is now called, is incorporated into the City’s ten year Consolidated Plan. In the RDO the City Council specifies the maximum number of housing unit building permits to be issued for the coming years. Developers and builders compete for these permits, thus city planners control residential growth.

Consideration of the ongoing need to provide housing for migrant workers who are vital to Gilroy’s economy accompanies local planners’ concerns about the environmental and economic impacts the rapid increase of large, expensive single family housing developments are having. A section entitled “Farmworker Housing” in the 2000 *City of Gilroy Consolidated Plan* indicated awareness by city officials, or at least those who drafted the *Plan*, that housing needs of migrant worker families require special attention. Agriculture and agribusiness-associated industry continue to be the keystones of Gilroy’s economy. The garlic industry is the city’s largest private employer. Christopher Ranch, L.L.C., the country’s leader in fresh garlic production, and Gilroy Foods, the world’s largest supplier of dehydrated garlic, onion, vegetables, and

capsicums, together employ more than 1,100 people, nearly 400 more than the next largest non-government employer.<sup>10</sup>

Prior to the Gilroy Garlic Festival, Gilroy had more negative than positive associations defining its identity among Bay area residents. Drivers along Highway 101 passed Gilroy on their way to other places. Gilroy was where Highway 101 reduced from a four-lane, divided highway to a two-lane road. This resulted in frequent traffic jams during peak travel times and speed traps for southbound traffic where a speed limit reduction corresponded to the reduced road size. Regional lore recalls Gilroy's reputation in the early 1970s for generously handing out speeding tickets to passers-by.<sup>11</sup>

Gilroy was also known for its smell. During harvest season and the months immediately following, scent emanating from tomato canneries and prune and garlic dehydrators filled the air. Unable to be contained, the industries' olfactory byproducts, particularly garlic, drifted up and down the Valley, and beyond. Local author Kathryn

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<sup>10</sup> Gilroy Economic Development Commission, "Local Business, Economy" (Gilroy Economic Development Commission web site, 2004), available from [www.gilroyedc.com/localbusiness.htm](http://www.gilroyedc.com/localbusiness.htm), accessed July 21, 2004. These calculations exclude retail, government, and health services, which would be substantial. The EDC chooses to promote employment figures for private, non-government entities, consistent with economic development materials published by many other cities. Because that is how city leaders choose to represent themselves, these are the numbers I use as well. Prior to the opening of Bonfante Gardens Theme Park in 2001, Christopher Ranch and Gilroy Foods were the area's two largest employers. They are now ranked numbers two and three, respectively, but their employee numbers combine to secure the garlic industry's place as the largest employer in Gilroy. According to the Bill Christopher, Christopher Ranch has about 450 full time, year-round employees and about 2,000 seasonal (approximately June, July, August) workers. These numbers total well over the 538 employees recorded in EDC documents and on the EDC web site. Gilroy Foods processes garlic, among other vegetables; Christopher Ranch grows as well as processes garlic in Gilroy. The dramatic seasonal increase in Christopher Ranch's employee numbers reflects their need for field labor during the annual harvest. Bill Christopher, personal communication, May 10, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> These two characteristics of Gilroy were mentioned often in newspaper articles during the Festival's first years, and they are recounted by locals and non-locals who experienced them first-hand. Former Bay area resident Dan Shoemaker recalled the city's reputation as a speed trap. Dan Shoemaker, personal communication, October 14, 2004. The speed trap anecdote also is recounted by Festival co-founder Don Christopher in Amy Sutherland, *Cookoff: Recipe Fever in America* (New York: Viking, 2003), 49.

McKenzie reported some residents recounted the smell traveling “as far north as Blossom Hill Road in San Jose, and as far south as Salinas – both locations some twenty-five miles away.”<sup>12</sup> When a city official in San Jose complained about the odor to Christopher Ranch’s Don Christopher, he replied “I can’t believe we are not charging you for that!”<sup>13</sup>

While many disliked the lingering aromas from the production plants, some locals are nostalgic about the days when Gilroy still had a tomato cannery, reminiscing that the smells of tomatoes and garlic combined into a smell evocative of a pot of spaghetti sauce, with extra garlic.<sup>14</sup> The last tomato cannery closed in 1997, leaving garlic as the dominant olfactory aspect of Gilroy from June through October each year.

Despite Gilroy’s sensory distinctiveness, San Jose’s appropriation of its Silicon Valley identity through the late 1970s and into the 1980s over-shadowed other non-technological aspects of the Santa Clara Valley’s identity. Eventually San Jose became synonymous in the popular imagination with high technology industries. Silicon Valley connoted the financially successful urban world of computers and start-up companies. A little to the south, Gilroy continued through these years as an agricultural center, although the nature of its agricultural industries shifted as an increasing residential population required supporting retail and services, and agribusiness expanded.

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<sup>12</sup> Tom Gallards, a former dehydration production manager, quoted in Kathryn McKenzie Nichols, *Smell It Like It Is: Tales From The Garlic Capital of the World* (Santa Barbara: Fithian Press, 1991), 9-10. Narratives of Gilroy’s traveling distinctive scent abound. A former resident of Santa Cruz, some forty miles west of Gilroy, whom I met in July, 2005, in Sonoma recalled with good humor smelling garlic in Santa Cruz during the summer months.

<sup>13</sup> Don Christopher, personal communication, May 10, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Chris Filice, Tom Howard, and Rhonda Pellin each separately shared a positive memory of the smells produced by the tomato cannery and garlic dehydrator. For Ms. Pellin the stimulation was so strong that she said she sometimes went home and cooked spaghetti sauce and garlic bread. Personal communications, July 26, 2004.

Gilroy now struggles with seemingly bipolar aspects of its identity: an agricultural past that has evolved into a commercial processing present, and a growing suburb for an increasingly affluent population of non-agricultural workers. Contemporary Gilroy is really two distinct Gilroys; which part of the city you visit informs how you perceive the city's population. To the west are Gilroyans who live in the new homes built in gated residential developments, shop in the newer strip plazas, and do not venture beyond the unmarked precincts of these professional, often-commuting, new residents. The other Gilroyans live closer to the extant downtown, in the Victorian homes, 1920s bungalows, and 1950s ranch-style houses that fill heavily-treed neighborhoods, not far from the one-story motels and small businesses along the two-lane Monterey Street, the main street through downtown. The area close to downtown, like that of many other cities, is dichotomous: not far from lower-income housing are properties on the National Historic Register.

The luxury-home suburbanization has had negligible impact on Gilroy's downtown. Although residents commuting northward to San Jose and the Bay area on high speed trains (running only Monday through Friday) benefit from the modern Caltran train station with ample parking, there is little other visible evidence that the families of commuters spend time or money downtown. There are ongoing efforts by City Council to revitalize the diminished commercial center, including redesigned sidewalks intended to invite pedestrian traffic and plans for mixed-use buildings.<sup>15</sup> But these changes are offset

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<sup>15</sup> The discouraging state of downtown as a commercial center was the topic of conversation on several occasions during my visits to Gilroy and has been high on the list of City Council concerns for several years. See, for example, Serdar Tumgoren, "The Top 10 Stories of 2004" (Gilroy Dispatch web site, article

by empty storefronts and a jumbled array of stores: a vacuum cleaner shop, a bowling alley with a Japanese-owned lunch room, a low-income medical clinic, antique stores, Garlic City Coffee Shop, and the Chamber of Commerce and Gilroy Garlic Festival offices. Over the course of the seven years I visited the city, most storefronts were increasingly weathered and uninviting despite the beautifully redesigned sidewalks and gentrification attempts such as an upscale restaurant and bar located in the restored 1905 City Hall across the street from the train station. The restaurant closed in less than one year.

#### **CREATING AND CELEBRATING COMMUNITY IN GILROY**

The city of Gilroy has a history of public celebrations. In 1930 local cattleman, hotel owner, and subsequent multi-term mayor of Gilroy George C. Miliias organized the first “Gymkhana” equestrian event.<sup>16</sup> This Wild West event included a rodeo, round-up, and a grand parade. Visiting dignitaries and rodeo competitors from throughout the state gathered in Gilroy for the annual event that continued until 1956. The town’s shifting demographics and reduced emphasis on cattle ranching contributed to the event’s gradual decline. In 1969 Gilroyans attended another western-type celebration, Bonanza Days.

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dated January 3, 2005), available from [www.gilroydispatch.com/article.asp?c=137978](http://www.gilroydispatch.com/article.asp?c=137978), accessed March 14, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> “Committees for Gymkhana meet to plan show,” *Gilroy Dispatch*, October 10, 1930. Gymkhana refers to “a meeting at which horses and their riders take part in games and contests.” Oxford English Dictionary Online, “Gymkhana” (Oxford Dictionary web site, 1989), available from [www.dictionary.oed.com](http://www.dictionary.oed.com), accessed December 1, 2005.

Held annually until the Gilroy Garlic Festival, Bonanza Days was conceived of as a communal party, a celebration of that nebulous yet desirable sense of community.<sup>17</sup>

Since 1979 Gilroyans of all ages have participated with ebullience in the Gilroy Garlic Festival. The three-day Festival is comprised of multiple events and attractions. Christmas Hill Park, an expansive public park south-west of town where the Festival has been held since 1980, is transformed in July into multi-purpose outdoor performance venues, kitchen amphitheater, working kitchens, concessions venues, children's theme park, art fair, and general gathering place where people eat, drink, listen to music, and shop under the glaring watch of the inland California sun. The 1979 Festival site was about one acre; since its move to Christmas Hill Park, the Festival site has expanded to 17 acres, with an additional approximately 90 acres dedicated to parking. (Figure 3.2)

Over the years the focus of the Festival has changed. By organizers' own admission, Festival activities in its early years leaned toward serving alcohol and hosting a rowdy party in the interest of generating positive perceptions of garlic and Gilroy. The party atmosphere led to safety concerns, especially after a 1993 knife fight resulted in 13 arrests. Since then, food, merchandizing, and entertainment have been emphasized more than drinking and partying. To create and sustain a family atmosphere, organizers expanded the children's area, selected entertainment suitable for a family venue, and reduced the centrality of the beer gardens in promotional materials and by their physical placement on the Festival site.

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<sup>17</sup> Tom Howard recalled attending Bonanza Days and suggested that it, as well as Gymkhana, were



**FIGURE 3.2. 2003 GILROY GARLIC FESTIVAL MAP** (2003 Gilroy Garlic Festival Program. Reprinted with permission.)

As attendance increased, so have the number and diversity of the Festival’s consumer offerings. In 1998, organizers formalized merchandizing of Gilroy Garlic Festival ephemera by opening the “Garlic Merchantile,” controlled-access tented areas functioning as the onsite stores for official Festival merchandise. The number of independent vendors increased from 141 at the 1981 Festival to 181 at the 2004 Festival; in 1981 there were sixteen bands and entertainment acts booked for the Festival as compared to the more than forty bands, strolling musicians, and entertainers scheduled for 2004. Cook-off contest emcee Narsai David commented during the 2003 Cook-off

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organized as community parties, as noted in the text. Tom Howard, personal communication, May 9, 2005.

that the Gilroy Garlic Festival is “more and more like a state fair . . . [with] different stages, different venues or areas” for food sales, music, children, and shopping.<sup>18</sup>

One of the main attractions of the Festival is Gourmet Alley, a covered area that literally bisects the Festival grounds. (Figure 3.3) In the Alley, “pyro chefs” work over huge propane burners and grills cooking garlic-infused foods for guests and workers. The volunteer cooks are noted for producing dramatic “flame-ups” or “flare-ups,” tall pillars of flames emanating from large sauté pans, dramatic visual displays loved by visitors and media. (Figure 3.4)



**FIGURE 3.3. BANNER FOR GOURMET ALLEY** Visible just below and behind the banner are the booths from which garlic-hungry diners order and receive their food. (Photograph by author)

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<sup>18</sup> Author’s notes, July 26, 2003.



**FIGURE 3.4. A FLARE-UP AT GOURMET ALLEY** (Photograph by author)

The foremost enticement of Gourmet Alley is gustatory. Massive quantities of garlic-laden food are prepared and consumed each year using literally tons of garlic. In 2002, for example, Festival visitors consumed 32,186 servings of garlic bread, 15,589 pepper steak sandwiches, and 10,079 orders of garlicky mushrooms.<sup>19</sup> In 2003, some 132,000 visitors consumed ten tons of beef, seven tons of pasta, four tons of shrimp scampi and four tons of calamari; the cooks in Gourmet Alley used over two tons of garlic in three days. Each year's press release boasts food sales numbers from the previous year's Festival, further reinforcing the importance of food as the event's focus, in particular the centrality of the garlic-laden foods prepared at Gourmet Alley by local pyro-chefs, and glorifying the Festival's carnivalesque excess. Such braggadocio

exemplifies *aggrandizement*, a strategy employed to create distinction and considered in detail in Chapter Seven.

The Festival brings together Gilroy residents who volunteer their time for Festival planning and events. Their efforts raise funds for local non-profit organizations, charities, and school groups. Through their repeated volunteer participation a sense of communal spirit is reinforced each year. As 2002 Gilroy Garlic Festival President Kurt Chacon reminded visitors:

[a]s you enjoy your day here, please keep in mind that this wonderful event is put on by over 4,000 volunteers who donate their time (42,000+ volunteer hours) to more than 150 non-profit groups. Over the last 23 years, the Festival has awarded almost \$6 million to these groups. In addition to the economic benefits derived from this event, the Garlic Festival has taught us that giving of ourselves to the community has made our Community one that we are all extremely proud of.<sup>20</sup>

The Gilroy Garlic Festival, like most community festivals, is not held solely for the entertainment of and economic gain from outsiders. In addition to tangible financial gains are intangible benefits felt especially among the locals whose volunteer efforts make the event successful. These benefits come in the forms of friendship among volunteers and individuals' sense of contributing to the betterment of the city, both of which engender communal spirit. Gilroyans' voluntary participation is a form of civic engagement that Robert Putnam argued has been in decline in America, especially since

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<sup>19</sup> For better or worse, such numbers are not available for garlic ice cream, a sought-after taste sensation of each year's event.

<sup>20</sup> Kurt Chacon, "President's Message," 24<sup>th</sup> *Gilroy Garlic Festival Program 2002*. Mention of the 4,000+ volunteers "clocking" from 38,000 to more than 42,000 volunteer hours, as well as a general reference to the more than 150 charities who benefit from funds raised at the Festival, consistently appears in the President's Message in each year's program.

the 1970s.<sup>21</sup> Yet community festivals throughout the country are staffed by local volunteers whose efforts exemplify Putnam's contention that individual civic participation leads to the betterment of the collective. The repeated volunteerism of Gilroyans challenges Putnam's argument about the decline of civic engagement: the 4,000-plus volunteers - nearly 10% of the city's population - who staff the Festival each year demonstrate that civic engagement is alive and well, at least in Gilroy.

Many people return year after year as volunteers, often working in the same area each year. Young Gilroyans who grow up watching their parents volunteer often end up assisting with Festival tasks themselves at a young age and develop zealous aspirations to work their way up the volunteer chain of command. Lauren Bevilacqua, for example, began volunteering at the Festival when she was seven years old, working alongside her father as he helped set up and man the massive parking lots.<sup>22</sup> When she was fifteen years old, Lauren aspired to be the first female chair of the parking committee by the time she was twenty-two. Each year Lauren took on additional responsibilities within parking lot operations, working the week before the Festival as well as all three days of the Festival. At eighteen years of age she was no longer determined to be the Parking Lot Committee Chair, although she did admit that it was "still kind of a goal . . . it would still be pretty

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<sup>21</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*.

<sup>22</sup> The following information about Lauren Bevilacqua comes from personal communication with her in March and July, 2005, and Staff report, "Volunteers: the backbone of the Garlic Festival" (Gilroy Dispatch web site, article dated October 17), available from <http://www.gilroydispatch.com/special/contentview.asp?c=4855>, accessed January 23, 2005. Additional information about youth volunteer efforts comes from Lauren's friend and long-time Festival volunteer Ty Ash, 2003 Gilroy Garlic Queen Melissa Noto, and assorted student volunteers working booths at the Festival over the course of several years.

cool to be the diamond in the rough so to speak.”<sup>23</sup> In addition to raising money for local non-profit groups and learning leadership and management skills, Lauren commented that it is the camaraderie shared among fellow volunteers that keeps people returning year after year: “you go to the same place because you know and are practically family with the people out there.”<sup>24</sup> She and a few other parking lot volunteers get together at least once during the year to recall anecdotes and memories they’ve collected working together over the years. Many other Festival volunteers see each other only once a year, at the Festival, thus endowing those intensive days together with a spirit of reunion and stressing the Festival’s time out of time-ness.

The contagious energy of volunteering is what brings people back year-after-year to stand in the dusty parking lot or work over hot flames for hours and hours. Long-time resident, former Festival Board of Director member, and continuing volunteer Jodi Heinzen commented that many of her friends volunteer at the Festival, where “strong bonds are made when people work together for a similar goal.” Besides, she continued, “it’s a fun place to be. Everyone there is happy and having a good time. It feels good to make other people happy.”<sup>25</sup>

Amid all the hard work and fun, the volunteers’ interactions produce a sense of community, the fuzzy yet desirable sense of belonging in a physical place as well as belonging to a group. The more than 4,000 volunteers can be understood as a temporary, imagined community, one that contains multiple imagined sub-communities. A sense of

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<sup>23</sup> Lauren Bevilacqua, personal communication, March 27, 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Jodi Heinzen, personal communication, April 8, 2005.

community emerges that sustains volunteer workers through the intensive days before and during the Festival. This temporary and intensive sense of community is similar to *communitas* as explored by Victor Turner.<sup>26</sup> Although initially conceived as emerging during the liminal phase of rites of passage, Turner's *communitas* is applicable more broadly: it can refer to groups of individuals that come together for a defined period of time during which intensive, focused, and heightened emotional energy and activities facilitate a spirit of oneness. Going through an intensive experience together produces a sense of community, albeit a transitory one.

Visitors also participate in the temporary, imagined community of the Festival. For the duration of their stay on the Festival site, visitors are sharing common experiences as they participate in a host-guest relationship.<sup>27</sup> Part of this relationship involves reciprocal exchange that, Putnam noted, is an essential thread connecting people in a community.<sup>28</sup> Since "even the most casual social interaction can have a powerful effect on reciprocity," and there are ample opportunities for exchange at the Festival, within the festival frame volunteers and attendees engage in important material and ideological reciprocal exchange.<sup>29</sup> At the most basic level, in exchange for the ten dollar entry fee, Festival guests have access to the Festival site where they consume garlic-laden foods iconic of Gilroy. In addition, visitors purchase crafts, dance with fellow audience

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<sup>26</sup> Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*.

<sup>27</sup> The notion of host-guest relationship is taken from literature on tourism, specifically Valene L. Smith, ed., *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989 [1977]).

<sup>28</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Any consideration of reciprocity necessitates acknowledging the seminal work that continues to inform scholarship on gifting, exchange, and obligation: Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1967).

members in front of performing musicians, and cheer on contestants in the garlic recipe contest cook-off. Each of these exchanges involves interaction between the Festival participants and visitors. Through these exchanges, locals and guests strengthen the significance of the temporary community defined by the festival frame. The consumption of garlic-laden foods and participation in or observation of the garlic-themed events, as well as consumer transactions in the Garlic Mercantile where garlic-abilia are sold, affirm Gilroy's identity as a foodscape and contribute to the perpetuation of Gilroy as a festive foodscape.

The volunteers are hosting a party to which thousands of people come and “the community feels the need to come through for all the people who enjoy it. There is something exhilarating about knowing that you are needed to pull together a huge event. .”<sup>30</sup> In addition to being hosts, the volunteers are affirming the value of their city as a branded place and of the people who inhabit it: “there are the true devotees who love to do it [volunteer] because they simply love Gilroy and love Garlic and love what Gilroy stands [for] and how it looks compared to the rest of the country.”<sup>31</sup> That the volunteer efforts raise money to assist community groups adds another positive dimension to the volunteers' sense of contributing to and being part of a community. And it adds another layer of reciprocity: volunteers give of themselves for the betterment of the local organizations, which in turn contribute to the quality of life for residents of Gilroy.

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<sup>29</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 93.

<sup>30</sup> Lauren Bevilacqua, personal communication, March 27, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

Not everyone catches the contagious, positive communal spirit of the Festival. Since its inception, some city officials and residents have been ambivalent about, inconvenienced by, or disenfranchised from the Festival. One community leader, speaking strictly “off the record,” critiqued the importance granted to garlic and the Festival by those with “tunnel vision.”<sup>32</sup> This person wondered “[w]hat is the life of a garlic festival?” Charged with some aspects of long-term planning for the city, this business person opined that city leaders should be considering the changing economies of Gilroy and of the region, that they should be looking beyond garlic rather than focusing on it to the seeming exclusion of other profitable local industries and businesses.<sup>33</sup>

Long-time resident George White’s family began raising garlic in Gilroy early in the twentieth century. Even though he thinks the Festival makes a “big deal of nothing,” he conceded the he “likes anything that brings people to Gilroy.”<sup>34</sup> Even ardent supporters of the Festival do acknowledge that although “the attitude of most Gilroyans is positive. . . there are always some grumblers.”<sup>35</sup> It is especially the residents of Eagle Pass, one of the newer residential developments west of town, who don’t like the Festival because modified traffic patterns and traffic jams during the Festival congest the roads leading to and from their upscale development.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Personal communication, August 3, 2000.

<sup>33</sup> By 2004, not only was this person nowhere to be found among the city’s or the Festival’s leadership, no one seemed to know where I could locate this person.

<sup>34</sup> Maggie Vashel and Robert Eggers, “The Good Old Days,” in *When They Were Plums: A Collection of Memories*, ed. Class Members of Honors U.S. History 1985-86 Gilroy High School (Gilroy: Gilroy High School, 1986), 11.

<sup>35</sup> Jodi Heinzen, personal communication, April 8, 2005.

<sup>36</sup> Lauren Bevilacqua, personal communication, May 9, 2005.

Although the voices of dissenting residents are few, they are part of a local discourse. Absent from conversations and most of the festivities are the workers who labor long hours harvesting and processing the garlic. Summer is the busiest time of the year for Christopher Ranch and Gilroy Foods, as it is for most agricultural enterprises. The workers who produce the iconic food that defines Gilroy as a festive foodscape exist in the background. Like the “army upon army of migrant workers. . .” who have been part of “the material production of landscape and the production of landscape representations,” these workers contribute to but are not a significant presence in the celebration of garlic.<sup>37</sup>

The organizers, volunteers, and paying attendees are, for the most part, several steps removed from the processes of garlic agriculture. There are important exceptions including, notably, Bill Christopher from Christopher Ranch, who has been and continues to be involved with multiple aspects of Festival planning and presentation. Dissenting voices are few and faint. Organizers, city leaders, and residents affirm that the Festival’s economic and intangible benefits far outweigh the power of those whom it inconveniences or disenfranchises.

Since its inception the Gilroy Garlic Festival has been a celebration of the locality and the intangible yet palpable sense of small town spirit that exists in this city. As one observer noted, Gilroy has “the town spirit of boosterism that makes its glory in such agrarian championships [as claiming to be the Garlic Capital of the World], a kind of

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<sup>37</sup> Mitchell, *The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape*, 1.

naïve civic optimism that stretches back to its roots.”<sup>38</sup> Among most residents and visitors the first Festival was considered an overnight success. Gilroy’s location makes it an easy day trip for residents of San Francisco Bay area to the north, as well as the central California coast and inland. Aggressive marketing orchestrated by public relations professional Carol Saunders attracted guests curious to see what Gilroy was doing with garlic.<sup>39</sup> Attendees now come from across the country and throughout the world. The Festival’s immediate popularity substantiated Festival organizers’ anticipatory assertion that Gilroy is the Garlic Capital of the World. And it did wonders to accelerate garlic’s transition from a food on the dietary and social margin into mainstream American foodways.

## **FROM FOREIGN TO FAD: THE MAINSTREAMING OF GARLIC IN AMERICAN FOODWAYS**

The residents who are sentimental about the days when Gilroy’s air reminded them of spaghetti sauce are also realistic. They know that not everyone appreciates the constant olfactory stimulation that blankets southern Santa Clara Valley during processing season, and that a negative reputation can spread further and linger longer than Gilroy’s distinctive smell. Food columnist Elizabeth Mehren incorporated comments

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<sup>38</sup> Anne Steinhardt, “There’s more to Gilroy than garlic,” *San Jose Mercury News*, April 8, 1979, 26.

<sup>39</sup> Carol Saunders was working under the auspices of the now-defunct Fresh Garlic Association, a collective of fresh garlic growers and producers that, at the time, was headed by Don Christopher of Christopher Ranch. Don Christopher explained, and Festival records confirm, that Ms. Saunders sent press materials to food editor throughout the county as well as arranged for local and regional media exposure. Don Christopher, personal communication, May 10, 2005; 1979 Festival box, 1980 Festival box, documents of Gilroy Garlic Festival Association (GGFA). The Gilroy Garlic Festival Association maintains a file box for each Festival year in which receipts for paid advertising, correspondence, Festival

of derision about Gilroy's "pungent presence" into newspaper articles published in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and Chicago, emphasizing the city's odoriferous reputation.<sup>40</sup> Former garlic farmer, local chef, and Festival co-founder Val Filice reminisced that years ago, as he stood watching water run through the irrigation system on his farm, tourists driving along Route 152 would stop to inquire about the "terrible smell" – the smell of "Gilroy's gold," garlic, being dehydrated.<sup>41</sup> It wasn't just the smell of garlic processing that caused many people to wrinkle their noses and reinforced Gilroy's negative reputation. Mr. Filice recalled that outside the Italian community, "people were embarrassed to use garlic . . . because [it caused] bad breath and its odor."<sup>42</sup> Prejudice against garlic as an ingredient and widespread mockeries of Gilroy's smell left Gilroyans with low communal self-esteem. Festival co-founder Rudy Melone noted that upon his arrival in Gilroy in the late 1970s, "[t]here was a general air of embarrassment about garlic – an absence of pride."<sup>43</sup>

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committee meeting minutes, copies of some printed media about the Festival, and other written records are kept.

<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Mehren, "Fame's Nothing to Sniff at in Gilroy," *The Washington Post*, August 7, 1979; ---, "Gilroy--the Town That Clove to a Winner," *Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 1979; ---, "A Little town known faaaar and wiiiide," *The Tribune*, August 10, 1979. These articles begin with comments about Gilroy's notoriety for its traffic congestion and smell before praising the success of the first garlic festival.

<sup>41</sup> Val Filice, personal communication, May 10, 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Jenny Midtgaard, "The Great Garlic Tale," *Miracle-Mile Shopper*, July 21, 1999. The article also appears as the Festival's official history: see Jenny Midtgaard, "The Great Garlic Tale" (Gilroy Garlic Festival web site), available from <http://www.gilroygarlicfestival.com/pages/festivaltail.html>, accessed March 15, 2004.

***Culinary Egocentrism: Immigrant Foodways and Progressive Era Dietary Reform***

The embarrassment about which Melone spoke and which people felt toward garlic predates Gilroy's negative press and odoriferous agribusiness. It was rooted in culinary egocentrism lingering from the colonial era and reinforced during the period of massive southern European migration to the United States in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century.

Italians have been coming to the American continent since one of their countrymen was instrumental in documenting previously uncharted lands in the Western Hemisphere. The greatest number of Italian immigrants came to the United States between 1896 and 1910, with some 300,000 recorded as arriving in 1907 alone.<sup>44</sup> While most stayed in northern and eastern cities to live and work, some were taken or went by choice inland to work the land or help develop the unsettled spaces of the American West. Substantial Italian immigration to California began around the time of that state's gold rush, facilitated by passenger ship service between Italy and San Francisco that began mid-century.<sup>45</sup> As the state's economy shifted from mining toward agriculture and industry, Italian settlement patterns shifted as well. Drawn by the gentle climate and availability of rich farmland, many Italians from San Francisco moved toward the agricultural counties of San Joaquin, Santa Clara, and Sonoma.

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<sup>44</sup> Federal Writers' Project, *The Italians of New York: A Survey Prepared by Workers of the Federal Writers Project, Works Progress Administration in the City of New York* (New York: Random House, 1938).

<sup>45</sup> Deanna Paoli Gumina, *The Italians of San Francisco 1850-1930 (Gli Italiani di San Francisco 1850-1930)* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1978).

Despite the diversity of California's population, prejudices against certain immigrant groups informed the social landscape, as they did throughout the country. One manifestation of cultural bigotry came in the form of culinary egocentrism. Reay Tannahill noted that historically, "deviations from the logic of the table had very little to do with food. They were political or social gestures."<sup>46</sup> She observed that those in "the Western world who canalized their ordinary human need to feel superior" did so through intolerance of "homosexuals, Jews, people who ate garlic or colored their hair, Catholics, blacks . . . ."<sup>47</sup> The presence of garlic eaters among her list of people discriminated against indicates how widespread the distaste was for both the food and the people who ate it.

People articulate individual and collective identities through incorporation of or aversion to particular consumables. I contend that an early aversion to garlic among Anglo-Americans, particularly those of northern European descent, was an expression of their prejudice against garlic-eating immigrant populations. Thus, an historical anti-garlic sentiment can be understood as a minor articulation of nativist ideology, what John Higham described as nationalism guided by an anti-foreign spirit and related fear of internal threats to the nation.<sup>48</sup> This anti-foreign spirit has its roots in America's colonial heritage.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Reay Tannahill, *Food in History* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1988), 347.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

<sup>48</sup> John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955). My understanding of nativism is informed by multiple sources, including especially Higham; an October, 2003 lecture by Dale T. Knobel about Samuel Morse's nativist activities, presented at Locust Grove, the Samuel F.B. Morse Historic Site, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.; Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Ray Allen Billington, *The Origins of Nativism in the United States* (New York:

Early feelings of American exceptionalism were a natural outcome of the Puritan conception that their “city on the hill” was a fulfillment of scriptural prophecy.<sup>50</sup> The ideological seeds of American exceptionalism, one manifestation of the nativist movement, slowly germinated. Throughout American history, the targets and expressions of nativist prejudices, though not always called that, have varied. In the mid-nineteenth century, an anti-foreign spirit manifested itself in political and social ways, including the short-lived Know-Nothing party and longer-lasting reform efforts intended to expedite the Americanization of immigrant populations. At the turn of the twentieth century through the First World War, the population that commanded much of nativists’ attention was the Southern European immigrants, including especially Italians. Reflecting the opinion of the time, Jacob A. Riis wrote in his muckraking expose that the “swarthy Italian immigrant,” who is also “honest” and “lighthearted,” “claims a large share of public attention, partly because he keeps coming at such a tremendous rate.”<sup>51</sup> The concern felt by nativists over controlling the flow of immigration, and their anxiety about

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Arno Press, 1974); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Dale T. Knobel, “*America for the Americans*”: *The Nativist Movement in the United States* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995).

<sup>49</sup> In his classic work, John Higham traced Nativist ideology to colonial sentiment, specifically pre-Civil War anti-Catholic sentiments expressed by Protestants, a prejudice carried with the colonists from England. Similarly, Reay Tannahill linked culinary egocentrism with cultural egocentrism and rooted both in American colonial heritage. Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*; Tannahill, *Food in History*.

<sup>50</sup> Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975). Robert Crunden asserted that it was John Winthrop’s 1630 speech, delivered on board a ship bound for the New World, in which he used the phrase “city on the hill,” that was the beginning of American exceptionalism, even before America existed. Robert M. Crunden, *A Brief History of American Culture* (Armonk, N.Y.: North Castle Books, 1996 [1990]).

<sup>51</sup> Of the Italian immigrant dwelling in New York’s slums Riis noted that, despite his “conspicuous faults, the swarthy Italian has his redeeming traits,” among them honesty, faithfulness, and gaiety. Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971[1890]), 47, 45.

exercising control over those immigrants already living in America, informed official and unofficial activities in the interest of Americanization. A multitude of reform efforts attempted to expedite Americanization of the immigrant masses.<sup>52</sup>

Several historical contingencies informed nativists' inclination to reform immigrants. A sense of cultural and ethnic superiority among some Anglo-Americans of northern European descent, bolstered by a festering fear of losing political power as the population was diluted by these immigrant populations, fed the flames of the rekindled nativist movement. The flood of Catholic immigrants, specifically immigrants from southern European Catholic countries such as Italy, was perceived as a threat to the American political system and national identity. Labor clashes, right-to-vote issues, and muckraking that revealed the squalor in which many urban immigrants lived brought concerns about assimilation or lack thereof to the fore, resulting in what was perceived as an immigration problem. The turn of the twentieth century witnessed increased distrust of immigrant populations. The steadily increasing distribution and readership of newspapers and magazines perpetuated and spread the negativity. The prejudicial title of a 1901 article in *American Kitchen Magazine*, "Queer Foreign Foods in America," exemplifies the era's prejudice against immigrant foods.<sup>53</sup> Dr. Allan McLaughlin of the U.S. Public Health and Marine Hospital Service was a frequent commentator on immigrants and "the immigrant problem" in the early years of the twentieth century. In his authoritative

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<sup>52</sup> This is not to suggest that all reform efforts were articulations of nativist ideology; they were not. Of particular interest for this project is the connection I see many reformers made between immigrant populations' native foodways, continued practice of which was interpreted as un-American, and their fitness as American citizens.

magazine articles he perpetuated detrimental stereotypes of several immigrant “races,” including the Italians.<sup>54</sup>

Food reform was one of several avenues pursued by Progressive Era (~1890-1920) reformers seeking to improve the lives of urban immigrants. That era’s attitudes toward food reform were a continuation of earlier health-diet reform efforts. Sylvester Graham (1794-1851) was one of many early nineteenth century health reformers. His teachings emphasized vegetarianism, temperance, and sexual abstinence. Like many other dietary reformers of that period, he advocated a diet devoid of all condiments and spices because they over-stimulated the body.<sup>55</sup> Following in Graham’s footsteps were many whose health-motivated, dietary reform teachings had long-lasting influences on the American diet. Other nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reformers, including especially Wilbur Olin Atwater (1844-1907, who introduced the calorie to Americans) and John Harvey Kellogg (1852-1943, creator of Kellogg’s cereal), talked about food and morality without reference to taste, tradition, or context; for them food was regarded solely as fuel for the body.<sup>56</sup> The teachings of these early dietary reformers forever

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<sup>53</sup> In the article the author called immigrant foods “course and unsavory compared with the food of his [the immigrant’s] adopted land.” Quoted in Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century*.

<sup>54</sup> Dr. A. J. [Allan] McLaughlin, “The American’s Distrust of the Immigrant,” *Popular Science Monthly*, January 1903; Dr. Allan [A.J.] McLaughlin, “Italian and Other Latin Immigrants,” *Popular Science Monthly*, August 1904.

<sup>55</sup> Haber, *From Hardtack to Home Fries: An Uncommon History of American Cooks and Meals*; Stephen Nissenbaum, *Sex, Diet, and Debility in Jacksonian America: Sylvester Graham and Health Reform* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980).

<sup>56</sup> Gerald Carson, *Cornflake Crusade* (New York: Arno Press, 1976 [1957]); John Coveney, *Food, Morals and Meaning: The Pleasure and Anxiety of Eating* (London: Routledge, 2000); James C. Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness: The History of American Health Reformers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

changed the ways Americans think about and consume food.<sup>57</sup> As the health-dietary reform movement secured a foothold among nineteenth century Anglo-Americans, they began to turn their reform-mindedness toward others. Believing their foodways and lifestyles to be superior to those of the increasing numbers of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, reformers sought to Americanize immigrants' diets.

Reformers involved in settlement houses and the home economics movement regarded foodways as an appropriate medium through which to instill American values among immigrant populations.<sup>58</sup> Robert Woods, who ran one of Boston's settlement houses, expressed the reformist ideology that foreign foodways were ill-suited to the American way of life; in a 1904 charity organization publication he wrote that the Italian's "over-stimulating and innutritious diet is precisely the opposite sort of feeding from that demanded by our exhilarating and taxing atmospheric conditions. This fact suggests [that dietary reform is] the first and perhaps the chief step in bringing about the adaptation of the Italian type of life to America."<sup>59</sup> Visually and odoriferously distinctive, Italian immigrants' foodways were particularly conspicuous to those concerned with assimilation. Continued use of exotic flavors was interpreted as resistance to Americanization and, therefore among radical nativists, a threat to national security. As Harvey Levenstein noted, "[t]he acrid smells of garlic and onions wafting through the immigrant quarters seemed to provide unpleasant evidence that their inhabitants found

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<sup>57</sup> Hillel Schwartz, *Never Satisfied: A Cultural History of Diets, Fantasies, and Fat* (New York: Free Press, 1986); Michelle Stacey, *Consumed: Why Americans Love, Hate, and Fear Food* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

<sup>58</sup> Stephanie J. Jass, "Recipes for Reform: Americanization and Foodways in Chicago Settlement Houses, 1890-1920." (Ph. D. diss., Western Michigan University, 2004).

American ways unappealing; that they continued to find foreign (and dangerous) ideas as palatable as their foreign food.”<sup>60</sup>

Several other undercurrents were swirling about during the Progressive Era that informed dietary reform efforts. One of the social forces directing reformers’ attention to foodways was the “cult of domesticity” that fortified early nineteenth-century domestic life.<sup>61</sup> The cult of domesticity empowered women with superior moral sensibility and positioned their domain, the domestic sphere, as critical to the development of strong individual and therefore national character. This ideology fostered belief in the civilizing capacity of women among many of the era’s elite and the emerging middle class; and it was women in these strata of society who had both the time and the inclination to participate in reform movements. As the century matured, the belief in women as keepers of morality was absorbed into American ideology. The idea that women and women’s work, such as domestic food preparation, can shape and control the morality of society is at the foundation of much of the late nineteenth-century social reform ideology. Settlement houses and classes taught there, including cooking classes, were perceived to be for the good of the immigrants and of the nation; resistance in the form of failure to assimilate was interpreted as disloyalty to immigrants’ adopted home and a threat to the strength of the nation.

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<sup>59</sup> Robert A. Woods, “Notes on the Italians in Boston,” *Charities* 1904, 81.

<sup>60</sup> Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet*, 104.

<sup>61</sup> Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997 [1977]); Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).

Reform efforts in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century were inspired also by tremendous changes taking place in nearly all aspects of food science and technology. Among the many influences shaping Americans' perceptions about food and consumption at that time were the discovery of vitamins, the nascent field of nutritional science, the advent of scientific cookery, the emergence of home economics as a respectable source for domestic management advice, the growth of corporate food purveyors, and the increasing importance of food advertising.<sup>62</sup> Scientific discourse within the domestic science movement about food and the body resembled those of previous dietary reformers: food was sustenance and fuel, pleasure and taste simply were not part of the rhetoric.<sup>63</sup>

Additional undercurrents informing the evolution of American attitudes toward food and dietary reform included a tenacious vestige of Puritan ideology and lingering influences of British culinary tradition. Waverly Root described "a Puritanical disapproval of self-indulgence and a feeling that there was something sinful about enjoying one's food."<sup>64</sup> This Puritan spirit may be so firmly planted in Americans' psyche that, as he suggested, it nourished the nineteenth century moralistic dietary reform movement, and continues in the contemporary apprehension toward foods that are offered and consumed more for pleasures of the palate than for nutritional sustenance.

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<sup>62</sup> On American cooking at the turn of the century and, more specifically, the rise of the domestic science movement, see Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century*. On general attitudes within American society toward food, see Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet*. On the growth and impact of national advertising, see Frank Presbrey, *The History and Development of Advertising* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968 [1929]).

<sup>63</sup> Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century*.

<sup>64</sup> Waverly Root and Richard de Rochemont, *Eating in America: A History* (Hopewell, N.J.: The Ecco Press, 1995 [1976]), 162.

In his exploration of American culinary heritage, Harvey Levenstein noted that, despite the presence of non-British immigrants, American foodways during the colonial era through the nineteenth century were most significantly influenced by British foodways.<sup>65</sup> Consistent with the restraint displayed toward the use of spices among the British middle and upper classes during the eighteenth century, the new Americans eschewed heavily seasoned foods. Garlic and other strong flavors were regarded as dangerous to the moral fiber of society because spicy foods were thought to stimulate the body, which in turn led to sinful sexual thoughts and excessive consumption of alcohol.<sup>66</sup>

The well-intentioned reformers did not anticipate that their efforts would meet resistance from some immigrant communities. Despite reformist pressures and the challenges of procuring familiar ingredients, Italian immigrants generally clung to their foodways. In cities like New York and San Francisco, and in small towns like Roseto, Pennsylvania, Italian immigrants tended to live in close-knit communities with other Italians. In San Francisco, for example, there existed a “small colony with a physiognomy all its own . . . [that] was essentially self-sufficient, in small part, of its own volition, in much larger part, because it was socially and economically constrained to be so. The presence of this homogeneous core of Italians naturally re-enforced habits, customs and modes of thought . . . .”<sup>67</sup> Adding to the fact that food played “particularly important roles

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<sup>65</sup> Lloyd John Harris, *The Book of Garlic* (Berkeley: Aris Books, 1979 [1974]); Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet*.

<sup>66</sup> Harvey Levenstein, “The American Response to Italian Food, 1880-1930,” *Food and Foodways* 1 (1985).

<sup>67</sup> Paul Radin, *The Italians of San Francisco, Their Adjustment and Acculturation*, Part 2/2 vols., *SERA: Cultural anthropology. Monograph no. 1, pt. 1-2* (n.p., 1935), 112.

in Italian family life[,] . . . it was extremely difficult to gain entry into Italian family home and kitchens or to coax the women out of them.”<sup>68</sup>

Dietary reform efforts had little impact on changing Italian foodways because reformist ideology and practices, taught primarily through cooking and nutrition classes, undermined the role and significance of Italian women as domestic authorities and knowledgeable cooks. “Discussions of Italian women as cooks, and good ones at that, and as the ones who stood by their food as the symbol of their indispensability, ran through the remembered details of immigrant and first-generation life.”<sup>69</sup> The fact that these women had to learn to use new ingredients and new appliances made them likely candidates for the cooking classes offered by reformers at settlement houses and by home economists at public schools. But such classes were viewed with disdain. Although they attended other classes such as sewing with enthusiasm, few participated in classes on nutrition, cooking, and food budgeting.

This general pattern predominated in most settlement houses and other sites for immigrant adult education. American ameliorative organizations tried hard to appeal to Italian women to modify their cooking habits. But Italian women mostly ignored them . . . [because] attending a class on a particular subject amounted to an admission of ignorance, incompetence, a need to improve. Since Italian women in America defined much of their personal worth in terms of cooking, cooking classes were cultural land mines. . . . For a woman to sign up for a class would be tantamount to a public declaration that her family somehow found her cooking skills wanting.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Levenstein, “The American Response to Italian Food, 1880-1930,” 7.

<sup>69</sup> Hasia R. Diner, *Hungering for America: Italians, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 77.

### *Garlic's Twentieth Century Transition: From Culinary Periphery to Food Fad*

The lingering suspicion toward particular spices and seasonings, and reformist prejudice against foreign diets, continued well into the twentieth century. Yet despite the best efforts of social reformers and lingering foodways prejudice, garlic slowly infiltrated mainstream American cookery. Garlic's gradual incorporation into revised editions of Fannie Farmer's *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book*, the cornerstone of classic American cookery instructional books, suggests incremental assimilation and acceptance of the pungent bulb. The book's first edition in 1896 neither included garlic among the list of condiments "used to stimulate the appetite by adding flavor to food," nor was it an ingredient in any of the five tomato sauce recipes, including "Sauce à l'Italienne."<sup>71</sup> Garlic was not included in the "Seasoning" section of the 1912 edition.<sup>72</sup> Yet by 1933 garlic was listed as an ingredient in a few dishes including a recipe for "Mexican" tomato sauce, which called for one clove of garlic; surprisingly no garlic was among the ingredients for that edition's "Italian" tomato sauce.<sup>73</sup> The 1951 revised edition finally included garlic in its "Spices and Seeds" section, noting that "[g]arlic adds particularly appetizing seasoning to many dishes."<sup>74</sup> Garlic is also present as a key ingredient in

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 78. See also Michael J. Eula, "Failure of American Food Reformers Among Italian Immigrants in New York City, 1891-1897," *Italian Americana* (2000); Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1830-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

<sup>71</sup> Fannie Merritt Farmer, *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1896), 14, 241. The only recipe in the 1896 cook book that called for garlic was "A Chapon" (288), a piece of bread rubbed with raw garlic and incorporated into a tossed salad. A chapon is used to season salad with the slightest hint of garlic.

<sup>72</sup> Fannie Merritt Farmer, *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1912 [1906]).

<sup>73</sup> Fannie Merritt Farmer, *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1933).

<sup>74</sup> Fannie Merritt Farmer, *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book*, ed. Wilma Perkins Lord (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951), 36.

several dishes, among them “Garlic Olives,” “Garlic Bread,” and “Sauce for Spaghetti.”<sup>75</sup> In the 1959, tenth revised edition, editor Wilma Lord Perkins advised caution, noting that “[m]any foreign recipes owe much of their special quality to unusual seasonings. Use unfamiliar seasonings with discretion.”<sup>76</sup>

Amid dramatic changes in American foodways during the first half of the twentieth century, ambivalence toward some foreign foods, including garlic, remained. In his social history of eating in America, Levenstein claimed that American culture’s phobia about garlic made it “a particular embarrassment.”<sup>77</sup> The author of a 1939 article about the charismatic and hugely popular New York Yankee Joe DiMaggio noted that he is “well adapted to most U. S. mores,” specifically mentioning that he used water instead of olive oil to slick his hair and that he “never reeks of garlic.”<sup>78</sup> Even though garlic, iconic of Italian foods and Italians, maintained a negative aura, Levenstein also noted that some “Italo-American” dishes were resistant to reformist Americanization.<sup>79</sup> In fact, rather than being Americanized out of existence, some foods such as spaghetti transgressed cultural boundaries, were adapted (thus Americanized by modification), and were incorporated into mainstream foodways. The incorporation of spaghetti and meatballs into restaurants frequented by non-Italians and onto domestic and commercial

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 185, 108, 147.

<sup>76</sup> Fannie Merritt Farmer, *The All New Fannie Farmer Boston Cooking-School Cookbook.*, ed. Wilma Perkins Lord (Boston: Little, Brown, 1959), 15.

<sup>77</sup> Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America*, 29.

<sup>78</sup> Noel Bunch, “Joe Dimaggio,” *Life*, May 1 1939, 69.

