

Research Article

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Introduction Contemporary food practices. Spaces of food production and consumption

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Contemporary food practices are a huge topic and many scholars have already generated an extensive literature on subjects such as food and globalization, the importance of taste, gender and consumption, food and identity, food and health, political economy of food etc. There are a great number of theoretical approaches related to food studies, from structuralism to symbolism, from functionalism to semiotic, from feminism to Marxism, to name only a few. To this interest in food practices have contributed a lot the transformations of the societies, from modern period to post-modernity.

As Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik highlighted in their *Introduction to Food and Culture*. A reader (2008) that “without a doubt feminism and women’s studies have contributed to the growth of food studies by legitimizing a domain of human behaviour so heavily associated with women over time and across culture”. This special issue will bring a small contribution to the literature on food, by presenting the experience of women from different cultural spaces (North and South American) in food production and consumption.

Globalization, “time and space compression” (Harvey, 1989), migration, industrialization of food production, women emancipation and the changes in the family structure, the transformations in the labour market and the rise of the consumerism and of the leisure economy, all of these contemporary realities influenced the food practices of the present generations and determined many differences compared with the past generations.

Contemporary food practices refer to values, negotiations, relationships, preferences, expectations, choices (Watson and Caldwell, 2011). They are daily practices, they imply routine, work division, hierarchy

and distinction, reflect the identity, lifestyle, status, class, gender, age and capital of each human being.

This IRSR special number dedicated to contemporary food practices includes five interesting articles, three of them focused mainly on the space of food production and consumption. The last two articles will present the daily food constraints and their implication in the food choices and social identity for people with different health issues.

The opening article of this issue, *Mobile Eating: A Cultural Perspective*, tackles the contemporary theme of mobility, seldom used in the food studies. The author highlights the high percentage of North Americans who eat and drink in their car and connects their practices with the mobile food infrastructure, with important roots in the American traveling history. Eating in the car may be explained by the need to be mobile, the pressure of time but also through habits related to fast-food eating or by the American car culture. Though eating in the car is perceived as a bad habit, especially in contrast with home eating, it provides a convenience that promised to extend time through multi-tasking. The author includes the practice of eating in the car as part of the fast-food system and highlights the risks associated with it, such as distracted driving, obesity and excessive environmental waste.

The second article, *Shifting Food Consciousness: Homesteading Blogs and the Inner Work of Food Justice*, brings us to another contemporary issue, the food activism or the social justice work. The author uses an ecowomanist theoretical framework and analyzes blog posts written by four homesteading bloggers. Home produced food is considered an alternative for industrialized food and it is part of the local production of food. The author presents four case studies of women who have chosen the domestic work as a lifestyle, in the search of living a more ‘authentic’ life but also as a form of self-care and healing process.

The third article, *Cultural Hybridity in the USA exemplified by Tex-Mex cuisine Race, Femininity and Food*, explores the one of the world’s great culinary regions, the U.S.-Mexican border area. The author uses the concepts of acculturation, hybridization and transculturation in

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order to explain the reciprocal influences of American and Mexican culture in the case of transnational mobility. The paper presents the most popular dishes of the tex-mex cuisine and their history. The author concludes that food provide an example of ethnic borderlands and tex-mex cuisine is a mixture of Spanish, Indian, Mexican and American Southwest culture.

The fourth article, *Ambivalent food experiences: Healthy eating and food changes in the lives of Ikojts with diabetes*, continues the story about Mexican society, this time with a focus on the relation between food and health. The author presents how the foodways of Ikojts, a Mexican indigenous people, have changed due to the increase of the diabetes cases. The article highlights the tension between

food and eating traditions and keeping the “diabetic diet”. The author proposes an original approach about people’s ambivalent food experiences, in order to include them in public health interventions.

The last article of this special number, *Femininity and the Racialization of Health and Dieting*, presents the perceptions of femininity among black and white American women. The author analyzed the way of transmitting the diet from one generation to another, together with the values associated to femininity. The paper highlights the racial differences in food practices, the white women being focused on losing or maintaining their weight, compared with the black women who were more concerned about well-being.