

Graduate Association for **Food Studies**

Title: Review of “Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture,” Second Edition by E.N. Anderson

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Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture, Second Edition E.N. Anderson.

New York: New York University Press. 2014. 362 pp.

Everyone Eats provides insight into the biocultural reasons for food choices. Most studies of world food problems tend to place focus on production while taking consumption for granted. The rise of nutritional anthropology and food history has recently shifted toward emphasizing the newly common phrase, “it’s not what we eat, it’s how we eat.” *Everyone Eats* draws on a nutritional context to explain the social and cultural reasons for why humans eat what they do. Anderson argues that consumption determines production by creating effective demand (4). The act of buying and acquiring food sparks particular interests. Therefore, emerging literature should focus on the entire food system, specifically looking at production, distribution, and consumption as part of a single process. The author points out that nutritional anthropology is, by definition, biocultural and biosocial. One cannot separate biology and genetics from cultural and social studies.

The book is organized into thirteen chapters, all of which explore the biocultural issues of food choices from the aesthetics of eating and various sensory perceptions between cultures. Overall, the key topics covered include human evolution, foodways, religion and ethnicity, food as pleasure, and food and medicine. Chapter 7, “Food as Pleasure,” details Anderson’s personal views of food as pleasure in an autoethnographic piece of research. The data collected are based on the author’s past experiences in China, Papua New Guinea, Istanbul, Mexico, and the Mediterranean countries and include powerful images, which are part of the ethnography. Anderson’s personal presence is clear throughout this book in his vivid reflections and literature. Anderson also utilizes poetry from an early medieval era and the mid-eighteenth century to illustrate desires for and consumption of alcohol.

Chapter 9 also draws on an autobiographical account from the author, with a discussion about food as a means of communication. It is most clearly a tool of communication in the process of a person defining his individuality and his place in society (171). Food communicates social class, ethnicity, and lifestyle. Such social distinction can be seen in social messages surrounding Chinese feast behavior. This section also advocates further exploration of food and social matters, and it argues that food study requires a phenomenological approach.

Chapter 13, an account of world food problems, places focus on the importance of understanding foodways. While ample food is available throughout the world, over a billion people are still undernourished, and starvation is one of the most common causes of death (250). These facts together demonstrate the importance of food as a universal phenomenon. The need for social justice is a real problem in the politics of food and science, where too often agricultural research funds are ploughed into luxury crops for the wealthy rather than to staples for the poor. Anderson discusses the political aspects of food distribution and critiques those who claim that the whole world can be fed based on the food available, which he claims is an idealistic vision in which all governments are able to overcome any mishaps, miscalculations, wars, and corruption. This chapter is situated well as the book’s final word on the politics of food.

The final chapter of the book recognizes unsung food creators who have never been previously identified. For Anderson, nutritional anthropology has a responsibility to ensure that the accomplishments of these individuals are recognized, which is one of the reasons for his emphasis of historical factors and food choices.

This book offers a snapshot of the recent drive towards exploring the sociocultural processes of food choices and is a particularly inviting text for undergraduates entering the field of food studies. The author’s emphasis of his own personal experiences of foods makes for an interesting account on perceptions. He offers a reflective view of how foods have impacted his life experiences. *Everyone Eats* is a relevant text for researchers exploring the relationship between food and society. Furthermore, it is a provocative text for future course design and policy making, as it provides a diverse account of the complexities involved in exploring the importance of food choices in today’s societies.

Nutritionism: The Science and Politics of Dietary Advice Gyorgy Scrinis

New York: Columbia University Press. 2013. 352 pp.

We currently live in the age of “functional nutritionism.” We are surrounded by cereals enhanced with calcium, soft drinks fortified with vitamins, butters and yogurts low in fat, and breads low in carbohydrates. These products all