<sup>79</sup> The emergence of an Italian-American cuisine is mentioned in Levenstein’s *Paradox of Plenty* but is treated in greater detail in Levenstein, “The American Response to Italian Food, 1880-1930.”; Harvey Levenstein and Joseph Colin, “The Food Habits of Italian Immigrants to America: An Examination of the Persistence of a Food Culture and the Rise of ‘Fast Food’ in America,” in *Dominant Symbols in Popular*

menus of non-Italians exemplifies how Italian foodways contributed to an evolving twentieth-century American cuisine.<sup>80</sup> In 1946, Hector Boiardi sold his Chef Boyardee canned spaghetti business to an American conglomerate, a move that exemplifies the “uncoupling of enclave foods from enclave businessmen”: going corporate marked the transition of “ethnic foods into the national marketplace and the cultural mainstream of American life.”<sup>81</sup>

In the mid-twentieth century garlic was continuing its transition from a food on the margin of mainstream American foodways to a familiar ingredient. In a 1956 *Collier's* magazine article, the author noted that garlic bread “borders on the commonplace,” appearing in restaurants and on domestic dining tables throughout the country.<sup>82</sup> Consumption of fresh garlic rose from about 4.5 million pounds in 1945 to over 36 million pounds by 1956.<sup>83</sup> Even allowing for population growth, those numbers indicate an impressive rise in use, and suggest that Americans were acquiring a taste for

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*Culture*, ed. Ray Browne, Marshall W. Fishwick, and Kevin O. Browne (Bowling Green: Popular Culture Press, 1990).

<sup>80</sup> The pairing of meatballs with spaghetti was not part of the traditional Italian service of pasta, at least not among peasants, reflecting the two-way relationship of Americanization and dietary reform efforts. Italian immigrants who came from rural areas, most of whom were peasants, had access to more foods in America than they had in Italy. They took advantage of America's abundance, ate foods that had previously been unavailable to them, and added elements to traditional dishes. “Traditional dishes following original recipes are still prepared in Italian-American homes, with the important exception that most of them contain a much larger quantity of dressing and additional ingredients.” Among the dishes to which additional ingredients were added was “all varieties of the so-called Italian spaghetti with meatballs.” Carla Bianco, “Migration and Urbanization of a Traditional Culture: An Italian Experience,” in *Folklore in the Modern World*, ed. Richard M. Dorson (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1978), 61.

<sup>81</sup> Donna Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 150-51.

<sup>82</sup> Duncan MacDougald Jr., “For Garlic Lovers Only.,” *Collier's*, January 20 1956. Garlic bread was not included in *The Boston Cooking School Cook Book* until 1951. That recipe, which was reproduced in subsequent editions, called for blending one sliced clove of garlic with ¼ cup butter and, after letting it stand for one-half hour, spreading it on a loaf of French or Italian bread. Farmer, *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book*, 108.

<sup>83</sup> MacDougald Jr., “For Garlic Lovers Only.”

the pungent product. A few years later, the American Dehydrated Onion and Garlic Association sponsored a consumer survey, the results of which were noteworthy because they “disprove[d] some widely held theories about the use of garlic in the home.”<sup>84</sup> From the survey Gentry Foods, a producer of dehydrated garlic, concluded that “[g]arlic, in all its forms, is a growing market, with greatest use among younger families . . . , [g]arlic is a sophisticated product, appealing more strongly to persons of above average economic status and education . . . , [and g]arlic is now socially acceptable, being used almost as often for ‘company’ meals as for family meals, and is being used by over 90 percent of all families.”<sup>85</sup> That a garlic-processing company published such optimistic statements about one of its products is self-serving, but, even if their optimism was hyperbolic, they were commenting on an existing food trend: the increased use of previously eschewed ingredient.

Early popular American celebrity chefs such as James Beard and Julia Child did much to promote the use of garlic among American home cooks. Included in James Beard’s 1965 cookbook, *Menus for Entertaining*, were numerous recipes incorporating garlic as a primary seasoning agent, among them several breakfast dishes. His encouragement of home cooks to incorporate garlic into the first meal of the day, especially dishes prepared for company, indicated his willingness to set aside previously

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<sup>84</sup> Select findings and the implications of this study for the dehydrated garlic industry were explored in “Survey Shows 90% of Families Use Garlic,” *Gentry Surrender*, November, 1961. “Garlic” file, Gilroy Historical Museum.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

popular notions of restraint in favor of flavor.<sup>86</sup> Julia Child's 1968 *The French Chef Cookbook*, based on her wildly popular PBS television program, included a recipe for *Ai'go Bouido*, Provençale garlic soup. Although there is only one garlic-centric recipe in the book, its inclusion indicated her interest in getting American domestic cooks to be less inhibited about using garlic. Beard's and Child's enthusiastic incorporation of ingredients previously regarded with suspicion served to expand domestic cooks' and diners' willingness to work with and eat such ingredients.

Before becoming widely accepted by the American public, garlic developed a cult-like following. Among its leading proponents was Lloyd J. Harris who, in 1974, founded the organization Lovers of the Stinking Rose to spread the gospel of garlic. In addition to an annual newsletter called "Garlic Times," Harris authored two books about garlic that became classics among devotees: *The Book of Garlic* and *The Official Garlic Lover's Handbook*.<sup>87</sup> In 1976, at the suggestion of Harris, Berkeley restaurateur and chef Alice Waters organized a garlic-themed Bastille Day dinner at her Chez Panisse restaurant. Already known in culinary circles for her commitment to using only seasonal, organic foods long before it was trendy, Waters' theme meal elevated garlic to an ingredient worthy of critical acclaim among other chefs and foodies.

By the mid-1970s, the number of garlic fans was increasing and cooking with garlic became a fad. The emergence of a genre of garlic-themed cookbooks around this

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<sup>86</sup> James Beard, *Menu's For Entertaining* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1956). Among his recommended breakfast dishes that embraced garlic were "Tiny Peppers Stuffed with Sausage" (p. 16), which called for two cloves of garlic for two pounds of ground pork, and "Codfish Provençale" (p. 20), which called for three cloves of garlic for one-and-one-half pounds of salt cod.

time reflects garlic's status as a food fad ingredient. Early in the publishing trend were *The Great Garlic Cookbook* and *Garlic Cookery*.<sup>88</sup> The Gilroy Garlic Festival Committee contributed to a growing garlic-centric literature, self-publishing *The Garlic Lover's Cookbook* followed by several others, including *Garlic Lover's Greatest Hits: 20 Years of Prize-Winning Recipes from the Gilroy Garlic Festival*.<sup>89</sup> There is no shortage of garlic cookbooks in the contemporary marketplace, indicating garlic's popularity among American eaters, or at least among cookbook authors and publishers.<sup>90</sup>

Berkeley, California-based documentary filmmaker Les Blank commemorated garlic's apparent Bay area cult-type following in his 1980 video "Garlic is as Good as Ten Mothers." Included in the fifty-one minute video is footage from the first Gilroy Garlic Festival as well as from the Chez Panisse garlic dinner. Garlic is the main ingredient not only of books, videos, and theme dinners, but also of some restaurants, most notably San Francisco's famed garlic restaurant, The Stinking Rose: A Garlic Restaurant. The restaurant's owner Jerry Dal Bozzo published his homage to the bulb, *The Stinking Cookbook: The Layman's Guide to Garlic Eating, Drinking, and Stinking*,

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<sup>87</sup> Harris, *The Book of Garlic*; Lloyd John Harris, *The Official Garlic Lovers Handbook* (Berkeley: Aris Books, 1986).

<sup>88</sup> Barbara Friedlander Meyer and Bob Cato, *The Great Garlic Cookbook* (New York: MacMillan, 1975); Martha Rose Shulman, *Garlic Cookery* (New York: Thorsons Publishers, 1984).

<sup>89</sup> Gilroy Garlic Festival Committee, *The Garlic Lover's Cookbook from Gilroy, Garlic Capital of the World* (Berkeley: Celestial Arts, 1980); ---, *Garlic Lover's Greatest Hits: 20 Years of Prize-Winning Recipes from the Gilroy Garlic Festival* (Berkeley: Celestial Arts, 1998).

<sup>90</sup> Other garlic-themed cookbooks include Susan Belsinger and Carolyn Dille, *The Garlic Book: A Garland of Simple, Savory, Robust Recipes* (Loveland: Interweave Press, 1993); Linda Griffith and Fred Griffith, *Garlic, Garlic, Garlic: Exceptional Recipes from the World's Most Indispensable Ingredient* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998); Victoria Renoux, *For the Love of -- Garlic: The Complete Guide To Garlic Cuisine* (Garden City Park: Square One Publishers, 2005). Garlic's popularity as an ingredient continues into the twenty-first century. A March 2003, search for "garlic" in the recipe database of a CondèNet Inc. food-themed web site, [www.epicurious.com](http://www.epicurious.com), produced 4,690 recipes.

which is sold, along with other garlic-abilia, through the restaurant's web site ([www.thestinkingrose.com](http://www.thestinkingrose.com)) and in a San Francisco retail store.<sup>91</sup>

## **FOOD AS ICON: FORMING A FOOD-THEMED IDENTITY FOR GILROY**

By the 1970s, even though more Americans were being encouraged to cook with and eat garlic, it was still somewhat of a novelty for many Americans. Perhaps garlic's cult-like following in the Bay area increased its appeal as worthy of iconization and festivalization among Gilroy's image makers.

It took a visionary outsider to appreciate the novelty and marketability of what was perceived by many as a communal liability. In 1978, Dr. Rudy Melone was a relative newcomer to Gilroy. As fundraising chairman of the local Rotary club, he was charged with devising new ways for the civic-minded group to support community organizations. According to the Festival's official history, Melone saw economic and social potential in promoting Gilroy as a center – if not *the* center – for Garlic production.<sup>92</sup> He learned that Arleux, in northern France, proclaimed itself to be the Garlic Capital of the World and attracted 80,000 people to its annual garlic festival.<sup>93</sup> Suspecting that Gilroy produced and processed more garlic than Arleux, Melone set out to convince the local power brokers that Gilroy would do well to celebrate rather than try to ignore this vital and often

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<sup>91</sup> Jerry Dal Bozzo, *The Stinking Cookbook: The Layman's Guide to Garlic Eating, Drinking, and Stinking* (Berkeley: Celestial Arts, 1994).

<sup>92</sup> Midtgaard, "The Great Garlic Tale."

<sup>93</sup> Nino Lo Bello, "Breathtaking Possibilities, The World's Garlic Capital," *San Francisco Examiner & Chronicle*, September 10, 1978. To this day Arleux celebrates its garlic production with a festival each September, distinguishing itself as the "*capitale de l'ail fume*," the capital of smoked garlic. The festival of Arleux dates back to 1961. See "Arleux" (Arleux, France web site), available from <http://www.arleux.com/index.html>, accessed March 16, 2004.

maligned economic resource. He saw promise in commemorating the city's main agricultural product and anticipated fund raising potential in the festival format.

Dr. Melone and Don Christopher, owner of Christopher Ranch, asked Val Filice, an established local cook, farmer, and garlic lover, to prepare a special garlic-laden lunch for an upcoming Rotary meeting at which they would promote the idea of organizing a garlic festival. Attending this lunch would be local leaders and invited media guests, including food editors and writers. Betsy Balsley, then-food editor for the *Los Angeles Times*, was one of the guests who enthusiastically supported the idea of a festival. Initially the idea met with hesitation from the mayor, who admitted to not liking garlic, and from Christopher himself who wondered if there was enough interest in garlic to support a festival.<sup>94</sup> There was skepticism about the Festival's success outside Gilroy as well: Don Christopher recalled that a county official thought it would attract such a small number of attendees that he did not bother to enforce sanitation standards.<sup>95</sup> Despite reservations and with encouragement from Balsley and others, Malone and Christopher proceeded with organizational planning. They put Filice in charge of what would become the culinary backbone of the Festival, the area called Gourmet Alley, where garlic-laden foods are prepared by local volunteers and sold to hungry attendees.

The inaugural Festival took place August 4-5, 1979. Those dates were selected so that the Garlic Festival would not conflict with previously scheduled Bonanza Days events and because the garlic harvest is complete by August, allowing organizers to

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<sup>94</sup> Val Filice, personal communication, August 24, 2004; Harvey Steiman, "Raising a big stink," *San Francisco Examiner & Chronicle*, November 19, 1978.

<sup>95</sup> Don Christopher, personal communication, May 10, 2005.

conceive of the Festival as a harvest festival. The Festival would be a full sensory experience: because Gilroy Foods' dehydrators would be processing the season's crop in August, they would be generating the distinctive aroma for which Gilroy was already famous. The first Festival took place on farmland donated by a local resident. Visitors walked over broken and dried garlic stalks as they visited booths sponsored by local civic organizations and businesses that offered

everything imaginable related to garlic: fresh garlic (pee-wees to colossal), garlic braids, all forms of dehydrated and processed garlic, books and information on garlic uses and its health aspects, folklore, garlic hats, tee shirts, belt buckles, garlic roses, garlic jewelry, paperweights, plaques, pet garlic and more.<sup>96</sup>

The garlic-Gilroy association being promoted through the Festival was reinforced by olfactory as well as visual, physical, and gustatory stimulation.

In addition to informational and retail booths, there was entertainment including country-western and rock musicians to minstrel singers, belly dancers and gymnasts, a magician, and roving mimes. Activities that are no longer part of the Festival calendar were tours of local garlic fields, packing plants, and processing plants. Among the activities that continue to be incorporated into each year's Festival are the recipe contest and the garlic topping contest, both considered in a subsequent chapter. But, as Rudy Malone noted, "the real drawing card – the unique quality of the Festival – is the GARLICKY FOOD."<sup>97</sup> Most of the garlicky foods made in the open air kitchen of Gourmet Alley then and now are Americanized versions of Italian dishes: *calamari*,

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<sup>96</sup> Rudy Malone, "Garlic Festival - The Beginning," in *1979 Festival Souvenir Program* (Gilroy: Gilroy Garlic Festival, 1979).

*scampi*, pasta with pesto sauce, garlic bread, Italian sausages, and garlic seasoned beef, reflecting the influence of Val Filice's Italian heritage on the Festival menu.

Organizers expected between 5,000 and 10,000 people to attend the inaugural Festival: they were nearly overwhelmed by 15,000 attendees. Val Filice humorously recalled having to send runners out to buy more food because there were so many more people than anticipated. He ordered men to drive to nearby Monterey for more prawns and squid. The beer chairman found himself in a similar bind. According to Festival history, partway through the first day the beer chairman called the distributor and said, "Heck, forget the kegs. Start sending us the trucks."<sup>98</sup>

Mr. Filice attributed the Festival's success to timing, to people's willingness to learn about a then-underappreciated food. He explained that in the late 1970s, "[p]eople were ready to learn about new foods, to learn about garlic. People didn't know how to use garlic."<sup>99</sup> Among those who did use garlic, he suggested, many were ashamed to admit it. Because of the Festival, Mr. Filice continued, the public "finally let [their enjoyment of] garlic out of the closet."<sup>100</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Festival's success is attributable to timing, but Mr. Filice's explanation tells only part of the story. That people were ready to try garlic can be linked to its gradual incorporation into American foodways as described in the previous section. This

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Midtgaard, "The Great Garlic Tale"; Val Filice, personal communication, August 24, 2004; Christine Tognetti, "Small idea sparks huge garlic interest," *Gilroy Dispatch*, July 2003.

<sup>99</sup> Val Filice, personal communication, August 24, 2004.

measurable change is partly the result of changing attitudes toward the populations who used garlic. The steady flood of immigrants from Southern Europe contributed to what had been conceived as “the immigrant problem.” World War I slowed the flow of immigrants. Immigration restrictions in the 1920s further curtailed the influx of immigrants from southern Europe. With the passage of stricter immigration laws, interest in Americanization reform waned.<sup>101</sup> A post-war desire for national unity among Anglo-Americans likely contributed to increased tolerance of southern Europeans already living in the United States, as did ongoing prejudice against Asians. Social, political, and economic crises, including the Great Depression, World War II, and Cold War ideology diverted attention away from Americanization to focus on matters of survival and national unity.

The ethnic revival of the 1970s elevated ethnic clothing, dialect, and foodways. It also stimulated Americans to think about ethnicity in new ways, as negotiable, voluntary and, therefore, not quite so foreign.<sup>102</sup> Renewed health concerns in the 1960s had middle-class Americans thinking about food differently and initiated a quest for ways to

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Philip Gleason suggested that several factors contributed to the post-1920s decline of attention to the “ethnic dimension” of American identity. In addition to immigration restrictions and the Great Depression, he noted the wide-reaching impact that a paradigm shift within the social sciences had on conceptions of race and identity. More specifically, a post-Depression reassessment of the concept of race discredited racialism, privileging instead the notion of culture and socialization as formative influences on individual and national identity. For a more extensive discussion of these ideological shifts, see Philip Gleason, “American Identity and Americanization,” in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephen Thernstrom (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1980); ---, “Americans All: World War II and the Shaping of American Identity,” *Review of Politics* 43 (1981).

<sup>102</sup> For a brief discussion about how the 1970s ethnic revival facilitated new ways of thinking about race, see Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*.

cook and eat with less fat and less salt.<sup>103</sup> Using spices, including garlic, to season food was presented as a healthier way to cook and eat for health conscious Americans.

Gradually garlic entered the world of gourmet foods and from there it transitioned, as do many foods that mark distinction, to the mainstream. Genovese pesto, a sauce made from garlic, fresh basil, pine nuts, and parmesan or pecorino cheese blended with olive oil, for example, now is readily available in jars at grocery stores throughout the country.<sup>104</sup>

Increased international travel also facilitated an interest in what previously had been foreign flavors. All of these factors exposed an increasing number of people to foods and foodways, including garlic, which less than a century ago was the subject of condemnation.

By 1979, garlic was still on the fringe of American foodways, but it was less symbolically charged than it had been. The immediate success of the first Gilroy Garlic Festival indicates that at least 15,000 people were curious about garlic, to see what garlic

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<sup>103</sup> For consideration of the many forces behind changes in the American diet, see especially Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America*; ---, *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet*.

<sup>104</sup> *Pesto* is the name for the uncooked garlic-basil-pine nut-cheese-olive oil sauce that originated in Genoa, Italy. As with many other culinary words, the term pesto has become generic and now refers to any number of uncooked sauces made from a fresh herb or vegetable, nuts, cheese, and garlic. The fact that the Italian word has been incorporated into the English language indicates how widely embraced are the term and the sauce to which it refers.

had to do with Gilroy, and to find out what Gilroy had to offer besides speeding tickets and heavily scented air.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Place Branding: Creating Identity Capital and Marketing Communal Pride**

When Rudy Malone proposed the Gilroy Garlic Festival, he had a couple of agendas. He asserted that “the garlic festival will proudly celebrate the worth of garlic and help create a positive and favorable image of Gilroy.”<sup>1</sup> The secondary purpose was to generate revenue to help the Gilroy Chamber of Commerce become independent of City support. As it turns out, the latter did not happen but the former did. During my interviews with Gilroyans, I heard time and again versions of this narrative: ‘I was on vacation and someone asked where I was from. Before the Festival no one knew where Gilroy was located. But now everyone knows where Gilroy is and they know about the Garlic Festival, even if they have never been to Gilroy.’ Not only did the Festival propel garlic and Gilroy into the headlines, it also generated among residents a sense of communal pride in the city and in garlic.

It was not just the Festival that catapulted Gilroy into public awareness; it was media coverage before, during, and after it. In the weeks following the first few Festivals, articles appeared in newspapers throughout the country. Much of the post-festival press was written with amused jocularly. Recalling garlic’s odorous reputation, newspaper stories incorporated catchy phrases such as “Fame’s nothing to sniff at in Gilroy” and

“Garlic Town Savors the Smell of Success.”<sup>2</sup> Gilroy’s civic and city leaders, now among the city’s image makers, did not seem to mind the tongue-in-cheek publicity; rather, they were delighted that the press embraced their quirky Festival. The *Gilroy Dispatch* editor was ebullient over the national and international exposure bestowed upon Gilroy:

[i]t seems that just about all the California metro papers, including both the Los Angeles Times and [San Francisco] Herald-Examiner, treated our local extravaganza as a major happening (that is to say, they did it justice). Then came those big spread[s] in the Chicago Tribune and Washington Post, and someone even said he saw a piece in the New [Y]ork Times. Even Time magazine mentioned it. Topping everything so far, however, was the report from Mayor Norman Goodrich at the Gilroy City Council meeting Monday that he had received a letter from a man living in Coventry, England . . . .<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter I consider place marketing and place branding, using Gilroy as a case study of how a city becomes branded as a foodscape. Once a food-based identity for a place is established, particularly through an ongoing successful event (successful in part because of good marketing), ongoing media campaigns reinforce it. The desired identity is perpetuated until it becomes the actual identity. As the Gilroy example illustrates, media exposure and positive public response to it promote and perpetuate a place identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Rudy Malone, “Garlic Festival I The Beginning,” *Gilroy Dispatch*, July 3, 1979.

<sup>2</sup> These and other headlines are listed on a two-page document compiled by someone associated with the Festival, presumably recording Festival publicity from newspapers and magazines across the county. The headlines quoted are from *The Washington Post*, August, 1979, and the *New York Times*, August, 1980. “Gilroy Garlic Festival Banner Headlines and Quotes,” [1981?] 1981 Festival box, GGFA.

<sup>3</sup> Pat Anderson, “Sweet Smell of Success,” *Gilroy Dispatch*, August 22, 1979, 2.

## MARKETING DISTINCTION

Records indicate the breadth of media coverage for the first two Festivals included Public Service Announcements on seventy-two radio stations in California, articles in magazines such as *Food and Wine* and *Sunset*, and television coverage on multiple local and regional stations.<sup>4</sup> To promote the second Festival, Val Filice, Mayor Norman Goodrich (who had decided that he liked garlic after all), and the first Miss Garlic, K. T. Bendel, appeared on Dinah Shore's nationally syndicated show, "Dinah!". Through extensive media exposure, the city's identity rapidly evolved from a place drivers bypass to a place of distinction.

Within a year, Gilroy acquired its new identity as Garlic Capital of the World; the media blitz leading up to and after the second Festival cemented the new identity. Image makers deliberately had created a place-specific, food-centered communal identity perpetuated by aggressive promotion of the Festival and absorbed by diverse media and audiences who ate up the playfulness of having fun with garlic, the spirited Festival, and garlic puns. Gilroy had become a festive foodscape. The obvious success of the inaugural Festival convinced city leaders that promoting the town's crop would secure a positive identity for Gilroy. And of course the Festival, and the lingering association it generated, would reap financial benefits for Gilroy. Gilroy city officials and the media positioned the city as a place to be consumed through its garlic-centered identity.

Festival attendance swelled from 15,000 in 1979 to 90,000 in 1981 to 132,000 in 2003. The Festival's ongoing success and media coverage of it confirm the tenacious

association both have created and continue to generate between the city of Gilroy and garlic. Ongoing recognition in local, national, and international media publicizes the city and the food-place association celebrated through the Festival. Low-tech media like roadside billboards contribute to perpetuating Gilroy's branded identity. (Figure 4.1) In 1998 QVC, the 24-hour television shopping network, broadcast live from the Festival for two hours mid-day on Saturday. The program was part of the network's "Local Flavors Tour." The Festival, and through it Gilroy as a festive foodscape, were promoted while garlic and garlic-related products were sold. Telecast to more than 58 million homes in the United States, Europe and Japan, this short feature provided tremendous exposure for the Festival and for Gilroy. The Festival has been featured on Food Network's "All American Festivals" program, providing national exposure to a food-niche audience.<sup>5</sup> The Visitors Bureau knows when Food Network has aired the program featuring the Gilroy Garlic Festival because they receive a dramatic increase of phone queries about the city and the Festival.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in 2005 the Festival office received some four hundred email queries after the Food Network program aired.<sup>7</sup> Magazines and web sites commend the Festival for its family atmosphere. For example, in 2004 it received the "Best Family Fairs & Festivals" award from *Bay Area Parent Magazine*. According to its 2003 Official Sponsor Package, the Festival "has been awarded more than 36 industry

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<sup>4</sup> 1979 Festival box, 1980 Festival box, GGFA.

<sup>5</sup> In 2003, "All American Festivals" Episode FE1A01 featured the Gilroy Garlic Festival. It has been replayed several times since then. An informational web page on the Food Network web site provides recipes as well as a link to the Gilroy Garlic Festival Association web site. Food Network, "All American Festivals Episode FE1A01" (Food Network web site), available from [http://www.foodtv.com/food/show\\_fe/episode/0,1976,FOOD\\_9961\\_20517,00.html](http://www.foodtv.com/food/show_fe/episode/0,1976,FOOD_9961_20517,00.html), accessed March 15, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Kirsten Carr, Executive Director of Gilroy Visitors Bureau, Inc., personal communication, July 27, 2004.

awards for excellence” including multiple Pinnacle Awards from the International Festival and Events Association.



**FIGURE 4.1. “WELCOME TO GILROY GARLIC CAPITAL OF THE WORLD” ROAD SIGN** This sign stands along Highway 101 just south of Gilroy, visible to north-bound traffic. This sign informs people about the city’s claim of capitaldom. (Photograph by author)

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<sup>7</sup> Chris Filice, personal communication, May 9, 2005.

The deliberate creation of a locality's identity based on a particular food item requires ongoing mediation of the desired association. By assigning symbolic or sign value to garlic, Gilroy image makers transformed the locality's agricultural and industrial resource into an amalgamation of symbolic, social, and identity capital.<sup>8</sup> Identity capital is what image makers for a locale choose to draw upon or highlight in their ongoing presentation, representation, and promotion of a locality. There are abundant examples of a communal resource promoted as identity capital to mark place distinction in the service of securing economic capital: consider natural resources (the Grand Canyon, which serves as an attraction to surrounding towns); human-made resources such as amusement parks, shopping centers or other entertainment that become the focal point of a locality's identity (Orlando, Florida, as the gateway to Disney; Las Vegas, Nevada; Bloomington, Minnesota as home of the Mall of America); or imagined or real histories upon which image makers choose to capitalize and promote place identity (Leavenworth, Washington, and its manufactured Bavarian-ness). In the case of Gilroy, business people cultivated the natural resource of the valley to draw economic capital in the form of jobs related to the garlic industry. City leaders then drew upon that resource, transforming it into an icon of collective and place identity.

In becoming symbolic and identity capital, garlic has been abstracted from its growth and production, as well as from the context of its long-standing association with particular ethnic foodways. Through re-contextualization that changed people's

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<sup>8</sup> My use of the term identity capital expands upon the concepts of symbolic capital and cultural capital developed by Pierre Bourdieu and widely incorporated into social theory. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of

perceptions, garlic became a denatured and symbolically neutral fun food to be cooked, eaten, worn, painted, sung about, and made into jewelry and assorted ephemera. (Figure 4.2) Garlic was transitioned from an ingredient to an object suitable for fetishization and festivalization.<sup>9</sup> (Figure 4.3)



**FIGURE 4.2. GARLIC BULB HAT** The author’s sister displays a garlic clove hat, one of many non-edible garlic-themed items for sale at the Gilroy Garlic Festival. (Photograph by author)

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Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

<sup>9</sup> My use of commodity fetishism, a concept from Karl Marx and filtered through many social theorists, recognizes that the action of fetishization removes a commodity from the context of its production. Harvey argued that the fragmentation of postmodernism is celebrating “fetishisms of locality” while also “ghettoizing” them with “an opaque otherness.” As places become commodities, and particular foods become iconic of those places, the foods and representations of the foods exemplify commodity fetishism. Garlic-abilia, especially items bearing the “Garlic Capital of the World” moniker, are tangible expressions



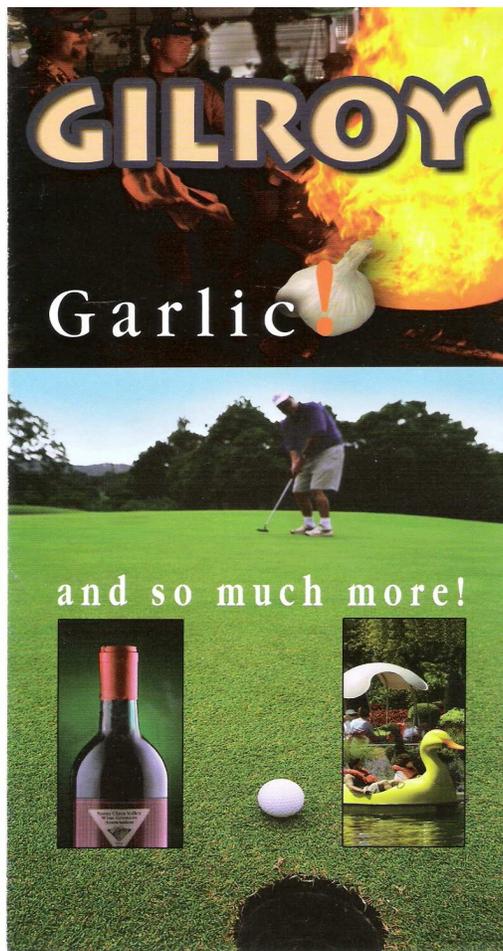
**FIGURE 4.3. MR. GARLIC** Mr. Gilroy Gerry Foisy talks with 2003 Garlic Queen Melissa Noto before the 2005 Festival. (Photograph by author)

The Festival takes place only three days of the year, leaving Gilroy another 362 days each year to live up to its reputation as the Garlic Capital of the World. For that purpose, the Gilroy Visitors Bureau (GVB) created “Guide to Garlic in Gilroy,” a bright orange flier that lists restaurants featuring garlic-laden dishes as well as shops specializing in garlic

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of foodscape commodity fetishism. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

merchandise. In a glossy promotional brochure they capitalize on Gilroy's fame as the Garlic Capital of the World while reminding visitors and potential investors that Gilroy is about "Garlic! . . . and so much more!" (Figure 4.4) There is no mention in these GVB publications of agricultural or industrial garlic production sites, none of which are open to the public, though fields of garlic and orchards are readily visible from Highway 101.



**FIGURE 4.4. GILROY VISITORS BUREAU  
"GARLIC! . . . AND SO MUCH MORE!"  
BROCHURE (GVB Brochure, author's collection)**

Automobile travelers approaching the city from the south see a billboard advertising the website for the Garlic Shoppe, one of the Gilroy-based garlic-themed retailers. (Figure 4.5) In addition to garlic, Gilroy boasts several other commercial attractions. It is home to Bonfante Gardens, a family theme amusement park, and the 145-store Gilroy Premium Outlets shopping center. Gilroy positions itself as “the regional shopping center destination for South Santa Clara County and beyond,”<sup>10</sup> thanks



**FIGURE 4.5. “GOT GARLIC?” ROAD SIGN** Billboard promoting the web site of a Gilroy-based, garlic-themed retailer. One of the Garlic Shoppe’s two stores in Gilroy is located just beyond this sign on Highways 101, south of Gilroy. (Photograph by author)

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<sup>10</sup> Gilroy Economic Development Commission, “Gilroy EDC celebrates its 8th program year,” *Gilroy Business Focus*, July, 2004.

to recent retail growth that includes a warehouse grocery chain, national chain bookstores, two home decoration stores and other “box” stores, all conveniently situated in expansive plazas immediately east of Highway 101. Such retail outlets lure visitors year round. Like much of the Bay area, Santa Clara County boasts several wineries as well as parks, golf courses, hiking trails, and other venues for outdoor activities. What differentiates Gilroy from other towns with golf courses, wineries, and retail outlets is its self-proclaimed status as the Garlic Capital of the World.

The primary identity promoted by Gilroy’s image makers includes little reference to the inhabitants who people the city and little mention of other possible identity-defining industries. Such selective inclusion is comparable to selective memory strategically evoked by those who create memorials and other commemorative expressions.<sup>11</sup> In Festival promotion there is neither mention of the fact that more garlic is grown in neighboring counties than is grown in Gilroy nor of the predominantly Mexican American laborers who work in the industry.<sup>12</sup> Image makers have successfully established what, for the most part, is an un-peopled food-place association for Gilroy.

The Festival, which draws more than 120,000 people to town one weekend a year, and the associated marketing of it, cement and perpetuate the city’s food-based identity.

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<sup>11</sup> John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Kammen, ed., *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*; George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> According to a brochure published by Christopher Ranch, California produces approximately 90% of all U.S. garlic, much of which comes to Gilroy for possessing or dehydration. Although there are only 500 to 700 acres dedicated to growing garlic in Gilroy, most of the 800 million pounds of garlic grown in Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara, Fresno, and Kern counties is shipped to Gilroy for processing. Additionally, Festival organizers reasoned they could assert the claim of capitaldom because Gilroy is home to two of the world’s four largest dehydrators.

Several local businesses capitalize on the association, incorporating garlic into their business names. From Garlic City Billiards to Garlic City Coffee, “garlic” is scattered throughout the yellow pages and streets of Gilroy. South Valley Internet, an area internet connectivity provider, secured garlic.com as its domain address and provides email service that incorporates garlic.com as the email address suffix. It is no wonder that businesses capitalize on such a palatable association; such names are humorous and catchy, especially to outsiders.

Gilroy’s branding as the Garlic Capital of the World not only provided clever names for local businesses and a positive identity for the city itself; it also has had significant economic and infrastructure consequences. Five years after the first Festival, the Gilroy Visitors Bureau was established and, in 1996, the Gilroy Economic Development Corporation was formed. The creation of these two entities is positioned as part of Gilroy’s movement toward becoming a tourist destination.<sup>13</sup> Community organizations and non-profit groups also benefit from the ongoing success of the Festival. Festival proceeds, approximately \$250,000 in 2002, are used to fund community projects, charitable groups and service organizations.

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<sup>13</sup> “The City has kept pace with the awakening of the tourism industry in California. Since 1979, when the first Gilroy Garlic Festival was held, Gilroy has steadily moved in the direction of becoming a tourist destination. The Gilroy Visitors Bureau, created in 1984, and the Gilroy Economic Development Corporation formed in 1996, are ongoing funded commitments made by the city as they orchestrate the long-range goals that guarantee the community's future economic vitality.” Gilroy Economic Development Commission, “The Gilroy Advantage, Lifestyle for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Gilroy, California Economic and Demographic Profile* [2004]; ---, “The Gilroy Advantage, Lifestyle for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Gilroy, California Economic and Demographic Profile* [2000]. The same quote appears on the EDC website. See Gilroy Economic Development Commission, “Community Profile” (Gilroy Economic Development Commission web site), available from <http://www.gilroyedc.org/overview.htm>, accessed March 23, 2005.

## **PLACE BRANDING: DIFFERENTIATION AND MARKETING A FOOD-CENTERED COMMUNAL IDENTITY**

Through their marketing, Gilroy image makers have transformed what was a communal embarrassment into a positive identification symbol, into identity capital. Place marketing takes a selective representation that “distills the essence of a place, and ‘imagines’ an identity that is attractive to tourists and residents alike.”<sup>14</sup> Marketing place is about product packaging where the product is an appealing, imagined geography. In the case of Gilroy, the product is Gilroy’s identity, represented by the moniker Garlic Capital of the World and the Festival; the packaging is promotional materials that tout the city’s claim of capitaldom and media coverage of the Festival. The consumers are current and potential local residents and businesses, potential future employers, visitors to the town and, more specifically, local and tourist festival attendees.

Like food packaging designers, place marketers hope to have a positive impact on consumers.<sup>15</sup> The impact will be measured by visitorship and dollars spent. Area hotels are filled every year for the duration of the Festival.<sup>16</sup> In addition to contributing to hotel and tax revenue, Festival attendees and vendors spend money at area restaurants, markets, gas stations, and other retail outlets. These measurements are relevant for another group of potential consumers of the branded identity: prospective Festival

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<sup>14</sup> T.C. Chang, “Geographical Imaginations of ‘New Asia-Singapore’,” *Geografiska Annaler Series B: Human Geography* 86, no. 3 (2004): 165. Chang situated his comment specifically in the context of tourism place marketing, but place marketing is not limited to tourists. It also is employed to lure investors as well as alter residents’ conception of their locality.

<sup>15</sup> For a brief reflection on food packaging, see Steve Heller, “Appetite Appeal,” *Social Research* 66, no. 1 (1999).

sponsors. The Festival's success and media exposure are significant not only to affirm Gilroy's collective identity as a foodscape and attract visitors to the city, but also to secure sponsorship for the continued success of the Festival. Like the media, some corporate sponsors incorporate levity into their marketing by playing off garlic's age-old and rightfully-earned odor-inducing reputation: in 1998 Sweet Breath Ice Chips, a candy-like breath freshener, was "The Official Breath Freshener of the Gilroy Garlic Festival" with free samples handed out to all interested attendees and included in the official Festival press kits.<sup>17</sup> Sponsors ranging from local retailers to Pepsi<sup>®</sup> help make the event financially viable just as individual commitments in the form of volunteerism make the Festival civically viable.

The impact of a place-based food Festival is not limited to the duration of the Festival. In fact, successful place branding and its associated marketing will have tangible and intangible consequences year-round. Intrigued by good marketing, people will be drawn to the place and, while there, will spend money. This assumes, of course, that the food-place association is a positive one. Gilroy's garlic campaign could have been unsuccessful: people might not have been intrigued by the initial garlic festival, or they may have attended and left with a negative impression of the food and the place. But

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<sup>16</sup> Kristin Carr, personal communication, August 19, 2005. According to Ms. Carr, the only other event in Gilroy that brings large numbers of people to the hotels is the Goldsmith Seed Pac trials, during which attendees fill up to two hotels for two week each year.

<sup>17</sup> The Jelly Belly Candy Company, in comparison, took advantage of garlic's capacity for manipulation by creating roasted garlic jelly beans. They distributed samples of the jelly beans at the 2004 Festival. In trash cans and on the ground just past the Jelly Belly booth, readily observable to the nose and eye, were slightly chewed remains of the sampled roasted garlic jelly beans. Apparently visitors underappreciated this garlic delicacy. Despite the apparent lack of appeal to Festival guests, roasted garlic Jelly Belly jellybeans are for sale at the Jelly Belly store in Gilroy's Premier Outlet Mall. They are one of many edible souvenirs of Gilroy available throughout the year that affirms the garlic-Gilroy brand.

neither of these things happened. The ongoing success of the Festival is evidence that the product is well packaged and marketed, and has secured customer brand loyalty.

A growing body of literature among scholars of urban and tourism studies attests to the rapid expansion of place branding as an identity-marketing phenomenon and as a nascent field for professional consultants.<sup>18</sup> Place branding is a local strategy working amid global forces to re-imagine a city so that it secures a competitive edge against other cities vying for tourist and investment dollars. It is a marketing tool that is usually discussed as it relates to themed environments, regions and larger cities such as Disney World, Las Vegas or New Orleans.<sup>19</sup> The branding of Gilroy as the Garlic Capital of the World is an example of successful place branding on a smaller scale.

Søren Buhl Pedersen noted that place branding “implies a new way of representing reality, a new practice of Lefebvre’s *l’espace conçu*.”<sup>20</sup> This means that place branding is based on the relationship between real, physical space; conceptual,

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<sup>18</sup> Scholars and practitioners of place marketing draw heavily from social theory, geography, tourism studies, and urban studies in their quest to brand localities. Included among the more influential voices articulating and informing place branding are Benedict Anderson, Mark Gottdiener, John Hannigan, David Harvey, Henri Lefebvre, and Sharon Zukin. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*; Gottdiener, *The Theming of America: Dreams, Visions and Commercial Spaces*; John Hannigan, *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 1998); David Harvey, “From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity,” in *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, ed. Jon Bird, et al. (London: Routledge, 1993); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995); ---, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). See also Dennis R. Judd and Susan Fainstein, eds., *The Tourist City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Gerry Kearns and Chris Philo, eds., *Selling Places: The City as Cultural Capital, Past and Present* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1993); Michael Sorkin, ed., *Variations on a Theme Park: Scenes from the New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992).

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Kevin Gotham, “Marketing Mardi Gras: Commodification, Spectacle and the Political Economy of Tourism in New Orleans,” *Urban Studies* 39, no. 10 (2002).

<sup>20</sup> Pedersen, “Place Branding: Giving the Region of Øresund a Competitive Edge,” 79. *L’espace conçu* literally translated as “conceived space;” the term, as Pedersen uses it, connotes both how space is imagined and imaged.

imagined, symbolic space and iconography; and experiences and perceptions of space. Place branding is based on the premise that places can be socially constructed. Place branding assumes that distinction, or what David Harvey called difference and otherness, can be produced.<sup>21</sup>

The success of place branding rests on consumer (e.g., festival attendees, tourists, locals, investors) perceptions and experiences of the place. If consumers buy into the brand, if they accept the association between the place and the icon, then the branding is successful. The branding process is not done solely from the outside in or from the top down; it necessitates inclusion of locals. Such inclusion is most likely to involve the people who comprise the “inner circle of cultural or political life” and endogenic as well as exogenic image makers’ efforts to “influence the influencers.”<sup>22</sup> Unheard are the legitimate but less powerful voices, though their participation (or quiet non-participation) in the branding is encouraged to ensure complete success. In Gilroy, “the influencers” have changed over the years. At first they were the men who conceived of and brought to fruition the first Festival. Recall that initially the mayor, while he did not discourage the festival, did not have confidence in its ability to draw people to Gilroy. After the surprising success of that first festival, however, he transitioned from being an “influencee” to being one of the “influencers” encouraging others to support the Festival and its associated Garlic Capital of the World branding.

John Hannigan outlined three “related dimensions” of place branding: instant recognition, playing on a desire for comfort and certainty, and providing a point of

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<sup>21</sup> Harvey, “From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity.”

identification for consumers.<sup>23</sup> The first and last of these coalesce into what I term differentiation; that is, differentiation of one place or locality from another. Creating distinction is at the core of successful place branding, and being able to protect a claim of being a world capital of something enhances distinction. Only by differentiating one locale from other locales, part of what David Harvey called “interplace competition,” is a place able to stand out in the competitive quest to secure lucrative manufacturing and commercial industries as well as tourists.<sup>24</sup> Harvey explicated that interplace competition is about attracting production by preserving a good business environment or realizing profits from speculative development, for example, and attracting consumers by creating a cultural center or attractive landscapes. “Investment in consumption spectacles, the selling of images of places, competition over the definition of cultural or symbolic capital, the revival of vernacular traditions associated with places, all become conflated” as place image makers engage in interplace competition for highly mobile capital.<sup>25</sup>

Gilroy’s brand moniker Garlic Capital of the World and the promotion of garlic as iconic of the city’s identity can be understood as a consumption spectacle on multiple levels. By attending the Festival, visitors, including locals and guests, participate in the performance of Gilroy’s branded identity. Their involvement in garlic-themed events and ingestion of garlic foods are ways of participating in the Festival spectacle. During non-

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<sup>22</sup> Pedersen, “Place Branding: Giving the Region of Øresund a Competitive Edge,” 79.

<sup>23</sup> Hannigan, “Symposium on Branding, the Entertainment Economy and Urban Place Building: An Introduction.”

<sup>24</sup> Harvey, “From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity,” 8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

Festival times, visitors are encouraged to consume the identity through acquisition of garlic-abilia and ingestion of garlic foods, thus consuming the foodscape identity.

There are obvious parallels with selling place and selling other consumer goods and services. Tangible reminders of Gilroy's branded identity abound. In addition to business names that incorporate the word or image of garlic, shops selling garlic-abilia are open year round. Restaurants feature garlic-laden foods for those who want to experience the flavorful identity during non-Festival time. The menu at Mama Mia's Ristorante Italiano in Gilroy has a special "Gilroy Garlic Menu" from which diners can choose Garlic Scampi or Garlic Festival penne con pesto, among other garlicky entrees. Dried garlic is sold year round by the pound, or in wreaths or braids, enabling consumers to purchase an unadulterated form of the iconized foodstuff. (Figure 4.6) Consumers can purchase from retail stores in Gilroy and websites T-shirts, foodstuffs, aprons, hats, magnets, and many more items that visually reinforce the Gilroy-garlic association. (Figure 4.7) But other than the Festival and garlic-abilia, there is little more than the distinctive smelling air to connect Gilroy to garlic for visitors.



**FIGURE 4.6. “FRESH GARLIC” SIGN** Sign advertising fresh garlic at the Garlic Shoppe, Highway 101, Gilroy. (Photograph by author)



**FIGURE 4.7. GARLIC MAGNETS** Magnetic garlic simulacra are one of many examples of garlic-abilia available at the Festival and from local retailers.

Unlike other themed and branded cities, such as Las Vegas, New Orleans or Leavenworth, Gilroy is able to retain its branded identity without having undergone much physical transformation. In fact, there has been very little significant physical change resulting from the self-proclaimed capitaldom by image makers. Among the material changes are road signs, retail outlets, enhancements to the city park where the Festival is held, and the temporary conversion of expansive fields into parking lots during the Festival days. The food-place association is tenacious enough, and entertaining enough, to sustain itself without urban rebuilding.

Branding as selective process and practice necessarily involves inclusion and exclusion – by focusing on selected features, other features are necessarily excluded. In the case of Gilroy, the fetishization of garlic is done to the exclusion of recognizing the labor and industries involved in its production. Also excluded is information about other commercial assets and natural resources Gilroy has to offer, though these are mentioned in some GVB and Economic Development Commission publications. The GVB “Garlic! . . . and so much more!” campaign suggests that, while some image makers may be aware that focusing exclusively on garlic may be potentially limiting, they nonetheless continue to give priority to it and to the city’s claim of capitaldom. Kristin Carr of the Gilroy Visitors Bureau noted that, despite the “Garlic! . . . and so much more!” slogan, the Visitors Bureau refers to Gilroy’s “fame” as Garlic Capital of the World “in almost every marketing piece.”<sup>26</sup> Media continue to focus on garlic and the Festival and, despite the

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<sup>26</sup> Kristin Carr, personal communication, August 19, 2005.

Festival's longevity, media present Gilroy's festivalization and fetishization of garlic as novel.

Place branding is a powerful marketing tool. Consider place monikers such as Niagara Falls, the Honeymoon Capital of the World, or Paris, the City of Lights. Successful brand slogans prompt place association, whether an actual place or an idea or image of a place is being recalled. The association made by branding does not need to be current. In fact, as the moniker for Niagara Falls illustrates, a place's association can outlive the reality of the source of the branding. Similarly, the basis or specification of a claim of differentiation can change over time. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, Gilroy became known as the Hay and Grain Capital of California.<sup>27</sup> In the decades around the turn of the twentieth century, Gilroy was known as the Dairy and Cheese Capital of California because four-fifths of the state's cheese production came from the Gilroy area. By the 1920s, Gilroy's extensive fruit orchards prompted it to be known as the Prune Capital. Agriculture and agribusiness continue to be vital to the city's and the region's economy, but the principal food is now garlic. Earlier in the century Gilroy town leaders could have promoted the city as the Prune Capital and organized a Prune Festival, complete with a Miss Prune Pageant and a prune recipe and cooking contest. Imagine the whimsical prune-abilia tourists could have purchased had that food-centered place branding been successful. Malone and Christopher could have

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<sup>27</sup> Brief mention is given to Gilroy's rich agricultural heritage and its short-lived position as capitals of these different agricultural and food products in Escamilla, *Gilroy, California: A Short History*. Whether by accident or on purpose, she noted that then-Pleasant Valley "became known as the hay and grain capitol [*sic*] of California" without capitalizing what could have been a title of distinction (p.9). In later passages she mentions the other claims to capitaldom (p.21) she uses capital letters, thus elevating the words from simply descriptors to part of a title of distinction.

commemorated the prune-centered episode of Gilroy's past. Instead they chose garlic: garlic was already associated among area residents with Gilroy by smell, it was transitioning from a food on the fringe to a food with a following, and garlic was a key ingredient in the city's physical and economic landscapes.

