

Food Practices: Beyond the Walls of a Supermarket

The lights are blinding as people line up one behind the other with a bright pink ticket in hand, each peering at masses of bloody flesh, separated by plastic and protected by a glass shield; waiting for a chance to get their share of the fresh kill. This scene may be a familiar one, as it is how many people acquire meat today in an urban society, even with its multitude of mixed backgrounds. Due to traumatizing experiences during my upbringing, I have limited the ways in which I acquire food, which could be remedied by looking at the socio-cultural impact certain food practices can have on the collective interest.

Most people are raised into a certain practice when it comes to obtaining food, and admittedly culture and religion play a huge role when it comes to how food is viewed nowadays. Having a mixed cultural background consisting of American, Greek, and Egyptian practices, I find that there has always been one constant in all three; the market. Although my grandparents and even my father have killed their own food before, it was never something that my family pushed on my siblings and I. I soon found myself judging and distancing myself from the custom and leaning more towards food sources in which I did not have to associate taking an animal's life with what I ate. Like many people today, I enjoy meat from a distance but try not to think about the actual process through which it is obtained, and in hindsight my partial understanding of the concept has caused me to look down on it even as I reap its benefits. Makenna Goodman

challenges my view, asserting that the killing of an animal does not always have to be a remorseful event, and while not easy, the butchering of animals raised by hard working people are better viewed as an exchange rather than a slaughter. Killing one's own food does not have ties to a sadistic nature or want, but it is rather about being "connected to the very foundations of self sufficiency" (Goodman 1). At heart, Goodman's argument does not stem from a need to defend a practice, but rather one of helping readers understand the psychology and reasoning behind it.

In a fast paced modern society, a grab-n-go supermarket is a nobility for most people. I know this is true for my family of five, especially having a working mother with three kids who does all the shopping. However, as I have started asking more questions about the origins of my food, I have found that there are many food practices that are not only sustainable, but cheaper and just as efficient when it comes to obtaining nourishment. One of these methods includes the underrated convention of foraging. Author Tara Lohan uses her experience in urban foraging as a way to motivate readers to look beyond the four walls of a supermarket and learn more about the nature around them and the resources it provides. This is not the only benefit however, foraging is not only a more interesting institution, but a sustainable practice that "has its benefits and beats the market in many ways" (Lohan 2). To add on, foraging is a great way to build a "community of people who care for and know" (Lohan 3) each other, which is surely an advantage when it comes to an everyday cycle that becomes monotonous. Essentially, Lohan is not looking to force consumers comparable to myself to change their lifestyles, but rather look beyond their own in order to become more educated when it comes to the resources around them, and perhaps even find a lifestyle that might suit them better.

Despite the fact that today's population is rather uninformed in regards to food practices, many are quick to form opinions and point fingers when it comes to which animals should be eaten and which should be spared. Being a part of a multi-cultural family in which many animals are fair game, I have admittedly frowned upon some of the animals my parents and theirs have consumed. Unlike my parents I was not raised in Egypt, but rather Cyprus and then America later on, both European countries which hold certain views on the consumption of animals such as dogs and cats. If asked a month ago, I would have easily rejected the thought of consuming what I consider to be a domestic animal, arguing that their human-like traits and mental capacities protected them from becoming prey. Johnathon Safran Foer argues against this, protesting the unfair views and judgements today's population holds when it comes to protecting certain animals. He rallies against humanitarians who are so quick to defend animals that are doomed to die anyways and are increasingly becoming an "enormous ecological and economic problem" (Foer 2). Unlike many aspects of life, when it comes to food, people's decisions are not always based on rationality, but rather "culture, habit, craving, and identity" (Foer 2). Foer's article is virtually introducing reason and fact to a conversation dictated by emotion, a practice that many of us should execute more often.

Perhaps instead of judging each other for their practices, people can start looking at food from one another's perspective. Instead of holding a pink ticket and standing in line at a market, one could be holding a butcher's knife, ready to drop it upon the unsuspecting neck of a bird, or holding a basket while rummaging through the leaves of trees for berries and snails. It is through this open mindedness, this new lens, that the world can begin to truly understand where their

food comes from, and perhaps build a community not as a town or a city, but as an Earth united under one cause; re-discovering old origins.