

The world's fare: food and culture at American World Fairs from 1893-1939.

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The world's fare: food and culture at American World Fairs from 1893-1939

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Abstract

Why is the American culinary tradition as conflicted as it is? Why do processed foods, foreign cuisine and home cooking can't coexist with American ways of eating? This paper highlights the conflict between government and corporate prescriptions on how we should eat and what was consumed by using American World Fairs as case studies at different points in time. Utilizing guidebooks, cookbooks, magazine advertisements, this paper aims to show that these trends were already beginning to develop in part due to the influence of these fairs intentionally or otherwise. First covering the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, it highlights the growing rift between secular and commercial reformers so that by the 1939 World Exposition schism between commercial ideas on how to eat and the traditional and regular cooks had developed. At the same time, its message was negated by the counterarguments, resulting in both hot dogs and lauds local, cooked cuisine. In other words, national paradigms, the new ideas presented at the fairs reinforced preexisting ones while giving reinforcement to others on how to eat to continue to exist.

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