### **GARLIC AND GOURMET AS CULTURAL AND IDENTITY CAPITAL**

Since the Festival's inception, Festival organizers have promoted it as a gourmet food festival, signifying organizers' intent to position their event as distinct from some other food festivals.<sup>28</sup> The term *gourmet* connotes ambiguous but particular associations of food and lifestyle.<sup>29</sup> Gilroy's image makers capitalize on the ambiguity of *gourmet* and the concept's capacity as a marker of cultural capital while also exploiting garlic's capacity for festivalization and fetishization. This juxtaposition of gourmet and frivolity broadens the appeal of Gilroy's garlic identity.

Garlic was previously regarded by middle-class Anglo-Americans as malodorous and, "though used by the French, [was] better adapted to medicine than cookery."<sup>30</sup> Over the course of the twentieth century, garlic transitioned from an ingredient associated with a marginalized immigrant population and foreigners to an ingredient of mainstream

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<sup>28</sup> This is not to suggest that the food festival-attending public would be any less interested in a festival featuring foods not promoted as or not regarded by the general public as *gourmet*. A number of successful non-gourmet food festivals takes place throughout the country, including the National Cornbread Festival (South Pittsburg, TN) and the Boggy Bayou Mullet Festival (Niceville, FL). While ingredients like cornbread and mullet may be elevated through their preparation to *gourmet*, they, like garlic, generally are not regarded as gourmet items.

<sup>29</sup> For a discussion on the shifting connotations of *gourmet* see Carol M. Newman, "What is gourmet?" *Art Culinaire*, no. 75 (2004); Carolyn M. Voight, "You Are What You Eat: Contemplations on the Civilizing the Palate with 'Gourmet'" (McGill University, 1997).

<sup>30</sup> Lucy Emerson, *The New-England Cookery* (1808), quoted in Root and de Rochemont, *Eating in America: A History*, 107.

American cooking. As part of its transition, garlic developed a cult-like following exemplified by the Berkeley-based fan club, Lovers of the Stinking Rose. Some garlic devotees express their love of the pungent lily through consumer participation in anything garlic-related, including frequenting the Gilroy Garlic Festival and other garlic-themed events throughout the county. Despite having a devoted following and being accepted as a principal ingredient by many American consumers, this acceptance is tempered by a subtle ambivalence toward garlic informed by lingering culinary egocentrism, physiological palate preferences and interest in partaking in food trends.

In addition to the ambivalence that tempers its popularity as a trendy food, there are several reasons why garlic has proven an unsuitable ingredient among those who pursue food trends as a strategy for marking distinction.<sup>31</sup> Unlike other foods that suggest distinction, such as caviar and vintage champagne, garlic is inexpensive and is readily available. Additionally, some garlic-laden foods have been embraced by consumers and by the corporate food industry: for example, the increased availability of commercially packaged Genovese pesto at grocery stores and its frequent appearance on restaurant menus indicate that this garlicky Italian sauce entered mainstream American food culture.

When the Gilroy Garlic Festival began, pesto was not widely available outside Italian markets and selected restaurants. Pesto's limited availability and association with northern Italian cuisine, familiar primarily among foodies and northern Italians, marked it

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<sup>31</sup> I use the term distinction in a Bourdieuan sense. Familiarity with or avoidance of particular foods becomes cultural capital and is, therefore, a strategy to indicate status and mark distinction. Drawing on works by Max Weber and Thorstein Veblen that explored the ways individuals claimed distinction based on conspicuous lifestyle displays, Warde and Martens similarly suggested that dining out is a potential means to mark distinction. Alan Warde and Lydia Martens, *Eating Out: Social Differentiation, Consumption and Pleasure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

as gourmet. Among the food offerings at the inaugural Festival was pasta with pesto, an unusual food to serve at an outdoor festival celebrating an agricultural product. Because pesto is now a fairly common food, Festival organizers recognized that they needed to update their pesto offering in order to keep it a gourmet item. Appreciating “the fine line of seeking improvement without altering a highly successful event,” 2004 Gourmet Alley co-chairman Greg Bozzo came up with a new version, “*Penne pasta con pesto*,” for that year’s Festival.<sup>32</sup> “First, and foremost, it’s a pesto dish,” Bozzo is quoted as saying in an official Festival press release; “But it’s more of a gourmet item than our previous entr[ée]. Basil and pesto are primary ingredients, but this will be served in a white cream sauce with the pesto introduced at the very end. And we’re adding garden-fresh chopped tomatoes.”<sup>33</sup> Professional and some home cooks would wonder why this dish qualifies as gourmet, but for the purposes of the Festival, the new dish was presented as such.

The culinary center of the Festival is Gourmet Alley, the outdoor working kitchen where volunteer cooks prepare massive quantities of garlicky foods. Even its name, a clever rhetorical juxtaposition, plays on the ambiguity and potentially elevating capacity of the term gourmet. The iconic foods prepared in Gourmet Alley and are served to hungry garlic devotees in paper or cardboard containers. The absence of picnic tables or benches near the sales windows leaves consumers no choice but to stand or sit on the ground while they eat. It is the foods that are being promoted as gourmet, not the dining experience.

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<sup>32</sup> July 6 Gilroy Garlic Festival Association Press Release, 2004, “Penne Pasta con Pesto is Perfect Example of Garlic Festival Evolution” (Gilroy Garlic Festival web site), available from [www.gilroygarlicfestival.com/pages/press.html](http://www.gilroygarlicfestival.com/pages/press.html), accessed September 1, 2004.

What the rhetoric about the new pesto dish and the titular symbolism of the arterial kitchen suggest are the organizers' dedication to framing the foods served as gourmet. By extension, if gourmet foods are served at the Festival, consuming the Festival's garlic-laden foods could be cultural capital for Festival volunteers, attendees, and garlic devotees. The fact that garlic itself is not regarded as a marker of elevated status and that garlic is not thought of as gourmet within the popular imagination problematizes the ideological equation of the Gilroy Garlic Festival with gourmet.

Most who consider the nuances of the term gourmet would agree that it encompasses ambience as well as actual foodstuffs. While one can partake of a gourmet food experience out of doors, it is debatable whether or not eating garlic bread or garlicky pasta with pesto sauce on a sun-parched patch of worn grass constitutes a gourmet experience. It is the ambiguity of the concept and the individual nature of defining what is and is not a gourmet experience that enables Gilroy Garlic Festival organizers to persist in framing their Festival first and foremost as a gourmet food festival.

Just as selecting the icon around which to build a place brand can seem somewhat arbitrary or spurious, so too can other claims associated with the branded identity. The fact that Gilroy Garlic Festival organizers continue to conceive of and promote their Festival as gourmet seems specious. In the last quarter of the twentieth century in particular, food has become a central theme within popular culture, elevating general public awareness of food and altering perceptions of what gourmet signifies. The cable television channel Food Network, which is dedicated entirely to food programming,

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

epitomizes food in contemporary American popular culture. Doug Brown interpreted the fact that food journalism is winning industry awards as indicative of a general change in attitudes toward food among Americans.<sup>34</sup> Along with changing attitudes come shifts in what might stand as cultural capital. As more people learn about cooking and are introduced to gourmet foods, the concept must be applied to different novel foods in order for the label *gourmet* to retain its status as a marker of distinction. Despite the dynamism of the world of food, Festival organizers and community leaders continue to conceive of and market the Festival as a gourmet food event by highlighting the availability of garlicky foods and the recipe contest cook-off.<sup>35</sup>

#### **CONCLUSION: GENERATING IDENTITIES THROUGH A FESTIVE FOODSCAPE**

Gilroy's branded identity is sustained by a successful food-centered event and promotional media. It is important to realize that there actually are multiple identities generated by the Festival and the associated place brand. One is that of the city as Festival founders intended: "To boost Gilroy's image by claiming the Garlic Capital of the World title."<sup>36</sup> Bill Ayer, president of the 1981 Festival, noted the Festival "turned Gilroy around – gave it identification. Once the Garlic Festival happened, the town's people started to gain some pride in themselves and pride in the city."<sup>37</sup> A second collective identity generated by the garlic festival is the community of Festival

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<sup>34</sup> Doug Brown, "Haute Cuisine," *American Journalism Review* 26, no. 1 (2004).

<sup>35</sup> Kristin Carr, personal communication, July 27, 2004; Val Filice, personal communication, August 24, 2004. Festival promotional materials affirm their comments.

<sup>36</sup> Victoria Hale, Promotion Chairman, "Garlic Festival History and Garlic Mystery," undated document on Gilroy Garlic Festival Committee letterhead, "Garlic Festival" file, Gilroy Historical Museum.

volunteers. A communal spirit is operating and being reinforced on multiple levels as volunteers simultaneously play numerous roles: individual residents, fundraisers, party hosts, co-workers, neighbors, and most importantly, friends. Just as national contemporaneous communities are expressed through performance of national anthems, the singing of which suggests unisonance, members of a locale can express a collective identity through the community festival, during which their participation as volunteers suggests the fraternal unisonance that constitutes sense of community.<sup>38</sup>

The Festival also is an institution around which other Gilroyans affirm their identities as members of the collective community, build traditions, and thus attachments to each other and to place. 2003 Gilroy Garlic Festival Queen Melissa Noto described how she and her friends, many of whom attend college out of town, meet at the Festival each year. Even if they do not determine a time and place to meet, she commented, “it goes without saying, everyone is going to be at the Festival.”<sup>39</sup> For many Gilroyans who grew up attending or participating in the Festival, Festival time is an integral part of their conception of home. As a site for midsummer re-connection the Festival becomes a landscape of memories and homecoming for young Gilroyans during their college years. Through their continuity, self-conscious behavior, and inherently collective nature, annual festivals are traditionalizing instruments.<sup>40</sup> College-age Gilroyans develop their own traditions of reunion, traditions very similar to those of other former residents for

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<sup>37</sup> “Bill Ayer,” *Gilroy Dispatch*, July, 2003. This refrain is heard and read often in various accounts of the Festival’s history and success. See also Sutherland, *Cookoff: Recipe Fever in America*.

<sup>38</sup> The singing of national anthems as expressions of national unisonance is discussed in Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 132.

<sup>39</sup> Melissa Noto, personal communication, July 29, 2005.

whom the Festival days define a period of homecoming. That the Festival continues to be a site for reunion is readily apparent to anyone walking around the site, where squeals of glee from reuniting friends are followed by the excited chatter as they share details of their lives apart. Festival time and space, then, facilitates validation of individual identity and attachment to place. Despite being considered “hick” by some outside Gilroy, even outsiders can see that the foodscape is important to the locals.<sup>41</sup>

The fortuitous combination of good marketing and a receptive public enabled business and town leaders to transform what was a communal embarrassment into positive identity capital. To protect their identity as a garlic foodscape, city officials tried to trademark the slogan Garlic Capital of the World as part of the city logo. After a two-year, expensive legal struggle, they conceded defeat.<sup>42</sup> But the association between the city and the moniker, which is used liberally in city, commercial, and tourism materials, is firmly entrenched in the popular imagination – at least among foodies, fans of food festivals, cooking contest contenders, and festival planners – so they feel relatively secure that no other town contest their capitaldom.<sup>43</sup> Such is a feature of successful food-themed place branding and foodscapes: once an association becomes firmly entrenched within the public imagination, it is tenacious.

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<sup>40</sup> Moore and Myerhoff, “Introduction: Secular Ritual: Forms and Meaning.”

<sup>41</sup> Lauren Bevilacqua commented that some of her non-Gilroyan friends call the Festival “hick.” Personal communication, March 27, 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Rhonda Pellin of the City of Gilroy and Chris Filice each shared their memories about the city’s quest to secure trademark protection for the city’s slogan. Personal communications, July 27, 2004.

<sup>43</sup> Despite the fact that Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, declared itself Garlic Capital of the World, Gilroy image makers remain confident that their status as *the* capital is secure because the food-place association between garlic and Gilroy is entrenched in the popular imagination. There was no indication of any contestation between Gilroy and Stroudsburg. In fact, I never heard anyone in Gilroy mention Stroudsburg or other garlic festivals, other than the festival in Arleux that was Malone’s inspiration.

Thanks to successful branding of a food-place association, the city of Gilroy has name recognition as a foodscape. This place brand is affirmed throughout the year by marketing, including Visitors Bureau brochures, rebroadcasts of television footage of Festival, listing on assorted festival web sites, and articles in printed media promoting the Festival. Gilroy's food-centered identity is reaffirmed once a year through a performative festival.

Gilroy – the brand – successfully links Gilroy's agricultural past and present with its industrial and commercial present in hopes of continued recognition of both into the future. Many localities draw upon moments from their pasts, however distant those pasts may be, inventing traditions that commemorate those moments in the service of identity formation and reification. In this way selected history becomes a "useable past."<sup>44</sup> Through "annual" events, localities evoke a useable past, implying continuity with the past while simultaneously evoking connections to the future.

The selection of a food item with historic links to the landscape does not guarantee successful place branding. As he faced the task of fund raising, Rudy Malone was looking for a catch. What he sought was differentiation – a way to distinguish Gilroy from other towns, one that would not only elevate Gilroy in the public imagination but that also would entice visitorship and investment. An agricultural product seemed logical in part because, to a relative newcomer such as Malone, its presence was so obvious: Gilroy's seasonal scent reminded him that garlic was important to the local economy.

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<sup>44</sup> The phrase "useable past" refers to the practice of selectively commemorating something from a group's history in the interest of affirming the group's identity. Teluja, "Making Ourselves Up: On the

Highlighting an agricultural product draws on the agrarian heritage of the valley, implicitly evoking nostalgia for the illusory simplicity of a farming past while catering to Americans' appetite for a festive and food-themed present. Gilroy's success as a foodscape is attributable to good marketing, people's curiosity about garlic and their willingness to suspend culinary egocentrism, people's seemingly infinite love of food and food festivals, and perhaps most importantly, as Mr. Filice so smartly noted, timing: all these variables came together at the right time, with skillful planning by the right people, in the right place. Americans were ready for another food festival and they were ready for garlic.

In 1979, a successful garlic campaign was far from certain. Twenty-five years later, Gilroy's food-place association has become so embedded in the popular imagination that it seems organic. Gilroy exemplifies successful place branding: hindsight makes it look as though success was inevitable.

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Manipulation of Tradition in Small Groups," 2. See also Hobsbawn and Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*; Kammen, ed., *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Consuming Identity: Competition, Implied Commensality, and Social Order in the Festival Frame**

Place-based food festivals are demarcated time and space for the consumption of the city's branded identity, consumption achieved through residents' and tourists' presence at and participation in Festival events and eating iconic foods. Participation in the festival not only affirms the place brand, but the various community identities articulated through and performed in the festival frame. As such, the Gilroy Garlic Festival is a temporary but recurring site for creating and reinforcing multiple senses of community and identities, including that of Gilroy as a festive foodscape.

Having introduced Gilroy, established it as a branded place, and considered how a sense of community is facilitated among some participants, this chapter moves from the macro level of the Festival in general to the micro level of particular Festival events. Within the Festival are several events that warrant detailed consideration as embedded discourse that articulate multifarious messages about participants' and observers' relationships with each other, relationships expressed through food production. In this chapter, the notion of community is interrogated at the sub-locality level by exploring several smaller-group interactions that, through particular recurring Festival events, simultaneously affirm and interrogate social order while also building alternative senses

of community.<sup>1</sup> After brief consideration of the Gilroy Garlic Queen Pageant, I turn my critical gaze to recipe and cooking contests in general, and Gilroy's Great Garlic Cook-off in particular, as venues that reinforce and challenge normative paradigms of domestic cooking. After analyzing the signification of cooking contests, I move to consideration of the garlic braiding demonstration and topping contest, both of which involve garlic in its natural state – “fresh from the field” dried bulbs.<sup>2</sup>

The Great Garlic Cook-off is a large-scale articulation of a popular festival event. The topping contest, a competitive spectator event during which field workers “top” raw garlic, is unique to the Gilroy Garlic Festival. Both events present competition under the rubric of entertainment. They are diversions from everyday life for observers but are condensed intensifications of everyday life for contestants, especially contestants in the topping contest. Each competitive event transforms a mundane task – domestic cooking and topping garlic – into a ritualized drama.<sup>3</sup> These two competitions provide distinctly different lenses through which to consider the role food can play within the festival genre in terms of framing, affirming, and challenging social order.

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<sup>1</sup> This is not to suggest that other festival activities are not important. They are symbolically and structurally significant for they constitute the Festival and endow it with meaning.

<sup>2</sup> My observations and analyses of these events are based on ethnographic fieldwork between 1999 and 2005; conversations with Festival attendees, Festival staff, contest participants, and past and present contest chairpersons; and each year's program booklet that includes schedules, some text about each event, and photographs.

<sup>3</sup> Beverley Stoeltje's work and teaching on festival significantly informed my reading of festivals. In particular, her analysis of rodeo as ritualized drama informed my thinking about the topping contest. See especially Beverly Stoeltje, “Power and Ritual Genres: American Rodeo,” *Western Folklore* 52 (1993); ---, “Riding and Roping and Reunion: Cowboy Festival,” in *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival*, ed. Alessandro Falassi (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

Americans have a “taken-for-granted enchantment with competition.”<sup>4</sup> Pauline Rosenau argued that a competition paradigm is part of America’s legacy of rugged individualism and is the basis of the American political system and economy; it is the organizational paradigm of children’s after-school undertakings, such as little league baseball, and some sectors of entertainment, such as gambling, reality television and game shows. It is logical that the competitive paradigm is represented in myriad forms within the festival genre as well. While the competitors may take competitions like cooking contests very seriously, even within the festival frame, they are embraced as a form of entertainment for spectators, and are sites for the exhibition of and public recognition of individual achievements.

**“IT’S NOT A BEAUTY PAGEANT”: THE GARLIC QUEEN PAGEANT AND COMMUNITY IDEALS**

As with any living tradition, the Festival retains its vitality by changing over time. In the Festival’s early years an extensive menu of preliminary satellite events, such as the Tour de Garlic bike tour and the Reek Run foot race, were used to generate additional interest and participation in the Festival. As participant involvement waned, satellite events were dropped from the calendar. The calendar of prelude events associated with the Festival has dwindled; in fact, the Festival Association does not organize any pre-festival public events. They do, however, participate in other community events: the Festival Association sponsors an entertainment stage and has a food booth at an annual

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<sup>4</sup> Rosenau, *The Competition Paradigm: America's Romance with Conflict, Contest, and Commerce*, 1.

classic car show called the Garlic City Fun Run that is organized by a local car club, held two weeks before the Festival. According to Chris Filice of the Festival Association, the Association's participation at the automobile Fun Run does not provide much publicity for the Festival but it is a "good will gesture."<sup>5</sup> The Association's participation in community events is part of the cycle of civic engagement that seems to thrive in Gilroy.

Among the events that remain vital to the Festival is the Gilroy Garlic Queen Pageant. The events surrounding the selection and crowning of Miss Gilroy Garlic and her Court take place in early May, well ahead of the mid-summer Festival. Although Gilroy is a small city, it retains a rural feeling, perhaps in part because of the centrality of agriculture and agribusiness in the city's economy and defining the landscape, the casual friendliness of its residents, and the genuine communal pride communicated by residents. It is not illogical, then, to suggest that the selection of Gilroy's Festival royalty is similar to contests in other rural towns: it is a display produced by and, importantly, for local consumption rather than for visitors or tourists.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Chris Filice, personal communication, January 25, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Leslie Prosterman similarly noted that young twins and freckle contests at county fairs are "a formal presentation of the community to itself." Prosterman, *Ordinary Life, Festival Days: Aesthetics in the Midwestern County Fair*, 18. Contests involving babies and children have long been components of fairs and festivals, as noted in Wayne Caldwell Neely's classic text on American agricultural fairs, Neely, *The Agricultural Fair*. Rodger Lyle Brown considered a festival baby crawling contest, expansively reading it as "a legacy of master-race eugenics." Brown, *Ghost Dancing on the Cracker Circuit: The Culture of Festivals in the American South*, 50. Robert Lavenda considered the sometimes contested nature of festival pageantry and social order at festivals intended to affirm community solidarity. Robert H. Lavenda, "Festivals and the Creation of Public Culture: Whose Voice(s)?" in *Museum and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, ed. Ivan Karp, et al. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992).

The young women who vie for the honor of being the “Belle of the Bulb” are judged on personal interviews (40%), talent (20%), evening gown poise (20%), and garlic-themed speeches or skits (20%). The personal interviews are conducted privately, with only the judges and each contestant present. The remaining components are performed in front of an audience of local family and friends at the culminating Pageant, held in an auditorium at the local community college. To one side of the auditorium is a television camera: community members who were unable to get tickets to the Pageant or want to relive the excitement of the evening are able to watch it on community access television throughout the coming year. Upon completion of the competition the judges, who are seated at a table between the stage and the audience, select the winner and runners-up. Audience members do not hesitate to express their enthusiasm by clapping, yelling out, and cheering for individual contestants as they display themselves on stage.

The Garlic Queen and her Court embody communal and societal ideals – stable yet dynamic, implicitly accepted yet ambiguous standards. Through the pageant, collective expectations about traits upstanding young women should exhibit are articulated. Inherent in the pageant genre, for example, is the expectation that the contestants will be physically attractive. Gilroyans, however, are quick to state that “it is not a beauty pageant.”<sup>7</sup> The lack of emphasis on physical appearance among audience members and in the evaluative scoring at the Garlic Queen Pageant is offset by the

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<sup>7</sup> Chris Filice, personal communication, May 6, 2005. She made the comment while outlining the judging criteria just before the 2005 Gilroy Garlic Queen Pageant commenced. That Robert Lavenda has an article titled with the same phrase suggests that it is a common and potentially controversial undercurrent of community queen pageants. See Lavenda, “‘It’s Not a Beauty Pageant!’ Hybrid Ideology in Minnesota Community Queen Pageants.”

inclusion of additional, seemingly less superficial standards important to the well-being of the community: that she is or will be attending college, will do community service, and will represent the town in a positive way.

As place-based food festival's royalty, they personify the locality's food-place association. These young women come to symbolize Gilroy and its garlic, further strengthening garlic's role as the vehicle by which citizens of Gilroy affirm community values. The Garlic Queen and her Court are obligated to represent the community in the weeks leading up to the Festival and, most importantly, for various activities throughout the Festival days. (Figure 5.1) The young women who become garlic royalty and their subsequent performances in that role affirm the collective expectation of young women among Gilroyans while also affirming the significance of garlic as iconic of positive elements of Gilroy's sense of community. Leaving further consideration of queen and beauty competitions and the associated pageantry to others, subsequent sections scrutinize two events that involve the actual food icon.<sup>8</sup>

### **COOKING AND RECIPE CONTESTS: IMPLIED COMMENSALITY AND COMMUNITAS**

Like queen competitions, the cooking contest and the topping contest explored in the remainder of this chapter are secular rituals in that they articulate, challenge, and reinforce expectations and identities in highly visible, ritualized displays.<sup>9</sup> This section

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<sup>8</sup> For exemplary work on queen and beauty contests, see Sarah Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World: Beauty Pageants and National Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Banner, *American Beauty*; Colleen Ballerino Cohen, Richard Wilk, and Beverly Stoeltje, eds., *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> Moore and Myerhoff, "Introduction: Secular Ritual: Forms and Meaning."

contextualizes critical analysis of the Great Garlic Cook-off as an example of the cooking contest genre, a genre informed by domestic ideology, food technology, consumerism, corporate culture, print and media technology, and agricultural fairs.



**FIGURE 5.1. A DUTY OF ROYALTY** Among the Garlic Royalty's responsibilities are entertaining the audience at the Cook-off while the judges' scores are tallied, and congratulating contest winners as they are announced. Here, 2000 Gilroy Garlic Queen Leila Alicia Wright hands the second place plaque to Susan Runkle, of Walton, Kentucky, for her entry, Crispy Garlic Salmon Cakes with Roasted Corn Salsa. (Photograph by author)

### *Recipe and Cooking Contests: Evolution of a Genre*

Contemporary cooking contests are descended from nineteenth-century agricultural fair domestic arts competitions, late nineteenth-century recipe contests held

by newspapers, and early twentieth-century corporate test kitchens created to devise and test recipes for new products. Agricultural fairs evolved into state and county fairs, both of which continue to award ribbons for agricultural and domestic products. Domestic arts displayed at nineteenth-century agricultural fairs offered much-deserved public recognition for domestic products.<sup>10</sup> The practice continues at contemporary county and state fairs, where judged competitions elevate the banality of domestic tasks and food preparation to undertakings worthy of public commendation; such a display “provides a physical domain in which participants represent their lives to themselves and all other interested parties.”<sup>11</sup> Exhibition of homegrown and homemade items at fairs was and continues to be a display of domestic skills, an expression of personal and collective aesthetics and an affirmation of social expectations. In her historical analysis of the Minnesota State Fair, Karal Ann Marling noted that “[j]ust as the Mrs. America beauty pageant of the 1960s would serve to glamorize the lot of the housewife, so the hard-fought state fair cake and jelly contests of the preceding epoch affirmed the value of her customary activities in the home.”<sup>12</sup>

In the late-nineteenth century, newspapers held recipe contests to attract and retain readers. They also printed recipes sent to them from corporate test kitchens, sometimes in the guise of a food column, sometimes as paid advertisement. Also appearing on food packaging and in free pamphlets, test kitchen recipes were a ready

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<sup>10</sup> On nineteenth-century agricultural fairs see Borish, “A Fair, Without *the* Fair, is No Fair at All: Women and the New England Agricultural Fair in the Mid-Nineteenth Century.”

<sup>11</sup> Prosterman, *Ordinary Life, Festival Days: Aesthetics in the Midwestern County Fair*, 16.

<sup>12</sup> Marling, *Blue Ribbon: A Social and Pictorial History of the Minnesota State Fair*, 247.

resource for domestic cooks facing the rapidly expanding world of packaged and processed foods and new appliances.

Another way to expand consumer familiarity with and use of new food products, as well as to acquire recipes that incorporated brand-specific products, was through company-sponsored recipes contests. These contests were instituted to generate recipes from home cooks that would appeal to other home cooks, thus encouraging more cooks to buy and learn how to use new items. Recipes from recipe contests had a more personal tone than those generated in corporate test kitchens, adding to their appeal for product promotion among print media and food companies.

Early in the trend of food industry sponsored recipe contests was a 1905 competition sponsored by Knox Gelatin. Other notable contests early in the twentieth century include one held in 1918 by General Chemical Company that required entrants to use Razor Baking Powder, and one in 1925 by Postum Cereal Company for Grape Nuts cereal. Interest among women to supplement their daily kitchen duties by entering recipe contests grew as “several powerful external forces conspired to make homemaking an attractive hobby as well as a full-time profession. Magazines bulged with ads for brand-new kitchen appliances, while the articles sandwiched in between the glossy pictures of freezers and ranges described new culinary methods and exciting changes in the American diet.”<sup>13</sup>

The national corporate-sponsored cooking contest was elevated from a print event to a visual media event with the Pillsbury Bake-off<sup>®</sup>. Inaugurated at the Waldorf-Astoria

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

Hotel in 1949, this was the first national contest for which finalists gathered to cook their entries.<sup>14</sup> Since then, the popularity of recipe and cooking contests among food companies, magazines and appliance makers, as well as amateur and professional cooks, has exploded. Indicative of their popularity is Cooking Contest Central, founded in 1997 and self-described as “[t]he Internet’s premier Web site dedicated to competitive cooking and recipe contests.”<sup>15</sup> Gilroy’s Great Garlic Cook-off is one of the best-known cooking contests among contesters on a calendar of more than 1300 annual amateur competitions.<sup>16</sup>

Another indication of the continued interest in competitive cooking is the number of cook-off and recipe contest cookbooks.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the increasing popularity of cooking contest-themed television shows such as Food Fight, Food Network Challenge and Iron Chef, all Food Network cable channel programs, attests to the American

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<sup>14</sup> The first Pillsbury Bake-off® was called the “Grand National Recipe and Baking Contest.” According to Pillsbury’s history of the event, it was the media that began calling the Grand National the Bake-off® and the company embraced it as the official name for the annual event. “Contest History” (Pillsbury Bake-off® web site), available from <http://www.pillsbury.com/bakeoff/history/1949.asp>, accessed February 5, 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Through the Cooking Contest Central home page, viewers can access lists of amateur, professional, and student contests as well as a myriad of other cooking contest related information. See “Recipe Contest Central” (Recipe Contest Central web site), available from <http://www.recipecontests.com/>, accessed February 5, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> In her book about amateur cooking contests, Amy Sutherland explored a few of the most favored competitions among serious food contesters; the Great Garlic Cook-off is one of them. She defined contenders as a “group of nearly two thousand cooks, mostly women, [that] makes a serious hobby if not a near career out of [entering] cooking contests.” Sutherland, *Cookoff: Recipe Fever in America*, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, publishers do not maintain publication and sales statistics on sub-genres of cookbooks so I am unable to offer comparative numbers. A casual glance through the cookbook section of a bookstore or on-line book supplier, however, illustrates this point. The array of titles suggests the breadth of this sub-genre: for example, Polly Bannister, *Blue Ribbon Recipes: Award-winning Recipes from America's Country Fairs* (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1997); Gwen McKee and Barbara Moseley, *The Recipe Hall of Fame Cookbook: Winning Recipes from Hometown America* (Brandon, Miss.: Quail Ridge Press, 1999); Pillsbury editors, *Pillsbury Best of the Bake-Off Cookbook: Recipes from America's Favorite Cooking Contest* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 2004); Barry Shlachter, *Championship Chili: Top Cookoff Winning Recipes* (Ft. Worth: Great Texas Lind, 2002).

public's appetite for amateur and professional competitive cooking as spectacle, for instruction, or both.<sup>18</sup>

Cooking contests are not unique to the United States; indeed, competitive cooking events for professional and amateur cooks are held throughout the world. What is uniquely American about cooking contests is the scale with which Americans embrace them, in some instances becoming professional contesters. Amy Sutherland interpreted these contests as democracy in action: in her witty exploration of the U.S. amateur competitive cooking circuit, she observes that

[w]hat all these people [who entered cooking contests] had in common was the cooking, a great leveler of class, age, and education. You don't have to be a genius to be a good cook, nor do you have to be a toned athlete or naturally talented. Neither must you be rich or young. That is what makes cooking contests so quintessentially American. All comers have a shot in this very democratic competitive arena where the common cook can make American food history . . . .<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Each of these shows is a variation on the theme of a cooking contest. Food Fight is described by its hosting network as “a raucous cooking competition” and “a fast paced battle between two teams” whose “goal it to out-cook – and out-razz – the opposing team.” “Food Network Challenge” is a food-travel show that visually takes viewers “to the biggest and best food battles around the world.” “Iron Chef,” the Japanese-language cult hit, is described as “a frenetic culinary battle” between two chefs, the results of which (prepared dishes) are judged to determine “who is victorious and who is vanquished.” The competition is staged in an arena called Kitchen Stadium, above which the panel of judges and the narrator sit, a physical arrangement that mimics that of spectators watching staged human and animal fights in the Coliseum of ancient Rome. The show was so popular in the United States that Food Network created an American version called “Iron Chef America, The Series” that replicates the original’s format, complete with a Kitchen Stadium that mirrors the original Japanese set. Of these shows, only the “Iron Chef” programs involve all professional chefs rather than at least some amateur or domestic cooks, an important distinction worthy of analysis but beyond the scope of this chapter. Food Network, “Food Fight” (Food Network web site), available from [http://www.foodnetwork.com/food/show\\_fg](http://www.foodnetwork.com/food/show_fg), accessed February 20, 2005; ---, “Food Network Challenge” (Food Network web site), available from [http://www.foodnetwork.com/food/show\\_cc](http://www.foodnetwork.com/food/show_cc), accessed February 20, 2005; ---, “Iron Chef” (Food Network web site), available from [http://www.foodnetwork.com/food/show\\_ic](http://www.foodnetwork.com/food/show_ic), accessed February 20, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Sutherland, *Cookoff: Recipe Fever in America*, 6.

Competitive cooking is a mainstay in contemporary American popular culture, within the festival frame, and as stand-alone entertainment. Described as “publicity event[s] cum Americana,” cook-offs are a popular food discourse.<sup>20</sup> They warrant critical attention because, when food and cooking are involved, issues of gender roles and social expectation are implicitly or explicitly being affirmed, subverted or both. Through an amateur cooking contest, domestic cooks are, for a short time and within a defined space, elevated to food celebrities as they prepare dishes of their own creation on stage for an audience larger than the usual familial assembly. Cooking on a contest stage reframes domestic cooking, removing it from the generally private sphere of the home and situating it in a very public performative frame.

### *The Great Garlic Cook-off Recipe and Cooking Contest: A Synopsis*

Gilroy’s Great Garlic Cook-off begins months before the Festival when each year hundreds of eager amateur cooks from the United States and Canada submit recipes to the Festival Association for the contest. The Recipe Contest committee screens submissions, narrowing the pool from several hundred to around fifty by eliminating those that do not meet the stated Cook-off Recipe Contest criteria. Recipe Contest Rules specify, for example, that each recipe must incorporate at least six cloves of fresh garlic or the equivalent in packaged form, yet some recipes overlook this vital detail.<sup>21</sup> The omission

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>21</sup> Contest rules can be viewed through the Gilroy Garlic Festival web site, <http://www.gilroygarlicfestival.com>. The link changes year to year. For 2000, the source was Gilroy Garlic Festival Association, “Garlic Cook-off” (Gilroy Garlic Festival web site, [2000]), available from <http://www.gilroygarlicfestival.com/cookoffhowto.html>, accessed April 24, 2000. The rules for 2005 were viewable at Gilroy Garlic Festival Association, “Garlic Cook-off” (Gilroy Garlic Festival web site, [2005]),

of ingredients, lack of originality, and illegibility, all of which violate stated rules, are among the primary reasons many recipes are discarded during the initial rounds of elimination. A Bay area food consultant, selected by the contest chairperson and working *pro bono*, has the arduous task of reviewing the remaining forty to sixty submissions and evaluating them according to the standards of the contest: uniqueness, intrigue, and ease of preparation.<sup>22</sup> She then cooks the recipes of her selected semi-finalists, narrowing the field until she arrives at the eight finalists who will be invited to the Festival. These finalists are brought, at the expense of the Festival Association, to Gilroy, where they are put up in a local hotel, gather for a pre-Festival dinner party, and spend Saturday morning cooking their recipes on stage.

The competition takes place on an elevated kitchen stage in front of bleacher seating for 1,000. (Figure 5.2) Throughout the two hours allotted for preparing the dishes, San Francisco chef, restaurateur, radio host, and Macy's Culinary Expert Narsai David acts as Cook-off Stage emcee, providing audio stimulation by talking about garlic, interviewing local garlic industry representatives, interviewing the contestants, fielding questions about garlic from the audience – a steady stream of chatter to keep the growing audience entertained as the contestants cook.<sup>23</sup> Some years there are media crews buzzing

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available from <http://www.gilroygarlicfestival.com/pages/cookoff-enter.html>, accessed January 10, 2005. The 2006 rules are posted at Gilroy Garlic Festival Association, "Cook-off. How to Enter 2006 Rules" ([2006]), available from <http://www.gilroygarlicfestival.com/pages/cookoff-enter.html>, accessed January 7, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> A Bay area food consultant has been used to select the contest finalists since 1982. Since 1999 Dee Carroll has served as the Cook-off Consultant. She is reimbursed food costs for the recipes she tests as part of the process of narrowing down the number of finalists. Janie Liebich, personal communication, August 17, 2000; Festival program booklets, various years.

<sup>23</sup> Narsai David has been emcee since 1991. Prior to that, the position was filled by different people. In 1989 and 1990 the contest was emceed by two different area food personalities; between 1986 and 1988,



**FIGURE 5.2. THE GREAT GARLIC COOK-OFF STAGE** The view of the Cook-Off stage, as seen from the bleachers. Narsai David stands at a podium on the front right corner of the stage. The judges sit at a round table on the front left corner of the stage. The long table across the front of the stage is where contestants' dishes are displayed for audience viewing after being presented to the judges. The contestants prepare their dishes at one of eight work stations behind the display table. Volunteer helpers are wearing red T-shirts. Notice the camera man in the yellow shirt. (Photograph by author)

about the stage, filming snippets of each contestant's work since they don't know yet who will be the winner. In 2000 celebrity chef Sarah Moulton was there with a film crew. As contestants worked to complete their dishes, she conducted interviews, exchanged pleasantries, and asked about their interest in garlic, cooking, and contests. The footage was later used for Food Network programming.

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Bay area television chef Jim Neil hosted the Cook-off. Until 1985 the cooking contest was held in kitchens at nearby Galvin Community College. During those early years, the winners were announced at the Festival site but there was no need for an emcee.

Throughout the morning the energy around the Cook-off Stage increases. As the audience swells, so too does the excitement among contestants and observers until it is as palpable as the air is fragrant with garlic-infused foods. As each dish is completed, it is displayed on a tray, paraded across the stage for the benefit of the eager audience, and served to the panel of judges.<sup>24</sup> The judges quietly sample and evaluate each dish in turn according to pre-established criteria. While the judges' scores are tallied the audience is entertained by the Garlic Queen and her Court, a barbershop quartet called Garlic City Harmony, and more prattle from the skilled emcee. Finally the winners are announced. The three contestants earning the highest scores are brought sequentially to the front of the stage, where they are congratulated and photographed by media and a now-adoring audience. The victors are awarded monetary prizes: one thousand dollars for first place, seven hundred fifty dollars for second place, and five hundred dollars for third place. Each of the remaining five finalists receives one hundred dollars. These prize amounts are not high compared to other national amateur cooking contests, but winning at the Gilroy Garlic Festival is significant for testers because it is so well-known. The Gilroy Garlic Queen and her Court crown the top three contest winners with garlic clove tiaras. (Figure 5.1)

### ***Cooking Contest Competitors: Implied Commensality and Communitas***

The process of cooking for a contest like the Gilroy Garlic Cook-off is an example of what I term *implied commensality*. Commensality normally refers to

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<sup>24</sup> The panel of five judges is selected by the Cook-off committee chairperson and is comprised of food industry professionals such as restaurant and personal chefs, food editors, and food writers. The food

fellowship at a table that occurs during the act of eating together. Prior to eating together, someone must cook. By extension, then, the act of cooking implies a future or eventual commensality.<sup>25</sup> In the case of the Gilroy Cook-off, contestants are preparing food to be eaten by the judges, and subsequently by volunteer helpers and the other contestants. Since contestants' recipes are printed in a recipe booklet being sold at the contest, their recipes may become part of someone else's future commensality.

All cooking can be considered an expression of implied commensality; the concept is not limited to cooking contests. Yet the format of a cooking contest has dimensions that differentiate it from domestic or commercial cooking. Competitive cooking, such as that observed at cooking contests, involves multiple cooks preparing multiple dishes (that could be the same or different) under time constraints and subject to immediate judgment (as compared to the delayed and perhaps more cautious judgment of cooking for domestic consumption, for example).

Just as commensality is implied in all cooking, commensality is inherent in every cooking contest: preparing food for others' consumption, whether it will be consumed sooner or later, is a preliminary act of commensality. For those cooking, it is implied commensality. Their dishes will be consumed by the judges who are eating together, thus

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consultant who determined the eight finalists provides the tie-breaking vote, as needed.

<sup>25</sup> Leonard Barkan defined commensality as "eating together, or more literally, eating at the same table." Without contradicting himself or the concept of commensality, he also described "virtual commensalities that appear when you dine alone with a book or in the presence of works of art." Additionally, I suggest one can engage in virtual commensality by dining with the memory of a dining companion or the memory invoked by the foods prepared and being consumed. Barkan noted that virtual commensality is an example of "the most private of all commensalities, you and your taste buds." Commensality does not require a table or other furniture. It is the act of sharing food that constitutes commensality. Consistent among these different conceptions of commensality is the act of eating as a sense experience, one that connotes interaction with other people but that can also be applied to private communion between the eater and

are experiencing commensality. The cooks are not part of this commensality except by implication: though they do not sit at the table, they created and prepared the dishes, hence they were active agents in the shared dining experience. If contest rules permit it and enough food has been prepared, contestants and their helpers will eat each other's food, thus eventually partaking in commensality themselves. Gilroy Garlic Festival rules specify that competitors must prepare enough of their dishes to serve the six, but most contestants prepare enough food to share with the other contestants when the competition is over. Sharing these dishes they have prepared themselves – their commensality – contributes to their sense of *communitas*, to their temporary, liminal community of participation.<sup>26</sup>

It is not only commensality that facilitates *communitas*. Contestants' participation in the Cook-off is a *communitas*-generating experience. People who share a liminal experience tend to form a bond with others who share the same experience, albeit a temporary or superficial sense of solidarity.<sup>27</sup> Such a temporary community is a familiar

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objects, including one's own taste buds. Leonard Barkan, "Feasts for the Eyes, Foods for Thought," *Social Research* 66, no. 1 (1999): 226.

<sup>26</sup> My use of the concept of *communitas* is drawn from Victor Turner's work on rites of passage. For Turner, *communitas* emerged in periods of liminality, times during rites of passage when participating individuals were vulnerable and personal barriers were lower than normal. The concept is applicable to times and conditions on the periphery of life, such as cooking contests, that are not formal rites of passage but during which participating individuals have heightened emotions and are vulnerable. Turnerian *communitas* differs from the camaraderie of every day life because it develops outside the normative structure of interaction. It is such structure that defines differences and constrains individual action, thus for Turner, it holds people apart. Turner defined the bonds of *communitas* as anti-structural: they are undifferentiated, equalitarian, direct, and non-rational. During periods of anti-structure, normal constraints are suspended making participants vulnerable and, at the same time, more open to forming a bond with fellow participants. While cooking may be part of daily life for contest participants, being at a contest and being on a contest stage likely are not, thus that time is liminal time. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*.

<sup>27</sup> Over the years I have worked in various capacities at local, regional, and national festivals, from country folklife festivals in South Carolina to Wyoming's statehood centennial festival to the Smithsonian

outcome of festival participation. The Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife founder Ralph Rinzler commented on his anticipation of this phenomenon, based on years of experience, to participants-and-staff-to-be as a pre-festival gathering in 1985.<sup>28</sup>

Scholars read group performance of consumption as transformative for participating individuals' relationships.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, group performance of food preparation is symbolically transformative in that a sense of *communitas* develops among participants. Social cohesion is affirmed through participants' ritualistic efforts of cooking, whether or not the cooking is done in a competitive environment: the act of cooking in itself is an activity during which fellowship may occur. The frame of a cooking contest magnifies the intensity of contestants' interaction and any resulting fellowship. Although they are not sharing their individual cooking tasks with each other, each contestant is participating in the intense experience of cooking in the liminal time and space of the cooking contest. A comment made by contestant Adam Sanchez exemplifies cooking contest *communitas*: being on stage and interacting with the other contestants, he said, "almost had a feeling of being a close family for one day."<sup>30</sup>

Contestant Diane Sweet commented that because all the contestants and stage volunteers get to know each other at the pre-Cook-off social, everyone "felt we were friends on

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Institution's Festival of American Folklife. While working these events – interacting with other staff and participants, and observing participants interact with each other – I experienced and witnessed manifestations of the type of festival *communitas* I introduce here. In their consideration of the link between secular ceremonies and the creation of a sense of community, Sally Moore and Barbara Myerhoff, expanding on the work of Edmund Leach, noted that the solidarity may be transient. Moore and Myerhoff, "Introduction: Secular Ritual: Forms and Meaning."

<sup>28</sup> Mr. Rinzler is quoted in Robert Cantwell, *Ethnomimesis: Folklife and the Representation of Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 142.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Limón, "Carne, Carnales, and the Carnavalesque: Bakhtinian 'Batos,' Disorder, and Narrative Discourses."

stage.”<sup>31</sup> In fact, in the spirit of community, during other contests she has let other competitors use her stove if theirs was not heating well or borrow utensils if they had forgotten theirs.

This is not to suggest that all contestants participate in a positive way during the liminal period of the contest. One contender who has competed in multiple national contests noted that “[s]ome of the big contests seem to bring out the worst in some of the more serious competitors” and some contestants “have really gotten a reputation for being less than kind.”<sup>32</sup> One Gilroy contestant commented about the rudeness of another contestant the year she competed: a woman kept a cool distance from the other competitors who were engaging in amicable banter. The aloof contestant’s lack of group engagement and what was described as her over-confident attitude set her apart from her temporary colleagues. The aloof woman “was acting very confident and didn’t have much to say to anyone. I really think she planned to win! The rest of us were just there to have fun.”<sup>33</sup> These comments indicate that not interacting and over- or false-confidence are perceived as negative traits, at least at Gilroy, which is considered a “small town” festival among the testers.<sup>34</sup> Even though everyone entering would like to win, most

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<sup>30</sup> Adam Sanchez, personal communication, July 23, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Diane Sparrow, personal communication, April 12, 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Diane Sparrow, personal communication, April 10, 2005 and April 12, 2005. Amy Sutherland described the varied moods and approaches to interaction of several national cooking contest contestants she observed. In her experience they ranged from amicable to antagonistic to hostile. Sutherland, *Cookoff: Recipe Fever in America*.

<sup>33</sup> Ruth Kendrick, personal communication, April 18, 2005.

<sup>34</sup> Because the Festival raises money for charity, as compared to being a corporate-sponsored contest, the cash prize amounts awarded to winners of the Great Garlic Cook-off are considerably less than those of other national cooking contests. Contesters enter because the contest has a reputation among amateur cooks for being fun while also being highly competitive. Contestants and contenders I interviewed described the Gilroy contest as “friendly,” “relaxed,” “personal,” and “calm” compared to other national cooking

contestants in the Great Garlic Cook-off are there for the fun of cooking and competing. Diane Sparrow, an established tester on the national circuit, described her participation in the Garlic Cook-off as competing *with* her friends rather than against other competitors:

[a]t this last Gilroy event [2004], I competed with Roxanne who has been a friend since 1999 and Margee who I met in 2001 when she cooked next to me at the National Chicken Cookoff in Sacramento. I met a few others by email before we went. I became friends with Michaela by email before we went and continued to stay in touch with her. I cooked right across from Roxanne and enjoyed her company while cooking, waiting and cleaning up.<sup>35</sup>

As Ms. Sparrow's comments indicate, cooking contest *communitas* may generate relationships that extend beyond the liminal period, thus those relationships grow from an existential *communitas* to an ongoing friendship or personal community.<sup>36</sup> One Gilroy contestant commented that she and another tester have been in contact since meeting as contestants at a chicken cook-off in Dallas several years prior: "[w]e have been in contact ever since. We have gone through marriages, divorces, and grandkids['] births together."<sup>37</sup> She marks the passage of time and measures the depth of her friendship by rites of passages that are emotionally and symbolically charged events. That tester-friends also continue to share the intense liminality of cooking contests at other contests further strengthens their connection with each other.

