

Graduate Association for **Food Studies**

Title: Book Review of *Drinking History: Fifteen Turning Points in the Making of American Beverages*

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food continuum, from production in Guinea Bissau to consumption in Lisbon, that satisfies migrants' desire for food from home. Interestingly, Williams's voice drops to its lowest pitch in this section, eliciting the question of whether his observations are more difficult to apply to urban foodways and their discourses or if the authors found other frameworks more appropriate.

The final section addresses the concepts of rural and urban foods in the context of nationalism, dealing extensively with the historic development of national foodways. From Sobral's description of the historic development of Portuguese gastronomy to Maria Yotova's research on the growth of Bulgaria's national yogurt culture, these pieces reveal the importance of mythmaking (particularly of the rural) undertaken by scholars, government agencies, and marketing firms to create specific regional or national foodways. Sami Zubaida takes us to the sixteenth-century work of an Egyptian religious scholar who ridicules the foodways of the peasant population, offering a distinct contrast to the lauding of rural foodways undertaken in other regions and times. Finally, Monica Truninger and Dulce Freire discuss the conflicting narratives and lived realities that underlie perhaps one of the most mythologized foodways, the Mediterranean Diet. These chapters contribute to a discussion of the country and city at a different scale, looking more closely at the ways in which different locations (cities and nations) and the producers of their discourses impact one another.

The volume builds on previous research often undertaken on Slow Food, for example by Rachel Laudan, Jeffrey Pilcher, and West. These three, among others, have pointed to the contradictory nature of current and historic food organizing. Such projects tend to be put in place by or for city dwellers who in turn expect to assist peasant food producers through valorization of their products. However, these projects often advance the interests of urbanites far better than rural livelihoods.

The volume is especially appropriate for those working in rural and urban studies and can easily

be assigned for undergraduate and graduate level coursework. Rural to urban foodways are addressed from many disciplinary perspectives (history, literature, geography, and anthropology), so scholars looking for comparative ethnographies of food will also be interested. Individual chapters will be of interest to those with related regional and topic focuses, though the material is heavily weighted towards Portugal. And for those interested in Williams's work, the intrigue of this volume remains, in large part, due to the strength of his original insight. What the editors give readers, where perhaps many food anthologies fall short, is a comprehensive theoretical perspective from which to analyze the plethora of ways humans produce, consume, represent, and interpret contemporary foodways.

BOOK REVIEW | SERENITY SUTHERLAND

Drinking History: Fifteen Turning Points in the Making of American Beverages *Andrew F. Smith*

New York: Columbia University Press. 2013. x, 250 pp.

America has an ebullient past of diverse and shifting beverage tastes that intersect histories of politics, economics, social movements, and global influences. This is the story Andrew F. Smith tells by analyzing important historical moments in *Drinking History: Fifteen Turning Points in the Making of American Beverages*. Like a narrative mixologist, Smith throws together seemingly unlikely ingredients: beer, wine, rum, cider, whiskey, tea, coffee, milk, bottled water, juice, and soft drinks. The book is not organized by individual drinks per se; Smith focuses on time periods such as colonial diversity and the temperance movement as he traces the development of American drinking habits. For instance, the chapter "Colonial Diversity" examines the beverages of colonial society including familiar drinks such as rum, beer, wine, and brandy, as well as mixed drinks that are less familiar: syllabub, posset, flips, shrubs, and cherry bounces. Similarly, the chapter "To Root Out

a Bad Habit” examines the temperance period that led to the passage of the Volstead Act and National Prohibition. The remaining chapters, however, focus on a single type or category of beverage, such as “youth” drinks—juices and soft drinks.

Smith introduces each chapter’s theme with a catchy story that captures the beverage’s role in and connections to larger American society. Then, Smith delves into the history of the time period that heightened the significance of the “turning point.” For instance, Smith begins the chapter on Prohibition on the eve of the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment. Smith then travels back in time, tracing how Americans from Increase Mather in colonial times to Benjamin Rush in early America dealt with drunkenness. Chapters like “The Judgment of Paris” explain the significance of place and history to the success and popularity of a particular beverage. For so long, French and Italian wines were viewed as the eminent vintages, best exemplified in American history by Thomas Jefferson’s affinity for expensive European wine. Now, Americans feature wines from California to New York and Chile to South Africa on their lists of “best of class” vintages.

Some chapters also include recipes to make the beverage in question, including a colonial recipe for roasting coffee and an unfermented wine recipe for communion during Prohibition. The chapters end with a description of how the beverage is integrated into American society today, as well as postscript notes that read as a “who’s who” and historical timeline. These additions include spicy tidbits about company factions and corporate buy-outs, details like birth and death dates of prominent figures, and the dates of larger national movements, such as wars and elections, that played a role in the chapter’s narrative.

