JAMES L. WATSON and MELISSA L. CALDWELL (eds.): *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader*. Blackwell Publishing, Malden MA, 2005, 320 pp., ISBN 978-0-631-23093-9, $47.95.

Alimentary globalism – Tokyo sushi in New York, Chilean grapes in wintertime Seattle, Coca-Cola in Trinidad, Big Macs in Beijing, and so on – disrupts established foodways, as anthropologists call the complex of behaviors surrounding the way we produce, acquire, cook, and eat our food. This, in turn, reshapes who we are. An article on wine might have fit in well here. Still, Watson and Caldwell's collection of nineteen wide-ranging essays nicely documents the spread of such change and the various ways in which communities react to it.

For instance, just *growing* green beans in Burkina Faso, where they are raised for export, has been enough to change the diet and meal patterns in that poor, underfed country by altering land use and work habits. Consequently, as Susanne Freidberg's contribution explains, the notion of a good sauce, a local dish closely tied to the social identity of women, has also changed. Without even eating the alien beans, the Burkinabé became different people. In a similar vein, Jeffrey Pilcher discusses how the modernization of tortilla production in Mexico, once exclusively the patient labor of housewives, is damaging health and harmfully redefining femininity.

Things don't have to turn out badly, however. What was surprising and heartening to discover in this collection is how resilient some communities have remained, though pressed to adapt. The Chinese, in a process anthropologists term localization, have forced a compromise between endemic needs and what a novel mode of food demands. Beijing double cheeseburgers taste the way they do in Berlin and Los Angeles. But to the young Chinese who eat them, it is the jolly and well-mopped social space surrounding those succulent disks of minced cow that offers something new and useful, the reader learns, and keeps the customers coming back. As Watson, Eriberto Lozada, and Yunxiang Yan show in their articles, McDonald's and other fast-food vendors have been less agents of change in China than indicators of a diffusely triggered social transformation there.

Not so cheering is the attitude of the capitalists. Kentucky Fried Chicken, Lozada points out, doesn't care particularly how it sells chicken, as long as it sells a lot of it. If Colonel Sanders freaks out Chinese youngsters, replace him with Chicky, the child-charming mascot who decorates KFC's 3,400 Chinese stores. Chicky is emblematic of KFC China's willingness to change, even if that has meant replacing coleslaw with bamboo shoots, and mashed potatoes with porridge. Capitalism is a human enterprise, after all, and if humans are resilient, it only follows that capitalism will be so too.

And not just capitalism. Hans and Judith-Maria Buechler describe in their article on German bread how independent artisan bakers survived profitably under the

extreme anti-capitalism of the German Democratic Republic. In contrast, the West German baking conglomerates who forced most of these little guys out of business after the *Wende* were cooperative market socialists before they invaded the East. Like culture and politics, the business world, too, is prone to modern ironies.

Harriet Ritvo reminds us in "Mad Cow Mysteries" (an article I'd like to ask the volume's GMO defender Robert Paarlberg to study) that the governments we expect to protect us from bad food can be conflicted and dangerously unreliable. Ritvo's depiction of the British leadership's tardy conversion from human BSE deniers to prion experts makes plain the rarest *rosbif* may be a politician who understands anything but politics. Yet as Ritvo observes, the body politic is what the body politic eats, and it doesn't easily tolerate a change in diet.

Fifteen years later and a world away in Japan, another government facing crisis seems willing to trade health for other interests. Yet promoting the sale of Fukushima-radiated fish and rice may not simply be a way of showing decisiveness or diverting cash into a disaster-ravaged region. As the British example invites one to conclude, Japan's fish-and-rice policy is designed to feed a fish-and-rice polity. Home cooking local food, that is, may be a good means of nurturing not just the physical but also the psychosocial recovery of tsunami-decimated communities. Sarah Phillips points out in her piece on the post-Chernobyl food crisis, however, that compromising food safety and neglecting citizen health contributed to the collapse of Soviet Russian control in Ukraine. Poisoning your constituents is a good way to lose their support.

Much of the ethnographic data gathered in this work is now reaching its expiration date. Its theoretical concerns, however, and the broad relations it illuminates between globalization, governance, business, science, food and drink, health, and the recipes for self-construction are still interesting. Eating and drinking, it's pleasant to think, may belong to a different category than automobiles, TV sets, and other impersonal classics of modern manufacturing. Like music and language, their roots still touch the living, private prehistory, the *temps perdu* of food fetishist Marcel Proust. This is why we treasure certain foods, and become confused when they are lost. This is why we can use food to reconfigure and console ourselves. Cultural identity has always been a malleable thing. We don't feel a strong need to worry about this fact, however, until the pace of communal self-transformation speeds up to less than a generation. Then, as the bullet train of psychic foreclosure, renovation, and reopening keeps accelerating, people start reaching for the emergency brake … or a slice of pizza. Food and eating can offer a means of slowing the change. Eating, especially when we practice it in the self-conscious fashion so popular and apparently necessary nowadays, allows us to locate, isolate, and nourish a familiar, reliable me. It's still an idealized,

constructed me. But when I sit down to eat, a madeleine, an Oreo, or a heritage turkey at a Thanksgiving feast, at least I seem to recognize the face looking back at me from the plate.

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MIKE VESETH: *Wine Wars: The Curse of the Blue Nun, the Miracle of Two Buck Chuck, and the Revenge of the Terroirists*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Lanham, MD, 2011, 255 pp., ISBN 978-0-7425-6819-8, $24.95. (google ebook $14.39)

Anyone analyzing the economics of wine will quickly notice the diversity of forces pressuring the industry. Wine's (alleged) progression towards homogeneity to meet mass market demand, corporate ownership consolidation, often cut-throat international competition, rivers of excess supply, technological manipulation in production, wildly vacillating price differentials and the impacts of global warming, among a host of other factors, may be simultaneously viewed as evil, good or both depending on one's perspective. These issues also make for a robust research agenda in wine economics. A new book by Mike Veseth, *Wine Wars: The Curse of the Blue Nun, the Miracle of Two Buck Chuck, and the Revenge of the Terroirists*, nicely captures the essence of these factors affecting the evolution of wine and the agenda for wine economics.

The running theme throughout this book is a search for the future of wine. Written in a brisk and non-technical style, Veseth uses this theme to focus on the competing forces vying for wine's future, expanding on and unifying essays previewed on his *wineeconomist.com* website. The overarching influence affecting the current market for wine, and one that will increasingly affect the future of wine, is globalization – albeit wine's global reach has existed since vineyards were first planted. Entwined with shrinking international borders and reduced barriers to the wine trade are increased efficiencies in wine production, shipping and marketing. These and other changes, in turn, have fostered a gnawing fear and vocal backlash against what these disruptions will bring to the wine world as we know it today.

Veseth takes us on a journey through wine economics via the use of what amounts to case studies exemplifying how wine economic issues are playing out in the marketplace. One learns, for example, about the lingering effects that certain very sweet and often badly made wines of the past have had on current consumer perceptions and taste. We gain insights, too, on the way large international and national retail chains are altering consumer wine buying routines, how new consumer interest in wine is being cultivated, and the ways, means and implications of the world wine glut. Further, we get a sense in *Wine Wars* of how historical, social and cultural factors in France, China and other countries will likely affect the