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competitions. Contestants spoke highly of the Gilroy residents who volunteer their time to raise money for charity.

<sup>35</sup> Diane Sparrow, personal communication, April 12, 2005

<sup>36</sup> Turner further qualified *communitas*, referring to some articulations of it as existential or spontaneous *communitas* because they lack structure and permanence. As the Cook-off contestants demonstrate, spontaneous *communitas* can morph from something transient into "real" or ongoing friendships. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*.

<sup>37</sup> Ruth Kendrick, personal communication, April 18, 2005.

It is not only the contestants who create and participate in a spontaneous temporary community based on their shared liminal experience. The competitors are cooking with the assistance of volunteer helpers, thus widening the circle of participants in the contest *communitas*. Additionally, the volunteer helpers and coordinators, operating as a team with months of planning behind them, comprise another temporary community, one that overlaps for a few days with the contestants' temporary community.

### *Cooking Contest: Affirmation and Subversion*

The Great Gilroy Cook-off is a multivalent episode within the festival frame. The “event within an event,” as former Recipe Contest Chairperson Jeanie Liebich called it, simultaneously affirms and challenges social norms.<sup>38</sup> On one hand, affirmation for individual contestants and for spectators comes from amateur cooks who prepare dishes that someone will eat: preparing food for others to eat is what is expected of the home cook. On the other hand, the fact that these amateur cooks position themselves as contestants, voluntarily engaging in competitive cooking, destabilizes the normative model of the home cook. Competitive cooking, by its very nature, challenges the sentimental and often nostalgic associations of homemade food with an implied familial bond and the comfort of food prepared in a loving home.

Cooks have displayed their cooking in performative ways for centuries. Seeing professional chefs compete with each other is entertaining for the general public and, importantly, it does not threaten the popular conception of professional chefs, whose

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<sup>38</sup> Janie Liebich, personal communication, August 17, 2000.

work inherently is intended for display and consumption by non-familial others. Seeing an amateur cook compete in a ritualized, public, competitive format and be judged by a panel of strangers challenges our conception of the home cook. This is not to suggest that home cooking is not ritualized; it is, especially cooking done in association with sacred and secular holidays. Home cooking is also judged on a daily basis, but most often the judgment is made by a friend or family member and is more subtle, humorous or gently expressed than numbers tabulated on a score sheet.

Observing amateur cooks preparing home-cooked foods in a public venue also challenges the normative paradigm of the physical logistics of such foods. Home cooking implicates “home,” a quasi-private, familial and familiar domestic space. Often associated with “home” are sentiments of nostalgia evoked by real memories or idealized concepts of domestic life. Benay Blend explained the central paradox of domestic space: “[o]n the one hand, it defines a territory in which women are honored as the carriers of [culinary and cultural] tradition[s]. On the other hand, it encloses women within a female space defined by external assumptions.”<sup>39</sup> This paradox is present wherever female cooks are working. Although the physical confines of a domestic kitchen are absent, the paradox of domestic space epitomized within the domestic kitchen is magnified on a cook-off stage. The domestic kitchen is implied as the contestants toil over the symbolically laden hot stove.

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<sup>39</sup> Benay Blend, ““I am an Act of Kneading”: Food and the Making of Chicana Identity,” in *Cooking Lessons: The Politics of Gender and Food*, ed. Sherrie A. Inness (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 46.

Domestic space is traditionally female space.<sup>40</sup> Although family patterns are changing, more women than men continue to be responsible for preparation of food in the home. The gender imbalance of most recipe cooking contests affirms and simultaneously undermines the normative model of American domestic cookery. Because there are more women than men among the finalists and winners (the people about whom the general public hears), the normative paradigm that associates women with domestic cooking is affirmed; yet the presence of men among the finalists and winners challenges the paradigmatic stereotype.

Women dominate the field of contestants at non-meat-centric events.<sup>41</sup> A count of the women and men among the finalists and winners at the Great Garlic Cook-off supports such a broad statement.<sup>42</sup> In the years between 1990 and 2004, for example, eight men were among the winners as compared to thirty-eight women.<sup>43</sup> The division between men and women among the finalists is similar: in the period 2000 and 2004, the finalists included four men and twenty-eight women.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Sherrie A. Inness, ed., *Dinner Roles: American Women and Culinary Culture* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003); Jessamyn Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking: Cookbooks and Gender in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

<sup>41</sup> Sutherland, *Cookoff: Recipe Fever in America*.

<sup>42</sup> The Gilroy Garlic Festival Association does not keep statistics on the total number of submissions each year, much less the gender of those submitting recipes, but a review of the winners since the Festival's inception is consistent with the American normative gender-food division.

<sup>43</sup> Since there are three prizes awarded each year, the total number of winners for these fifteen years should be forty-five. The total given here is one higher because in 1992 a married couple won, thus counting toward both the men's and the women's totals. The numbers for the years 1979 to 1989 are similar, with eight men among the winners, one of whom was part of a couple.

<sup>44</sup> These numbers reflect the number of finalists cooking on stage during the specified years. Some years there are no men among the finalists; other years there is more than one. In 2000, for example, the finalists were all women. In 2001, there were two men among the eight finalists.

Despite the association of women with domestic cookery, American domestic ideology comfortably regards men as hobby cooks and regards meat as manly: those two ideological stereotypes combine to situate men at the grill or at food events involving more meat than other foods.<sup>45</sup> It is no surprise, then, that there are more men than women at meat-themed cooking competitions such as chili cook-offs and grilling contests.

That some cooking contests attract more male than female entrants is attributable to the type of food being prepared as well as the format of the contest. “Iron Chef”-type competitions involve professional and amateur chefs in pompous spectacles of aggressive culinary prowess. Women do compete in hard-core culinary competitions, but their less frequent presence strengthens the association between professional cooking, competitive culinary competence, and male virility. As one cultural critic observed, Food Network’s “Iron Chef” program “constructs the act of cooking not only as an art form and a form of service but also as a test of strength, speed, endurance and mental dexterity,” the latter characteristics being conventional markers of masculinity.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Carol Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York: Continuum, 1990); Thomas A. Adler, “Making Pancakes on Sunday: The Male Cook in Family Tradition,” *Western Folklore* 40 (1981); Sherrie A. Inness, “Introduction: Of Meatloaf and Jell-O.,” in *Cooking Lessons: The Politics of Gender and Food*, ed. Sherrie A. Inness (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001); Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America*. Interestingly, although meat is regarded as masculine, meatloaf is gendered as female. In her survey of twentieth-century cook books Jessamyn Neuhaus observed “[c]ookery instruction gendered the dull but dependable meatloaf as a feminine recipe.” She concluded “[w]e still expect meatloaf to stand for homey cooking, women’s cooking.” Jessamyn Neuhaus, “Is Meatloaf for Men? Gender and Meatloaf Recipes, 1920-1960,” in *Cooking Lessons: The Politics of Gender and Food*, ed. Sherrie A. Inness (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 88-89, 107. The food industry senses and reinforces such gender stereotyping with food products, packaging, and advertising designed to appeal to a specific gender. For example, see Nancy McCue, “Sex Appeal: Food Companies Distinguish between Male and Female Markets,” *Prepared Foods* 165, no. 8 (1996).

<sup>46</sup> Mark Gallagher, “What’s So Funny About Iron Chef?” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 31, no. 4 (2004): 182.

### *Cooking and the Performative Frame*

Whether being done in a domestic kitchen, on a stage, or on a television set, cooking evokes the performative frame. Meaning is conferred upon the situated acts of cooking and eating based on the physical and symbolic contexts in which they are performed. For example, the meaning of a meal prepared by a family member in one's home is ascribed symbolic value different from a meal eaten in an upscale restaurant with co-workers. On the contest stage the mundanity of domestic cooking is usurped by the performative frame of competition. If the performative frame of competition is stereotypically masculine and the performative frame of domesticity is stereotypically feminine, then the cooking contest is the marriage of the two.

Inherent in the performative frame is an implied accountability of the performer to the audience.<sup>47</sup> The fact that a contestant was selected as a finalist implies an elevated level of cookery competence. In the case of the Great Garlic Cook-off, for which initial selection is based on reading and testing recipes, competency is read in the contestant's creativity of combining ingredients and presenting them in ways that will produce what is anticipated to be edible, appealing dishes.

During the contest, the finalists' food is tasted by the judges and evaluated according to pre-determined criteria. Although they cannot taste the food, the audience also is judging the contestants. The contestants are accountable to the audience for providing entertainment and intriguing recipes. Audience members formulate their

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<sup>47</sup> The notion of communicative competence inherent in the performative frame is a fundamental aspect of performance-centered theory, discussed in the introduction. A seminal work that situates the concept within performance theory is Bauman, "Verbal Art as Performance."

opinions based on the entire performative event, including not only the contestants' stage presence while cooking, but also and equally important, their aptitude during interviews with the emcee and their enthusiastic prize acceptance or gracious loss.

Cooking competitions that are the culmination of a recipe contest allow no room for creativity. That is, individual creativity takes place during the process of recipe creation, not during the on-stage cooking. Even during the initial stage of recipe development, however, potential contestants must harness their creativity as individual cooks and work within the guidelines and rules of each contest. When asked how they came up with their recipe ideas, contestants described looking for flavor or ingredient trends by reviewing what dishes made it to the finalists' circle and which ones won the contest in the recent past. Adam Sanchez, who won first place in 2001 and was a finalist in 2005, also described getting his motivation from wandering through the grocery store, thinking about putting together flavors until, after about an hour, he has formulated his dish.<sup>48</sup> Devising a recipe or a unique dish for a contest is an aesthetic act of creativity, creativity that must be channeled into the recipe because at the actual cooking contest, contestants are required to follow exactly their submitted recipes.<sup>49</sup> Competitors on the

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<sup>48</sup> Adam Sanchez, personal communication, July 23, 2005.

<sup>49</sup> Creating contest recipes requires personal creativity and some critical thinking, but there are no insider secrets. In fact, the "Cooking Contest Central" website lists "contest tips" for those who need a little guidance, and an American Culinary Federation book about food competitions aims to help potential competitors by outlining the competitive process, including competitive strategies, sample scoring sheets, and comments from contest judges. "Cooking Contest Tips," Cooking Contest Central, <http://www.contestcooking.com/tips.html>. Accessed January 4, 2005; Edward G. Leonard, *American Culinary Federation's Guide to Culinary Competitions: Cooking to Win!* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005). The American Culinary Federation book seems geared more toward professional chefs than amateur cooks. The needs of amateur cooks active in the cooking contest circuit likely are now met by the Cooking Contest Central website. Prior to its inception, amateur cooks could turn to Karen Green, *Winners! Recipes that Won the Contests & How You Can be a Winner Too* (New York: William Morrow, 1980).

Gilroy Cook-off Stage cannot deviate from their original recipes, and they must produce their dishes within the prescribed two-hour time. Suppression of spontaneous culinary creativity such as is experienced in recipe cooking contests defies normative domestic cookery. Many home cooks modify recipes as they cook to accommodate for taste preferences, dietary proscriptions, missing ingredients, or just on a whim.

*Cooking Contests as Entertainment, Affirmation, and Vicarious Consumption*

As with other Festival components, the Great Garlic Cook-off functions on multiple levels. It is staged entertainment for Festival attendees and a site where contestants can express their culinary skills and competitive spirit. The contest affords contestants public recognition of their skills for food production, something generally absent from domestic cooking. During the contest normative gender roles simultaneously are affirmed and subverted. The Cook-off Stage becomes a venue that fosters *communitas* among participants as well as a site where Gilroyans can practice civic engagement. And, significantly for all involved, because food is the primary focus, it is a venue for real and implied commensality.

Since competition often is packaged as entertainment, and cooking can be packaged as competition, it follows that the media and event organizers capitalize on the entertainment capacity of cooking competitions. Even if observers are not able to taste the finished product, there can be pleasure in observing the care and consideration involved in orchestrating a dish for display, especially when preparations are made in the adrenaline-intense frame of a competition. Audience members of television food competitions and festival cooking contests engage in what I previously have called

vicarious consumption, vicariously consuming the process of cooking and the prepared foods without actually participating in the processes of creation and consumption.<sup>50</sup>

Despite its popularity among amateur cooks and Festival goers, the Great Garlic Cook-off is not a profitable component of the Festival; in fact, it is a drain on Festival finances.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, the Cook-off continues because it provides the Festival and Gilroy with tremendous publicity, thus furthering Gilroy's identity as a festive foodscape, the garlic-Gilroy brand. As much as contestants like participating and as much as the audience loves watching the culmination of the contest, the media love the event even more. The Cook-off merits mention in more news stories about the Festival than any other Festival event. Whether attracted by the novelty of what contestants can do with the humble bulb, the vicarious thrill of being at and reporting on a competitive event, or a hunger for home cooking, media inevitably devote column inches and air time to the Cook-off.

Amy Sutherland observed that the Gilroy Garlic Festival is not necessarily the festival for devoted garlic aficionados: they “may prefer the Garlic is Life festival in Tulsa, Oklahoma – saying Gilroy's fete is too crowded and features only one of six hundred subvarieties of garlic.”<sup>52</sup> But, she continued, it is the Great Garlic Cook-off that lures a regional, national and international crowd of spectators, thus affirming Gilroy's claim to be the Garlic Capital of the World. The Cook-off is not about money, it is about

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<sup>50</sup> Adema, “Vicarious Consumption: Food Television and the Ambiguities of Modernity.”

<sup>51</sup> Chris Filice, personal communication, March 18, 2005.

<sup>52</sup> Sutherland, *Cookoff: Recipe Fever in America*.

the performance of identities: the identities of the men and women who compete, and more importantly, the identity of Gilroy as a foodscape.

## **GARLIC BRAIDING AND TOPPING: SYMBOLIC DISPLAYS OF NATURE AND POWER**

### *Braiding: Interaction with the Icon*

Among the other crowd-pleasing, garlic-inspired events at the Gilroy Garlic Festival are garlic braiding classes and the garlic topping contests. At Garlic Grove, a centrally located garlic information booth, interested visitors can obtain free garlic growing kits: canvas bags bearing the name ConAgra, the parent company of Gilroy Foods, containing two bulbs or heads of garlic. Volunteers manning the booth offer spoken and printed instructions on how, where and when to plant the garlic, how to care for it, and when to harvest it. On display at Garlic Grove are photographs showing commercially-raised garlic at various stages of its growth, harvest, and production. The visual displays, garlic growing kits, and the topping contest are the only conspicuous indications that garlic is an agricultural product that requires human involvement to get from the field to the table.

Also at Garlic Grove, a limited number of Festival goers can obtain tickets to one of the coveted garlic braiding classes. On the Festival schedule since 1982, the interactive braiding demonstrations have proven a very popular attraction: every year the free tickets are gone by mid-morning. Repeat visitors to the Festival know to go early for tickets if they want to be part of a braiding class. Only fifty Festival attendees at a time are able to participate in the hands-on, non-competitive demonstrations, held twice each day, during

which they learn to braid garlic.<sup>53</sup> (Figure 5.3) Part of the attraction to this event is that it is one of the few interactive Festival activities, and it is the only “free” (i.e., included in the cost of Festival admission) one. Visitors can admire arts and crafts, listen to music, and watch the cooking contest and demonstrations, but these activities are relatively passive. Shopping and eating are interactive, but they require spending additional money.



**FIGURE 5.3. GARLIC BRAIDING DEMONSTRATION** Gilroyan Elaine Bonino instructs Beth and Tom Johnston of Delray Beach, Florida, how to braid garlic. Looking on is Festival volunteer Jodi Heinzen. The garlic used for the demonstrations, some 2,100 bulbs, is grown and donated by Ms. Bonino’s nephews. (Photography by author)

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<sup>53</sup> Over the years the frequency of the braiding demonstrations has varied. Schedules in each year’s program booklet indicate that they were held once a day in 1982, thrice daily in 1983, twice daily between 1984 and 1993 and once daily between 1994 and 2001. Since 2002, they have been held twice each day.

At Garlic Grove and during a braiding class are the only chances visitors have to touch actual garlic bulbs. Another attraction of the braiding demonstrations may be that participants get to take home their braids, or their attempted braids.

The braiding class was described in previous years' program books as "a crash course" to learn "the time honored tradition of Garlic braiding."<sup>54</sup> Over the years the amount of text in the Festival programs dedicated to describing this event has decreased, with the space being given instead to photographs from previous years' demonstrations. The increased space given to photographs of smiling garlic braiding students suggests Festival organizers' commitment to highlighting visitors' interaction with the icon of Gilroy's branded identity. The pictures in each year's Festival program also serve as visual reminders of the skilled manual labor involved in making the garlic braids that are for sale at the Festival and in local garlic-themed shops. Unlike the workers who make the retail braids, the people pictured in the programs are sitting at a festival, in sunshine, voluntarily engaging in the chore for only a few minutes.

### ***Garlic Galore: Spectaclization of Occupational Skill and Festival Inversion***

When garlic is pulled from the ground, long stems and short roots are still attached to each bulb. "Topping" is the process of trimming the roots and the stems from dried bulbs of garlic. The garlic topping contest has been on the schedule since the inaugural Festival. This contest is an articulation of a familiar festival theme: the competitive display of occupational skills. It merits critical consideration because it

presents a microcosm of labor and consumer relations, and it affords Festival goers a site to witness and partake in Festival inversion. This display presents unique messages perhaps familiar to other agricultural festivals but articulated uniquely through the topping contest at the Gilroy Garlic Festival.

In the early years of the Festival, the topping contest was a two-person competition, with each person representing a different local garlic-growing company. In those years it was a symbolic corporate contest.<sup>55</sup> For several years into the 1980s, Festival visitors were invited to “enter this friendly competition.” The invitation came with a caveat, however: “[t]his is grueling work, and certainly a test of your skill.”<sup>56</sup> Although it is unclear how many years the visiting public was invited to try their hand at this difficult and dangerous task, text in the program booklets suggest that this format was in place well into the 1990s.<sup>57</sup> By the late 1990s, a few injuries from the special topping shears amplified participant safety concerns, and the contest returned to being a demonstration by skilled laborers rather than a participatory event.

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<sup>54</sup> “Garlic Braiding,” Gilroy Garlic Festival Programs 1986-1992, documents of GGFA. For many years Bonnie Gillio led the braiding demonstrations and her farm donated the garlic for them. In 2001 Elaine Bonino took over the braiding demonstrations.

<sup>55</sup> Bill Christopher recalled that in 1979, it was a woman who represented the Joseph Gubser Garlic Company and a man who represented Christopher Ranch. The female competitor caused quite a commotion when she won. There was no additional mention of gender for the following years when this format was followed, 1979 to the early 1980s, most likely 1982. Bill Christopher, personal communication, February 23, 2005.

<sup>56</sup> “Garlic Topping,” 1986 Gilroy Garlic Festival Program, p. 13. Author’s files.

<sup>57</sup> Outlining how the event was conducted in the past from the program booklets is problematic because the text in the program booklets potentially is misleading. In the years I attended the Festival, only professional toppers participated in the topping contest, but the text in the program booklet implied that anyone could try their hand at topping garlic. The text has changed very little year to year even though the event’s format has changed. Bill Christopher thought that the open-participation format was followed for four to five years. Bill Christopher, personal communication, February 23, 2005.

Since the late 1990s, participants in the topping contest have been pre-selected men and women employed by Christopher Ranch, which grows as well as processes garlic in Gilroy. Bill Christopher explained that some of his workers volunteer to be in the contest, and when more are needed, he asks others to participate.<sup>58</sup> In exchange for their participation in the contest once a day for three days, the contestants get a paid day off from work, are provided with food and refreshments in the Hospitality Area, have access to the Festival site, and sometimes are given Festival tickets for their families.

The topping contest takes place twice a day, daily at noon for female contestants and again at two p.m. for male contestants.<sup>59</sup> Festival goers sit on hay bales that define the perimeter of the competition area, a circle approximately forty feet in diameter. The contest draws such a large crowd that observers also stand several people deep behind the ring of hay bales. Bill Christopher, one of the owners of Christopher Ranch and son of Festival co-founder Don Christopher, serves as emcee for the contest. At the scheduled times, he introduces the contestants by their first names to attentive audiences.<sup>60</sup> After a brief review of the rules, which do not change year to year, the contest begins.

With encouragement from Mr. Christopher, the crowd cheers as the contestants skillfully “top” hundreds of bulbs of garlic that have been strewn on the ground, as it is in

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<sup>58</sup> Bill Christopher, *Ibid.* In the years I watched the contest, several of the same men and women competed each year.

<sup>59</sup> From 1979 to 1982, the topping contest was held once daily. Since 1983, contests have taken place twice daily, and since 1985 Festival program schedules indicate that there were separate contests for men and for women.

<sup>60</sup> Mr. Christopher has organized the topping contest since the inaugural Festival. Assisting Mr. Christopher is Alfredo Franco, who has helped with the topping contest for fourteen years. During the Festival days, he is busy setting up each round of the contest, assisting with weighing the topped garlic to determine the winners, transporting the contestants to and from the Festival site, and escorting them to the Hospitality Area for pre- or post-contest meals.

the garlic fields. (Figures 5.4 and 5.5) The contestants, all of whom are of Mexican or Hispanic descent, work at an alarmingly rapid pace, clearly adept at using the very sharp hand shears they brought with them for the contest. As a bulb is topped, it is tossed into a nearby bushel basket. With efficient, repetitive movements most contestants quickly fill at least one and are well into a second bushel basket of trimmed bulbs. At the end of five minutes, baskets are collected and weighed; the man and the woman with the heaviest baskets wins – fifty dollars for first place, twenty-five for second and fifteen for third.<sup>61</sup>

(Figure 5.6)



**FIGURE 5.4. WOMEN'S TOPPING CONTEST** Spectators cheer on (from nearest to farthest) Lucilla Diaz, Rosa Vasquez, Margarita Diaz, and Maria Flores Diaz at Friday's women's topping contest, 2005. (Photograph by author)

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<sup>61</sup> During the years I observed the contest, the prizes went from being checks in envelopes to cash in envelopes. Although it made sense from the perspective of the bookkeeper, I thought it awkward that these workers had to bother with checks for such modest amounts of money.



**FIGURE 5.5. MEN'S TOPPING CONTEST** Alfredo Vasquez (center), Gustavo Flores (left), and Manuel Caneles (right) compete during the 2005 Festival. (Photograph by Beth Johnston, used with permission)



**FIGURE 5.6. JUDGING THE COMPETITION** Male contestants wait while their topped garlic is weighed, 2000. (Photograph by author)

Like elements of traditional rodeo, the garlic topping contest transforms an occupational skill into a spectator event. What is daily work activity for the participating men and women is transformed within the festival frame into a ritualized competitive drama. The laborer-contestants are doing difficult and potentially dangerous work, just as they do in the fields during one phase of the garlic production cycle. And, like their work in the garlic fields, the contest winners' financial compensation is determined by the measured weight of the garlic they top. The reality of their work in the fields – the faster they work and the more garlic they top, the greater their take-home pay – is condensed within the festival frame, and presented as entertainment for visual consumption.

***The Garlic Topping Contest: Affirmation, Inversion, and Mayhem***

Within the festival frame, the hegemonic relationships between laborer and producer/manager and between laborer and consumer are affirmed. At the Festival, as in their daily work environment, non-Anglo laborers are being judged by non-laboring observers. The contest takes place in a defined space within which subordinate workers are overseen by an Anglo managerial superior. During the contest the workers are also being observed by an audience comprised of people who normally purchase the products of their labors. The diverse audience is representative of the general consuming public who, through their acquisition of garlic from grocery stores and other retail outlets, judges the work of the laborers. The topping contest is a microcosm of the labor, power, and race relations of garlic production in Santa Clara County, and of worker-consumer

relations in general. Unlike other secular rituals that emerge in response to or represent challenges to the status quo, the topping contest affirms existing power relationships.<sup>62</sup>

The landscape of the topping contest articulates the stratification of labor and leaves no room for uncertainty. As Don Mitchell noted, ideologies of race and gender define the labor relations of agribusiness.<sup>63</sup> These relations are represented in the topping contest and in the Festival writ large. Mostly absent from the Festival audience are the people involved with the manual labor of garlic processing. In late summer they are busy in the fields and plants processing the harvest.<sup>64</sup> In the hay bale-defined circle, workers are marginalized, objectified, and made into spectacles.

The apparent lack of contradiction during the contest does not mean that there are not subtexts eroding the suggested symbolic order. The event is intended to be an educational and entertaining display. Presenting manual labor as entertainment problematizes the denatured presentation of garlic that dominates the Festival. More specifically, the presence of the workers demonstrating their occupational skill highlights the reality of the labor required in the field-to-table process, and this problematizes the un-peopled garlic-themed identity put forth by Gilroy's image makers.

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<sup>62</sup> My observations, particularly with respect to the topping contest as a condensed version of labor relations, parallel those of Robert Lavenda, who noted that although small town festivals in theory are conducted to promote a unified community identity, in practice they often reinforce social divisions. See Lavenda, "Festivals and the Creation of Public Culture: Whose Voice(s)?" Terrence Turner discussed secular rituals that represent challenges to the status quo. See Terrence Turner, "Transformation, Hierarchy and Transcendence: A Reformulation of Ven [*sic*] Gennep's Model of the Structure of Rites de Passage," in *Secular Ritual*, ed. Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff (Assen/Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977).

<sup>63</sup> Mitchell, *The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape*.

<sup>64</sup> In comparison, some local employers of non-agricultural workers give employees Friday off so that they can attend the Festival.

What follows the topping contest is just as important as the display of power that the contest symbolizes. Once the weighing is complete and the contestants have received their prize envelopes, the freshly topped garlic is tossed back into and spread around the hay bale-defined circle. Knowing audience members are on the edge of the hay bales, ready for what comes next; first-timers are captivated by the energy even though they cannot anticipate what will happen next.

On command from Mr. Christopher, audience members lunge forward and try to grab the garlic bulbs scattered on the ground. (Figures 5.7 and 5.8) Many return Festival visitors come prepared with empty plastic bags; others scoop garlic bulbs into their arms



**FIGURE 5.7. POST-TOPPING CONTEST COMPETITION** The initial crush of people eager to pick up freshly topped garlic. (Photograph by author)

or make reservoirs in the fabric of their over-sized shirts. Clambering around are people who paid the \$10 per person Festival entry fee. They scurry to retrieve cloves that sell in nearby markets for around \$1 a pound.



**FIGURE 5.8. A HAPPY GARLIC GRABBER** (Photograph by author)

The significance of the garlic retrieval lies not in economics but in what it symbolizes. This post-contest competition is structured and unstructured mayhem. Structure is provided, literally, by the hay bales that define the space in which the disorder occurs. The presence of an officiating and authoritative supervisor (Mr. Christopher) also lends structure and the suggestion of order. Although the post-contest free-for-all is not listed in the Festival program, it is an established event and is therefore

part of the Festival's schedule. As with other instances of festival inversion, this non-official event allows participants to temporarily suspend social norms and etiquette. In this case, those who had been consumer/observers become spectacle/participants. The contestants are part of the inversion as well. Looking mildly amused, they stand just outside the circle and watch for a brief moment as the audience members-turned foragers throw themselves into the mayhem. When I asked the men, who had just completed the topping contest, about the spectators' mad dash for garlic, several of them concurred that watching this spectacle is funny; with mild bemusement, competitor José expressed surprise that people got so emotional over the free garlic.<sup>65</sup>

The topping demonstration re-connects Gilroy's icon with the natural environment from which it comes. In the process, it reminds the thoughtful observer of the reality that manual labor is required to get the food item from field to market. Through their introduction to the contestants, audience members might get to "know" agricultural workers. Yet their familiarity with the worker-contestants is necessarily superficial: the worker-contestants are present in the enclosed competition circle once each day for little more than five minutes, the duration of the competition. Although they are not prohibited from interacting with the audience before or after the contest, I have never seen them do so. My attempts to speak with the contestants were brief and rushed because, I was told, they were hurrying to get their meals so Alfredo Franco, who provided their transportation, could leave promptly to fetch the next contestants.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Jose, Gustavo, Alfredo, and Alfredo Franco, personal communication, July 29, 2005.

<sup>66</sup> That they had to hurry indicated to me that the contestants do not linger at the Festival. Although the second group of contestants did not have the same reason for their rapid departure, they nonetheless left

Audience members are further detached from the workers by the social and symbolic gesture that the latter are introduced only by their first names. The physical structure of the hay bales and the linguistic practice of introducing contestants only with their first names serve to keep distance between the audience and the participants.

Each year I engaged fellow-audience members in casual conversation about the topping contest and the subsequent scavenge.<sup>67</sup> Most of the people with whom I spoke expressed some discomfort with the spectaclization of the laborers. One woman said that she felt badly for the contestants, whom she referred to as “migrant workers.” She tempered her initial remark by suggesting that if the workers were having fun, then she thought it was okay for us, the audience, to cheer them on. Even if the contestants were comfortable being on display, she continued, she thought the prize money should be more, since they worked so hard. With another particularly contemplative observer, I discussed the possibility that the discomfort we were expressing might be “white man’s guilt,” an inversion of “white man’s burden:” rather than feeling obliged to improve the lives of others, we felt guilt for making spectacles of them.<sup>68</sup> When I asked locals about the contest, I got a very different sort of response. In general, they did not seem to think critically about the contest but enjoyed it as an entertaining spectacle. Melissa Noto’s

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quickly after the contest. My brief exchange with the contestants also was hampered by my very limited Spanish-speaking abilities and the apparent lack of English-speaking abilities of some of them. Mr. Franco kindly translated my questions so that those who did not understand English could participate in the conversation.

<sup>67</sup> Inevitably my conversations took place with other audience members who did not to participate in the post-contest mayhem, making my pool of interviewees not completely random.

<sup>68</sup> The “white man’s guilt” exchange took place with Beth Johnston, July 29, 2005. In subsequent communication, she reflected that watching the topping contest with spectators cheering as others toiled made her feel like she was in ancient Rome cheering on the Gladiators. Beth Johnston, personal communication, August 13, 2005.

comments typify those of other locals: rather than finding it “derogatory,” she considered the contest as “giving them [the worker-contestants] respect for what they do.”<sup>69</sup> A first-time visitor to the Festival was taken aback as the audience transformed from spectator to spectacle; while she did find it humorous, she also found it mildly embarrassing for people to scavenge. Another person remarked that the behavior affirmed her belief that people will do anything to get something for “free.”

Stanley Brandes noted a paradox of festivity: a form that seems to provide a break from ordinary routine, one that at times may even seem chaotic and formless, may actually promote order and social control by reinforcing power relationships and moral guidelines.<sup>70</sup> The festival paradox is present in the performative frame of the topping contest and post-contest garlic free-for-all.

### ***Union Incitement: An Episode of Contestation***

The power relationships articulated in the topping contest are not without contestation, although opposition is rarely public and has not been recorded in the Gilroy Garlic Festival’s official history.<sup>71</sup> One year there was a very public display of disquiet among the farm workers that made visible to Festival visitors some normally-behind-the-

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<sup>69</sup> Ms. Noto noted that because she grew up around garlic workers in general, and the topping contest in particular, she “doesn’t think anything about it.” She also commented that many Gilroyans get summer jobs during their high school years working in the garlic fields, so to her, and presumably other locals, the contest is not a spectacle. Melissa Noto, personal communication, July 29, 2005.

<sup>70</sup> Brandes, *Power and Persuasion: Fiestas and Social Control in Rural Mexico*.

<sup>71</sup> By the “official” history I mean the texts to which the public has access, including the Festival web site, each year’s Festival program booklet, and the special publication that appeared in 2003 to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Festival. My recounting of the union incitement is drawn from various documents in the 1980 Festival file, documents to which the public does not have access.

scenes labor politics. The brief episode was an important reminder that no landscape or foodscape produces itself.

In 1980, Val Filice still was farming garlic. That summer, he recalled, during harvest time, leaders from the United Farm Workers of America (UFWA) came to Gilroy and tried to unionize the laborers.<sup>72</sup> A wage dispute, the focus of their incitement, led many workers to go on strike, shutting down some of the harvest and production work.<sup>73</sup> Members of the UFWA no doubt recognized that picketing at the then-two-year-old Festival, taking place on August 2 and 3 that year, would be a tremendous opportunity to publicize their cause.

On July 24, Rudy Malone got word that the UFWA planned to picket the Festival.<sup>74</sup> Within days he was meeting with Marshal Ganz, a leader in the California branch of UFWA. Mr. Malone made it clear to Mr. Ganz that the Festival, administered by the Gilroy Garlic Festival Association, was not an activity of the garlic growers, the employers with whom the UFWA was having the labor dispute. Despite Mr. Malone's request that the UFWA recognize the distinction between the Festival, which had no agricultural employees and therefore should not be a target of the UFWA's attention, and the garlic growers, Mr. Ganz persisted in asserting that the UFWA would picket the Festival.

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<sup>72</sup> Val Filice, personal communication, May 10, 2005.

<sup>73</sup> "Gilroy, Calif.," *New York Times*, August 6, 1980.

<sup>74</sup> The account of meetings between Mr. Malone and Mr. Ganz is drawn from a legal document in which Mr. Malone outlined his pre-Festival meetings with Mr. Ganz. "Declaration of Rudy Malone," August 1, 1980, 1980 Festival box, documents of GGFA.

In anticipation of possible violence that might ensue during the picketing, and bad publicity that picketing would generate, the Festival Association sought legal counsel and prepared several legal documents, including a restraining order and a complaint for injunction and damages.<sup>75</sup> Discussions of security measures and law enforcement procedures dominated Association and Board of Directors meetings in the days before to the Festival.<sup>76</sup>

Festival goers' access to the Festival that year was slightly obstructed by the crowd of picketers gathered just outside the entry gate and the law enforcement officers standing by in case the situation warranted their services. The story of the UFWA incitement made national news: a *New York Times* article reported that "several hundred striking members of the United Farm Workers of America, many of them children, stood a vigil outside [the Festival], holding the red and black flag of the union."<sup>77</sup> It is noteworthy that on the same date this short article appeared about the labor dispute's impact on the Festival, just five pages previous in the same section, there was an article

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<sup>75</sup> Among the legal documents prepared and apparently filed in the county court system was a "Complaint for Injunction and Damages." *Gilroy Garlic Festival Association, Inc., v United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO, and DOES I through CCC*, "Complaint for Injunction and Damages," August 1, 1980, 1980 Festival box, Gilroy Garlic Festival Office, documents of GGFO. A post-Festival letter to Mr. Malone from the attorney with whom the Festival Association had been working indicated that Court action had not been pursued. That suggests that the picketing demonstration was non-violent and caused no damage to property or reputation. Personal letter from Attorney to Malone, August 11, 1980, 1980 Festival box, documents of GGFA.

<sup>76</sup> Meeting Minutes, Gilroy Garlic Festival Association, July 29, 1980; Meeting Minutes, Board of Directors July 29, 1980, 1980 Festival Box, documents of GGFA.

<sup>77</sup> "Gilroy, Calif.," *New York Times*, August 6, 1980; Robert Lindsey, "Garlic Town Savors the Smell of Success," *New York Times*, August 6, 1980.

nearly ten times as long praising the second annual Festival. The latter article made no mention of the labor dispute, strike, or picketers.<sup>78</sup>

In addition to holding flags, picketers were handing out a flier with the header “WHY WE PICKET THE GILROY GARLIC FESTIVAL.” On the one-page, typed flier was a line drawing of a dark-haired young boy and a dark-haired young girl hand-picking garlic in a field. The single-spaced text informed readers that

[t]he Garlic Festival means different things to different people. For the growers it means profits and prestige. For those of us who harvest the garlic it means our children must work in the fields so families can eat . . . .

Since July 21, 2,000 farm workers around Gilroy and Hollister [a neighboring town] – including 1,200 garlic workers – have been on strike for a better life and for representation by Cesar Chavez’s United Farm Workers . . . .

We called on the companies where workers have voted for the union to meet immediately and discuss ways we can end the strike. The growers refused!

That is why we are striking. And that is why we are picketing the Garlic Festival.

We feel the time to have a garlic festival is when all people in our community can share in the bounty and celebration, not just the growers and their friends . . . .

Contribute the money you were going to give to the growers to attend the garlic festival to the garlic workers’ strike.

One visitor who witnessed the strike was disturbed enough to write to the Festival Association upon his return home. In a hand written letter, composed on the back of one of the AFWU fliers, this Festival guest had several complaints. Not only were there higher prices and more traffic than he had experienced when

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<sup>78</sup> Three days later a very short article noted that an interim agreement ending the nineteen-day strike had been reached “in the garlic-growing capital of the nation.” [news services], “Settlement in Garlic Strike,” *Washington Post*, August 9, 1980.

he attended the first year's Festival, he disliked being "greeted by all those strikers, 'Farm Workers' passing the bucket to get some money and trying to boycott the festival etc."<sup>79</sup>

Apparently not all visitors understood the strikers' message. Don Christopher remembered that some non-Hispanic guests thought the people greeting them at the entry gates were calling out "Welcome!" and that the display was part of the Festival.<sup>80</sup> In fact, what the picketers were yelling was "¡Huelga!", the Spanish word for strike.

The 1980 picketing was a vivid reminder of the often behind-the-scenes human work involved in getting an agricultural product from field to factory to table. While eating may be "an agricultural act," few consumers consider the natural and labor economies of their produce.<sup>81</sup> Most eaters, Wendell Berry noted, "think of food as an agricultural product, perhaps, but they do not think of themselves as participants in agriculture. They think of themselves as 'consumers.'"<sup>82</sup> The 1980 picketers, the interactive braiding demonstration, and especially the topping contest are the only times during the Festival when visitors are faced with the reality that they, like the garlic they eat, are part of an agricultural process.

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<sup>79</sup> Although the signature is illegible, the return address indicated the letter was sent from Carmel, California, a small city about an hour's drive southwest of Gilroy. Letter to the Garlic Festival, August 2, 1980, 1980 Festival Box, documents of GGFA.

<sup>80</sup> Don Christopher, personal communication, May 10, 2005.

<sup>81</sup> Wendell Berry, "The Pleasures of Eating," in *Cooking, Eating, Thinking*, ed. Deanne W. Curtin and Lisa M. Heldke (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

The very nature of a festival that commemorates a food-place association is agricultural; thus, all Festival goers, including those who neither learn to braid garlic nor observe the topping contest, are participants in the agricultural process. Through their participation, just as through consumers' choices at the grocery store, Festival goers sanction the status quo of agricultural production. Unlike county fairs that directly connect food to its source, the Gilroy Garlic Festival and other similar place-based food festivals are not overt celebrations of the connection between landscape and the product of the land. The connection is implied – displays at Garlic Grove, bushel baskets filled with strands of field-fresh garlic lining the Cook-off Stage – but it is not a focal point of the Festival, its marketing or media coverage of the event.

## CONCLUSION

For most people the festival frame connotes leisure, a time out of time. As time free from the obligations of labor and production, modern leisure such as a festival “is seen as quintessentially the time of consumption.”<sup>83</sup> The consumption can be literal, consuming sustenance, or ideological, consuming ideas. At the Gilroy Garlic Festival, participants and attendees literally consume the iconic food in various forms, from garlic pickles to garlicky pesto to garlic ice cream. (Figure 5.9) They also consume ideologies embedded within and performed through Festival events, including affirmations of and challenges to social norms. Foodscapes, whether permanent or temporary, simultaneously are landscapes of leisure and consumption. They also represent, in abbreviated and

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<sup>83</sup> Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 79.

symbolic form, landscapes of production: production of consumer goods, of ideology and of identity.

After being presented to the judges, the artfully displayed dishes prepared by contestants in the Great Garlic Cook-off are left on decorated tables at the front of the Cook-off stage. At the end of the contest, departing media and audience slowly parade past the trays of food. The display of the dishes provides another opportunity for recognition, admiration and validation of the contestants' efforts. It also affords visual and olfactory appetite stimulation for Festival goers about to consume the iconic garlic and, by extension, the brand identity of Gilroy.



**FIGURE 5.9. GARLIC ICE CREAM** A booth selling garlic ice cream, one of the many garlic-flavored novelty foods at the Gilroy Garlic Festival. (Photograph by author)

## Chapter Six

### “This little piggy went to PigFest . . .”:

#### The Quest for Communal Identity and the Paradox of PigFest

Not all place-based food festivals bear such sweet smells as garlic and success. PigFest, like the Gilroy Garlic Festival, was initiated to commemorate an historic, food-place association for its community. Drawing on Coppell, Texas’s, agricultural past – until the 1980s, much of the land on which the city now sits was farmland – civic leaders organized the first annual PigFest in 1996. While pigs are potentially as much, if not more fun, than garlic as an organizing theme, the event did not work. After being cancelled just one month before its advertised date in 2000, PigFest went the way of Coppell’s agricultural past: it quickly became a distant memory.<sup>1</sup>

In the spirit of community building, Festival organizers hoped to celebrate the landscape’s agrarian past within the constraints of its affluent suburban present in hopes of creating a sense of community for the future. This agenda seemed particularly important for the nascent upscale suburb of commuters. Rapid population expansion and associated residential and commercial growth left Coppell, which as a new city had no

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<sup>1</sup> The Festival is variously written as PigFest, Pig Fest, or Pigfest in different printed sources. I use PigFest because that is how it appeared in newspaper advertisements paid for by Coppell Celebrates, the group that organized the Festival. Also, that is the preferred spelling of Sharon Logan, Coppell’s Community Information Officer and former Coppell Celebrates member. When asked about the different spellings, she commented, “I thought that the one word with two capitals was a novel way to do something. I thought it was a little catchier than Pig Fest or Pigfest.” I agree. And, since novelty was a secondary reason why pigs

community traditions, with few identity-distinguishing features to differentiate it from other nearby suburbs. PigFest organizers, who included primarily civic leaders and a few city employees, hoped to generate a successful place brand and a sense of collective identity for Coppell by creating a festive foodscape, a food-themed identity established and perpetuated through an annual, place-based food festival.

Coppell's aspiring image makers had good reason to think that a community festival was the appropriate medium for advancing their community-generating agenda. Official sources such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) extolled the virtues of hosting an annual festival as a way for a city to celebrate itself.<sup>2</sup> Coppell's image makers knew that other cities and towns had success in using the festival format to secure place differentiation; from far away Gilroy to nearby Grapevine, they had heard of and witnessed successful food-place branding. They seemed to ascribe to a "Field of Dreams" philosophy: if they hold an annual festival, people will attend and, consequently, a sense of place and sense of community would emerge.<sup>3</sup>

Like Chapters Three and Four about the nascence of Gilroy's branded identity, this chapter is about the construction of place and sense of community. In contrast to those chapters, however, this chapter explores an *unsuccessful* attempt to create a sense of community and place identity through a place-based food festival. In this chapter I

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were the chosen theme for communal celebration, I adopted that spelling. Sharon Logan, Community Information Officer, City of Coppell, personal communication, August 16, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Office of Public Affairs, "The Urban Fair: How Cities Celebrate Themselves."

<sup>3</sup> In the movie "Field of Dreams" (1989), a man builds a baseball diamond on his Iowa farm, believing that if he builds it, ball players from the past will come and play. They do. This philosophy is an articulation of sociology's self-fulfilling prophecy, developed by Robert Merton, which dictates that assigning a label to something or someone affects how that thing or person is regarded, thus affecting the outcome of events;

consider the impetus behind Coppel's PigFest and suggest several reasons why the Festival was ultimately removed from the community calendar. As an unsuccessful attempt to mediate communal identity, PigFest provides an important comparison to the Gilroy Garlic Festival. The longevity of several widely known place-based food festivals makes their success seem inevitable: the Gilroy Garlic Festival, which celebrated its twenty-eighth year in 2005, is a toddler compared to the Maine Lobster Festival, which commenced in 1947, and the Florida Strawberry Festival<sup>®</sup>, which began in 1930. Consideration of an unsuccessful event evinces that, although many food items are ripe for fetishization and festivalization in the service of place differentiation and community building, place-based food festivals are not guaranteed to succeed. As the case study of Coppel's PigFest illustrates, the most significant factors informing a place-based food festival's success or failure are the displayed and implied semiotics of food symbolization and the degree to which organizers allow for communal participation.

A caveat implicit in my work on PigFest is applicable to other short-lived festivals: because they no longer occur, such events are challenging to document.<sup>4</sup> As

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that is, behavior is determined in part by meaning assigned to a situation. Robert A. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1957).

<sup>4</sup> A local festival that no longer takes place inherently presents challenges to the researcher. In this case the difficulty of locating original event files and documents was complicated because the organizing agency no longer exists. Whatever files there were from PigFest 1996, 1997, and 1998 have been moved, misplaced, and possibly discarded. Newspaper articles provide a glimpse into what organizers put into their press releases and, when reporters were curious, provide insight into the event's reception among attendees. PigFest data presented in this chapter are drawn from extant promotional materials, newspaper advertisement and articles, files from PigFest 1999 and 2000, ethnography at PigFest 1999, and personal recollections of a few Coppel residents filtered through the fuzzy lens of time. My observations and analysis of Coppel are based on multiple visits to the city between 1999 and 2005. One of the few works that documents a failed community-building festival is Anthony T. Rauche, "Festa Italiana in Hartford, Connecticut: The Pastries, the Pizza, and the People Who "Parla Italiano"," in *We Gather Together: Food and Festival in American Life*, ed. Theodore C. Humphrey and Lin T. Humphrey (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988).

unsuccessful events vanish from calendars, they tend to disappear from conversation and, subsequently, from communal memory. In fact, during the years I worked on this project after PigFest ceased, most people in the Dallas area, including Coppell residents, to whom I mentioned the event had either a very faint memory of the event or no recollection of PigFest.