Virtually every chapter ends with the same theme: mergers and acquisitions. Indeed, this is the subtle brilliance of Smith’s story. The story of American beverages is about the diminution of small businesses leading to conglomerate corporate control. Iced teas and juices that began with small businessmen in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century sell to larger corporations

like Kraft and Nestle, which then go through mergers and acquisitions of their own. Today’s familiar corporations like Diageo, Anheuser Busch (now owned by InBev), and Constellation Brands bought out local distilleries, small time beer brewers and family owned wineries. Smith writes that he hopes his book will “provide insight into how we ended up where we are today” as well as “provide inspiration for alternative approaches for the future” (viii). These alternative approaches become clear in the sections on beer, wine, spirits, and to an extent, coffee, as Smith tells us that small brewers, distillers, and wineries have sprung up to compete with the larger corporations.

Smith places great value on the agency of American consumers who have the power to bring larger corporations to task by making thoughtful drink choices. Increasingly, consumers seek beverages with taste, character, and a business culture that emphasizes quality of the product over shareholder earning statements. This is especially true in the craft beer market where consumers deliberately purchase flavorful, quality beer made by local crafters using locally grown hops, barley, yeast, and water. This is one of the best features of the book, and it offers a hopeful yet cautious tone for the future of the American beverage industry.

Each chapter reads as its own unique essay, full of historical information, which makes it quite useful for short readings for a class or factual research. Reading the book straight through, however, is frustrating due to the repetitive nature of Smith’s style. For instance, readers will encounter the definition of a syllabub—a drink made with frothy, spiced milk or cream mixed with cider, wine, and sugar—half a dozen times. Dr. Benjamin Rush is also featured extensively as one of the first alcohol reformers. These are only a handful of examples, as Smith treats each chapter as its own unit, re-explaining as he goes along. In terms of content, readers may wonder why certain beverages, such as the controversial absinthe, were excluded from this history. The book also lacks good coverage of beverages from non-European ethnic backgrounds, such as rice-based alcohols like sake. Likewise, tequila and vodka receive only

a few short paragraphs (136-7). Also missing is coverage of topics relating to the drinking age debate, which for many youths in America is one of the greatest “turning points” of their lives.

Overall, Smith’s engaging narrative style provides the reader with specific and useful facts. The book will surely be useful to scholars in history, anthropology, American studies and others who are interested in the culture of American beverages. Scholars interested in the development of corporations and business history will surely find details about the rise of American companies such as Starbucks, Kool-Aid and Welch’s (to name a few) useful. Researchers focused on the food and beverage industry will also find a great resource in the fact-packed pages of Smith’s book.

BOOK REVIEW | RACHEL A. SNELL

Three Squares: The Invention of the American Meal *Abigail Carroll*

New York: Basic Books, 2013. 344 pp.

Abigail Carroll’s *Three Squares: The Invention of the American Meal* traces the evolution of the American meal from the colonial era to the present. By exploring the concurrent development of dining and snacking habits, Carroll provides insight into the development of class-consciousness, national identity, and the growth of consumer culture in America. Carroll argues that “the shape of the meal is also the shape of society” and ably demonstrates the power of food studies to illuminate fresh perspectives on identity formation (219). So much of American identity is wrapped up in choices of how, where, and what to eat. Carroll reveals that a significant portion of that identity is inherited from the past.

In *Three Squares*, Carroll contends that our eating habits “lie deeply embedded in popular assumptions about what is normal, good, fashionable, healthy, and American” (xii). A relatively recent invention, our modern eating habits and current dining customs stem from developments in the nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries that influenced the timing of dinner, impacted the composition of breakfast, invented lunch, and legitimized snacking. To explore this transformation, Carroll’s text is arranged chronologically and thematically. The first two chapters present a chronological narrative of eating habits prior to the nineteenth century. In these chapters, Carroll traces eating habits from the earliest period of colonial settlement in North America to the post revolutionary period. This overview of eating in America from times of subsistence to times of plenty sets the stage for the remainder of the book, which describes the development of each meal, with separate chapters for lunch, breakfast, dinner, and snacking. The final chapters explore current practices and speculate about how emerging concerns related to health and tradition might impact American dining in the future.

In order to show the development of a uniquely American middle-class identity in the nineteenth century, Carroll describes the evolution of dinner from subsistence to a family repast imbued with specific cultural meaning. The informal and pragmatic nature of colonial dining shifted during the late eighteenth century to become more complicated, genteel, and self consciously imitative of European conventions. The atmosphere of the dining table with its prescribed etiquette, extravagant table setting, and increasingly elaborate fare set the stage for a deliberate performance of identity. As Carroll writes, “the ritualization of dinner as a nightly ceremony . . . spoke of class values; the trappings aided the ambitious middle-class family in identifying itself as respectable and successful” (69). To accommodate these aims, dinner evolved from a hearty, midday repast meant to refuel the family for the remainder of the day’s labor into a meal served to mark the end of the working day. Dinner brought the family, scattered by work and school during the day, together and provided parents with an opportunity to model proper behavior to their children. Dinner, according to Carroll, “did double duty: it fed Americans’ spirits as well as their stomachs” (76). As men and children spent more time outside the