### **“THIS LITTLE PIGGY WENT TO MARKET. . .”: THE MAKING OF COPPELL**

Contemporary Coppell is a suburb of Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, the ninth largest metropolitan area in the United States.<sup>5</sup> Most of Coppell is situated in northwestern Dallas County, five miles north of Dallas-Ft. Worth International Airport. (Figure 6.1) In 1832, early settlers were attracted to the area by a natural spring. They established a small farming community and called it Grapevine Springs.<sup>6</sup> More than a decade later it became part of the state of Texas. The area was renamed Gibbs in 1873, recognizing prominent Dallas attorney Barnett Gibbs, who had major landholdings in the vicinity. The settlement was renamed, once again, in 1890 in honor of George Coppell, an engineer who is credited with bringing the Cotton Belt Railroad, part of the St. Louis and Southwestern Texas Railroads, to the area a few years earlier. From the depot in Coppell,

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, “PHC-T-2 Ranking Tables for Metropolitan Areas, Table 3: Metropolitan Areas Ranked by Population: 2000” (U.S. Census Bureau web site), available from <http://www.census.gov>, accessed August 16, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Historical information about Coppell and city data are compiled from multiple sources, including interviews with residents and civic leaders; documents in the “History of Coppell,” “Old Coppell (Downtown),” and “Coppell from 1980-1990” folders at the Coppell Public Library (sources cited individually where appropriate); Roy Barkley, ed., *The New Handbook of Texas, volume 2* (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1996); Lou Duggan and Jean Murph, eds., *The Citizens' Advocate Journal of Coppell History, Book I Centennial Edition 1880-1990* (Coppell: Citizens' Advocate, 1990); Samuel L. Wyse Associates, and Rady and Associates Inc., *City of Coppell, Texas, Comprehensive Plan*,



as the primary mode of commercial shipping and, consequently, initiated a decline in the town's population. As the town of Coppell lost its vitality through the late 1920s and 1930s, farmers still active in the area had to venture to Carrollton or other nearby towns for supplies. In 1937 a work relief effort of the Works Projects Administration resulted in a park along the historically significant Grapevine Creek, near the Coppell's old town center.<sup>8</sup> Gradually, a small town re-emerged near the park and again called itself Coppell.

Coppell in the 1940s did not attain the vitality of its late-nineteenth-century predecessor. World War II called many area men into service, leaving family farms struggling to survive. Coppell's population again declined in the post-war years. By 1949, there were only twelve students attending grades one through eight in Coppell's schoolhouse. The WPA park went unused; the land on which it was built was returned to private ownership and was leased for agricultural use.

By the early 1950s, Coppell's population was again on the rise. It was during this time that Coppell began the transition from a rural, agricultural community to a bedroom community for the city of Dallas. Indicative of changing demographics and encroaching modern practices was the paving of the two main roads through town, Denton Tap Road

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century, the population around Coppell consisted primarily of dispersed single family farms with some families living and working in the town itself. By all accounts it was a low density population. My inclusion of the number of students in school at two different historic periods is intended to suggest the size of the town. Since there were other, larger towns not far from Coppell, presumably only the children whose families considered Coppell their home town attended the school.

<sup>8</sup> Grapevine Springs Park is quite significant in Texas history. According to most accounts, it was the site where, in 1843, Sam Houston, then President of the Republic of Texas, camped while waiting to sign a treaty with Indians that would allow white settlers to move into the region with less fear of Indian attacks. Although Houston left before signing the treaty, many similar treaties were negotiated and signed by native tribal leaders and Anglo officials in the area, thus clearing the way for contested but eventual white settlement of North Texas. For a history of the park, see Dave Garrett, "Grapevine Springs Park," in *The Citizens' Advocate Journal of Coppell History, Book I Centennial Edition 1880-1990* (Coppell: Citizens' Advocate, 1990).

and Sandy Lake Road. Concerned about Dallas' interest in annexation of land, residents of Coppell began the process of securing official recognition as a distinct city.

In 1955, by a forty-one to one vote, voting residents elected to incorporate Coppell.<sup>9</sup> Initially only two square miles, contemporary Coppell comprises barely 15 square miles. For decades Coppell's population steadily and dramatically increased. (Table 6.1) Coppell's population growth paralleled that of Dallas County, growth attributable to Dallas's rapid transition from an agricultural center to a manufacturing and financial center for the southwest. The county experienced continued population increase throughout the second half of the twentieth century with Coppell, and many other emerging cities in the area, accommodating new residents.

There were several other features in addition to its proximity to downtown Dallas that made Coppell an attractive destination for new residents. Completion of the North Texas sections of the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways in the 1960s, and the opening of Dallas-Ft. Worth International Airport (DFW) in 1974 stimulated Coppell's population growth. In fact, Coppell's proximity to the airport and major highways is largely responsible for the city's emergence as a thriving bedroom community in the last decades of the twentieth century.

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<sup>9</sup> Jean Murph, "Three Schools Eventually Became One, Recreation Revolved Around Nature," *Citizen's Advocate*, June 24, 2005.

**TABLE 6.1. COPPELL, TEXAS, POPULATION DATA**

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<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Annual growth rate</u>
1960 <sup>a</sup>	666	---
1970	1,728	15.9%
1980	3,826	12.1%
1990	16,881	34.1%
2000	35,958	109.8%

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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, State and County QuickFacts, “Coppell (city), Texas,” <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48/4816612.html>. See also the sources cited in footnote 6.

Note: Because the city was incorporated in 1955, 1960 is the first year that the U.S. Census Bureau recorded population numbers for Coppell. Since this project is interested in Coppell since its city leaders determined a need to generate communal identity through festival, I attend to post-incorporation Coppell.

In the decade between 1990 and 2000, Coppell experienced a population boom far greater than other areas in North Texas. (Appendix A, Table A1) Real estate developers knew that Coppell was geographically well-situated to thrive; developers and locals promoted, and continue to promote, Coppell’s location as one of its assets. The same highways that made it conveniently close to Dallas and a major airport also made Coppell far enough away from the stresses of modern urban life that affluent families with young children could have the American bucolic ideal of a home, a yard, and swaying trees.

With carefully worded text, developers suggested that Coppell’s “luxury homes” were for an upper socio-economic segment of the city’s population; the people who moved there were predominantly white, with earned income well above those of residents in neighboring suburban cities. (Appendix A, Tables A2 and A3) In the 2002 edition of *Destination DFW*, a Dallas-Ft. Worth informational-promotional publication, the description of Coppell read

[j]ust a few years ago most folks had never heard of Coppell, and those who had didn’t think much about it. In 1980 it was just a quiet little town of 3,826; then the fickle finger of development trends began to point Coppell’s way. It’s still quiet but no longer little. Not that it looks like a city — it’s actually more a dusting of North Texas woods with luxury homes, manicured yards, and rows of shade trees in sway. In short, it’s a good place to raise a family. If anything, it’s becoming more exclusive with the passage of time. . . .Coppell can generally be described by its enviable bordering freeways: I-635, I-35, and Highway 121. To the south-east is Las Colinas and one of the fastest suburban commuter routes to downtown Dallas. . . .<sup>10</sup>

In addition to its location and upscale residential subdivisions, developers promoted Coppell’s commitment to incorporating green spaces into its design, specifically “parks, jogging trails, playgrounds and the Riverchase golf course.”<sup>11</sup> Included among the preserved open spaces is the WPA park, Grapevine Spring Park, which, after being donated by private owners for city use, was restored and re-dedicated as “an historic open space park” in 1993.<sup>12</sup> Promotional materials also mention the

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<sup>10</sup> HPC Publications, *Destination DFW* (Dallas: HPC Publications, 2002), 69. Similar text appears in newspaper articles during the 1980s about Coppell’s rapid growth. See, for example, “‘City with a Beautiful Future’ promotes growth,” *Coppell Gazette*, February 24, 1988; Les Cockrell, “Coppell -- ‘New’ City rises on Western Horizon,” *Times-Chronicle Today*, February 28 and March 1, 1984.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel L. Wyse Associates, *City of Coppell, Texas, Comprehensive Plan, 1972-1992*, 69.

<sup>12</sup> Historical marker in Grapevine Springs Park, erected by the Coppell Historical Society, 1993.

growth and quality of the city's school district, praising expanding enrollment, a new high school complex, and campuses rated "exemplary" by the Texas Education Association.<sup>13</sup> Inclusion of the school district in text about Coppell affirms developers' intention of attracting young families.

Coppell's Community Information Officer Sharon Logan speculated that people are drawn to the city by its carefully planned aesthetic design, including dark brick facades on most homes and government structures, and landscaped medians along public thoroughfares.<sup>14</sup> No doubt all these features are some of the "amenities of community life [intended] to attract new residents" alluded to in a 1972 Comprehensive Plan.<sup>15</sup>

Coppell is accessed easily via one of the multi-lane highways that define its boundaries. The city's proximity to DFW airport facilitated building of "industrial parks" comprised of warehouses, merchandise transfer centers, and corporate headquarters along its southern edges. These oxymoronicly named "parks" abut the few extant fields, reminders of the not-so-distant past when much of the land was dedicated to family farms. The area's continued population growth and the ease of access afforded by the extensive network of highways encircling the city have led to the construction of sizeable apartment complexes and expansive shopping centers along its northern edges.

Once off Highway I-35, I-635 or Texas State Highway 121, drivers find themselves on smoothly paved roads divided by the afore-mentioned, well-maintained landscaped medians amid shopping plazas and subdivisions with names that allude to a

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<sup>13</sup> HPC Publications, *Destination DFW*, 69.

<sup>14</sup> Personal communication, June 1, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel L. Wyse Associates, *City of Coppell, Texas, Comprehensive Plan, 1972-1992*.

pastoral ideal or a displaced natural feature of the area. Most of the commercial and residential buildings visible from the main roads are large, dark brick structures.

Although there is architectural variety among the homes in residential subdivisions such as “Magnolia Park” and “Stonemeade Estate,” there is remarkable visual homogeneity among the various subdivisions and in the retail plazas along the main thoroughfares.

Readily apparent while driving around Coppel is the commercialism that accompanies suburban growth in America: strip plazas with grocery stores, cafes, dry cleaners and national chain drug stores. Like many suburbs, especially those that stretch across the vast lands of Texas, Coppel is built for automotive travel: everything is spread out and designed to accommodate vehicles. A car-dependent town plan and homes with electric garage doors or garages that open to a back alley do not facilitate interaction among residents.

Coppel’s wide roads are easily negotiated, but they do not lead to a geographic town center. The absence of a town common means that there is no central social and commercial gathering space, what often becomes the heart and soul of a small city. There is an area called Town Center, but it is neither a geographic center nor a social gathering place. On the property comprising Town Center are a large YMCA, the Coppel Justice Center, and Coppel Town Center, the equivalent of a city hall, which houses city administration and government. (Figures 6.2 and 6.3)



**FIGURE 6.2. GATES DEFINING THE ENTRANCE TO COPPELL'S TOWN CENTER** The formal design of the walled gateway does not communicate an air of welcome. The building behind this gate is the firehouse. (Photograph of author)



**FIGURE 6.3. COPPELL TOWN CENTER** The town hall was built in 1986. (Photograph by author)

### **“THIS LITTLE PIGGY STAYED HOME. . .”: NO SENSE OF PLACE OR COMMUNITY**

Absent from promotional materials and most discussions about the city is mention of the activities and people that generate a sense of community. People talk about Coppel’s rapid growth, about its central location in the Metroplex, and about property values, but there is little indication of communal identity and pride among residents that is apparent among locals of other small cities like Gilroy.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps contributing to the apparent lack of communal spirit is that those who work for the betterment of the city do not live there; they commute to work in a city that has built its identity around the ease with which residents can commute away from for their work.<sup>17</sup>

Coppel’s recent development as a suburb, the commuter lifestyle of many of its residents, and its automobile-centric design do much to inform the absence of a connection among residents, and between residents and the city – a sense of community and a sense of place. Coppel exemplifies classic suburban sprawl: what appear to be “residential ‘communities’ utterly lacking in communal life” serviced by businesses in strip shopping centers.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> When I talked with current and former Coppel residents and relatives of Coppel residents during the course of my research, I heard repeatedly how conveniently situated the city is for getting to downtown Dallas and to the airport. One unmarried man commented that he stayed in Coppel, even though there were more young families than other single people, because he could get much more house for his money in Coppel than he could closer to Dallas, and, because of the extensive highway network, he was close enough to Dallas that he could visit friends and participate in Dallas’s vibrant cultural life.

<sup>17</sup> A city employee estimated that less than forty percent of city employees live in Coppel, not because they do not want to but because they cannot afford it. While these people work to develop senses of place and community for Coppel, they invest their leisure time and energy building community elsewhere. What was considered a prohibitively-high cost of living in Coppel was mentioned by more than one city employee as the reason for not living there. The estimate was offered by an employee of city government, personal communication, October 4, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*, x.

Because most Coppell residents moved to the area within the past twenty years, there is no heritage of dwelling in Coppell, of the lived experiences associated with the place.<sup>19</sup> Not only is a majority of the population recently arrived, there is a sense among residents that people do not stay long enough to invest in the community. Based on interviews with thirty-nine community “stakeholders,” the authors of “The Coppell Comprehensive Plan” observed that, “even though Coppell is principally a residential community, many residents do not live here for very long (some just 3-5 years). Many move because of company transfers. This may make it hard to encourage more resident participation on future plans.”<sup>20</sup>

Absent is a sense of shared past from which image makers spearheading city-wide events can draw to distinguish their suburban oasis from other nearby suburbs. In an effort to participate in what David Harvey called “interplace competition,” image makers must differentiate Coppell from other emerging cities in the area.<sup>21</sup> Localities are defined in part by how their inhabitants and image makers conceive of, present and represent the physical space in comparison to other places. Noteworthy is the fact that Coppell developers define the city by its geographic proximity to other cities, thus highlighting the mobile nature of contemporary life and, by implication, of its residents. Their

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<sup>19</sup> Anne Buttimer recognized that residents ascribe meaning to place through lived experience, what she called “the process of dwelling.” She draws from Martin Heidegger in her deliberate use of “dwelling” rather than “housing” and her emphasis that dwelling connotes inclusion, or at least recognition of the meaning-ascribing and place-defining experiences of those who reside there. It is in this sense that I, too, use “dwelling.” Anne Buttimer, “Home, Reach, and the Sense of Place,” in *The Human Experience of Space and Place*, ed. Anne Buttimer and David Seamon (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980).

<sup>20</sup> “Stakeholders” included “homeowners, business representatives, church leaders, developers, and others with an interest in the future of Coppell.” Hellmuth, Obata + Kassabaum, Inc., and Lockwood, Andrews & Newman, Inc., “The Coppell Comprehensive Plan, City of Coppell, Texas,” (Coppell: 1996), 7, A-8.

<sup>21</sup> Harvey, “From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity,” 8.

approach to place-promotion is consistent with what Doreen Massey and others suggested – namely, that a locality’s character can only be understood by linking it to places beyond its borders.<sup>22</sup> Massey stressed that localities are constituted by their economic, political and cultural links with the world beyond their borders. Furthering this global approach to place, Harvey argued that the character of place is a social construction and is based in part on interplace competition, what I refer to as differentiation.<sup>23</sup> Accepting these methods of understanding locality helps appreciate Coppel as a somewhat typical, developer-built, mid- to late-twentieth-century American suburban city.

One of the consequences of a place being defined primarily in relation *to* other places, is that it risks overlooking its *genius loci*, the characteristics, features, or history that make it distinct. Eliminating or suppressing distinctive places and standardizing landscapes can leave residents and visitors nothing upon which to build a connection to place, resulting in what Edward Relph calls “placelessness” or no sense of place.<sup>24</sup> That Coppel’s planners created an area called Town Center suggests they recognized the symbolic value of having a town center. Despite their dedication to building according to an “old world” architectural style, evocative of a generic but established community and traditions, the Town Center lacks features that invite residents to make it a communal gathering place and, consequently, a physical space around which residents develop a

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<sup>22</sup> Doreen Massey, “Questions of Locality,” *Geography* 78, no. 338 (1993).

<sup>23</sup> Harvey, “From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity.”

<sup>24</sup> Relph, *Place and Placelessness*.

sense of place and a sense of community.<sup>25</sup> Subsequent planners and residents recognize the value of a symbolic communal center, though there was no consensus as to how to achieve it: the 1996 Comprehensive Plan noted that

[t]own Center needs to be the central focal point to create a community feeling. But it also needs a master plan. The Town Center should include public uses like City Hall, library, civic center, performing arts center, etc. Support uses, like the YMCA or restaurants, would also be appropriate (although most do not want a “fast-food restaurant row” in the Town Center). Almost one-third of the original area has been lost to development – should the City consider buying the undeveloped land? Most adjacent homeowners want Town Center to remain as open space.<sup>26</sup>

As if to compensate for the absence of meaningful places in the present, image makers often incorporate references to the past. This can be done by incorporating architectural styles meant to connect symbolically new buildings to an idealized past of the period during which and the place in which the style was established. Another way to evoke the past in the present is through names. One of the planned subdivisions in Coppell, for example, is called “Old Coppell.” (Figure 6.4) The oxymoronic name rhetorically compartmentalizes place-history: it recalls by implication what once was, yet inside the small subdivision’s ivy-covered walls there is no evidence of anything old or

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<sup>25</sup> One of the goals itemized in the 1996 Comprehensive Plan was for new commercial developments to “adhere to the ‘old world’ architectural standards established by the City” as part of the effort to preserve and protect “significant features.” Hellmuth, “The Coppell Comprehensive Plan, City of Coppell, Texas,” 10. That planners determined to follow an “old world” architectural style as they established the city is an example of looking outward to create identity rather than cultivating that which might be distinctive to the place being inhabited. Coppell Director of Planning Gary Sieb explained that the City “doesn’t have a formal definition of ‘old world’ but what we’ve put together from a variety of sources . . . is that masonry is the prevailing building material, it should be of darker tones, real brick (not fake), other masonry products-- cast stone, SOME (less than 20%) stucco, wrought iron, rock, and traditional building materials are best. Proportion is important, gabled roofs are encouraged, small paned windows are recommended, and dark shingles with some texture all contribute to the theme.” Personal communication, January 13, 2006. There is a small community garden plot located next to Coppell Town Center (the building), which can, and likely does, function to generate a sense of community among those who work the garden. On my frequent weekday and weekend visits to Coppell, however, I never saw anyone in the garden.

uniquely Coppell. The homes inside the Old Coppell subdivision are examples of the “North Dallas Special” style, a design common among homebuilders at the upper end of the market.<sup>27</sup> This single-family home style “attempts to create a skyline of an entire village. It is meant to stand alone.”<sup>28</sup> (Figures 6.5 and 6.6) Like other sizeable suburban homes, these McMansions emphasize privacy, maximize livable space for the lots on which they sit, are repetitive in their design, and minimize features that facilitate interaction with neighbors.<sup>29</sup>



**FIGURE 6.4. OLD COPPELL SUBDIVISION** The entries to the subdivision are bordered by ivy-covered masonry walls. Standing on both sides of the road at each of the two entries are small, brick and stone structures that suggest a gate house. (Photograph by author)

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., A-3.

<sup>27</sup> Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*. Although not unique to North Dallas, the title is fitting since many of the homes in Coppell and other suburbs of Dallas are in this style. 302 Hearstone Lane, located within the “Old Coppell” subdivision, was for sale in October, 2005. The agent-produced flier described this 1990 construction as a two-story, 4,120 square-foot home with five bedrooms, a game room, a gourmet kitchen, and an oversized two-car garage on a 70x120 foot lot. The list price for this property was \$595,000.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>29</sup> That the term McMansion has been incorporated into colloquial American English indicates how widespread the style is in subdivisions across the country. The style has been described as “the fast food version of the American dream” by Ibid., 41.



**FIGURES 6.5. AND 6.6. TWO “NORTH DALLAS SPECIALS”**

These houses, located in the Old Coppell subdivision, typify the North Dallas Special style. Note the proximity of the airplane in the lower image, a reminder how close DFW airport is to Coppell. (Photographs by author)



Distinct from, but adjacent to, the late-twentieth-century “Old Coppel” subdivision is a locally-designated historic area called Old Coppel, whose the center consists of a traffic signal at a crossroads a couple of miles from Coppel’s bustling commercial areas.<sup>30</sup> (Figure 6.7) Absent from historic Old Coppel are the McMansions that define most of Coppel’s residential landscape. Instead, in addition to a few early-twentieth-century clapboard buildings, there are mid-century one-story homes, a few small businesses, the senior center, a school, and a trailer park. Also there, at the head of Old Coppel’s crossroads, is the Stringfellow home, circa 1890s, the oldest extant home in Coppel. Recognizing “citizens’ desire for a mixed-use town center to provide a ‘sense of place’ that the community has been missing for years,” a Master Plan to redesign and redevelop Old Coppel as a place-defining focal point was initiated in 2001.<sup>31</sup> The conversion of Old Coppel into a meaning-generating place is a long-term plan. During the 1990s, other plans were being investigated to distinguish Coppel from neighboring suburbs and to give residents a sense of place.

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<sup>30</sup> Coppel’s Assistant Director of Planning Marcie Diamond explained that calling Old Coppel an historic district is local zoning nomenclature; the area does not have official state designation as an Historic District. “H” (Historic) zoning, with specific design guidelines, was established for Old Coppel in May, 2005, by means of an amendment to the City’s Zoning Ordinance. Personal communication, January 13, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Looney Ricks Kiss, “Old Coppel Master Plan Summary [brochure],” (2002).



**FIGURE 6.7. OLD COPPELL** The center of the “historic” Old Coppel is the intersection of South Coppel and Bethel Roads. At the head of South Coppel Road, behind the signs, stands the Stingfellow home. It was for sale at the time this photograph was taken, September 2005. (Photograph by author)

Kent C. Ryden defined sense of place as constituted in part from meanings and associations a person ascribes to a place: “[f]or those who have developed a sense of place, then, it is as though there is an unseen layer of usage, memory and significance . . . .superimposed upon the geographical surface . . . .”<sup>32</sup> The emotive associations that tie individuals to communal physical space come from residents sharing memories of the space, as well as generating new ones through lived experiences in the place, thereby endowing it with more significance. The challenge of creating a meaningful invisible landscape for a young city, whose residents are new and do not have narratives of the

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<sup>32</sup> Kent C. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993), 40.

landscape, is significant. Traditional community building and nurturing institutions, such as extended family and neighborhoods, can be difficult to sustain in contemporary life's highly mobile society, what Harvey called the "new matrix of social relations and capital accumulation."<sup>33</sup>

To facilitate a sense of familiarity and connection, city and civic leaders often turn to traditional forms of community affirmation. Local festivals are one strategy that can help maintain communal identity among an otherwise disconnected population. Sharon Logan noted that the City Council "believe[d] that community festivals and events help to foster the concept of 'a sense of community.'"<sup>34</sup> The organizers and promoters of PigFest were similarly reflexive: they recognized, and in fact hoped, that through the festival frame they would facilitate a sense of communal identity among locals and within the larger Metroplex.<sup>35</sup>

#### **"THIS LITTLE PIGGY WENT TO PIGFEST . . .": THE BIRTH AND DEMISE OF PIGFEST**

Coppel Celebrates was a non-profit organization formed in 1993 to "coordinate events that promote the benefits of living and working in Coppel, Texas, and enhance the quality of life and work in Coppel."<sup>36</sup> Its ten-member Board of Directors was comprised of appointed representatives from the City, Coppel Chamber of Commerce, Coppel

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<sup>33</sup> Harvey, "From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity."

<sup>34</sup> Sharon Logan, personal communication, May 20, 2004.

<sup>35</sup> Barbara Babcock lucidly explored the concepts of reflexive, reflexivity, and reflexiveness as "the capacity of language and of thought – of any system of signification – to turn or bend back upon itself, to become an object to itself, and to refer to itself." Babcock, "Reflexivity: Definitions and Discriminations," 2.

<sup>36</sup> "Mission," Bylaws of Coppel Celebrates, document dated January 14, 1993, Documents of Coppel City Information Office.

Independent School District and select community service organizations (Rotary Club of Coppell, Lions Club, Exchange Club, Women’s Club), as well as three business leaders elected by the appointed directors.<sup>37</sup> Even though city employees sat on the Coppell Celebrates board, operating events under that organization diverted financial and organizational responsibilities away from city government. It also allowed their events to be considered community events because they were not, strictly speaking, organized by the city. Through their events, Coppell Celebrates became the image makers for the city.

In 1996 Coppell Celebrates transformed a struggling spring festival, Funfest, into PigFest.<sup>38</sup> The three-day, porcine-themed event was intended primarily for Coppell families, with secondary and tertiary target audiences of residents in neighboring communities and pig enthusiasts. During its tenure, the Festival was heavily promoted in local media: paid advertisements on major network-affiliated local television stations, press releases sent to four major papers serving Coppell and the Metroplex, advertisements in direct mail pieces sent to all Coppell homes, inserts into the Money Mailer coupon/promotion envelopes delivered to Coppell and Las Colinas (a neighboring town) homes, and fliers handed out in all Coppell schools.

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<sup>37</sup> Angelo Vaccaro commented that Coppell Celebrates “brought people together, to work together, who wouldn’t normally work together.” Apparently these various civic organizations had an ongoing rivalry and Coppell Celebrates was among the first times the groups, through their representatives, worked in unity. Angelo Vaccaro, former Coppell Celebrates Board member, personal communication, October 7, 2005.

<sup>38</sup> Marice Richter reported in a pre-PigFest article that Fun Fest, “[w]ithout a theme to generate interest . . . had become lackluster and attendance had begun to dwindle, officials said.” Those officials were not named. Marice Richter, “Coppell hopes to hog attention -- Community will kick off Pigfest next weekend,” *The Dallas Morning News* 1996.

In anticipation of the first Festival, one newspaper reporter noted that the event “will pay homage to the city’s widely unknown history.”<sup>39</sup> To acquaint residents with their city’s heritage, a PigFest special section in the local paper included a short article about Coppell’s agrarian past. The article, “Pigfest part of Coppell history,” began: “[c]onsidering that 845 acres of the present Coppell was once a pig farm, it’s no wonder those behind this year’s Pigfest decided to dedicate the festivities to the beloved fine-haired friend.”<sup>40</sup> The article continued with personal recollections from Coppell resident Bob Ottinger, whose family operated a pig, cattle and grain farm for seventeen years on the site of what is now Coppell Town Center. As though this article was enough to familiarize residents with Coppell’s history, no similar retrospective appeared in subsequent years.<sup>41</sup>

Festival organizers selected pigs as the theme not only because some of their city was built on a farm that had had pigs; they also regarded pigs as a novelty and thought novelty appeal would translate into visitorship. Sharon Logan reflected, “[t]rying to establish an event in the Metroplex is like trying to make a leaf on a tree stand out from the rest. There are so many events and so many opportunities for people to spend discretionary income that the competition for attendance, attention and media support is unbelievable. So, the ‘pig theme’ really made the festival stand out from the rest of the

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<sup>39</sup> Natalie Medigovich, “Residents to go hog wild over Pigfest events,” *Coppell Gazette*, April 18, 1996.

<sup>40</sup> Misty J. Hoyt, “Pigfest part of Coppell History,” *Ibid.*, April 25.

<sup>41</sup> A short, pre-festival article the second year incorporated one sentence reminding readers that “Pig Fest is named in honor of the affluent Metroplex community’s heritage – much of the suburban sprawl that is Coppell formerly consisted of hog farms, including the land on which the city’s Town Center now sits.” Eric Sipos, “Pig Fest '97 this weekend,” *Ibid.*, April 24, 1997. In fact, although much of the land that constitutes contemporary Coppell was farmland, it was not dedicated solely or primarily to hogs.

events [in the Metroplex].”<sup>42</sup> Then-City Manager Jim Witt summarized, “Pigs are a hot item. ...I think it’s a cute theme.”<sup>43</sup> Pigs, especially piglets, were a “hot item” in 1995 in large part because of the amazingly successful family movie “Babe, the Gallant Pig.” Thus Coppel Celebrates’ chosen pig theme combined a popular culture trend with a segment of Coppel’s agricultural past. (Figure 6.8)



**FIGURE 6.8.**  
**PIGFEST TICKET**  
(Author’s collection)

Coppel Celebrates hired S.S. “Sparky” Sparks, a Dallas consultant with a reputation for coordinating unusual events. Sparks recalled accepting the job because it “sounded fun,” and PigFest was “a promote-able concept for a festival that would get ink for Coppel and get people out.”<sup>44</sup> Subsequent to the first PigFest, Coppel Celebrates coordinated the event without him, but for the first year, his creativity and connections were essential. Coppel Celebrates also worked with the Metroplex Association of

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<sup>42</sup> Sharon Logan, personal communication, May 26, 2004.

<sup>43</sup> Medigovich, “Residents to go hog wild over Pigfest events.”

<sup>44</sup> S.S. “Sparky” Sparks, The Sparks Agency, personal communication, August 19, 2005.

Potbellied Pig Enthusiasts (MAPPE), a North Texas non-profit pig-rescue and educational organization.<sup>45</sup>

PigFest took place at Andy Brown Park West, part of an expansive park with soccer fields, baseball diamonds and open space hospitable to a festival. The inaugural PigFest contained several events customary to community festivals, modified for pig participation.<sup>46</sup> Included among the “‘Pig’Tivities” were a pig parade (so popular it was repeated several times during each Festival), a pig beauty pageant and fashion show, and competitive events organized under the title “Olym‘Pig’ Events.” There were ample opportunities for human involvement as well: people participated in competitive events such as the “Pig Out,” a hot dog eating contest; a pork cook-off; a Pigskin Punt, Pass and Kick contest; and a pig calling contest. Most activities were run by volunteers from local non-profit groups, who used the Festival as an opportunity for fund-raising and information dissemination. Among the non-competitive events for humans were a Harley-Davidson “Road Hog” show, a community “Pig-nic,” performances by local music and school groups, arts and crafts, and carnival rides and games. To attract adult attendees, organizers hired several regionally recognized musical bands to perform throughout the three-day Festival.

At the inaugural PigFest, young visitors were encouraged to visit the “Pig Pen” petting zoo, where children could touch farm animals such as goats, sheep, baby chicks, a

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<sup>45</sup> The Metroplex Association of Potbellied Pig Enthusiasts (MAPPE) is now known as Atlastahome Sanctuary. I use MAPPE throughout for clarity because that is what the organization was called during the years of PigFest. For information on Atlastahome Sanctuary, see [www.atlastahome.com](http://www.atlastahome.com).

<sup>46</sup> The PigFest schedule of events and activities changed very little over the course of its existence. Only schedule additions, deletions, and changes relevant to this project are discussed.

calf, and ducks. Interestingly, for subsequent Festivals, “Pig Pen” became the name of the children’s area and the petting zoo was called the “Petting Farm.” Although the name changed, the Petting Farm remained a central component of PigFest. In this small, enclosed space suburban children were introduced to animals that, until the town of Coppel was built, might have shared space with humans on the family farms that stood where Coppel now stands. (Figure 6.9)

Although the area around Coppel was once primarily farm land, the cotton fields and animal barns have long since been replaced by paved roads and brick buildings, leaving Festival organizers to look outside the city for the Festival’s iconic pigs. Part of this duty for the inaugural PigFest went to Sparks, the hired Festival coordinator, who purchased pigs to “staff” the competitive events at PigFest. For the first PigFest, Mr. Sparks also arranged for the petting zoo (then Pig Pen) animals. MAPPE provided the pigs that participated in the parade and beauty contests. The fact that the animals spectaclized for the Petting Farm and pig events were bought, hired, and borrowed reinforces how far removed Coppel was from the agricultural past that PigFest was allegedly commemorating.



**FIGURE 6.9. PIGFEST PETTING ZOO** PigFest, 1999. (Photograph by author)

After the first year, MAPPE became the sole provider of pigs for PigFest. In addition to supplying pigs for all the “Pig’Tivities,” MAPPE representatives set up a display tent where PigFest attendees could learn about pot bellied pigs as pets. For a small fee, anyone could pet and feed a pig (fifty cents for a child-size handful of feed), or have a picture taken with one of several young and adult pot bellied pigs (three dollars). (Figure 6.10) On Saturday afternoon of PigFest 1999, the MAPPE pig petting and photographing drew a larger crowd than did the puppies and dogs at the Humane Society’s Adopt-a-Pet tent.



**FIGURE 6.10. TODDLER FEEDING A POT BELLIED PIG** PigFest, 1999. (Photograph by author)

That same year, the Petting Farm and the MAPPE tent were well away from each other, separated by the “Food Court,” where vendors were selling ubiquitous festival foods such as corn dogs, funnel cakes, nachos, hot dogs, and lemonade. The result of this festival-scape was a jumble of olfactory stimulation: barnyard smells emanating from the Petting Farm and pig pens mingled with the sweet, fry smell of funnel cakes and corn dogs. At each venue, humans were encouraged to interact with animals: the latter through literal consumption, and the former two through hands-on interaction.

The fact that pigs were not included in the Petting Farm after the inaugural PigFest – that those available for petting and feeding were stationed in the

educational/pet-rescue MAPPE tent – signals a shift in the event from celebrating Coppel’s agricultural past, a past that included raising pigs and other animals for slaughter, to regarding pigs as pets. This shift was notable in other areas as well, especially food-related activities offered at the Festival. The pork cook-off of 1996 was not repeated in 1997. Its inclusion in the schedule for 1998, but not for 1999, is perhaps indicative of the confusion that underlay PigFest. Symbolizing ambivalence toward pig as pet or pig as provision was the inclusion in 1997 of a chili cook-off and Texas barbeque, “featuring beef recipes this year.”<sup>47</sup>

Not everything at PigFest involved pigs. Coppel Celebrates contracted a carnival company to provide midway rides and amusements.<sup>48</sup> The carnival was included in their community festival because it generates substantial profits, and it attracts people: the bright lights of carnival rides and games, set up a few days in advance of the actual Festival, are an “immediate magnet” for attendees when the event opens.<sup>49</sup> PigFest organizers contracted for amusement that would appeal particularly to children, part of their effort to promote Festival attendance of residents with young families. Among the

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<sup>47</sup> “Annual event brings out cute pigs, great food and four-night cruise,” *Coppel Gazette*, April 24, 1997. In Texas, chili and barbeque traditionally incorporate beef, not pork, so the inclusion of a pork cook-off was a bit non-traditional for a Texas food competition. Margaret Visser noted that pork, which is pink when raw and pale when cooked, is considered less “masculine” than red meat, potentially problematic among beef-loving Texans. Margaret Visser, *Much Depends on Dinner: The Extraordinary History and Mythology, Allure and Obsessions, Perils and Taboos of an Ordinary Meal* (New York: Grove Press, 1986).

<sup>48</sup> During the first three years of PigFest, the Rotary Club contracted a different carnival company each year. Revenue from carnival amusements remained with the Rotary as part of their fund-raising efforts. Safety concerns raised in 1998 added to an existing interest among Coppel Celebrates members in having carnival revenue directed toward general festival expenses rather than remain with a single group. For PigFest 1999, Coppel Celebrates assumed control of contracting the carnival company and revenues went toward the event’s operating budget. PigFest 1999 Binder, documents of Coppel Community Information Office (CCIO); Sharon Logan, personal communication, August 19, 2005.

<sup>49</sup> Angelo Vaccaro, personal communication, October 7, 2005.

attractions provided by the Kaiser carnival company in 1999 were a small Ferris wheel, the spinning tea cups ride, and the TITANIC Adventure Slide™, a thirty-three-foot-high inflatable slide that mimics the sinking Titanic cruise ship.<sup>50</sup> The Titanic slide was so popular that the lines of children waiting to climb the ill-fated ship slide often interfered with other Festival foot traffic. The Titanic slide and other carnival rides were huge attractions for young PigFest attendees, diluting the pig-ness of the Festival.

The midway has long been both an alluring and a contested component of agricultural fairs and festivals. In his history of American agricultural fairs, Wayne Caldwell Neely lamented that the traveling American carnival companies dispensing food and entertainment are “yet another manifestation of the rise of commercialized entertainment, though of course a very old one.” Modern carnival amusements, which are descended from side shows of English fairs, Neely continued, “form the eternal appurtenances of the fair.”<sup>51</sup> In her history of the Minnesota state fair, Karal Ann Marling noted that, by the early 1890s, critics that regarded the midway as having “no legitimate place on a fairground” were “clearly in the minority among crowds of urbanites without the faintest interest in agricultural matters who came to the state fair to be diverted and delighted on the Midway.”<sup>52</sup> More than a century later, long lines of

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<sup>50</sup> The Titanic ship tragedy was popularized through the Oscar-winning 1997 movie, “Titanic.” Prior to the Titanic slide, the inflatable feature at PigFest was two Moon Walks.

<sup>51</sup> Neely, *The Agricultural Fair*, 201.

<sup>52</sup> Marling, *Blue Ribbon: A Social and Pictorial History of the Minnesota State Fair*, 187. Ted Ownby similarly noted that popular culture of the midway was regarded as an assault on southern Evangelical sensibilities. Ted Ownby, “Harvest Celebration in the Rural South and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1865-1920,” in *Feats and Celebrations in North American Ethnic Communities*, ed. Ramón Gutiérrez and Geneviève Fabre (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1995).

eager children waiting to enjoy the amusements suggest that the midway continues to capture the attention and affection of suburbanites.

While midway amusements certainly distract from other festival events, they often are instrumental to the festival's tangible (financial) and intangible (positive experience of festival visitors) success. They are part of what Marling described as a symbiotic relationship, in which the agricultural elements of a fair have a "natural complement in the trickery, bright lights, and illusions of the entertainment district."<sup>53</sup> A vital component of the symbiosis is financial; Marling reflected that "history also teaches that without the receipts from the Ferris wheel, Little Egypt, and the rest of the gaudy attractions, the Columbian Exposition would have finished its run in debt and disgrace."<sup>54</sup>

The midway was, it turned out, an essential component of PigFest as well. When the contracted carnival company cancelled in mid-March, 2000, Coppell Celebrates cancelled PigFest rather than risk financial losses, fearing that families would not come to carnival-less Festival.<sup>55</sup> For an event described as having "the air of an overgrown school carnival,"<sup>56</sup> to lose a primarily children's attraction was devastating. It was not the rides that would be missed by organizers, but the revenue generated by them, revenue that was necessary to keep the Festival afloat. Without income from the carnival company, perhaps \$25,000 in costs would have to come directly from the City's General fund.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Marling, *Blue Ribbon: A Social and Pictorial History of the Minnesota State Fair*, 187.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Other carnival companies were contacted, but with just one month's lead time, Coppell Celebrates was unable to secure another area carnival company.

<sup>56</sup> Joe Simmacher, "Pig Style: Festival-goers go hog wild in Coppell," *The Dallas Morning News*, May 2, 1999, 39A.

<sup>57</sup> Sharon Logan, personal communication, May 26, 2004.

According to minutes from a March 20, 2000, Coppell Celebrates PigFest planning meeting, the absence of a carnival company was not the only reason behind the event's cancellation. During this meeting, members of the board outlined other concerns, among them, "the shortage of volunteers and community assistance from civic organizations."<sup>58</sup> Although the Band Boosters had agreed to volunteer for the event, and a local Girl Scout troop was committed to having a booth in the children's area, city workers who had volunteered in the past would not be available that year because of an employee banquet. As of the late-March date, there was only one entertainer under contract, no food vendors had signed contracts (although several verbally had agreed to be present), and no one had been contracted to supply the animals for the Petting Farm – the event was only one month away and there were many holes yet to be filled.<sup>59</sup>

Another concern discussed by board members was the weather. Although spring in North Texas can be ideal for outdoor events, rain is always a possibility, and nothing dampens an outdoor fete faster than a Texas-sized storm. Rain-reduced attendance translates into reduced revenue and, especially for events with substantial entertainers' fees, the loss can be substantial.<sup>60</sup> Without vendor fees and other event revenue, the

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<sup>58</sup> "PigFest Minutes," March 20, 2000, PigFest 2000 Binder, documents of CCIO.

<sup>59</sup> In comparison, the MAPPE people were enthused and ready for PigFest. Chris Hinterman, then-president of MAPPE, remembered that the cancellation was tough for the organization. They were a small non-profit group at the time so the funds they raised by selling raffle tickets (for donated Southwest Airline tickets) at PigFest were a substantial part of their budget. Chris Hinterman, personal communication, August 19, 2005.

<sup>60</sup> As if to reinforce that it was not just Coppell that has to consider the economic consequences of bad weather on festivals, Sharon Logan sent me an article about the cancellation of Arbor Daze, a seventeen-year-old festival held in nearby Euless, cancelled forever because of weather-induced financial losses and fears of similar losses in the future. Ellena F. Morrison, "Citing risks, Euless cancels Arbor Daze," *Star-Telegram*, August 17, 2005, available online at <http://www.dfw.com/ml/dfw/news/local/states/texas/northeast/12403489.htm>, accessed August 17, 2005.

musical entertainment contracted to perform at PigFest would have to be paid out of the Coppel Celebrates' account, but funds in the account came from each year's PigFest income. No PigFest meant no funds in the bank. In 1999, severe rains required the event to close early on Saturday evening and prohibited events from ever starting on Sunday, cutting into the potential profit for Coppel Celebrates. Organizers anticipated criticism from residents if a weather-caused complete cancellation became the financial reality: "What do you tell the taxpayers (especially those who don't attend) that you're going to have to pay \$20,000 worth of bills for an event that never happened," Sharon Logan hypothetically queried while reflecting on PigFest's cancellation. Coppel Celebrates would be responsible for unpaid expenses, but how would they pay expenses without sufficient revenues from the previous year's PigFest? She suggested that "it would be easier to drop a successful thing and move on than to run it into the ground and live with that negative legacy. . . . Plus the novelty of 'pigs' eventually wears off and it doesn't stand out as much. It garnered the attention we were seeking at the time."<sup>61</sup>

In light of these problems, board member Bill Herries "entertained a motion to suspend PigFest and to close out all bank accounts for Coppel Celebrates with the money going to the city of Coppel Parks and Leisure Services Department, stipulating that the funds turned over from Coppel Celebrates would be used to implement a city-wide festival similar to PigFest."<sup>62</sup> The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

The event that replaced PigFest has since undergone further transformation. By 2003, Coppel's celebration of community spirit had evolved from the three day PigFest

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<sup>61</sup> Sharon Logan, personal communication, May 26, 2004.

to a three-day Spirit of Coppell Family Days festival to a July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebration planned, funded and operated by the Coppell's Parks and Recreation Department.

**“AND THIS LITTLE PIGGY WENT WEE, WEE, WEE ALL THE WAY HOME.”: THE PARADOX OF PIGFEST**

Multiple considerations prompted cancellation of PigFest 2000, though the carnival company's short-notice cancellation usually is offered as the primary reason. More significant than its cancellation is the fact that the event was permanently removed from the calendar, and that the communal-celebratory duties of Coppell Celebrates were turned over to a different organizing body. If the event had been successful at its intended goals of enhancing community spirit and providing positive exposure for Coppell, wouldn't organizers have found a way to continue the celebration in subsequent years, with or without carnival rides, despite the uncertainty of Mother Nature? While it is impossible to say what might have been, the fact remains that PigFest failed to create a food-place association; it was unable to brand Coppell a festive foodscape.

No single force is responsible for PigFest's demise, but consideration of a combination of contributing factors, in addition to the vagaries of weather and cancellation by the carnival company, sheds light on why PigFest did not achieve its desired goals through a pig-themed commemoration of Coppell's agricultural past.

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<sup>62</sup> “PigFest Minutes,” March 20, 2000, PigFest 2000 Binder, documents of CCIO.

### *Swine as symbol*

Early on there were grumbles of discontent among some Coppell residents who did not favor using a pig as the place brand icon; they did not want to have their upscale suburb associated with the area's farming past. Even before the initial PigFest, then-Mayor Tom Morton said he had heard complaints about the event: "[t]hose residents said they wanted Plato or Socrates read and didn't find our theme amusing."<sup>63</sup> Coppell resident Madge Cruse was among the dissenters. After several years on planning committees for previous festivals, she stepped down in protest over the pig theme. "I just don't think that Pigfest fits with the image that Coppell is trying to project," she commented in a newspaper article.<sup>64</sup> The disputation over Coppell's brand identity reduced some residents' willingness to support local boosterism. It also spread beyond Coppell's borders: the article in which Ms. Cruse's comments appeared was not the local Coppell paper, but *The Dallas Morning News*, with a Metroplex-wide readership of more than one million people.

Consider, however, that in the late 1970s, some Gilroy residents, including the mayor, did not embrace garlic as a food or an industry worthy of celebrating, much less iconizing; they were hesitant about promoting what was perceived as negative and off-putting by many locals and passers-by. As Rod Kauffman, then-Vice President of Gentry Foods Corporation (now Gilroy Foods) commented, "[t]he first year we claimed the [Garlic Capital] world title, I don't think people liked it much. It was like being called the

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<sup>63</sup> Medigovich, "Residents to go hog wild over Pigfest events," 7A.

<sup>64</sup> Richter, "Coppell hopes to hog attention -- Community will kick off Pigfest next weekend," 2T.

Bad Breath Capital of the World. But it brings a lot of money in here – a lot.”<sup>65</sup> Some Gilroy leaders doubted that the Festival would have a positive and lasting impact for the community. Festival co-founder Don Christopher recalled that Gilroy’s mayor had such low expectations that he did not attend the inaugural Garlic Festival, laughingly dismissing the Festival and suggesting that “the next thing you’ll [Festival organizers] want is a prune festival.”<sup>66</sup> But as Pat Anderson, then-editor of the *Gilroy Dispatch*, opined in the days before the first Festival,

[i]t’s easy to say, ‘We don’t want to be known as the Garlic Capital of the World – it’s degrading.’ How much more degrading would it be should the thousands of persons employed annually in fields and in shipping and processing plants hit the welfare rolls. The dust and aroma clinging to individuals and the town during the peak harvest and processing season should be a badge of honor, rather than of embarrassment. . . . Masses of machinery are sold in the area to aid [garlic] production. Thousands of workers take home a pay check after working in fields and plants. Trucking firms also share in the proceeds, not only plying back and forth to harvest fields, but subsequently transporting bulbs, powders, salts and liquid garlic to distant markets . . . . Perhaps garlic does not have the sweet odor of the prune, in which early Gilroyans took such pride, even though it, too, had some less than ideal aspects; but there are a great many pluses derived from the aromatic root.<sup>67</sup>

Garlic was and is vital to Gilroy’s economy. Pig farming is not part of contemporary Coppel; nor was there a history of pig-centered communal celebrations from the days when Coppel had working farms to which planners and residents could turn as historic precedence or for inspiration. Among Coppel residents there was neither

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<sup>65</sup> Kathy Rebelloand, “Aroma Swirls in Gilroy: Pungency pays off for this old California town,” *USA Today*, July 25, 1986, 5B.

<sup>66</sup> Don Christopher, personal communication, May 10, 2005. Recall that earlier in the twentieth century, Gilroy had a prolific pitted fruit industry, including growing plums and dehydrating them into prunes. Although prunes are not as pungent as garlic, they similarly have a less-than-positive association.

<sup>67</sup> Pat Anderson, “Gilroy Garlic Festival [Editorial],” *Gilroy Dispatch*, August 3, 1979, 2.

significant economic nor symbolic reason to remain loyal to pigs. There was little connection made at PigFest between the realities of Coppel's recent or historic agricultural past and its suburban present, giving residents and visitors nothing with which to personally identify or connect. Even the lye soap making demonstration at PigFest 1996 given by Mabel Wells, whose family ran a dairy farm on what is now Coppel's Sandy Lake Road, did not represent the reality of modern pig farming. The demonstration would, as she said, "give people the chance to see what it was like back in the old days."<sup>68</sup>

Residents of Cincinnati, Ohio, like those in Gilroy and Coppel, also went through a process of contesting an icon meant to commemorate and celebrate one aspect of the city's historical identity.<sup>69</sup> In the early and mid-nineteenth century, Cincinnati led the country in production and packing of pork products, earning it the appellation "Porkopolis." More than a century later, in the late-1980s, artist Andrew Leicester incorporated reference to Porkopolis into an art installation that would serve as the sculptural entrance to a recreational park near downtown Cincinnati. Reigning over the Leicester's sculpture, *Cincinnati Gateway*, are four life-size (four-foot tall), bronze, winged pigs standing atop twenty-two-foot columns. The artist commented that with these flying pigs he created the "myth of Pigasus": "[I]ike the Roman general after whom Cincinnati was named, who gave his all when asked to leave his farm and serve his

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<sup>68</sup> Misty J. Hoyt, "Pigfest part of Coppel History," *Coppel Gazette*, April 25, 1996, 4.

<sup>69</sup> The following discussion of Cincinnati and her pigs is drawn primarily from Erika Doss, *Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs: Public Art and Cultural Democracy in American Communities* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscape as Public History* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995).

country, Pigasus represents the millions of hogs after whom Cincinnati was nicknamed and who, likewise gave their all.”<sup>70</sup> Incorporated into another less readily visible part of Leicester’s *Gateway* is an image of a row of pigs on a slaughterhouse assembly line, also referring to Cincinnati’s porcine production past.

The pigs were one of many visual references to Cincinnati’s history incorporated into the iconographically rich piece, yet it was the flying pigs that caused a public debate. Citizens wondered aloud whether pigs would be interpreted as symbolic of the city’s gruesome and greedy industrial past or of the city’s entrepreneurial industrial spirit. Critics perceived the pigs as symbolizing greed and sloth, not characteristics by which they wanted their city to be known. Proponents regarded the pigs as whimsical, no less noble an icon than Michigan’s wolverine or the National Park Service’s Smokey the Bear. Incorporated into Leicester’s plan for his sculptural entrance was public participation in the development and maintenance of his piece, thus residents became invested in the project and, by extension, its symbols. Through the processes of public debate and civic engagement, over the period of a few months citizen contestation transitioned into consent: pigs were appropriated by residents as a positive symbol for their city.

The Cincinnati flying pigs episode is one example of pigs becoming emblematic of a city’s place identity. A plethora of pig- and hog-themed places (e.g., Hog Island, Virginia; SPAM Museum, Minnesota) and commercial establishments (e.g., Hog’s Breath Inn, California; Hog Wild Saloon, South Dakota; Pig-N-Whistle BBQ restaurants,

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<sup>70</sup> Erika Doss expanded on Leicester’s joking reference to a ‘myth of Pigasus.’ Doss, *Spirit Poles and*

Tennessee) throughout the country further indicate that swine are conducive to fetishization, iconization, and festivalization. S. Jonathan Bass argued that the hog has become an enduring symbol of the American South.<sup>71</sup> Not only did pigs in the South inspire the first self-service grocery store (Piggly Wiggly, founded by Clarence Saunders in 1916), they are the main ingredient in the region's barbecue pits, and are the theme of many community festivals. Georgia, for example, is home to multiple successful events at which swine are celebrated and consumed as symbol and sustenance. Representative of the diversity of pig-centric events are Vienna's BIG PIG JIG<sup>®</sup>, Georgia's oldest, largest, and official barbecue competition; and the Ocmulgee Wild Hog Festival held in Abbeville, founded by the owner of a wild-hog-hunting camp, at which dogs compete in hog-baying competition.<sup>72</sup> Texas, known more for cattle than swine, also is home to feral pig festivals, including Sabinal's Wild Hog Festival and Bandera's Wild Hog Explosion.

That pigs as an organizing theme "works" in some cities but failed in Coppell suggests it was not the pigs that were the problem, but the process. Dolores Hayden noted that "[p]ublic history, architectural preservation, environmental protection, and public art can take on a special evocative role in helping to define a city's history if, and only if, they are complemented by a strong community process that establishes the context of

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*Flying Pigs: Public Art and Cultural Democracy in American Communities*, 220.

<sup>71</sup> S. Jonathan Bass, "'How 'bout a Hand for the Hog': The Enduring Nature of the Swine as a Cultural Symbol in the South," *Southern Cultures* 1, no. 3 (1995).

<sup>72</sup> Ian Frazier, "Hogs Wild," *New Yorker*, December 12, 2005; Craig S. Pascoe, "Barbeculture: Experiencing the South Through BBQ" (paper presented at the American Folklore Society Annual Meeting, Atlanta, Georgia, October 21, 2005). See also "History" (BIG PIG JIG<sup>®</sup> web site, 2005), available from <http://www.bigpigjig.com/history.htm>, accessed October 30, 2005.

social memory.”<sup>73</sup> Community engagement and participation are essential components of the politics and processes of place construction.

Coppell citizens’ resistance to embracing the pig as their collective icon is based in part on the selected history of a pig-centric agricultural past. The absence of pigs from contemporary Coppell economic life and repeatedly low levels of volunteer participation in PigFest also contributed to a general lack of enthusiasm in supporting the annual Festival. Hesitation might have been assuaged by an event that, like Gilroy Garlic Festival, engendered participation among many residents and brought positive notoriety to the city. Jane Adams attributed the ongoing success of the Cobden, Illinois Peach Festival to the significant involvement of people within the community, from the Lions and Women’s Clubs to grocery stores and residents who provided food for sale:

“[m]obilizing and organizing volunteer labor . . . draws people into close association with one another, validates the claims of community leaders, and contributes to the continued viability of a village that has been persistently under siege by larger social forces.”<sup>74</sup>

In addition to volunteers from a very few community non-profit groups that ran various competitive and fun pig-themed activities, some Coppell city employees volunteered their time to the weekend event.<sup>75</sup> Approximately seventy-five volunteers “staffed” the three-day event in 1999, less than one-quarter of one percent of the population. Recall, in comparison, that nearly ten percent of Gilroy’s population actively

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<sup>73</sup> Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscape as Public History*, 76.

<sup>74</sup> Jane Adams, “Creating Community in a Midwestern Village: Fifty Years of the Cobden Peach Festival,” *Illinois Historical Journal* 83 (1990): 104.

participates in the Festival as volunteers. The festival format employed by the PigFest organizing committee did not inspire civic engagement on a personal level as does Gilroy's Festival.

Participation breeds loyalty to an event or to public art, as witnessed so strongly among the volunteers of Gilroy, who return year after year with great enthusiasm, and among the citizens of Cincinnati, whose participation in making a public art piece helped transform "a volatile civic controversy" into "a meaningful episode in community mobilization."<sup>76</sup> Volunteerism sustains the communal spirit generated through a festival beyond the festival days, and that contributes to a sense of community, a sense of place. While PigFest brought people together for a few hours over the course of a few days, it did not provide a venue for ongoing civic engagement – there was little tangible or intangible consequence of their efforts on which to reflect with collective or communal pride, and there was no outlet for the mediated communal identity promoted by the Festival.<sup>77</sup>

### ***Pig as Pet or Provision***

Inherent in PigFest's organization and promotion were confusing and conflicting messages. Two different representations of pigs – pig as pet and pig as provision – were

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<sup>75</sup> The local Rotary chapter, the Lions Club, and the Chamber of Commerce were the groups that consistently and substantially participated in PigFest. Other organizations that participated on a lesser level included a few local churches and youth groups.

<sup>76</sup> Doss, *Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs: Public Art and Cultural Democracy in American Communities*, 200.

<sup>77</sup> Ideally residents would have benefited from funds raised during PigFest since the profit was split between community service organizations, the "non-profit partners" that facilitate the Festival. According to the PigFest 1999 budget reconciliation report, the Rotary Club, Lions Club, and Chamber of Commerce

present at PigFest, without any accommodation for distancing the two. Together, they diluted the event's efficacy toward achieving its intended goals.

In a study of the “language of cooking” among Languedocian Pyrenees agro-pastoral peasant societies, Claudine Fabre-Vassas found that the pig emerged as a central and recurring figure.<sup>78</sup> Although her initial focus was the traditions and customs that prescribed ritualized pig slaughter, she was drawn toward the antithesis of the slaughter: the breeding of the pigs. Her observations paralleled those of Edmund Leach and other ethnologists before her: she noted,

in reflecting on the use of common animal names as insults – that that bond-forming proximity [of breeding] necessitates this distancing just as the incest prohibition separates us from our parents. This operation turned out to be all the more necessary for the pig, which became ‘one of the children of the house’ whose slaughter risked rousing the unbearable specter of cannibalism.<sup>79</sup>

Her comments illuminate an ambivalence that might be felt by others raising animals for slaughter but regarded as pet, particularly if the animals are few in number and raised in “bond-forming proximity.”<sup>80</sup>

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split \$3,829.66, the profit left after vendors and other expenses were paid, and \$2,000 was set aside in the Coppell Celebrates account as seed money for the following year. Documents of CCIO.

<sup>78</sup> Claudine Fabre-Vassas, *The Singular Beast: Jews, Christians, & the Pig*, trans. Carol Volk (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>80</sup> The dissonance between farm animal as pet and farm animal as provision is not unfamiliar to members of 4-H, a youth organization originally geared toward rural youth, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service. Among the educational objectives of the 4-H are civic responsibility, agricultural technology, and animal husbandry. Showmanship of animals raised by 4-Hers is a major component of 4-H animal husbandry, and 4-Hers learn not to get too attached to the animals they raise and show because some of them will be sold for slaughter. In a children's book about raising pigs on a Pennsylvania farm, the young narrator Alisha Eberly, a member of 4-H, commented, “[t]he saddest thing about being a pig farmer is that after we show our pigs we have to send some of them to market, where they are used as food.” Judy Wolfman, *Life on a Pig Farm* (Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 2002), 43.

Such ambivalence was fundamental, though inadvertent, at PigFest, during which pigs concurrently were commemorated as farm animals, cooked in the cook-off, and spectaclized as play things and pets. More specifically, the family farms commemorated by PigFest were farms raising pigs for human consumption, thus emphasizing pig as food. Conversely, the non-profit group that garnered attention from organizers, attendees, and media was the MAPPE, which supplied the pigs for events that framed pigs as play things. Additionally, they disseminated information about their Adopt-a-Pig program (including pig-as-pet education) and their commitment to rescuing abandoned pigs.<sup>81</sup>

The schizophrenic potential of representation complicates the capacity of domesticated farm animals for festivalization and commodification.<sup>82</sup> Popular media personify pigs as cute, cuddly or humorous. Consider, for example, cartoon character “Porky the Pig,” Warner Bros. lovable, naïve, stuttering pig. Consider also, the movie “Babe,” an empowering tale about a piglet that becomes a shepherd alongside his sheepdog friends. While the movie did little for sheep farming, it catapulted piglets into popular culture one year before the inaugural PigFest.

Several food advertising campaigns humanize animals to use them as brand icons. In such campaigns, animals are anthropomorphized with voices and adorned with accessories, as is the case with Elsie the Cow, the spokescow for Borden Dairy products.

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<sup>81</sup> Part of the attraction of potbellied pigs as pets is that they are very small and cute when young. As they mature, however, they grow to be full-sized pigs. Apparently many people who adopt potbellied pigs were unaware that they grow out of the piglet size. When they find themselves unprepared to house and feed big pigs, they abandon them, keeping potbellied pig rescue organizations very busy. Chris Hinterman, personal communication, August 19, 2005.

<sup>82</sup> This line of thinking came out of a conversation with Eve Jochowitz about the ease with which fruits or vegetables might be festivalized, especially as compared to animals. Personal communication, October 14, 2004.

Since 1939, a Brown Jersey cow adorned with a necklace of yellow daisies has served as the corporate mascot, endearing customers to her and to the milk she marketed. It is personifications such as adorning animals with fashion accessories, intended to attract customer through product identification, that also make domesticated animals problematic as symbols. Pigs at PigFest were dressed in human clothing and paraded around the Festival site. Such spectacles challenged the image of pigs as farm animals bred for consumption. It was the latter conception of pigs that was the initial impetus for PigFest, but that message got muddled amid all the “‘Pig’Tivities.”

### *Alimentary Alienation*

Food can function both to foster feelings of community and feelings of antagonism. Food taboos serve as a means of differentiating identity; how, when, where, or why something is eaten or not eaten becomes a marker of group membership or exclusion. Much has been written about food avoidance, particularly religiously-motivated, voluntary alimentary restrictions.<sup>83</sup> Since Islamic and Judaic laws governing food preparation and consumption strictly prohibit contact with pork, a pig-themed event would likely offend these groups’ sensibilities, especially one that features a pork cook-off, makes a spectacle of the forbidden animal, and hosts a pig rescue and pig-as-pet

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<sup>83</sup> Among the most influential authors who addressed food prohibitions are Mary Douglas, who interpreted them as encoded symbolic and metaphoric expressions; and Marvin Harris and Frederick Simoon, who interpreted them as ecological and pragmatic strategies. Carol Laderman argued that these two perspectives are not mutually exclusive but are part of the “multivalent nature of cultural patterns.” See Douglas, “Deciphering a meal.”; ---, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*; Marvin Harris, *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches: The Riddles of Culture* (New York: Random House, 1974); ---, *Good to Eat: Riddles of Food and Culture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985); Carol Laderman, “Symbolic and Empirical Reality: A New Approach to the Analysis of Food Avoidances,” *American*

association.<sup>84</sup> Selection of a pig theme suggests an absence of Jews and Muslims in Coppel's past, on the board of Coppel Celebrates and in Coppel's current population. There is not a synagogue or temple in Coppel, but that there are several within the Metroplex, and the presence of kosher foods (albeit a very small selection) at Coppel grocery stores suggests that some of the city's residents follow these dietetic laws.

Attending a pig-themed festival would not be against the religious-based dietary laws but, since the proscription is to avoid contact with swine, such an event may be interpreted as taboo, repulsive, or exclusionary by implication. Although inadvertent, alienating a sector of the population was likely a contributing factor to why PigFest failed to capture the attention of a larger audience in the Metroplex.<sup>85</sup>

## **CONCLUSION: COMMUNITIES OF MEMORY FROM THE INSIDE OUT**

Coppel, in a critical way, is similar to Suffolk, Massachusetts, the town sociologist Robert Bellah and his colleagues studied in their communitarian classic

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*Ethnologist* 8, no. 3 (1981); Frederick J. Simoons, *Eat Not This Flesh: Food Avoidances from Prehistory to the Present* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961).

<sup>84</sup> Proscription against pork also is among the teachings of the Nation of Islam (NOI). For insight into the complexity of NOI's asceticism, in particular the rigidly controlled diet, see Doris Witt, *Black Hunger: Food and the Politics of U.S. Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>85</sup> Public Law 94-521 prohibits the U.S. Census Bureau, and other demographic-collecting projects, from asking questions about religious affiliation on a mandatory basis, making it difficult to accurately assess a city's religious profile. Some information about religious practices is collected on a voluntary basis but it is very general in geographic and sectarian scopes. According to the Statistical Abstract of the United States 2002, in 1995 73% of respondents said they were Protestant or Christian, 2% Jewish, 1% Orthodox, 1% Mormon, 5% "Other specific," and 8% "None" or non-designating. These generalized statistics support the apparent religious breakdown of North Texas; that is, it is predominantly Protestant and Christian, with a small percentage of the population pursuing Judaism and an even smaller percentage pursuing "other" faiths. U.S. Census Bureau, "Table 66. Religious Preference, Church Membership 1980 to 2000" (U.S. Census Bureau web site), available from <http://www.census.gov>, accessed August 23, 2005.

*Habits of the Heart: Individuals and Commitment in American Life*.<sup>86</sup> As in Bellah's Suffolk, many residents of Coppel work outside the city, so their daily "work life" separates them from their place of residence. As is the case with most of the individuals interviewed for Bellah's project, residents of Coppel are not rooted in communal traditions. "The community of civic-minded, interlocking families rooted in two hundred fifty years of tradition – does not really exist. Three-fourths of Suffolk's present population have moved in within the past twenty five years. Most of them are not deeply involved with the town," noted Bellah.<sup>87</sup> He emphasized the importance of traditions for ensuring that communities survive and hopefully thrive. Through the telling and retelling stories of collective history, individuals build "communities of memories," communal identity is maintained and individuals within the community are rewarded with a sense of belonging.

Leicester's public art sculpture in Cincinnati recalls the city's history, from pre-Anglo Native American settlement to twentieth-century industrial prosperity. A shared past that is recalled in the collective and enacted by individuals, as was the production of *Cincinnati Gateway*, connects the past with the future through the present, and, if successful, provides a fundamental link between people and the physical space that constitutes their locality. Such an intangible connection between people and landscape is what endears people to place, thus creating a sense of place.

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<sup>86</sup>Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

In his consideration of collective memory, George Lipsitz noted that what a society chooses to remember about the past influences the present.<sup>88</sup> What is recalled also provides insight into the society's present and the future. Did the Coppell Celebrates Board of Directors envision pigs as part of Coppell's future? In their effort to provide their city with a sense of community and a place brand by looking to the past, they neglected to provide a vision for the future. Memorializing an agrarian past suggests the importance of – at least ideologically – the family farm. The family farm holds a significant place in the American imagination. It is evocative of an idyllic and sometimes nostalgic conception of the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer, a character with little in common with the upper-class families of Coppell.

By highlighting an agrarian past in a suburban present, from the outset PigFest planners had a potentially uncomfortable polarity: amid upscale subdivisions and manicured medians dividing six-lane roadways, they set out to commemorate the past by containing and commodifying it. Although the farm animals of Coppell's past were also contained, their confinement during PigFest was extreme. Petting Farm animals were confined to a pen. The Pony Rides had ponies tethered with chain to a central post so that their and their riders' movement was limited to a small circle. (Figure 6.11) The pigs were paraded on leashes, monitored during sporting events, and like the Petting Farm animals, confined to pens. For a small fee, children could pet and feed the fenced-in farm animals and ride the ponies. Interacting with farm animals would have been natural

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<sup>88</sup> Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*.

components of children being raised on a farm. At PigFest, a narrow representation of Coppel's past and a novelty of the present were caged and commodified.



**FIGURE 6.11. TETHERED PONIES** PigFest, 1999 (Photograph by author)

Despite PigFest's failure to generate long-lasting excitement about Coppel's agricultural past, the theme remains central to members of the Coppel Historical Society and City staff dedicated to generating a sense of place. Rather than focus on a particular farm animal, Historical Society member Jean Murph explained, community-building efforts now aim to evoke a more generalized agricultural past. A weekly Farmers Market, initiated by the Historical Society and administered by the City, is intended to remind residents of the importance of Coppel's agricultural history. (Figure 6.12) The Farmers Market, which began in 2003, is a "conscious effort to show that part of Coppel's history

was land, farming,” Ms. Murph commented.<sup>89</sup> Held on Saturdays, late-spring through late-fall, the Market attracts locals who come to buy produce, fresh eggs, herb plants or organic poultry and cheeses from among ten or so grower/producer vendors.<sup>90</sup> Those who advocated for the Farmers Market had several good reasons to do so. Not only do such markets help people reconnect with their food supply, it can also serve as an “incubator” for ideas and involvement, in this case getting residents to interact, even if briefly and superficially, with other residents, and familiarizing residents with historic Old Coppel.<sup>91</sup>



**FIGURE 6.12. COPPELL FARMERS MARKET, AUGUST 2005** (Photograph by author)

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<sup>89</sup> Jean Murph, personal communication, November 16, 2005.

<sup>90</sup> Repeated visits to the market during the summer and autumn of 2005 suggest that it is frequented by a small but steady stream of locals.

<sup>91</sup> Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*.

In addition to evoking Coppel's agricultural past, the Farmers Market is intended to emphasize the significance of the old downtown, and to generate more interest in and support for its redevelopment. For the time being the Market is held on an empty lot in historic Old Coppel, but as that area's redevelopment, as outlined in the Old Coppel Master Plan, comes to fruition in the coming years, the Farmers Market will be relocated to another site. Promotional text reflects the various goals organizers have for the Market: "[t]he City of Coppel initiated a revitalization Master Plan of Historic Old Town and the Coppel Farmers Market is proud to lead the way in bringing local growers/producers back to Coppel while fostering a sense of place for Old Town."<sup>92</sup>

As Relph noted, however, meaningful places cannot be designed: "places have to be made largely through the involvement and commitment of the people who live and work in them; places have to be made from the inside out."<sup>93</sup> Place-making is affected by architectural design as well as the social relationships and patterns of activity among residents. Coppel is struggling with cultivating a sense of place not because it is a relatively new city, but because the character and design of its public buildings and spaces, roadways, and enclosed subdivisions do not facilitate casual interaction among residents. Planners and residents recognize this and are no longer guided predominantly by the ethos of walled subdivisions. Instead, they recognize, that "[m]asonry walls

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<sup>92</sup> "Coppel Farmers Market" (Local Harvest SM web site), available from <http://www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets/M5795>, accessed January 3, 2006. Among the features of the Market itemized on the City's official website is that it is a "A Place with a Sense of Community." City of Coppel, "Coppel Farmers Market" (City of Coppel web site), available from <http://www.ci.coppel.tx.us/>, accessed January 3, 2006.

around subdivisions often hurt Coppell’s sense of community.”<sup>94</sup> As the Master Plan for historic Old Coppell illustrates, Coppell’s image makers will continue to look toward the past to endow their city with significance, foster a sense of community for residents, and a sense of place among residents of Coppell and the Metroplex.

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<sup>93</sup> Relph, “Modernity and the Reclamation of Place,” 34.

<sup>94</sup> Hellmuth, “The Coppell Comprehensive Plan, City of Coppell, Texas.”

## Chapter Seven

### **Aggrandizement: Differentiation and Similitude of Symbolic Identity**

Gilroy, California, is the self-proclaimed Garlic Capital of the World. As the Gilroy Garlic Festival gained in popularity, Gilroy's identity as *the* garlic capital entered the popular imagination, at least among foodies, food festival fans, and festival organizers. With media assistance, word of Gilroy's place brand spread to wider and more diverse audiences, thus helping to reinforce and perpetuate its claim.

Actually, Gilroy is one of several self-proclaimed Garlic capitals of the world. Making a similar claim is Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania.<sup>1</sup> Though much smaller and younger than Gilroy's Festival, Stroudsburg's annual garlic festival, the Pocono Garlic Festival, commemorates the town's affinity for the stinking rose, in particular, for garlic grown in the Pocono Mountains. Many other towns and cities pay homage to the bulbous herb with an annual festival. From Tonasket, Washington's Okanogan River Garlic Festival to Saugerties, New York's Hudson Valley Garlic Festival, localities throughout the country organize garlic-centered festivities. From Ontario to British Columbia, Canadians similarly orchestrate garlic-themed festivals. The Isle of Wight, United Kingdom, is also home to a multi-decade tradition of celebrating locally-grown garlic with a yearly festival. Arleux, France, perhaps the only town whose claim to garlic

capitaldom predates Gilroy's claim, has been celebrating its relationship with garlic through a festival since 1961.

In this chapter I consider the seemingly ubiquitous phenomenon of places – towns, cities, states – claiming to be the capital of a particular food item as a strategy of place differentiation. The attempt to differentiate a locality with such a title exemplifies what I term *aggrandizement* or *grandstanding*. In this context the two terms are effectively synonymous, with a nuanced distinction of scale between them.

Aggrandizement is applicable only on one scale: it refers to rhetorical, symbolic and physical attempts at differentiation on the communal level. Grandstanding is applicable to such displays on multiple scales; that is, on communal or individual levels.<sup>2</sup> The motivations behind place differentiation most often are economic, directly linked to promotion of place in the interest of local boosterism and increased tourism. Thus, strategic aggrandizement is one component of negotiating identity and a central aspect of place-making. In addition to differentiating place for consumption by tourists and potential future residents or businesses, image makers often mediate a locality's identity as part of their effort to create or improve a sense of community and a sense of place among residents.

This chapter's first section introduces the theoretical underpinnings of aggrandizement. Subsequent sections turn from theory to praxis. Within this chapter I consider multiple localities. What connects these places is that each town's image makers

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<sup>11</sup> Thanks to Jennifer Shropshire for bringing this festival to my attention. Information about the Pocono Garlic Festival is available at [www.poconogarlic.com](http://www.poconogarlic.com).

assert a claim of capitaldom of the same food item that is iconized by another place.<sup>3</sup>

Each of the sites considered in this chapter commemorates through an annual festival the food iconized in the assertion of capitaldom, employing the festival frame to reinforce place differentiation. The focus of this study is on how image makers in these localities have incorporated a food-place connection into contemporary promotional materials, that is, texts of self-inscription. Through consideration of a trio of localities that assert spinach capitaldom, and a plethora of places that promote themselves as peach capitals, I explore the practice and implications of promoting place through aggrandizement. These examples were selected, not because spinach or peaches are particularly resonant for the negotiation of identity, but because they typify the widespread use among image makers to promote a locality on the basis of a place-specific, food-themed capitaldom. The basis of each site's claim of capitaldom rests on historical or contemporary agricultural presence of the food item in the locality. As with the examples of Gilroy's garlic and Coppel's pigs, however, few of these localities deliberately promote the obvious relationship between the iconized food item and the processes through which it goes from field to table.

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<sup>2</sup> This project attends only to grandstanding and aggrandizement as they apply to and are practiced by localities.

<sup>3</sup> My analyses for the sites considered in this chapter are based on traditional and modern ethnography, which includes site visits, interviews and correspondence with people who live and work in these towns, and extensive reading of printed and web-based business and tourism promotional literature. Given the proliferation of web-based place promotion, it is particularly relevant to incorporate that medium into discussions of place marketing. As Florian Urban noted, web sites reveal how a city wants to present itself by "embedding a concept of the city into the public consciousness." Florian Urban, "Small Town, Big Website? Cities and Their Representation on the Internet," *Cities* 19, no. 1 (2002): 51.

## NEGOTIATING PLACE IDENTITY: NEOLOCALISM, EXOTICISM, AND COMMODIFICATION

*Neolocalism* suggests a recent or new emphasis on localism and regionalism, on local and regional production, on local and regional identity.<sup>4</sup> Neolocalism, as discussed by Shortridge and Shortridge, is a response to and a foil for the distancing and depersonalizing effects of globalization: “[Americans] miss having a sense of community and region to provide an anchor of identity. One upshot of this is a renewed commitment to experiencing things close to home.”<sup>5</sup> David Harvey similarly noted that as spatial barriers become less important as a consequence of globalization, “the elaboration of place-bound identities has become more rather than less important . . .”; hence, the celebration of the uniqueness of place.<sup>6</sup> As a deliberate effort to create a new identity by celebrating things “close to home,” neolocalism is articulated in diverse ways, including renewed interest in local history and politics, historical reenactments, patronage of local or regional producers and markets such as farmers’ markets.<sup>7</sup>

Place-based food festivals and the food-place associations they celebrate are also manifestations of neolocalism. Both highlight a food with an historic connection to the

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<sup>4</sup> Barbara G. Shortridge and James R. Shortridge, “Introduction: Food and American Culture,” in *The Taste of American Place: A Reader on Regional and Ethnic Foods*, ed. Barbara G. Shortridge and James R. Shortridge (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Elaborating on ideas introduced in his 1989 book, David Harvey further problematized space and place in Harvey, “From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity,” 4. See also Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*.

<sup>7</sup> Among the many recent publications celebrating farmers’ markets are how-to-guides for starting and selling at such markets, and recipe collections. See, for example, Vance Corum, Marie Rosenzweig, and Eric Gibson, *The New Farmers’ Market: Farm-Fresh Ideas for Producers, Managers & Communities* (Auburn, CA.: New World Publishing, 2001); Deborah Madison, *Local Flavors: Cooking and Eating from America’s Farmers’ Markets* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002).

place, often by re-contextualizing the food item.<sup>8</sup> In addition to bolstering a collective identity, through food symbolization image makers aim to attract visitors lured by the promise of the festival frame and food. Through festival events and publicity they commodify an existing relationship between a food item and the locale's geography, history, and residents. The subsequent consumption of the locale's identity by residents and visitors is the intended consequence of town promoters and event organizers. Just as clothing retailers create differentiated spaces of consumption, image makers seek to create differentiated identities for consumption.<sup>9</sup> The production and consumption of communal identities come together in the symbolic consumption of identity and in the literal consumption of iconic foods. Both modes of consumption are promoted by place branding and articulated through year-round sale of iconic foods at local shops and restaurant, for example, as well as through annual celebrations such as a place-based food festival.

Aggrandizement draws attention to a perceived exoticism, even if what is elevated by iconization to exotic is a quotidian item such as garlic or peaches.<sup>10</sup> A quest for the exotic serves as a means of distinction for the consumer and a means of distinction for

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<sup>8</sup> The symbolization of garlic for Gilroy exemplifies this re-contextualizing process, as does the 1990s symbolization of chile peppers by image makers in Pueblo, Colorado. See Terrence W. Haverluk, "Chile Peppers and Identity Construction in Pueblo, Colorado," *Journal for the Study of Food and Society* 6, no. 1 (2002).

<sup>9</sup> Louise Crewe and Michelle Lowe, "Gap on the Map? Toward a Geography of Consumption and Identity," *Environment and Planning A* 27 (1995).

<sup>10</sup> Food-centered aggrandizement is analogous to the appropriation of exoticism explored by Susan Stewart in her consideration of the tourist impulse of acquisition. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984).

that which is situated as exotic.<sup>11</sup> Differentiation of place works only when social space is compared to other places and offers something different – a food, a landscape, a Popeye statue – that cannot be experienced elsewhere. Within the place-based food festival frame, ordinary foods are exoticized through events such as cooking contests that feature the iconic food, queen and baby pageants whose winners become symbolic food royalty, references to popular culture that already link the food to the world outside, and parade floats that incorporate the food and its popular culture symbols. Through food-centered place branding in general, and aggrandizement in particular, the featured food-place association is exoticized.

The neolocalist impulse is a demonstration of Susan Stewart’s projected return to the consumer’s native culture. Stewart noted, “[o]nce the exotic experience is readily purchasable by a large segment of the tourist population, either increasingly exotic experiences are sought (consider travel posters advertising the last frontier or the last unspoiled island) or, in a type of reverse snobbery, there is a turning toward ‘the classic’ of the consumer’s native culture.”<sup>12</sup> As symbolic landscapes that represent a food-place association, foodscapes muddle this binary by drawing upon both the exotic and the classic: iconizing a food item that is or was grown in the locale exoticizes it while at the same time evoking nostalgia for an agrarian, pastoral past. The suggestion of and potential pleasure from literal consumption of food associated with festive foodscapes

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<sup>11</sup> On distinction as social marker, see Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. On perceiving and representing a thing or a cultural Other as exotic, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). On the production of distinction in the name of heritage tourism, see Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

further complicates the exotic/classic model proposed by Stewart: these foods are simultaneously exotic, because the types and quantities of food offered are extra-normal, and classic, because food offers comfort. I contend that such ambivalence is part of the attraction of place-based food festival, and food events in general. Although ambivalence often is considered confounding, and therefore negative, its liminal nature is part of its attraction: a place or a situation laden with ambiguity can be variously interpreted, offering multiple levels of experience and meaning within a single experiential frame, thus broadening its appeal.

Like other aspects of the tourist experience, events and places are understood by the juxtaposition of contrasts.<sup>13</sup> Holcomb considered place-marketing a modern manifestation of differentiation.<sup>14</sup> She argued that industrial cities turned to this strategy of self-promotion in the mid-1970s. During that time of economic recession and massive de-industrialization, local authorities in cities such as Cleveland and Pittsburgh turned to marketing the cities themselves as products to be consumed, as commodities for the marketplace. By isolating unique parts of the cities, what became known as “tourist bubbles,” while ignoring other less desirable areas and features, image makers sought to differentiate each city in the tourism and commercial marketplaces. Similarly, Hannigan considered the fiscal crisis of the late 1980s and early 1990s caused by further de-industrialization, falling tax base, and declining public expenditure, as a driving force

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<sup>12</sup> Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, 148.

<sup>13</sup> MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*; John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990).

behind the emergence of a new style of local economic development that privileged image promotion over other possible tourism foci.<sup>15</sup> Like other scholars of urban tourism, Hannigan argued that such image-driven place-marketing emerged as part of concentrated attempts at urban regeneration.<sup>16</sup>

The commodification of place, however, is not limited to urban environments. Rural regions such as Appalachia have been and continue to be commodified.<sup>17</sup> Frenkel and Walton noted that numerous towns across the United States, faced with a declining rural-based economy, turned to tourism as an “alternative economy.”<sup>18</sup> In their study of Leavenworth, Washington, these authors considered how the rise of heritage tourism, of which food-place themed aggrandizement is part, amid increased competition to secure tourist dollars is linked with the production of cultural or symbolic capital. The quest for distinction is what draws chambers of commerce throughout the United States to assign labels to their towns in attempts to lure potential businesses, residents, or visitors to their areas. The forces behind, and economic and social consequences resulting from, “selling place” are many.<sup>19</sup> Selling place bundles economic and social opportunity with the commodification of place, commodification that can be literal, as selling Grand Canyon

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<sup>14</sup> Briavel Holcomb, “Revisioning Place: De- and Re-constructing the Image of the Industrial City,” in *Selling Places: The City as Cultural Capital, Past and Present*, ed. Gerry Kearns and Chris Philo (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1993).

<sup>15</sup> Hannigan, “Symposium on Branding, the Entertainment Economy and Urban Place Building: An Introduction.”

<sup>16</sup> Judd and Fainstein, eds., *The Tourist City*.

<sup>17</sup> John B. Stephenson, “Escape to the Periphery: Commodifying Place in Rural Appalachia,” *Appalachian Journal* 11, no. Spring (1984).

<sup>18</sup> Frenkel and Walton, “Bavarian Leavenworth and the Symbolic Economy of a Theme Town.”

<sup>19</sup> Kearns and Philo, eds., *Selling Places: The City as Cultural Capital, Past and Present*; Hal K. Rothman, *Devil's Bargain: Tourism in the 20th Century American West* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press,

package tours or selling ethnic foods in New Glarus, Wisconsin, or figurative, as in selling the ethnic-themed identity of Leavenworth, Washington or selling a food-themed identity symbolized in a food festival.<sup>20</sup>

The theming of a town – whether it is a complete restructuring as in Leavenworth, Washington, or promotion of a food-themed symbolic identity – endows the town with identity capital. That is, what is highlighted as part of the strategy of place branding becomes a symbolic and potentially tangible resource for differentiating the locality. In contrast to what tourism scholars term “theme towns,” none of the localities I consider has undergone much, if any, physical restructuring as a result of its theming as a foodscape, yet the places are ascribed identity based on their iconization of a particular food. Promoting place as a foodscape is one strategy of place aggrandizement.

Pauline Rosenau asserted that America’s competition paradigm is driven by politics, economics, and philosophical individualism. Place branding, as observed across America, is an articulation of Rosenau’s competition paradigm and indeed is informed by politics and economics. Yet, there is something more. What inspires image makers not only to differentiate a social space but to do so by asserting that it is the “biggest” or “weirdest” or “capital” of something? Karal Ann Marling suggested that an American infatuation with colossus is attributable to an “aesthetics of awe” and anxiety about the vastness of the American frontier. Although her focus was on Minnesota roadside

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1998); Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> Barbara Shortridge asserted that food is “a major participatory component of [visitors’] ethnic exploration” of purposefully reinvented heritage destinations like Lindsborg, Kansas, and New Glarus, Wisconsin. Barbara G. Shortridge, “Ethnic Heritage Food in Lindsborg, Kansas, and New Glarus, Wisconsin,” in *Culinary Tourism*, ed. Lucy M. Long (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2004), 268.

statuary, her discussion of how these larger-than-life objects “convey a sense of a town’s unique claims to recognition” is applicable to this discussion on place branding through assertions of capitaldom.<sup>21</sup> By historically situating in the American landscape a desire for place differentiation, Marling added depth and a uniquely American perspective to Rosenau’s competition paradigm. A place-differentiating claim of capitaldom, like a roadside colossus, becomes “a resonant mark of local presence, a magnet drawing travelers off the westward course of history and highway, into the mythical realm of the American Midwest.”<sup>22</sup> Remove the regional specificity of her examples, and the analysis can apply to other attempts at place differentiation that present anomalies.

Claims of uniqueness such as “Garlic Capital of the World” vaunt superiority, just as claims of cultural heritage imply superiority.<sup>23</sup> As a mode of cultural production, heritage “distills the past into icons of identity.”<sup>24</sup> Displays of a select past, whether in a museum, at a festival or as a themed tourism destination, endow that past with value and shape public memory. April Schultz provided an example of how ethnicity and articulations of ethnic heritage are parts of the identity-making process.<sup>25</sup> Steven Hoelscher further demonstrated that cultural heritage can be employed not only for communal affirmation but also for the invention of an “ethnic place.”<sup>26</sup> Commemorating

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<sup>21</sup> Karal Ann Marling, *The Colossus of Roads: Myth and Symbol along the American Highway* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 54.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>23</sup> David Lowenthal, ““Identity, Heritage, and History,”” in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John Gillis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 41. See also Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*.

<sup>25</sup> Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian-American through Celebration*.

<sup>26</sup> Hoelscher, *Heritage on Stage: The Invention of Ethnic Place in America's Little Switzerland*.

an agricultural heritage through a festive foodscape is another example of exploiting a real, fabricated or idealized cultural past.<sup>27</sup>

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett noted that “[t]o compete with each other, destinations must be distinguishable, which is why the tourism industry requires the production of difference.”<sup>28</sup> She observed that heritage “is a way of producing ‘hereness’” by establishing a place as a destination; marking heritage converts a place from somewhere tourists pass through on their way to elsewhere to a place they head toward.<sup>29</sup> Asserting that Alma, Arkansas, for example, is the Spinach Capital of the World assigns a “hereness” to the city; it marks it as an anomalous place, different from other towns along the highway.

#### **DIFFERENTIATION AND SIMILITUDE: CONTESTED CLAIMS OF CAPITALDOM**

Inherent in titular celebrations of place is the contradiction that the same rhetoric used to extol the uniqueness or virtues of one place is used to differentiate other places. Thus, in an attempt to mark distinction, employing rhetoric of differentiation generates a degree of similitude. Alma, Arkansas, Crystal City, Texas, and Lenexa, Kansas, each claims to be the Spinach Capital of the World. Each city has iconized spinach as its identificational symbol. (Figure 7.1)

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<sup>27</sup> This is not to suggest that the binary of real/ideal is the only conception of the past from which image makers draw. There is any number of possibilities along what might be considered a continuum of pasts from real to fictionalized, including the melding of elements from each (real and fabricated) that would result in a new representative reality.

<sup>28</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, 152.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.



**FIGURE 7.1. U.S. SPINACH CAPITALS OF THE WORLD**

Through an annual spinach festival, each town commemorates an agricultural past and perpetuates a generalized food-themed communal identity. As these case studies suggest, an obsolete or somewhat spurious food-place connection can be celebrated through aggrandizement; a claim of capitaldom can be evoked as a strategy for the interconnected interests of community building, place differentiation, and place promotion.

Present in each of the following city stories is the familiar cartoon character Popeye. The spinach-eating sailor first appeared in 1929 as a walk-on character in cartoonist Elzie Segar's "Thimble Theatre" comic strip. By gulping cans of spinach, Popeye transformed from a scrawny man to a pugilist of super-hero strength. The popular cartoon character's obsessive consumption of the iron-rich vegetable affected more than his body: he is credited with a thirty-three percent rise in spinach consumption

throughout the United States in the early 1930s, thereby not only strengthening children but also saving the spinach industry during the Great Depression.<sup>30</sup>

### ***The Great Spinach Rush: Lenexa, Kansas***

Lenexa (population 40,238) is located in Johnson County, at the interchange of highways I-35 and I-435, and only twelve miles southwest of Kansas City, Missouri.<sup>31</sup> Although considered part of the Kansas City metropolitan area, Lenexa community leaders do not define their city as a bedroom community for that larger city. In fact, just the opposite is true: they promote themselves as a business destination rather than a bedroom community. The Chamber of Commerce boasts that even though the average commute time for residents of Johnson County is twenty minutes, “[f]or many Lenexa residents its even less since they work where they live; the population of Lenexa doubles in size each workday with its employment base.”<sup>32</sup> Like Coppell, Lenexa image makers promote the city’s proximity to an extensive network of highways as one of its major attractions. Unlike Coppell, however, their highway-proximity rhetoric positions Lenexa

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<sup>30</sup> The correlation between Popeye’s popularity among children and the rise of spinach consumption seems undisputed, at least among those for whom spinach is central to their lives. Mary Rivera of Crystal City affirmed it and it is mentioned in histories of Popeye. See Bill Blackbeard, “Thimble Theater (U.S.),” in *The World Encyclopedia of Comics*, ed. Maurice Horn (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1976); Inc. King Features Syndicate, “History” (Popeye web site, a King Features Syndicate, Inc. web site), available from [www.popeye.com](http://www.popeye.com), accessed March 16, 2005; ---, “Popeye” (King Features Syndicate, Inc. web site), available from [www.kingfeatures.com](http://www.kingfeatures.com), accessed January 23, 2006; Bud Sagendorf, *Popeye: The First Fifty Years* (New York: Workman Publishing, 1979).

<sup>31</sup> Population numbers provided in this chapter are from Census 2000. U.S. Census Bureau web site, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

<sup>32</sup> Economic Development Council Lenexa Chamber of Commerce, “Quality of Life” (Lenexa Chamber of Commerce web site), available from <http://www.lenexa.org/edc/quality-life.html>, accessed January 6, 2006.

as a great place for businesses because the highways provide ease of access for employees to commute *in* to Lenexa.<sup>33</sup>

Since 1984, Lenexa city leaders have evoked an historical moment in a food-themed celebration in an effort to reinforce a sense of community and sense of place among current residents and for visitors from neighboring cities. Based solely on its importance to the area's 1930s agricultural economy, spinach was chosen as a worthy icon of the area's agrarian heritage. Sponsored by the Lenexa Parks and Recreation Department, the Spinach Festival was intended to bring residents together, much as bringing spinach from area farms to the Frisco Railroad depot in downtown Lenexa brought people together during the first half of the twentieth century.

Lenexa's claim to spinach capitaldom is based on "the great spinach rush" of 1934. That year, a buyer from Chicago's Ernst Applebaum Company named W.A. Loree, whom locals affectionately called Popeye, offered to buy all the spinach that area truck farmers could deliver to the train station.<sup>34</sup> The networks of predominantly Belgian-immigrant farmers and neighbors set to work. The tasks of producing ice for the refrigerated train cars, getting the company-supplied bushel baskets to farmers and getting the field-fresh spinach to the train station meant temporary jobs for many men, not just the farmers. The Johnson County spinach rush came in the midst of the Great

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<sup>33</sup> Economic Development Council Lenexa Chamber of Commerce, "Business Information" (Lenexa Chamber of Commerce web site), available from <http://www.lenexa.org/edc/bus-info.html>, accessed January 6, 2006.

<sup>34</sup> Beryl Legler Hennigh, Lenexa Historical Society Museum Assistant, personal correspondence, March 15, 2005; [n.a.], "[Untitled: about Mr. Loree's spinach-buying trip visit to Lenexa]," *Kansas City Star/Times* 1934; Bill Graham, "Visit from Popeye expected during Lenexa Spinach Festival," *The West and South Johnson County Star*, August 22, 1984; Bill Graham and Elaine Adams, "Popeye a cockeyed hit

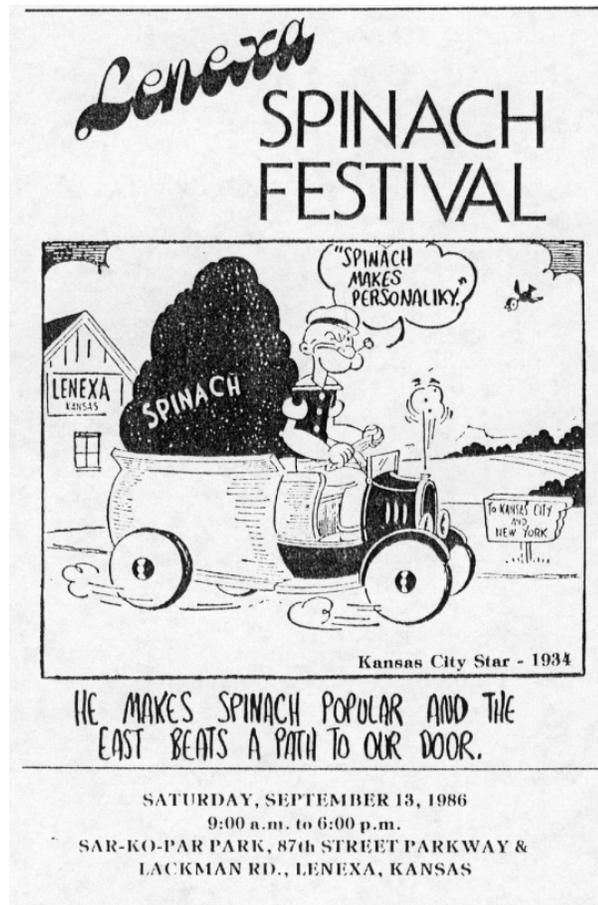
Depression; during these years of economic crisis Lenexa farmers were grateful to help feed a national appetite for spinach. Demand for their green leaf not only put much needed cash in residents' pockets; it boosted their egos. Lenexa was designated as the Spinach Capital of the World.

Included in the inaugural Spinach Festival's program was the signing by then-Mayor Rich Becker of a Proclamation declaring September 8, 1984, Lenexa Spinach Day. The proclamation stated that "descendants and or persons involved in the spinach growing community . . . should be provided gratitude and recognition."<sup>35</sup> This official document, and the public display of its signing, imparted authoritative and ritualized validation of the city's chosen identity, an identity rooted in historical reality glorified in the non-agricultural present. (Figure 7.2)

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in park," *The West and South Johnson County Star*, [late August] 1984; Kelly Lister, "Green, leafy vegetable is festival's main attraction," *The West and South Johnson County Star* 1984.

<sup>35</sup> "Proclamation Lenexa Spinach Day," document dated September 8, 1984, Legler Barn Museum/Lenexa Historical Society, Spinach Festival File; duplicate in author's files.



**FIGURE 7.2. LENEXA SPINACH FESTIVAL, 1986**

The cartoon shown on the Festival flier was reproduced from 1934, the year of the “great spinach rush.” (Lenexa Historical Society Museum)

Initial Festival activities included a spinach recipe contest, a butter churning contest, and a treadle sewing machine contest. Available for sale was “The Official Lenexa Spinach Festival *Spinach Cookbook*,” produced by Lenexa Historical Society volunteers and the *Lenexa News*. By 1985 the butter churning and treadle sewing machine contests had been replaced by a sunflower contest and a bubble gum blowing

competition, events with no discernible connection to the spinach-centered agrarian heritage the Festival was commemorating.

As family farming became more difficult to maintain in the face of increased agribusiness and as the national economy shifted toward service and consumer-driven industries, Lenexa's economy transitioned from agriculture to corporate culture. The family farms were supplanted by housing developments, apartment complexes, and commercial and industrial growth on which the city economy now depends. Lenexa City Planner Brant Gaul explained that "we [present day Lenexa and its economy] have been rapidly moving away from our agricultural past and are now a suburban community of 45,000 people with a like number of jobs in our many business parks."<sup>36</sup> Contemporary Lenexa's largest employers reflect the diversity of American business culture: in addition to the City of Lenexa, major employers include telecom companies, medical labs, a pharmaceutical research firm, and food and beverage products manufacturers.

Over the years, changing Festival activities reflected the town's changing population and economic base, exemplifying the evolution of a living tradition. Historical Society Museum Assistant Beryl Legler Hennigh noted, "[s]ome of the past activities have been dropped due to the health and deaths of many of the early Belgian growers. Their descendants are mostly involved in high tech jobs of today and neither have space [n]or interest in the [spinach] growing industry of the past."<sup>37</sup> By the late-twentieth century emphasis on residents' Belgium heritage and their spinach farming was diluted by increased emphasis on a more generalized, regional past. In addition to recognizing

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<sup>36</sup> Brant Gaul, City of Lenexa Planner, personal communication, February 22, 2005

Lenexa's "rich agricultural and ethnic history," each of which is presented as one-dimensional (i.e., spinach is the only crop and Belgian farmers are the only "ethnic" group referenced),

. . . the Spinach Festival is also an opportunity for the community to "step back in time" and celebrate Kansas City's place in the history books as a "jumping off" point for the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails. From 1820 to 1890, wagon trains were a common sight in our area . . . . To give festival goers an authentic look at the 1800s, over one hundred reenactors, demonstrators, and exhibitors will showcase the customs, clothing, lifestyles, and legends of that era.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the attenuation of the Belgian-agricultural historical moment, Lenexa's spinach historical capitaldom is commemorated through a food-themed articulation of the competition paradigm: volunteers make the world's largest spinach salad.<sup>39</sup> Their assertion that theirs is the world's largest spinach salad provides residents a modern outlet for its communal aggrandizement.

At the Spinach Festival, Lenexa's history is condensed for a suburban present and packaged as entertainment: "The Spinach Festival rolls all of the history surrounding Lenexa into a fun celebration."<sup>40</sup> The casual reference to the city's beginnings "in the middle of several old wagon trails that crisscrossed the area" references its current

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<sup>37</sup> Beryl Legler Hennigh, personal communication, March 15, 2005.

<sup>38</sup> Excerpt from "Lenexa Festivals" brochure, Lenexa Convention & Visitors Bureau, [2005?], author's file.

<sup>39</sup> The keeper of world records, Guinness World Records™, has not recorded Lenexa's claim of spinach salad aggrandizement but the title appears to be uncontested. Guinness World Records notes only two salad records, that of the largest Caesar salad and the longest salad bar. Guinness World Records, "Food and Drink" (Guinness World Records web site, 2005), available from <http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com>, accessed March 15, 2005.

<sup>40</sup> City of Lenexa Department of Parks and Recreation, "Special Events, Spinach Festival" (City of Lenexa web site, 2005), available from <http://www.ci.lenexa.ks.us/parks/spinachfestival.html>, accessed January 4, 2006.

location amid interstate highways.<sup>41</sup> Mention of the immigrant farmers lends cultural texture and the reenactors suggest the authority of history to the generalized past being recalled.

Agriculture has moved into the distant past of Lenexa's collective memory. Nevertheless, Festival organizers resolved that the area's cultural, agricultural, and geographic heritages are worthy of commemoration and that they provide suitable themes around which to reinforce a communal identity.

Spinach is not the only food around which Lenexa residents gather to celebrate, however, further diffusing the significance of spinach as part of residents' collective identity. Appreciating the sense-of-community-generating capacity of festivals, the City Parks and Recreation Department "holds several festivals throughout the year that helps [*sic*] maintain a 'small town community atmosphere.'"<sup>42</sup> A three-fold, color brochure titled "Lenexa's Festivals" distributed by the Lenexa Convention & Visitors Bureau features three food-themed festivals. One of them is the Spinach Festival. In 1982, two years before the Spinach Festival commenced, the City Parks and Recreation Department organized the first Great Lenexa Barbeque Battle. Held at the same city park that now hosts the Spinach Festival, each June more than 150 teams compete for the title of Kansas State Barbeque Champion. In October, residents turn out for the Lenexa Chili Challenge. Since 1987 this festival, sponsored by several local companies as well as the City Parks and Recreation Department, has provided area teams a chance to compete in either the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.(accessed.

<sup>42</sup> Lenexa Historical Society, "Origins of Lenexa" (Lenexa Historical Society web site), available from <http://www.grapevine.net/~lhskc>, accessed January 23, 2006.

Competition or the Home Style Chili category. The top three winners in the Competition category, sanctioned by the Chili Appreciation Society International (CASI), qualify to compete in the annual Terlingua International Chili Championship, the premier chili-making contest in the United States.

Those responsible in the 1980s for facilitating Lenexa's community spirit obviously recognized the appeal of food-themed events. That these three festivals continue indicates the success of food as an organizing theme. The ongoing incorporation of the Spinach Festival into the city's events calendar suggests the value of recognizing, even if only superficially, heritage as identity capital.

#### ***Local Boosterism and a Cartoon Character: Alma, Arkansas***

Alma (population 4,160) is located in northwestern Arkansas, in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains. Alma's one exit from I-40, the east-west highway that dissects Arkansas, is cluttered with gas stations, and fast-casual and fast-food restaurants. Travelers along this highway learn of Alma well before arriving at its exit: to the east and the west are dark green billboards inviting visitors to Alma, the Spinach Capital of the World. In addition to its capitaldom and the area's natural beauty, the Alma Area Chamber of Commerce advertises the city's proximity to major highways and the nearby larger cities of Fort Smith and Fayetteville.

Alma[,] Arkansas, is located in the beautiful foothills of the Ozark Mountains, along the Arkansas river with interstate 40 and 540 crossing the city limits. *Alma is only minutes from Fort Smith and Fayetteville Arkansas . . . Alma also has several medical facilities with three hospitals all within a 20-mile radius. . . .*

Shopping is made easy at Alma offering a variety of stores and *still only minutes from* Historical Downtown Van Buren, Central Mall in Fort Smith and Northwest Arkansas Mall in Fayetteville. . . .

There are several campgrounds and larger lakes *within a 100-mile radius* of Eagle Crest [golf course] along with the Arkansas River, Clear Creek, and Lee Creek *just minutes away*. *The neighboring cities* of Van Buren, Mountainburg and Fort Smith all have wonderful city parks with swimming pools and lots of play areas for kids.<sup>43</sup>

Emphasis on Alma's propinquity to facilities located elsewhere suggests that image makers define the city's identity more by its relation to these larger neighboring cities than by its indigenous features. What makes Alma distinctive are the concerted efforts of local civic leaders to capitalize on their self-designation that Alma is the Spinach Capital of the World.

The remains of a large, long-vacant shed alongside the railroad tracks that run through downtown is a tangible reminder of the days when spinach farming was vital to Alma's economy. The heyday of spinach farming around Alma began in the 1930s and continued into the early 1950s.<sup>44</sup> During that time, some of the local spinach was loaded from the shed into boxcars, iced, and shipped for market distribution. Alma's first canning plant, built in 1936, canned additional spinach raised in the area.

As California agribusiness expanded into the twentieth century, small farms throughout the country that had been supplying the nation with fresh produce were unable to remain profitable. In towns like Lenexa and Alma, farm-centered economies gave way to non-agricultural commerce. Rapid changes in agribusiness and food

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<sup>43</sup> Alma Area Chamber of Commerce, (Alma Area Chamber of Commerce web site), available from [www.almachamber.com](http://www.almachamber.com), accessed April 11, 2005. Emphasis added.

technology during the mid- to late-twentieth century that affected farmers also altered spinach consumption patterns among Americans: food packaging that enabled fresh spinach to remain fresher longer facilitated a transition from fresh bunch to bagged leaf spinach in grocery stores and domestic kitchens across America. Increased availability of fresh spinach reduced demand for canned spinach, consequently reducing the demand for acreage devoted to spinach for production.<sup>45</sup>

Changes in the nation's spinach consumption patterns led to changes in Alma's economy and population. Although there is not spinach farming in the immediate vicinity of Alma, the spinach industry continues to be a vital aspect of the city's economy. Allen Canning Company, which cans spinach and other vegetables, is Alma's largest private employer.<sup>46</sup> The Allen Canning Company markets Popeye Brand Spinach, a brand name that capitalizes on a once-popular but still widely familiar American cartoon character, Popeye. The Alma cannery building, adjacent to the railroad tracks, is decorated with images of the Popeye logo. Indeed, Popeye's likeness appears throughout town. (Figure 7.3)

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<sup>44</sup> Craig Andersen, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, personal communication, April 11, 2005.

<sup>45</sup> Craig Andersen, *Ibid.* Arkansas is *not* listed among the top six "spinach for fresh market" states, but its ongoing inclusion in the "other states" category of "spinach for processing" production indicates that the state continues to be a significant contributor of spinach to the canning sector of production. United States Department of Agriculture – National Agricultural Statistics Service, "Vegetable Annual Summary Tables: 'Spinach for Fresh Market 1992-1994,' 'Spinach for Fresh Market 2001-2003' 'Spinach for Processing 1992-1994,' 'Spinach for Processing 2001-2003' " (U.S. Department of Agriculture web site), available from <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/nassr/>, accessed March 18, 2004.

<sup>46</sup> Allen Canning Company is the city's second largest employer, closely following the school district. The company does not disclose employment figures. The Siloam Springs, Arkansas-based company has three canneries in Arkansas. Although company representatives will not disclose which foods are processed at



**FIGURE 7.3. ALLEN CANNERY, ALMA, ARKANSAS** Clearly visible from the road is an image of Popeye holding a bursting can of spinach. Everyone heading from the interstate highway to downtown passes the cannery. (Photograph by author)

In the mid-1980s, Alma businessmen George Bowles and Wolf Grulkey decided that the town needed a way to “draw attention to itself” to attract tourist dollars; they decided a spinach festival would put the town “on the map.”<sup>47</sup> These two civic-minded men, acting on their own initiative, followed a neolocalist impulse: they declared Alma the Spinach Capital of the World. Their resulting public relations campaign spread the word of Alma’s capitaldom across the nation.

Bowles and Grulkey secured support from the Allen Canning Company, support that included use of the trademarked image of Popeye.<sup>48</sup> Also willing to back their efforts

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which location, Kathy Turner of Allen Canning Company corporate headquarters did confirm that spinach is packed at the Alma plant. Kathy Turner, personal communication, April 8, 2005.

<sup>47</sup> Kay Bowles, personal communication, April 7, 2005; Eldon Mushrush, Director, Alma Area Chamber of Commerce, personal communication, March 8 and April 7, 2005; Russ John, “Alma, Spinach Capital of the World” (Alma Chamber of Commerce web site, October 10, 2001), available from Alma Community Guide, <http://www.almachamber.com/alma.htm>, accessed September 5, 2004.

was the city government, whose presence in the aggrandizement campaign provided authority and, therefore, legitimacy. In 1986 then-Mayor Manford N. Burris officially proclaimed Alma, Arkansas, as the Spinach Capital of the World, further validating – at least in their minds– its status as world capital.

Capitalizing on the lingering presence of Popeye as a popular culture icon, and the importance of Popeye brand vegetables to the city’s economy, Bowles and Grulkey commissioned a statue of Popeye that would stand proudly on Fayetteville Avenue, Alma’s main street. Lacking permission from King Features Syndicate, the resulting papier-mâché statue, made by Arkansas artist Red Moore, is an imitation rather than a reproduction of Popeye. (Figure 7.4) Next to the statue is a mural depicting Popeye and his cartoon friends in a small boat, possibly floating down the nearby Arkansas River.

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<sup>48</sup> Allen Canning Company pays royalties to King Features Syndicate, which owns rights for the cartoon character Popeye, to incorporate a likeness of him into the Popeye Brand Spinach label and advertising.



**FIGURE 7.4. POPEYE STATUE IN ALMA, ARKANSAS** Alma image makers appropriated and iconized Popeye in the service of promoting their assertion of capitaldom. (Photograph by author)

Alma’s annual Spinach Festival was first held in May 1987. Since then it has become the annual performance of the city’s mediated collective identity. The Festival is now organized by the Alma Area Chamber of Commerce and a host of volunteers, and sponsored by multiple local businesses. Among the leading sponsors is the Allen Canning Company, which “loans” the festival their use of the trademarked Popeye image and

donates canned spinach. Festival events include a spinach eating contest, a youth talent show and a “Popeye vs. Brutus” (Popeye’s arch rival in the cartoon strip) contest of strength. Vendors and non-profit organizations set up booths or tables along Fayetteville Avenue; throughout the day, visitors stroll to look at the books being sold by the public library and peruse Popeye-abilia such as small Popeye dolls, extra-large cans of Popeye Brand Spinach and Spinach Festival T-shirts bearing an image of Popeye.

In addition to the one-day festival, the Chamber of Commerce co-sponsors a Sweetpea Pageant for young girls and boys. Named after the cartoon character Swee’Pea, Popeye’s adopted baby, the pageant provides another event through which residents and non-residents participate in and affirm the town’s spinach-themed identity, an identity town leaders have linked to both the cartoon character Popeye and the Popeye brand of canned vegetables.

As visual authentication of their capitaldom, local businesses and individuals raised funds to paint a one-million-gallon-capacity water tower located on a hill at the edge of town, visually transforming it from a standard water tower into a can of spinach. The dark green “can” features a twenty-seven-foot tall picture of a smiling Popeye, the same image that appears on cans of Popeye Brand Spinach. (Figure 7.5) The water tower-*cum*-spinach can, visible from numerous locations throughout town and posted on the Alma site of the state’s tourism web site, serves as an ever-present reminder of the importance of canned spinach and Popeye to the city’s identity as a foodscape.<sup>49</sup> It also

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<sup>49</sup> Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, “City Listings Alma” (Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism web site), available from [http://www.arkansas.com/city-listings/city\\_detail.asp?city=Alma](http://www.arkansas.com/city-listings/city_detail.asp?city=Alma), accessed October 15, 2005.

gives Alma image makers an additional feature about which they can assert differentiation through aggrandizement: theirs is the world's largest spinach can.



**FIGURE 7.5. SPINACH-THEMED WATER TOWER IN ALMA, ARKANSAS**  
(Photography by author)

### *Hub of the Winter Garden: Crystal City, Texas*

Crystal City does not have a water tower masquerading as a can of spinach, but it too claims to be the Spinach Capital of the World. Crystal City (population 7,190), the county seat of Zavala County, is located in the wide open spaces of southwest Texas, a fertile agricultural region known as the Winter Garden.<sup>50</sup> Driving to Crystal City is an exercise in patience: the vastness of the Rio Grande Plains landscape makes it feel like a long way from everywhere.

The Winter Garden's twentieth-century agricultural success is due primarily to an abundance of Mexican and Mexican American workers.<sup>51</sup> Crystal City's reputation as the home of the Chicano political party *La Raza Unida*, founded in 1970, also is a consequence of the sizable Mexican and Mexican American labor population.<sup>52</sup> During

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<sup>50</sup> The appellation Winter Garden was created in 1924. Businessmen from Crystal City and several nearby towns made up the name to differentiate the district from other sections of South Texas. The term applies to an imprecisely defined winter-vegetable producing area within Maverick, Uvalde, Zavala, Dimmit, La Salle, and Frio counties. James Weeks Jr. Tiller, *The Texas Winter Garden: Commercial Cold-Season Vegetable Production* (Austin: University of Texas, Bureau of Business Research, Graduate School of Business, 1971). For a first-hand recollection of the group's formation, see *The Winter Garden Journal*, November, 1932, quoted in "Winter Garden Chamber of Commerce," in *Now and Then in Zavala County: A History of Zavala County, Texas Written by the people of Zavala County* (Crystal City: Zavala County Historical Commission, 1985).

<sup>51</sup> My use "Mexican American" unhyphenated throughout my discussion of Crystal City is consistent with how the term is used by José Angel Gutiérrez, widely considered the leading agent in the political and social empowerment of Crystal City's migrant and immigrant populations. Like him, I reject the pan-ethnic term "Hispanic" to describe the population of South Texas. José Angel Gutiérrez, *The Making of a Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998). Although an agricultural history of the region is not part of this project, discussion of the Spinach Festival cannot occur without mention of how spinach came to be important enough to be iconized. Less visible in pre-1960s historical records of Crystal City are the Mexican and Mexican American residents and migrant workers whose labor created the landscape that the Anglos promoted as the Winter Garden, exemplifying the criticism lodged by Don Mitchell and challenging the scholar who intends to document the formation of the Winter Garden landscape. Mitchell, *The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape*.

<sup>52</sup> For more information on Crystal City Mexican and Mexican American residents' struggle for self-determination and empowerment, see Ignacio Molina García, "Armed with a Ballot: The Rise of La Raza Unida Party in Texas" (master's thesis, University of Arizona, 1990); José Angel Gutiérrez, *La Raza and Revolution: The Empirical Conditions of Revolution in Four South Texas Counties* (San Francisco: R & E

the first six decades of the twentieth century, despite comprising a majority of the area's permanent and migrant populations, Mexican and Mexican American workers held little or no political or economic power. The lack of power among those whose labor produced the Winter Garden's economic prosperity "demonstrates the structural hierarchical relations of the cultural division of labor," whereby the land-owning Anglo elite and businessmen also controlled the city's governmental and social institutions.<sup>53</sup>

Into the late 1960s, the city was physically and racially segregated by railroad tracks, the same railroad that facilitated the Winter Garden's rise as an agricultural center. Despite winning five seats on the city council in 1963, *Los Cinco Candidados* (the five Mexican American candidates who ran for and won the city council seats) were ousted in a 1965 election by the still-powerful Anglos with support from Mexican Americans who aspired to be like the Anglo minority. José Angel Gutiérrez, a founding member of Crystal City's Chicano movement, recalled that

[t]he first Chicano effort of Los Cinco Candidatos had been dismissed by the Anglo media, by the white-controlled Democratic Party, and by local Anglo influentials as an aberration of extreme radical politics fomented by outside radicals . . . . Local Anglos boasted of how harmonious the relations had always been between them and the Mexican people of Cristal [the Chicano name for Crystal City] and South Texas.<sup>54</sup>

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Research Associates, 1972); Armando Navarro, *The Cristal Experiment: A Chicano Struggle for Community Control* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); Junius O'Brennan and Nopal Smith, *The Cristal Icon* (Austin: Galahand Press, 1981); John S. Shockley, *Chicano Revolt in a Texas Town* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1974).

<sup>53</sup> Armando L. Trujillo, *Chicano Empowerment and Bilingual Education: Movimiento Politics in Crystal City, Texas* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 44. See also Douglas E. Foley, Clarice Mota, Donale E. Post, and Ignacio Lozano, *From Peones to Politicos: Class and Ethnicity in a South Texas Town, 1900-1987* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).

<sup>54</sup> Gutiérrez, *The Making of a Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal*, 138. Gutiérrez's autobiographical reflection on the rise and fall of the Chicano movement in Crystal City provides personal insight to the complex and troubled racial history of the area.

The superficial harmony was disrupted again by a second revival of Chicano power in 1969. A three-week-long school walkout protesting unequal education galvanized more than 1,500 students and hundreds of parents, and garnered positive national media attention for Crystal City, especially after officials from the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare visited the city to assess the situation and facilitate resolution. Several Chicanos won over Democratic incumbents in the 1972 city elections, shifting the balance of power in Crystal City and the Winter Garden region. Following the devastating loss in 1978 by a La Raza gubernatorial candidate, however, the party lost state funding and its hard-earned status. The accomplishments of Crystal City's Mexican American residents to socially, politically, and economically empower themselves, related national media attention, and several scholarly works about the city and its Chicano movement made it iconic of the *Movimiento*, the U.S.-wide Chicano movement initiated in the 1960s.<sup>55</sup> The association of Crystal City and the Chicano movement may linger for many, but it is spinach and Popeye that dominates contemporary city promotional materials.

Long before La Raza put Crystal City into national headlines, the city became known as a major shipping point for winter vegetables. Mexican and Mexican American workers tended fields of onions, peppers, tomatoes, and spinach that the Uvalde Railway, beginning in 1908, shipped north. The winter of 1918-1919 saw the first commercial spinach crop in the Crystal City area. By the early 1930s, spinach was the region's major crop. The city's first vegetable cannery, built solely to process spinach, opened in 1932

and elevated the city's importance as a regional commercial center and provider of vegetables to the nation. In May, 1933, an enthusiastic news story noted that the cannery "is now running two shifts with an output of 10,000 cans a day."<sup>56</sup>

Around the same time that residents in Lenexa, Kansas, declared their city the Spinach Capital of the World, Crystal City achieved its capitaldom: in 1936, then-Texas Governor James V. Allred proclaimed Crystal City the Spinach Capital of the World. That same year, the Anglo business leaders and political officials commenced an annual Spinach Festival.<sup>57</sup> (Figure 7.6) The Festival that celebrated spinach's role in making Crystal City a prosperous town, at least for the power and land-holding Anglos, continued until the advent of World War II. The Spinach Festival, like many local festivals across the country, was suspended in 1941.

Demand for fresh and canned vegetables continued, and Winter Garden farmers, and their Mexican and Mexican American workers, continued to grow and ship produce. In 1945, after several years of research about the area's agricultural and transportation potential, California Packing Corporation, now Del Monte Corporation, built a cannery in Crystal City. When the company first established themselves in Crystal City, they raised their own produce on leased farmland northeast of town. There were many changes over the years, including expansion of the Del Monte facilities to include a new-can

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<sup>55</sup> Trujillo, *Chicano Empowerment and Bilingual Education: Movimiento Politics in Crystal City, Texas*.

<sup>56</sup> From *The Winter Garden Journal*, May, 1933, quoted in *Now and Then in Zavala County: A History of Zavala County, Texas Written by the people of Zavala County*, (Crystal City: Zavala County Historical Commission, 1986), 21.

<sup>57</sup> "Highlights of Crystal City's History," in *Now and Then in Zavala County: A History of Zavala County, Texas Written by the people of Zavala County* (Crystal City: Zavala County Historical Commission, 1985), 61; Armando L. Trujillo, "Adelante con Popeye! Spinach Festival as a Symbol of Chicano Sociocultural

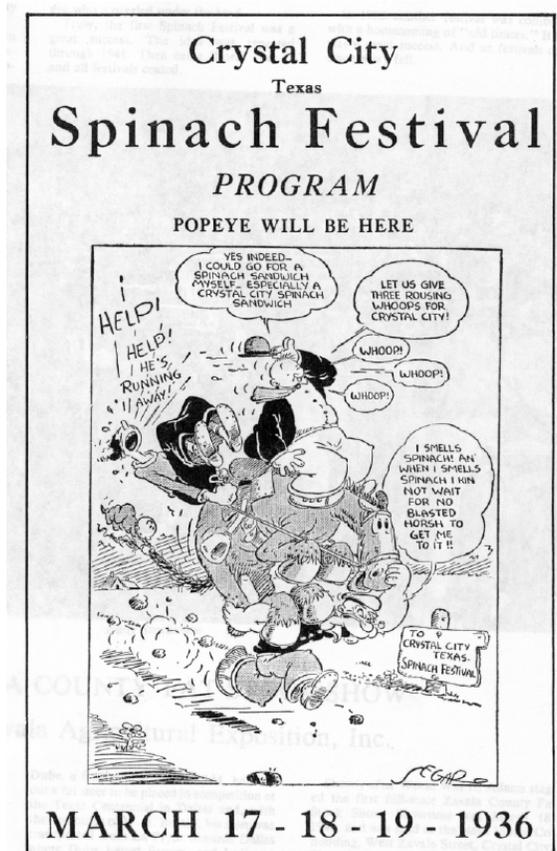
manufacturing plant to supply the vegetable processing plant with containers. By the 1980s, Del Monte no longer owned farms but relied on individual growers for produce.<sup>58</sup> Del Monte operations are as instrumental to Crystal City's economic vitality as Crystal City is to the company. Del Monte is the number one selling brand of canned spinach in the United States; Crystal City's Del Monte USA Plant 250 is one of the city's largest employers and relies on Crystal City as the "sole source of [its] spinach in North America."<sup>59</sup>

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Integration and Accommodation" (paper presented at the American Folklore Society Annual Meeting, Atlanta, Georgia, October 21, 2005).

<sup>58</sup> "Del Monte Corporation," in *Now and Then in Zavala County: A History of Zavala County, Texas Written by the people of Zavala County* (Crystal City: Zavala County Historical Commission, 1985).

<sup>59</sup> Del Monte Corporation, "Del Monte Corporation," *23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Spinach Festival Program Booklet* 2004. Like Allen Canning Company, Del Monte does not make public employment figures. A 1985 publication noted that Del Monte's "employment rolls at the plant now swell to 1,100 persons during the fall and spring months and a staff of approximately 265 regular employees is needed to maintain the warehouse, normal administrative services, plant maintenance, can manufacturing, field operations, etc." "Del Monte Corporation," 32. Mark Costillo of Crystal City Economic Development Commission suggested that there are likely around 400 regular employees, with a much larger number working when produce is in. He noted that Del Monte, city and county government, and the school district are the three largest employers in Crystal City. Mark Costillo, personal communication, October 4, 2005. A Crystal City resident commented that 400 may be the number of employees if counting everyone who works in any capacity all year, but she thought that eighty percent of the community was employed by Del Monte, at least during season. According to Knight Features Syndicate, Allen cannery's Popeye Brand canned spinach is the number two brand, behind Del Monte. King Features Syndicate, Inc. web site, Licensing, "Popeye," <http://www.kingfeatures.com/license>, accessed January 23, 2006.



**FIGURE 7.6. CRYSTAL CITY SPINACH FESTIVAL, 1934** The cartoon capitalized on Popeye’s association with spinach and Crystal City’s association with Popeye. (*Now and Then in Zavala County: A History of Zavala County*, 1985)

After the tremendous political and social upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s, gradually Crystal City’s institutions of power, education system, and residents settled into their revised and contemporary state: Mexican Americans hold numerous elected offices within various city, county, and school district offices, and work alongside their Anglo neighbors for the betterment of the city. In anticipation of Crystal City’s seventy-fifth “birthday,” in 1982 a small group of businessmen and civic leaders, including a former Spinach Queen, formed the Spinach Festival Association and revived the Spinach

Festival.<sup>60</sup> That this group of citizens determined it was better to revive a Festival from the city's past rather than conceive a new one is an example of neolocalism, the modern trend to emphasize, in this case, local production in the interest of place marketing. Previously dominated by Anglo power brokers and image makers, the contemporary Spinach Festival Association is comprised of members of both the Mexican American and the Anglo communities.

The apex of four days of festivities is Saturday, when, in addition to carnival amusements, there is a parade and a spinach recipe contest. All morning male and female contestants, ranging in age from teenagers to senior citizens, deliver, and taste contest entries. Although brought to the Western hemisphere by early Spanish settlers, spinach is not associated with traditional Mexican foodways. The ongoing incorporation of a recipe contest into the Festival schedule, and the involvement of Crystal City residents in the recipe contest, indicate that iconized spinach has been incorporated into locals' foodways, at least to a degree that residents are comfortable submitting spinach-centered culinary creations in a competition.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Crystal City was incorporated by a twenty-four-to-eleven vote. Voting residents of Crystal City elected to incorporate the town on April 12, 1910. That official date is of less importance than the fact that as early as 1907 a town existed, and by 1908, there was a railroad line to the town. "Highlights of Crystal City's History.;" "Winter Garden Chamber of Commerce."

<sup>61</sup> Entrants in the recipe contest represent the diversity of the city's population. Despite significant participation of Mexican Americans in 1999, the foods presented resembled those frequently offered at church suppers or pot luck dinners throughout America – dishes such as mayonnaise-based-onion-soup-mix spinach dip, spinach quiche, and deviled eggs. Much to my surprise, the macaroni-based, creamy, mild-flavored foods entered in and winning the contest did not reflect the traditional foodways of the Mexican American contestants. It is debatable whether or not foods submitted to a cooking contest reflect daily, special occasion, or ideal foodways. A similar debate takes place among scholars considering community cookbooks. See Lynne Ireland, "The Compiled Cookbook as Foodways Autobiography," *Western Folklore* 40 (1981).

Paid advertisements from out-of-town sponsors in Festival programs during its early years suggest that the event was conceived as a way to bring tourists to Crystal City. These sponsors no doubt also hoped to generate business from monied Crystal City residents. Among the early sponsors was the Gunther Hotel in San Antonio, 115 miles north of Crystal City, where the men who became the Winter Garden Chamber of Commerce gathered in 1924. The Festival continues to draw tourists, especially from throughout South Texas.<sup>62</sup>

Perhaps more important than being a venue for curious tourists, however, the Festival serves as a homecoming for former Crystal City residents. Many former residents come “home” for the November Festival rather than in December for Christmas.<sup>63</sup> During my visit to the Festival in 1999, it was apparent that friends and families were reuniting: especially during the parade, as floats processed down the main street, the excitement was palpable with friends calling out to friends, and people greeting each other with the enthusiasm of reuniting after a long absence.

The presence of Popeye, Crystal City’s “patron saint,” around the city affirms spinach’s iconic role in the city’s symbolic identity as a foodscape.<sup>64</sup> His likeness appears

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<sup>62</sup> Mary Rivera commented that the Festival Association received queries come from throughout the nation about their Spinach Festival. Mary Rivera, Crystal City Festival Association, personal communication, April 4, 2005.

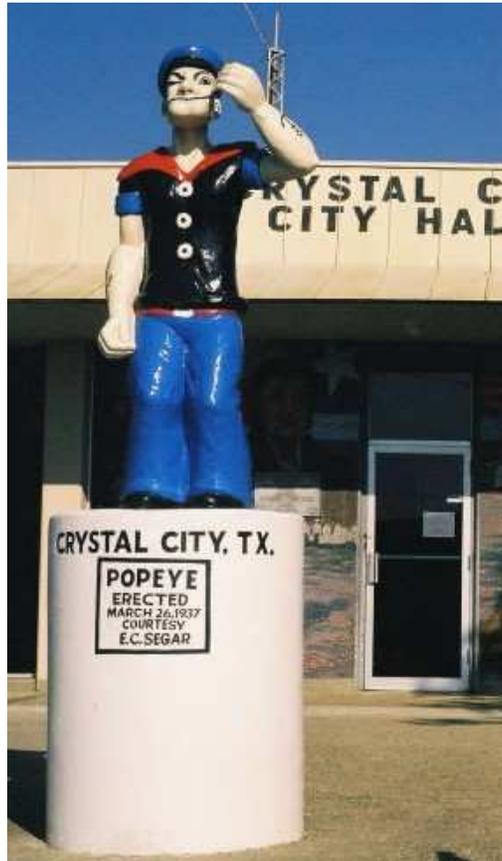
<sup>63</sup> Ibid., Mark Costillo, personal communication, October 4, 2005; Sandra Zavala, personal communication, November 13, 1999.

<sup>64</sup> Referring to Popeye as the “patron saint” of the city indicates the importance of this popular culture character, intimately associated with spinach, to Crystal City’s identity as Spinach Capital of the World. A brief history of the county recorded that “Popeye became the ‘patron saint’ of the city in 1937 when a statue of him was erected in the park across the street from city hall.” “Highlights of Crystal City’s History,” 61. Popeye again is referred to as the patron saint of the city in promotional materials for the 1993 Festival. Trujillo, “Adelante con Popeye! Spinach Festival as a Symbol of Chicano Sociocultural Integration and Accommodation”.

on the Festival Association letterhead and Popeye dolls decorate vehicles during the Festival parade. In 1937 a plaster of Paris statue of Popeye was erected in homage to the impact the fictitious character was having on Crystal City's economy and identity. When asked about the statue's origins, Mary Rivera of the Crystal City Festival Association proudly reiterated what city promotional materials all mention: the Crystal City statue was created with permission from Popeye's creator, cartoonist Elzie Segar, and that their statue looks like the "real" Popeye.<sup>65</sup> Standing proudly outside City Hall, "Saint" Popeye bestows his blessing on the city. (Figure 7.7)

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<sup>65</sup> Mary Rivera, personal communication, April 4, 2005



**FIGURE 7.7. POPEYE STATUE IN CRYSTAL CITY, TEXAS** The plaque on the base is an ever-present reminder that Crystal City's statue was made with permission from Popeye's creator, cartoonist Elze Segar. (Photography by author)

### *The Spinach Spat*

Early in 1987, newspapers throughout the country, from Sarasota, Florida, to Bakersfield, California, published articles about the Popeye statue being erected in the newly declared Spinach Capital of the World, Alma, Arkansas.<sup>66</sup> Although they were

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<sup>66</sup> (AP), "Popeye to overlook town's spinach fest," *Morning Advocate*, March 20, 1987; ---, "Popeye would be proud," *Sarasota Herald Tribune* 1987; ---, "Two towns go pop-eyed over spinach title," *The*

only short articles that regurgitated Associated Press (AP) information, it is significant that multiple newspapers deemed the story worth printing and demonstrates how successful the advocates of Alma's new status as spinach capital were at transforming spinach from a grocery item to identity capital. Kay Bowles, wife of spinach capital campaign co-creator George Bowles, remembered that "people from all over were calling": once the AP picked up the story, she recalled, coverage "snowballed."<sup>67</sup>

Bowles and Grulkey cleverly introduced Alma as Crystal City's rival. Rather than celebrating the city's own merit, they presented it in comparison to another city and, through aggrandizement, as a contender for a title of distinction. It was good marketing. Not only did their publicity campaign spark the interest of the news wire, it caught the attention of folks in Crystal City, inaugurating an ongoing spat about which city could rightfully claim to be the Spinach Capital of the World.

After Dale Barker, publisher of *Zavala County Sentinel* (the newspaper that serves Crystal City), read of Alma's claim of capitaldom in the *Southwest Times Record* early in 1987, he sent the reporter a letter about Crystal City's spinach heritage. In it he mentioned that Crystal City was designated Spinach Capital in the 1930s and that their Segar-sanctioned statue of Popeye was dedicated in 1937. Barker implied that Crystal City is the rightful Capital because of historical precedence. He noted that Crystal City's Popeye statue "has been the subject of countless articles, including a story in National

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*Bakersfield Californian*, March 21, 1987; Rodney Bowers, "Texans also claiming spinach capital crown," *Arkansas Gazette*, March 20, 1987; Linda Seubold, "Alma taking title seriously," *Southwest Times Record* 1987; ---, "Popeye to reside in Alma," *Southwest Times Record*, February 22, 1987.

<sup>67</sup> Kay Bowles, personal communication, May 5, 2005.

Geographic.”<sup>68</sup> Mention of Crystal City’s capitaldom in a prestigious magazine provided the city external validation of its mediated identity. Citing that detail in his letter demonstrates that he, and no doubt others in the city, accepted the validation, and accepted their long-standing status as Spinach Capital of the World as an intrinsic characteristic of the city. Receipt of external validation, whether it be a proclamation from the Mayor or an article in a magazine, is vital to the maintenance of a place brand. Barker also mentioned the Spinach Festival, “a really big 3-day celebration for this little city of 8,000 people,” and suggested that Crystal City’s Del Monte USA plant “might challenge Allen Canning.”

Barker closed his letter with an implied acknowledgement of the marketing potential for both cities: as if to emphasize its importance, he began mid-sentence: “– have tried to get the local Chamber of Commerce interested in ‘challenging’ Alma but no success yet.”<sup>69</sup> The Alma Chamber of Commerce did not reply to the letter, but spinach-identity advocate George Bowles did: he sent a box to Barker containing soil, spinach seeds, a can of Popeye Brand spinach, and bumper stickers proclaiming Alma the Spinach Capital. His actions, and his publicity of them in the local newspaper, indicated his desire to keep alive the spinach spat; no doubt he recognized the value of promoting the rivalry he had created to generate publicity for Alma.

In March that same year, a Texas Area Del Monte USA representative, in a letter to the Alma Chamber of Commerce, invited “your community” to attend Crystal City’s

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<sup>68</sup> Dale Barker to Linda Seubold, Crystal City, Texas, February 27, 1987 (unpublished letter), in scrapbook, compiled by Kay Bowles, private collection.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

Festival in November and, he continued, “we trust you will come to join us and ‘Popeye’ in November.”<sup>70</sup> In his letter he repeated the validating historical precedence of Crystal City’s claim of capitaldom. Critical mention of Alma’s assertions in *Texas Monthly* a few months later again brought the rivalry to the public’s attention.<sup>71</sup> At a Chamber of Commerce meeting in June 1987, Bowles noted that Alma and neighboring towns stood to benefit from the tourism generated by the publicity about the “spinach war.”<sup>72</sup> Indicative of the importance of the spat to Alma community leaders is not only its repeated presence in the press and community discussion, but the presence of a scrapbook compiled by Kay Bowles, comprised mostly of clippings about the affable dispute between Alma and Crystal City.

What is particularly striking about the spinach spat is its deliberateness. It illustrates the intentional creation of a place brand as a marketing strategy, and reinforces the significance of interplace competition in the contemporary tourism landscape. Town leaders in both communities were aware of the potential impact media exposure could bring to their localities. Alma leaders giggle and take pride in the row Bowles and Grulkey began; Crystal City residents who know about the rivalry, and many do not, are quick to defend the historic precedence of their claim and their connection to Popeye’s creator.

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<sup>70</sup> David L. Carter, Production Manager-Texas Area, Del Monte USA, to Regina Friday, Alma Chamber of Commerce, Crystal City, March 19, 1987 (unpublished letter), in scrapbook, compiled by Kay Bowles, private collection.

<sup>71</sup> Dick J. Reavis, “The National Tour of Texas: The Importance of Popeye,” *Texas Monthly*, June, 1987.

<sup>72</sup> Linda Seubold, “Spinach spat not settled,” *Southwest Times Record*, June 6, 1987.

Despite their attempts to differentiate Alma by claiming it as the Spinach Capital of the World, however, Bowles and Grulkey created similitude: although there should only be one capital, now there are two places that actively assert their spinach capitaldom. Although geographically distant, the towns are similar. Both suffer from a widespread problem of rural decline resulting from population shifts, changes in farming and food industries, and changes in local and national economies.

Absent from the spinach spat is Lenexa. Their claim of capitaldom, though as historically rooted as Crystal City's, is not a central aspect of communal identity projected in city promotional materials. Nor, according to life-long resident Beryl Legler Hennigh, is it important to residents' collective identity.<sup>73</sup> Alma and Crystal City, on the other hand, not only embrace their spinach heritage but also continue to present the food-place association as *the* central feature of their place brand. Every letter, brochure, and press release generated by the Alma Area Chamber of Commerce office, for example, includes the phrase Spinach Capital of the World.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, the Crystal City Festival Association stationary letterhead includes an image of their Popeye statue and the moniker Spinach Capital of the World.

One potential problem with successful commodification of place is having something to offer visitors, especially during non-Festival days. Downtown Alma provides minimal opportunities for tourists to spend money: Fayetteville Avenue is lined with one-story storefronts, several of which are empty, though the Kustom Kaps T-shirt shop, city offices, the public library, and the Blood Bought Church do bring residents into

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<sup>73</sup> Beryl Legler Hennigh, personal communication, April 5, 2005.

town. Despite the optimism that Alma's claim of differentiation will bring tourism dollars to town, visitors who come to see Popeye have little more to do than take a picture of the statue and possibly eat lunch at the one of the restaurants adjacent to I-40.<sup>75</sup>

Through their claim of capitaldom, an assertion reinforced through the Spinach Festivals, image makers in these cities offer condensed and sterilized versions of the cities' histories. Although their continued reference to being Spinach Capital of the World evokes the past, Alma and Crystal City community leaders do not glorify it, as does promotional text about Lenexa's Festival. Even though forty-four percent of Crystal City's economy is agribusiness (not all of which is spinach), there is no mention in Festival materials of farms or farm-to-factory labor.<sup>76</sup> Spinach processed at Alma's Allen Cannery comes from farms on the Oklahoma side of the Arkansas River Valley west and north of Alma, giving Festival organizers good reason to omit mention of the agricultural origins of their iconic food.<sup>77</sup>

The participation of Alma's and Crystal City's canneries as major Festival sponsors asserts a connection between spinach and the cities' industrial presents. Through the Festivals, spinach is de-natured: the incorporation of canned spinach into Festival events, like the cooking contest in Crystal City for which entrants are required to use Del Monte canned spinach and the Popeye Brand canned spinach eating contest in Alma, and

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<sup>74</sup> Eldon Mushrush, personal communication, April 7, 2005

<sup>75</sup> Both Eldon Mushrush and Kay Bowles commented separately on the absence of other attractions or money-spending alternatives for visitors.

<sup>76</sup> Mark Castillo, personal communication, October 4, 2005.

<sup>77</sup> Craig Andersen, personal communication, April 11, 2005; Kathy Turner, personal communication, April 18, 2005; Nancy Cole, "Support strong for spinach," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 14, 2005.

the corporate presence as sponsors frame spinach as a commercially produced food rather than a product of the land.

Does the fact that three cities claim to be the Spinach Capital of the World belittle the title? While it may strike the general public as nothing more than a humorous, place-based rhetorical aporia, and although the anticipated conflict was what fed Bowles and Grulkey's campaign, their competing claims in fact illustrate the rhetorical conflict associated with place-aggrandizement in general: as locales seek to differentiate themselves from other locales, they can't help but use the same language of differentiation employed by other locales. Gerry Kearns and Chris Philo noted that the individuality of a place matters less than cultivating an image of a certain sort of place with certain attributes. They suggested that "the practice of selling places may even generate sameness and blandness despite its appearance of bringing geographical differences into the fold of contemporary economic and political discourse."<sup>78</sup> With so many self-proclaimed Capitals of the World – claims of capitaldom include Castroville, California, and artichokes; Ketchikan, Alaska, and king salmon; North Loup, Nebraska, and popcorn; Wenatchee, Washington, and apples – there is a limit to how unique or original such claims can be. Indicative of how popular the strategy of aggrandizement is among image makers seeking to differentiate locales is the presence of multiple web-based resources listing places' "claims to fame."<sup>79</sup> The ubiquity of the practice indicates

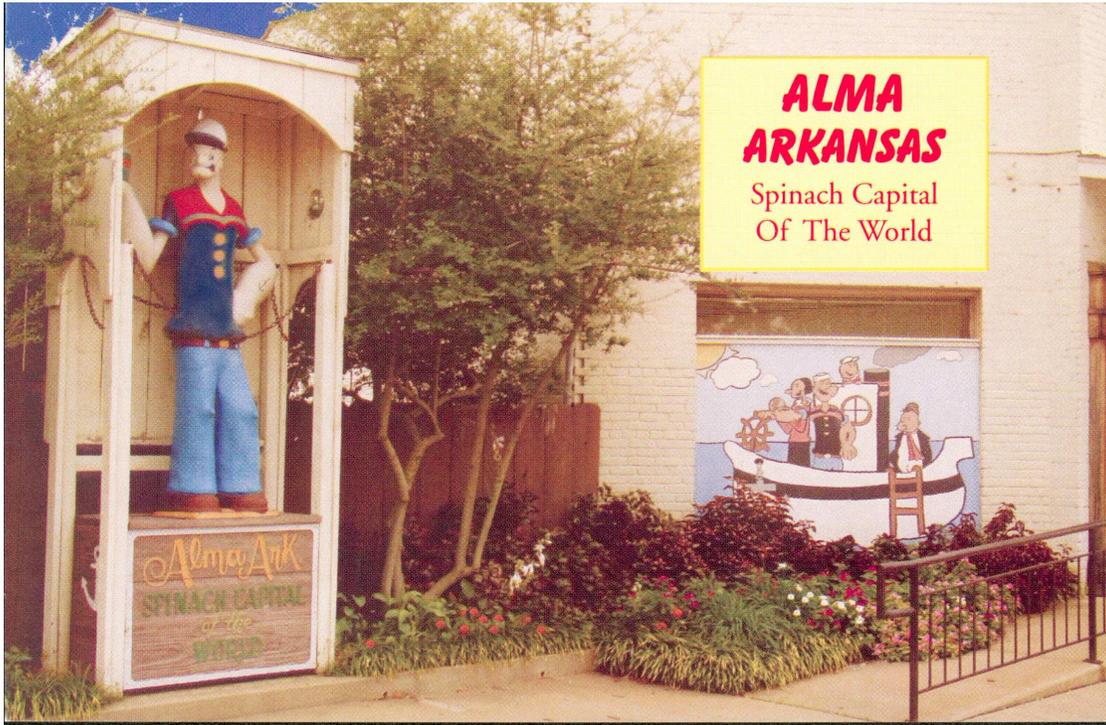
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<sup>78</sup> Gerry Kearns and Chris Philo, "Culture, History, Capital: A Critical Introduction to the Selling of Places," in *Selling Places: The City as Cultural Capital, Past and Present*, ed. Gerry Kearns and Chris Philo (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1993), 21.

<sup>79</sup> The web-based "Fact Index" maintains a list of more than 160 self-proclaimed capitals of the world of something. Their admittedly incomplete list can be viewed at "Self-proclaimed Capitals of the World"

that image makers are drawn to aggrandizement as a strategy for local differentiation.

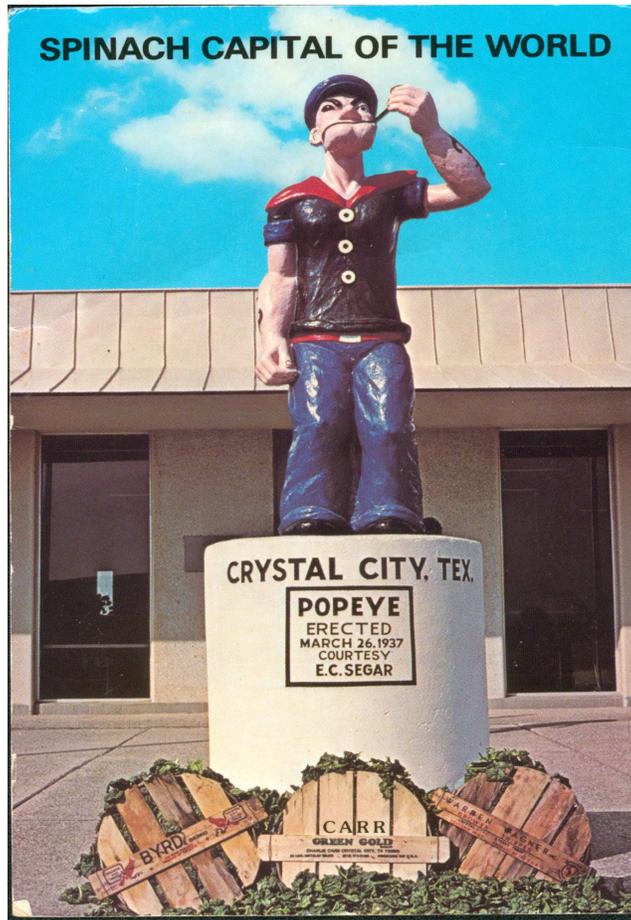
The novelty of branding a foodscape as *the* capital of anything, however, is diluted when such an assertion, meant to distinguish, becomes ubiquitous. (Figures 7.8 and 7.9)



**FIGURE 7.8. ALMA, ARKANSAS POSTCARD** This postcard, available through the Alma Area Chamber of Commerce, declares Alma the Spinach Capital of the World. A postcard available in Crystal City, Texas, similarly asserts Crystal City's spinach capitaldom; see Figure 7.9. (Author's collection)

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(Fact Index web site), available from [http://www.fact-index.com/s/se/self\\_proclaimed\\_capitals\\_of\\_the\\_world.html](http://www.fact-index.com/s/se/self_proclaimed_capitals_of_the_world.html), accessed September 13, 2004. There are so many places promoted through aggrandizement that ePodunk organizes its "Claims to Fame" section by "Boasts by topics." Categories include Agriculture, Clothing, Food (not to be confused with agriculture) and weather. "Claims to Fame" (ePodunk, Inc. web site), available from <http://www.epodunk.com>, accessed September 13, 2004.



**FIGURE 7.9. CRYSTAL CITY, TEXAS POSTCARD**

This postcard, available for purchase in Crystal City, declares Crystal City, Texas, the Spinach Capital of the World. Resting at the base of the statue are overflowing spinach baskets, each of which bears the name of an important mid-twentieth-century farming family, reinforcing the historical precedence of Crystal City's claim of capitaldom. (Author's collection)

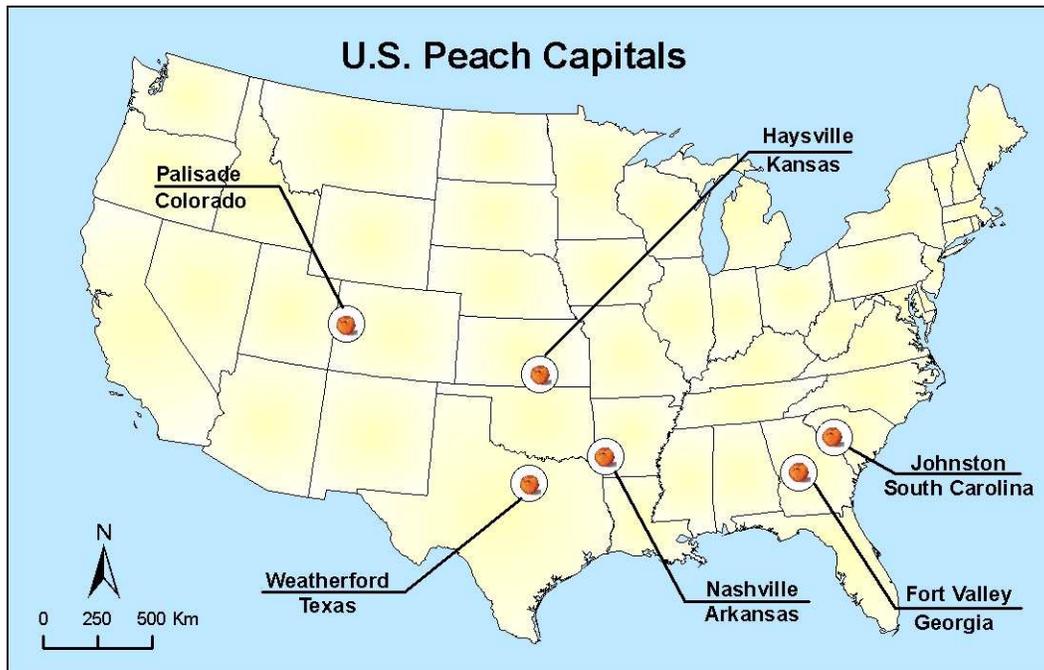
## **A PLETHORA OF PEACH CAPITALS: PLACE DIFFERENTIATION AND TERROIR**

Any agricultural item can be iconized in the service of place branding, and claims of capitaldom can be more local than global in their conception.<sup>80</sup> Many cities and towns claim to be foodscapes by positioning themselves as food-specific capitals of states or regions rather than of the world. In this section, aggrandizement as a strategy of place branding is considered on another scale.

The United States is the largest peach producer in the world. A popular summer fruit, their bright color, sweet flavor, and culinary versatility make them attractive to both cooks and eaters. Their popularity apparently makes them attractive to town leaders and tourism officials as well. Because nearly every region of the country has commercially grown peaches, it seems logical that multiple localities would each claim to be a peach capital. (Figure 7.10)

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<sup>80</sup> As the list on Fact Index illustrates, non-agricultural items can be iconized in the service of place branding. Ibid.



**FIGURE 7.10. U.S. PEACH CAPITALS**

As with other towns whose economy is heavily weighted toward agriculture, Fort Valley, Georgia, and its food-centered identity are by-products of early-twentieth-century railroad network expansion, as well as hospitable geographical and climatic features. Peach production in this area of southwest Georgia was so substantial by the early 1920s that in 1924 state officials carved into existing Macon and Houston counties to create Peach County. Fort Valley (population 8,005), the Peach Capital of Georgia, is the county seat of Peach County.<sup>81</sup> Although farmers in the area also grow pecans and other produce, the focus of Fort Valley's aggrandizement is peaches. This seems inevitable, in

<sup>81</sup> "Fort Valley" (New Georgia Encyclopedia web site), available from <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org>, accessed September 13, 2004 and January 23, 2006. See also Georgia

part because of the county's name, and because more than eighty percent of Georgia's peach crop is grown in Peach County.

The town hosts the Georgia Peach Festival each June when, in addition to other peach-themed events, Festival volunteers cook what they claim to be the World's Largest Peach Cobbler – like Lenexa's spinach salad, yet another opportunity for communal aggrandizement. The Festival and related marketing fortify Fort Valley's assertion as the state capital of the fuzzy stone fruit.

Just outside Grand Junction in Western Colorado, the town of Palisade prides itself on being the Peach Capital of Colorado. Tourists and the town's 2,579 residents can savor a “small-town feel” in Palisade's “cozy downtown.”<sup>82</sup> The combination of a warm climate produced by mountain breezes moving through Debeque Canyon and fertile soil make the area around Palisade a prime peach – as well as cherry and grape – growing region.<sup>83</sup> The selected stars of Palisade's agricultural heritage are peaches. The town's association with the summer fruit is celebrated annually with the Palisade Peach Festival, which features a plethora of peach-themed events. Palisade's claim to capitaldom is historically situated: the first peach trees were planted in the early 1880s, and city historical records indicate that a communal celebration called Peach Days began in the late 1880s. The locality's peach pride is based on the town's agricultural past and present, not uncommon among towns that claim an agriculturally-based food-themed capitaldom.

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Peach Festival web site, <http://www.gapeachfestival.com/>; Peach County, Georgia web site, <http://www.peachcounty.net/common/content.asp>.

<sup>82</sup> Palisade Chamber of Commerce, “[Home page]” (Palisade Chamber of Commerce web site), available from <http://www.palisadecoc.com>, accessed March 7, 2005.

Interestingly, although the Palisade Chamber of Commerce website home page includes a color photograph of peaches, and the Palisade Peach Festival is promoted through the site, Chamber of Commerce promotional literature does not include anything about peaches. This omission suggests that the claim is more to reinforce Palisade as a foodscape among residents than as a hook with which to attract tourism and commerce.

Not to be confused with Peach Orchard, Arkansas (located in northeastern Arkansas, population 195), is Nashville, Arkansas (located in southwestern Arkansas, population 4,878), another self-proclaimed Peach Capital. Earlier in the twentieth century, peaches from the more than 4,000 orchards that surrounded the city were packed into railcars and shipped to consumers all over the country.<sup>84</sup> Peach pride resulted in city leaders declaring Nashville the Peach Capital of the World. Nashville, like other proud farming communities, celebrated itself with an annual peach festival. Arkansas' Peach Festival now is held in Clarksville, far from Nashville, reflecting the latter's changing economic landscape.

Nowhere to be seen on the city of Nashville's official web site is their earlier claim of capitaldom.<sup>85</sup> Peaches are no longer an important element of the area's economy but they are integral to the city's mediated identity. Nashville's city logo includes images of a peach, a dinosaur, the American flag, and the letter N, woven together above the town's moniker "Sharing the Hometown Feeling." The symbols

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.; "About the Fest" (Palisade Peach Festival web site), available from <http://www.palisadepeachfest.com>, accessed March 17, 2005 and January 23, 2006.

<sup>84</sup> Rose Ray, Nashville Chamber of Commerce, personal communication, April 29 and May 3, 2005.

<sup>85</sup> City of Nashville, (City of Nashville web site), available from <http://www.nashvillearkansas.com>, accessed September 16, 2004 and January 23, 2006.

incorporated into the logo form a symbolically-charged *bricolage* that situates Nashville in an historical continuum, from a remote past (dinosaur) to a human past and present (peach), while also evoking nationalism (flag) and nostalgia (“hometown feeling”).

A fourth city that declares peach capitaldom is Haysville, Kansas (population 8,502), the Peach Capital of Kansas. The city’s Peach Capital Soccer Club and toponymic street names (Peach Circle, Peach Avenue) are reminders of the fruit’s centrality, at least at one time, in the locality’s identity. Jan Janzen, who has lived in Haysville most of her life, has fond memories of picking peaches and helping her mother freeze the fresh fruit.<sup>86</sup> She remembered when Haysville was surrounded by orchards and being the Peach Capital was central to the city’s identity. Now, she commented, only those who have lived there for many, many years associate the town with peaches. Haysville’s capitaldom lives on in the memories of its older residents and in place names. The devolution of place and food-themed identity is noteworthy, for the process reflects the impact societal and environmental changes can have on communal identity: in Haysville’s instance, the mediating forces of devolution included suburban sprawl, land development, salt water from oil fields and age of the orchards.

Each year, peach lovers throughout Texas eagerly await Parker County peaches. The state has several peach-growing regions, most notably Parker County in the north just west of Fort Worth, and the Hill Country in Central Texas west of Austin. Named by the State Legislature as the Peach Capital of Texas, Weatherford (population 19,000), the county seat of Parker County, has government authority legitimizing its claim of

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<sup>86</sup> Jan Janzen, personal communication, 12 April 2005.

capitaldom.<sup>87</sup> Since 1983, the town has celebrated the peachy aspect of its communal identity each July at the Parker County Peach Festival. In addition to enjoying treats such as peach ice cream and peach juleps, visitors can stroll among 170 arts and crafts vendors whose booths ring the city's historic town square.<sup>88</sup> (Figure 7.11) There is an historic farmers market on the edge of downtown, a few blocks from the Festival site, where visitors and locals can purchase locally raised peaches and other local produce. Although the Festival does not highlight peaches as an agricultural product, the proximity of the farmers market to the Festival site suggests to visitors the link between peaches and agriculture. At the farmers market during the peach festival, and on non-festival days, visitors are reminded that eating is an agricultural act. Through toponymic names, residents and visitors are reminded year-round of the importance of peaches to the collective identity of Weatherford – the city as a branded food-themed place. (Figure 7.12)

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<sup>87</sup> Weatherford also is known as the Cutting Horse Capital of the World because it is home to hundreds of professional cutting horse trainers, as well as multiple Hall of Fame horses. Although promoters of many localities aim to differentiate towns by drawing attention to the same fruit iconized in association with other localities, Weatherford's claim as the Cutting Horse Capital of the World appears to be uncontested.

<sup>88</sup> There were 170 vendors listed in the Festival Program in 2000, the year I attended the event. The number does not include food vendors. By comparison, the three-day Gilroy Garlic Festival had 71 vendors in 2000, most of whom were selling garlic-infused food items. By 2004, there were 181 arts and crafts vendors at the Gilroy Garlic Festival.



**FIGURE 7.11. HOMEMADE SIGN FOR HOMEMADE PEACH ICE CREAM** Peach ice cream, made with Parker County peaches, available at the Parker County Peach Festival, Weatherford, Texas (Photograph by author)



**FIGURE 7.12. PEACH STREET** Street names that commemorate an iconic food are not unusual in themed cities and towns throughout the country. This Peach Street is in Weatherford, Texas. (Photograph by author)

There is a town in the United States that carries the moniker the Peach Capital of the World – Johnston, South Carolina. Since South Carolina does not have the highest production of market fresh peaches, one wonders why a South Carolina town is entitled to assert that claim. Perhaps it is because South Carolina can claim a longer peach heritage than California, the largest U.S. producer of market fresh peaches. Peaches have been grown in South Carolina since the late seventeenth century, and, according to state historical records, the first commercial peach shipper was trading by 1859.<sup>89</sup> Perhaps it is because South Carolina markets itself, through the state government’s South Carolina Peach Council, as the “Tastier Peach State.” Although the moniker neglects to specify exactly what South Carolina peaches are tastier than, we can assume it is their competition, California and Georgia peaches, the latter of which ranks third in production of fresh market peaches.

Edgefield County, home to the town of Johnston (population 2,336) is the largest producer of peaches in South Carolina. In 2001, South Carolina then-Governor Jim Hodges declared June 24-30 “Peach Week.”<sup>90</sup> Such official validation reinforces the claims of peach capitaldom. Further bolstering their claim of capitaldom is a new museum in Johnston, the Edgefield County Peach Museum, and peach-themed events, including the annual Peach Blossom Beauty Pageant and subsequent Peach Blossom Festival. Although Johnston holds the title of Peach Capital, it shares the peach-theme

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<sup>89</sup> South Carolina Department of Agriculture, “South Carolina Peach Facts” (South Carolina Department of Agriculture web site), available from <http://www.scd.a.state.sc.us>, accessed September 16, 2004.

<sup>90</sup> Press Release Archives 2001 South Carolina Department of Agriculture, “Governor declares SC Peach Week---June 24-30, 2001” (South Carolina Department of Agriculture web site), available from <http://www.scd.a.state.sc.us>, accessed September 16, 2004.

spotlight with other Edgefield County localities: specifically, the annual Peach Festival, which honors the entire region's peach industry, is held in the neighboring town of Trenton.

The image makers who assert peach capitaldom recognize, consciously or not, the potential conflict inherent in such claims of aggrandizement. Rather than make a grandiose claim that may be contested, they content themselves to state or regional claim of aggrandizement.<sup>91</sup> What none of these locales highlights is the actual uniqueness of its peaches. Some promotional texts do mention topographical and climatic features that combine to produce the area's peaches, yet they rarely include specific mention of peaches' distinctive flavor profiles. There are hundreds of different peach cultivars or varieties; each region of the country grows only a fraction of these. While each different cultivar tastes like a peach, each varietal's distinctive character is informed by the physical features of the host landscape, soil, climate and human intervention.

Even though most food marketers in the United States don't identify it as such, the French concept *terroir* has – or could have – a role in all aspects of food-themed place branding.<sup>92</sup> The notion *terroir* unquestioningly is incorporated into conversations about French wines; the deliberate “invention” of grape-place associations is, in part, the result of successful nineteenth-century food-themed place branding campaigns, promoted initially at the regional level and appropriated at the national level.<sup>93</sup> The California wine

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<sup>91</sup> Although, as the spinach spat demonstrates, competing claims do not necessarily result in hostility.

<sup>92</sup> The concept is readily employed in wine scholarship, but food scholarship has been slow to incorporate it.

<sup>93</sup> Guy, *When Champagne Became French: Wine and the Making of a National Identity*; Robert C. Ulin, “Invention and Representation as Cultural Capital,” *American Anthropologist* 97, no. 3 (1995).

industry has embraced the promotional potential of *terroir*: most northern California wineries differentiate between the flavor profile of wines produced in Napa and Sonoma Counties, for example. Some vintners further differentiate a wine's flavor profile by highlighting a locality's microclimate, such as that of the Alexander Valley in northern Sonoma County, and its impact on the grapes. *Terroir* similarly could be incorporated into discourses that aim to differentiate place-specific foods as part of the strategy of locale aggrandizement. Because the concept emphasizes the environmental (climatic) and geographic (topographic) uniqueness of a physical space as the primary forces informing an agricultural product, it necessarily celebrates, or at least designates, place-specific distinction. Use of the term must be more than rhetorical, however, or else its meaning, and therefore the concept's value as a marker of distinction, will become diluted.

## CONCLUSION

Contests like recipe competitions and queen pageants are important components of community festivals. They enable contestants and observers to participate in a temporary suspension of normative behaviors such as eating, dressing and cooking. They permit individual and collective expressions of the competition paradigm.<sup>94</sup> The competitive impulse at the communal level also is articulated through acts of aggrandizement, such as declaring one's locality as a food capital of the world.

As the examples from Alma, Crystal City, and the numerous peach capitals demonstrate, in the process of trying to differentiate a locale, hopeful image makers can

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<sup>94</sup> Rosenau, *The Competition Paradigm: America's Romance with Conflict, Contest, and Commerce*.

wind up reducing distinction because of the implicit comparison to other locales. When similar rhetoric of distinction is used by multiple image brokers, the validity of claims of uniqueness is compromised. In the event of duplicate claims of uniqueness, further sources of differentiation must be sought. I suggest that the incorporation of *terroir* into food-themed place marketing would provide such differentiation because the concept connotes distinction between products, and, more importantly, the basis of product distinction is the uniqueness of place.<sup>95</sup>

The neocalist impulse, articulated in claims of aggrandizement, is part of an ongoing quest for communal identity, especially within locales whose traditional community-generating institutions are eroding as the result of suburbanization or rural decay. Additionally, aggrandizement that highlights a food-place association is a way to connect contemporary life with a real or fictive agricultural past. Iconizing a product of the land implicitly connects the food to the earth and the processes required to transform it from field to table. At the same time, however, a festive foodscape emphasizes the denaturing of food in the contemporary marketplace. Processed spinach is several steps removed from the fields where the leaves are grown, just as Popeye's spinach-induced super-human strength is several steps removed from the reality of human experience.

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<sup>95</sup> Incorporating *terroir* into food-centered place branding is, to date in the United States, an under-utilized strategy of aggrandizement. Within the European Union (EU) there is much more attention to and contestation about food-place associations. For years, local, regional, and national leaders have fought to protect certain agricultural produces as place-specific intellectual property. Geographical Indications (GI) within the EU "are place names (in some countries also words associated with a place) used to identify the origin and quality, reputation or other characteristics of products (for example, 'Champagne', 'Tequila' or 'Roquefort')." A GI requires that a product come from a specified place and have qualities or a reputation resulting from the place of origin. Such protection is applied to wines and spirits and increasingly GI protection is sought – and secured – for food products. GI protection is applicable to non-agricultural products as well. World Trade Organization web site, Trade Related Issues of Intellectual Property Rights

What is the reasoning behind the impulse to declare a place the capital of anything, and the impact of there being multiple localities that make similar, if not competing claims? I contend that food-themed capitaldom claims are part of image makers' desire to have localities recognized as distinctive, despite the reality that what they market as distinctive is, in fact, something they share in common with other localities.

No doubt image makers are seduced by Gilroy's successful example of food-place branding. The Capital of the World phenomenon is not limited to food, yet food is a common theme for aggrandizement. This is because not only do people need to eat, but also because people want to eat, and the festive foodscape frame affords license for everyone to play with their food.

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(TRIPS), "Geographical Indications," [http://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/trips\\_e/gi\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/gi_e.htm), accessed May 12, 2005.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Conclusion**

Entertainment, arts, and culture form what John Hannigan called the “new economic grail” for cities hoping to secure a competitive edge in the commodity-driven modern world.<sup>1</sup> Food should be included on that list as well. It is a potentially lucrative and tenacious subject matter for theming a locality, asserting differentiation through aggrandizement, securing a place brand, and concurrently generating a sense of place and senses of community. Calendars across the country illustrate the ubiquity of food as a theme for communal celebrations, from place-based food festivals to “Taste of . . .” festivals to ethnicity or culturally specific food festivals, all indicating that image makers and event planners recognize the popular appeal of festivalizing food.

In this dissertation I explored the multidimensionality of iconizing food as a strategy of place branding and community building, and how symbolic meaning associated with or attributed to food informs their use as iconic of collective identity. When the association between a place and a food item is abstracted, highlighted, and promoted, the communal landscape becomes foodscape. When a locality is known primarily for a festive performance of its food-centered identity, the locality becomes a festive foodscape. The previous chapters considered how image makers in several small cities tried to develop a sense of community and a sense of place by differentiating their

localities as festive foodscapes. Being a festive foodscape does not necessitate a literal transformation of landscape; it is the morphing of ideas about place and food, about how that place is presented and recalled in association with a particular food.

### **FOOD AS SYMBOL AND THEME**

Food as a marker of identity and medium for communication is a particularly appetizing subject. Food is encoded with symbolic significance through family, religion, history, and festivity. Like all symbols, symbolized foods transcend the immediate situation in which they are used. Through fetishization, iconization, and festivalization, often a food item becomes denatured; it no longer is associated with the land and agricultural processes that transform it from crop to comestible. History, including in part agricultural heritage, is present by implication, as is presence of those who work the land where the food is grown. As Don Mitchell noted, the “beautiful and the damned” co-exist, though most often the former is given priority over the latter.<sup>2</sup> In the case of a foodscape, the food and its festivalization is the beautiful, and the implicated processes of production are the damned.

Consideration of the inherently dynamic symbolization of food illustrates the mutually symbiotic relationship between globalization and local identity. Some food-focused studies explore how the dueling forces of homogenization and heterogenization have been transformative rather than eradicating, looking at food as an example of a

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<sup>1</sup> Hannigan, “Symposium on Branding, the Entertainment Economy and Urban Place Building: An Introduction,” 352.

creolized expression of national identity.<sup>3</sup> Still others consider how the global economy and its attendant consumerism have created venues in which food is a vehicle for appropriation and resistance.<sup>4</sup> My work on food-themed place branding and aggrandizement contributes to the growing literature on food symbolization and identity.

Since food is a semantic vessel, its use as a symbol or icon of identity is never one-dimensional. Particular foods connote the angst of exile or the comforts of home.<sup>5</sup> In addition to bearing emotional, cultural, religious, or economic associations, food items and their strategic symbolization can evoke and even valorize history. Jacksonville, Texas, for example, holds an annual festival celebrating its former status as the “Tomato Capital of the World.” By commemorating its former capitaldom, festival organizers evoke nostalgia for the area’s agricultural past, while also celebrating the vitality of farming to the city’s current economy. Jacksonville perpetuates what Bellah, et al. call a “community of memory”: through the Tomato Festival the Chamber of Commerce and residents retell their history as a way to make meaningful, affirm, and perpetuate residents’ collective identity among themselves and to outsiders.<sup>6</sup> (Figure 8.1)

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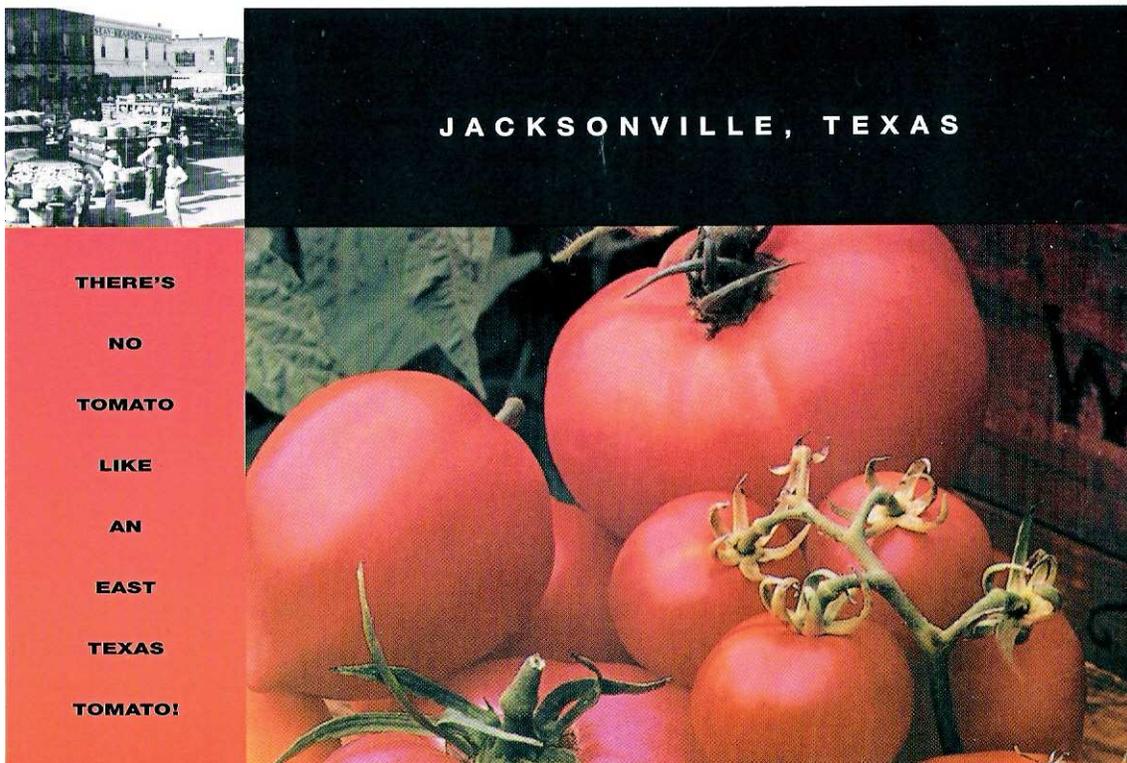
<sup>2</sup> Mitchell considered “the connection between the material production of landscape [the damned] and the production of landscape representations [the beauty]” in the making of the California landscape. Mitchell, *The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape*, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Wilk, “Food and Nationalism: The Origins of ‘Belizean Food’.”

<sup>4</sup> Ferrero, “*Comida Sin Par*. Consumption of Mexican Food in Los Angeles: ‘Foodscapes’ in a Transnational Consumer Society.”

<sup>5</sup> Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory*.

<sup>6</sup> Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*.



**FIGURE 8.1. JACKSONVILLE, TEXAS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE POSTCARD** The text on the back of the postcards reads “Jacksonville was once known as the Tomato Capital of the World and celebrates Tomato Fest each year on the second Saturday in June. (Author’s collection)

The theming of towns and cities is a coping strategy, that is, a locally practiced strategy employed to make sense of and cope with the economic and social pressures of our modern age.<sup>7</sup> Among those pressures are the real or perceived needs to generate a sense of place and a sense of community among residents, and to differentiate the locality from other places to secure tourism and commerce. The theming of place is one strategy through which image makers engage in what David Harvey called interplace competition. Locale aggrandizement, asserted through claims of capitaldom and performed through

festivals, is an attempt to secure place differentiation through place branding.

Aggrandizement is a complex neolocalist impulse comprising issues of authenticity, nostalgia, and a quest for personal and communal grounding – for rootedness, albeit ephemeral, in an uprooted world. Terrence Haverluk asserted that neolocalism and heritage tourism “counter the homogenizing effects of globalization and the creation of faux landscapes.”<sup>8</sup> But, commemoration based on neolocalism and heritage can produce landscapes or symbolic identities that are similar, as is the case with Alma’s and Crystal City’s contested claims of capitaldom and the prominence of Popeye in each city’s promotional written and visual texts.

The people who image a place, and the self-inscribed texts created to promote place identity, must be integral to any study of that place. Furthermore, the specificity of any locale is constituted of natural, historical, and social influences, all of which must be taken into consideration as components of place making. Equally important is consideration of the reception among “outsiders” to the locality as a festive foodscape, for it is the acceptance and support of non-residents as well as residents that make the foodscape place brand a success. My work illustrates such a multi-layered and multi-disciplinary approach to appreciating how and why image makers chose a particular food, and how the place-based food festival celebrating that food becomes an integral part of each city’s identity as a foodscape.

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<sup>7</sup> Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson, Unnur Dís Skaptadóttir, and Karl Benediktsson, “Coping with Social Capital? The Cultural Economy of Tourism in the North,” *Sociologia Ruralis* 43, no. 1 (2003).

<sup>8</sup> Haverluk, “Chile Peppers and Identity Construction in Pueblo, Colorado,” 45-46.

Through food-themed place branding, image makers provide residents and visitors links to the physical landscape, albeit rather obtuse or abstracted links. If successful, the iconic food, now symbolizing the locality, provides connections to the place that can be absorbed, such as an intangible but palpable sense of place and sense of community, or literally carried away, like garlic ice cream purchased during the Gilroy Garlic Festival or at the Garlic Shoppe during non-Festival days. If buying a souvenir condenses a tourism experience, consumption of an iconized food is ingestion of the symbolic identity of a foodscape.

Eric Hobsbawm noted that, once created, an invented tradition can take on a life of its own, despite an absence of an authentic antiquity.<sup>9</sup> This can be the case but, for a tradition to continue, it must resonate with some level of meaning in order for it to remain vital to the practicing group. The polysemic festival frame affords ample opportunities to deliver multiple messages, thus a festival can affect many people differently. The ambiguity inherent in the performative genre of festival is part of its appeal, and part of its danger. As Barbara Myerhoff suggested, secular rituals are “dramas of persuasion;” the success of what is intended to be a community affirming event, like any drama, must resonate among community members in order to be convincing.<sup>10</sup> The immediate and continued success of the Gilroy Garlic Festival, and the repeated involvement of locals as volunteers, indicate that organizers successfully “persuaded” community members to believe in – and invest in – their drama. Pigfest, however persuasive organizers tried to

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<sup>9</sup> Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions.”

<sup>10</sup> Myerhoff, “We Don’t Wrap Herring in a Printed Page: Fusion, Fiction and Continuity in Secular Ritual,” 222.

make it, failed to win over citizens of Coppell: the multiple contradictory messages enacted during the event, and an organizational format that did not facilitate enough volunteer involvement for residents to become invested, were unable to convince residents that the theme or the event was apposite for their city.

In their efforts to impose legitimacy on PigFest, organizers dubbed the inaugural Festival the first “annual.” Incorporating “annual” into an event’s name evokes the legitimacy and authority of history: the word suggests continuity of an implied link to the past and the future. PigFest exemplifies what Barbara Myerhoff called “nonce rituals,” awkward and self-conscious secular events “laboring under their obvious contrivance, and the often touchingly transparent hopes and intentions of the participants.”<sup>11</sup> These events lack the consensual, “self-evident” basic symbols that convey “the rightness which endows authenticity and conviction to any circumstance where they occur.”<sup>12</sup>

### **FOOD SYMBOLIZATION: COMMEMORATION THROUGH RE-CONTEXTUALIZATION**

John Gillis argued that national memory is constructed as much by forgetting as by remembering.<sup>13</sup> Through place branding, food commemorates the landscape by an implied reference to food as an agricultural product. Because place-based food festivals are a modern articulation of traditional agricultural fairs and harvest festivals, their discourse implicates a degree of nostalgia for an agrarian past or present. Inherent in commemorations of landscape are a lingering infatuation with a rural ideal, nostalgia for

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 201. I understand Myerhoff’s term “nonce rituals” to be a modification of “nonce word,” which refers to a word invented or used for a specific occasion. As applied to secular ritual, nonce would similarly imply that the event was invented for a particular occasion or commemoration.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

a falsely remembered simpler past, and nostalgia for the present.<sup>14</sup> The increased use of four-wheel-drive vehicles for urban transportation is testimony to the continued power of a rural ideal.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, people retreating to rural homes, be they condominiums along the shore or log cabins in the mountains, suggests a continued desire to escape temporarily the trappings of urban life, a sentiment anticipated in the nineteenth century by Frederick Law Olmsted, Calvert Vaux, and the urban officials who hired them to create parks as pastoral oases in emerging American cities. The actions of iconizing and festivalizing an agricultural product are strategies of differentiation enacted in the present that are gestures toward the past in hopes of contributing to the future.

Food festivals can transcend social, religious, and cultural differences that might otherwise be divisive within a locality.<sup>16</sup> George Lewis asserted that because festival organizers in Stockton, California, chose asparagus, what he suggested is an “ethnically and culturally neutral food symbol,” as their place icon, “all community subgroups could feel equally included, likely a significant point in the success of this festival.”<sup>17</sup> Gilroy

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<sup>13</sup> Gillis, *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*.

<sup>14</sup> Jameson conceived of nostalgia for the present as the practice of bracketing and historicizing the present as if it has already slipped away. This sentiment may be particularly resonant with urbanites who venture into the suburbs or a rural locale to commemorate the food-land connection. Frederic Jameson, “Nostalgia for the Present,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (1989); ---, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> Nigel Thrift, “Images of Social Change,” in *The Changing Social Structure*, ed. Chris Hamnett, *et al.* (London: Sage Publications, 1989). Similarly, evocative names of SUVs, such as Explorer, Expedition, Trail Blazer, and Yukon, indicate a lingering infatuation with a mythologized spirit of frontier exploration and the open spaces of the American West.

<sup>16</sup> Adams, “Creating Community in a Midwestern Village: Fifty Years of the Cobden Peach Festival.”; Lewis, “Celebrating Asparagus: Community and the Rationally Constructed Food Festival.”

<sup>17</sup> Lewis, “Celebrating Asparagus: Community and the Rationally Constructed Food Festival,” 75. Lewis noted that although asparagus “has never been exclusively claimed by any one ethnic group,” in contemporary America it has “often been associated with the upper class” (76). I contend this association is more than noteworthy and warrants further consideration: since food readily is used as cultural capital, consideration of the upper class association may inform festival organizers’ and/or potential attendees’

and Coppel image makers each chose a food that was not symbolically or culturally neutral as the theme around which to organize a community generating festival. As I argued, iconizing pigs in Coppel implicated several potentially limiting and conflicting messages, all of which contributed to the collective rejection of the porcine-themed event.

Gilroy organizers also were vulnerable to collective rejection of the proposed festivalization of their foodscape identity by choosing to celebrate symbolically charged garlic. Negative associations included lingering dietary reform ideology and anti-immigrant prejudices, and what many perceived as garlic's off-putting smell. But timing, marketing, and re-contextualization tilted a liminal situation in favor of organizers. The garlic-Gilroy connection promoted initially by garlic growers, and subsequently by the Festival Association, abstracted garlic from its agricultural and cultural contexts, thereby avoiding the hot issues of labor and ethnic associations. Although the foods prepared at Gourmet Alley are Americanized versions of Italian foodways, garlic is presented in an atmosphere devoid of any ethnic markers. The focus of Gilroy's identity as a foodscape is based on garlic as a festivalized, consumable commodity.

Image makers in the cities that assert spinach capitaldom, in comparison, did not have cultural or olfactory associations to overcome in their iconization of the green leaf. Yet, like their counterparts in cities across the country who celebrate an agricultural product, Alma and Crystal City civic leaders isolated and de-peopled a historical moment

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expectations. Although they did not frame their festival this way, Stockton image makers could have promoted the asparagus festival, and through it Stockton's sense of place, as a "positional good." See James S. Duncan and Nancy G. Duncan, "Sense of Place as a Positional Good: Locating Bedford in Space and Time," in *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geography*, ed. Paul Adams, *et al.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

by re-contextualizing their iconic food. These two cities are promoted as foodscapes, but sharing the spotlight with spinach is the deified popular culture icon, Popeye.

### **TERROIR: FOOD, PLACE, DIFFERENTIATION**

The creation of meaningful place is a process. Consensual participation facilitates a sense of place as home or as a valued public space.<sup>18</sup> Once established, personal and communal connections to place seem natural, even innate. If well marketed and presented, a food-place association can seem organic as well, a natural relationship between the place and the food. Place marketers promoting a food-place association based on an agricultural connection (as compared to, for example, a resident ethnic group) would do well to incorporate the ideology of *terroir* into their texts. An appreciation of *terroir* gives expression to the food voice that constitutes foodscape.

If the relationship between a food and a place seems natural, it is because it is presented that way. *Vignerons* (grape growers) and *négociants* (merchant-manufacturers) in France presented local interests in the service of national identity, resulting in a global association of the champagne with France.<sup>19</sup> By the early nineteenth century, the association was established in the popular imagination: writers and scientists were promoting champagne as emblematic of “a unique French personality.”<sup>20</sup> The ideology of *terroir* has been embraced by grape growers and wine producers throughout the world. If

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<sup>18</sup> Examples abound of how spaces become meaningful places. For an historical example of how immigrants develop an attachment to place, see Robin W. Doughty, *At Home in Texas: Early Views of the Land* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 1987). For examples of various spaces becoming valued public places, see Doss, *Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs: Public Art and Cultural Democracy in American Communities*; Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscape as Public History*.

<sup>19</sup> Guy, *When Champagne Became French: Wine and the Making of a National Identity*.

*terroir* can facilitate place and product differentiation in the service of nation building through wine, why not also employ it for differentiation among, or even promoting, localities and place-specific products of the land? The end result of incorporating *terroir* in discussions of place-specific agricultural items is that the product, be it wine or cheese or peaches, becomes understood as a product of place, unique to its specific geographic place of origin, uniqueness attributable to the combined forces of nature, culture, and history.

### **FOODSCAPES AND CONTEMPORARY FOOD DISCOURSE**

Food-themed aggrandizement and place-based food festivals are articulations of contemporary food discourses that inform individual and collective identities. Sharon Zukin suggested that a new approach to food is correlated to the gentrification of cities.<sup>21</sup> I contend that the widespread popularity in the last quarter of the twentieth century among organizers of and attendees to food-themed festivals is part of this new approach to food. In her exploration of the power relationships associated with gentrification and how they inform an emergent new cuisine, she argued that “[b]oth gentrification and new cuisine represent a new organization of consumption that developed during the 1970s. Both imply a new landscape of economic power based, in turn, on changing patterns of capital investment, production, and consumption.”<sup>22</sup> A new cuisine is part of a larger societal shift in food systems, in social landscape, and in contemporary social discourses

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World*.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

of food. Among the changes in social landscape, and part of this new cuisine, is the increased popularity of food as organizing theme for festivity. The resulting festive foodscapes have become familiar features on civic and social calendars across the country and indicate acceptance within the popular imagination of food-place associations.

The ubiquity of food festivals reflects changes in the food system and, I contend, is part of contemporary food discourse. Fetishizing food – re-contextualizing it so that references to it are devoid of any past – mirrors how most commodities are presented in contemporary consumer culture. No marker of identity is neutral, and a foodscape is no exception: it is inscribed with social and symbolic subtexts. To control how subtexts are read, most often the foods presented at place-based food festivals are de-natured, just as many food items are by the time they get to the grocery store, and dissociated from cultural associations.

I opened posing this question: “Why do some community leaders select a food item around which to build and maintain a collective identity?” Everyone eats, but it is more than that. Throughout the preceding pages I have demonstrated that the transactional character of food – its multivalence and malleability as a symbol – makes it an attractive focus for image makers charged with community building and place differentiation. People with discretionary income are willing to play, literally and figuratively, with their food, adding to its appeal as a commodity for symbolization, fetishization, and festivalization. Consumption of place and consumption of identity are made palatable in a festive foodscape.

## Appendix A

### Coppell, Texas, and Area Data

**TABLE A.1. NORTH TEXAS SUBURBAN AND URBAN CITIES' POPULATION GROWTH, 1990-2000**

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<u>City</u>	<u>Percentage change</u>
Carrollton	+42.4
<b>Coppell</b>	<b>+109.8</b>
Grapevine	+42.4
Irving	+23.5
Lewisville	+67.6
Dallas (city)	+18.1
Ft. Worth (city)	+19.3
Texas (state)	+22.8

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Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, State and County QuickFacts, ““Carrollton (city), Texas,’ ‘Coppell (city), Texas,’ ‘Grapevine (city), Texas,’ ‘Irving (city), Texas,’ ‘Lewisville (city), Texas,’ ‘Dallas (city), Texas,’ ‘Ft. Worth (city), Texas’” (U.S. Census Bureau web site), available from <http://quickfacts.census.gov>, accessed August 16, 2005.

**TABLE A.2. COPPELL, TEXAS, 2000 RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS**

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<u>Race</u>	<u>Number of people</u>	<u>Percentage of population</u>
One Race	35,251	98.0
<i>White</i>	29,929	83.2
<i>Black or African American</i>	1,174	3.3
<i>American Indian, Alaska Native</i>	122	0.3
<i>Asian and other Pacific Islander</i>	3,343	9.3
<i>Some other race</i>	675	1.9
Two or more races	707	2.0
Total 2000 population	35,958	100

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Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, "Fact Sheet Coppell city, Texas" (2000), available from <http://factfinder.census.gov>, accessed August 16, 2005.

**TABLE A.3. NORTH TEXAS SUBURBAN AND URBAN CITIES' MEDIAN INCOME (1999) AND OWNER-OCCUPIED HOME VALUES (2000)**

<u>City</u>	<u>Median household income, 1999 (U.S. dollars)</u>	<u>Median value owner-occupied single-family homes, 2000 (U.S. dollars)</u>
Carrollton	62,406	125,900
<b>Coppell</b>	<b>96,935</b>	<b>210,700</b>
Grapevine	71,680	157,100
Irving	44,956	94,200
Lewisville	54,771	116,700
Dallas (city)	37,628	89,800
Ft. Worth (city)	37,074	71,100
Texas (state)	39,927	82,500

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, "Fact Sheet Coppell city, Texas" (2000), available from <http://factfinder.census.gov>, accessed August 16, 2005.

Note: Coppell is not without poverty. According to the 2000 census, 680 individuals were below the poverty level. That is 1.9% of the city's population. By comparison, 15.4% of Texas's population is below poverty level, only slightly higher than the national average of 12.4%. U.S. Census Bureau, "Coppell (city), Texas" (U.S. Census Bureau web site, 2000), available from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48/4816612.html>, accessed August 16, 2005.

## Appendix B

### Contributing Individuals

Many people contributed to my research, enhancing my ethnography with local knowledge, personal experience narratives, and historical fact. Over my years of research I engaged in innumerable formal and informal conversations with individuals interested in and willing to talk with me about food, festival, and community identity. My observations and analyses are informed by the people with whom I had casual conversations as well as those with whom I had more formal and/or repeated interactions. Listed below in alphabetical order are some of the people who shared time and information with me.

Andrea Adema, Buffalo, New York  
Julia Adema, Tiburon, California  
Craig Andersen, Fayetteville, Arkansas  
Ty Ash, Gilroy, California  
Lauren Bevilacqua, Gilroy California  
Kay Bowles, Alma, Arkansas  
Fred Burrell, Dallas, Texas  
Kristen Carr, Gilroy, California  
Robert T. Chomiak, Coppell, Texas  
Bill Christopher, Gilroy, California  
Don Christopher, Gilroy, California  
Nancy Cole, Little Rock, Arkansas  
Mark Costillo, Crystal City, Texas  
Marcie Diamond, Coppell, Texas  
Elizabeth Engelhardt, Austin, Texas  
Chris Filice, Gilroy, California  
Val Filice, Gilroy, California  
Patti Hale, Gilroy, California  
Jodi Heinzen, Gilroy, California  
Beryl Legler Hennigh, Lenexa, Kansas  
Bill Lindsteadt, Gilroy, California  
Chris Hinterman, Ennis, Texas  
Tom Howard, Gilroy, California  
Jan Janzen, Haysville, Kansas  
Eve Jochnowitz, New York, New York  
Beth Johnston, Delray Beach, Florida  
Ruth Kendrick, Ogden, Utah  
Joann Kessler, Gilroy, California  
Doug Kuczynski, Sacramento, California

Karen LaCorte, Gilroy, California  
Thom Lapworth, Quartz Hill, California  
Janie Liebich, Gilroy, California  
Sharon Logan, Coppell, Texas  
Bill Lynch, San Francisco, California  
Jean Murph, Coppell, Texas  
Eldon Mushrush, Alma, Arkansas  
Melanie Newby, Bradenton, Florida  
Melissa Noto, Gilroy, California  
Rhonda Pellin, Gilroy, California  
Rose Ray, Nashville, Arkansas  
Mary Rivera, Crystal City, Texas  
Patsy Ross, Gilroy, California  
Beth Royals, Richmond, Virginia  
Adam Sanchez, Gilroy, California  
Dan Shoemaker, Bowling Green, Ohio  
Jennifer Shropshire, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
Gary Sieb, Coppell, Texas  
Bill Smothermon, Coppell Texas  
Brian H. Smith, Kingston, New York  
S.S. "Sparky" Sparks, Wills Point, Texas  
Diane Sparrow, Osage, Iowa  
Jodi A. Sterle, College Station, Texas  
Elaine Sweet, Dallas, Texas  
Carole Thomson, Gilroy, California  
Armando Trujillo, San Antonio, Texas  
Kathy Turner, Siloam Springs, Arkansas  
Angelo J. Vaccaro, Coppell, Texas  
Lani D. Yoshimura, Gilroy, California  
Sandra Zavala, Crystal City, Texas

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## **Vita**

Pauline Adema was born in Buffalo, New York, on July 5, 1964, the daughter of Andrea Rosenstiel Adema and Douglas Moore Adema. After completing her work at Williamsville South High School, Williamsville, New York, in 1982, she entered Hamilton College in Clinton, New York. In February 1984, she transferred to New College of Florida in Sarasota, Florida, from which she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology, Psychology, and Sociology. She graduated in May 1986. In August 1987, she entered the Folklore Institute at Indiana University, from which she earned a Master of Arts degree and graduated in May 1989. Before enrolling in the Department of American Studies at The University of Texas, she worked as a folklife, foodways, arts, and cultural tourism consultant in Nevada, Wyoming, South Carolina, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Texas.

Permanent address: 5445 Caruth Haven Lane, #622, Dallas, Texas 75225

This dissertation was typed by the author.