

and vegans show how disenfranchised groups can use cooking literature to speak against stereotypes that assume all black or vegans are identical. In this fashion, cooking literature becomes a powerful platform for minorities to question mainstream cultural stereotypes. (p.167)

I admit it: I am no vegan. But it seems to me that the chasm between lived African American experience and veganism, between antiblack racism and antivegan prejudice, is vast. I have similar trouble seeing *The I Hate to Cook Book* in the same light as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*.

Inness glosses over important counterclaims. She suggests, for instance, that convenience food was appealing in part because it was "modern" (p.24); but she pays little heed to the idea that the emphasis on domestic science—all those gleaming space-age appliances—was an attempt to reconcile women to a return to the home after the working adventures afforded by World War II. She devotes two sentences to the idea that perhaps the 1970s natural foods emphasis on women as the nurturers of the planet might have served essentialist, antifeminist aims. Although she cites a startling rise in self-identified vegans, she fails to look to what are, to my mind, the trend's most obvious sources: celebrity vegans and yoga. The work is troubled, too, by a slipperiness about audience: her argument about glamorous vegan cookbooks as seducers of carnivores would be much more compelling if she provided any evidence that actual carnivores read *The Voluptuous Vegan*.

Then there's the chapter on *Two Fat Ladies*. I'm not so sure that "the popularity of the Ladies and their show, [sic] points out that females wish to see figures in the media that better represent their own bodies and experiences" (p.174). It's just possible that the show's popularity was predicated less on feminist identification than on the spectacle of two obese women driving around on a motorbike, discussing the horrors of the modern-day world in plummy accents, and stuffing fistfuls of haggis and spoonfuls of clotted cream in their mouths. America loves a freak. And, as the success of *Fear Factor* has amply demonstrated, America loves to watch other people eat disgusting things.

Perhaps this is the most disappointing aspect of Inness's book: its sociopolitical explorations make no space for actual eating. Food here is a device, a vehicle, a methodology. This, perhaps, is why convenience foods, home-baked bread, traditional Chinese cookery, and marinated Loch Fyne kippers occupy the same ground: they are all "ingredients" in Inness's reading of race, class, and gender in America, interchangeable with other such ingredients (wash-'n'-wear fabrics, children's toys). Inness's book is important because it adds another page to the woefully thin library on

food studies in the humanities, but it fails to engage with what seems to me to be the real stuff of meaningful humanistic work on the subject: questions of pleasure and disgust and desire, of hunger and satiety, of food as the stuff that literally and figuratively makes our bodies, our politics, our society, our culture. Let's hope there's much more to come.

—Gwen Hyman, The Cooper Union

Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, & Environmental Change in Honduras & the United States
John Solari

Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005
xiii + 321 pp. Illustrations. \$21.95 (paper)

In *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, & Environmental Change in Honduras & the United States*, John Solari relates the history of the banana in Honduras and the United States from 1870 to 1975. He provides a well-written, balanced, and multifaceted perspective on the banana and shows how over a period of one hundred years it became the favorite American fruit, quickly moving from a precious and rare commodity to such ubiquity that its year-round presence is taken for granted. Solari's book is rich in detail, insight, and source material. It should be useful to both the educated general public and students in the social sciences, economics, agriculture, and food studies.

Solari neither attacks nor defends the giant fruit companies (United, Standard, Cayumel) that funded and profited from the banana, and there is no exposé of the horrors of the feudal plantations. On first reading, this troubled me. A second, closer reading revealed, however, a good range of insights into the lives of the peasant workers, as well as an analysis of the nature and behavior of vertically consolidating corporations.

The book is well organized into eight chapters. Chapter 1, "Going Bananas," begins in the late eighteenth century with the initial shipping of bananas on schooners and steamers from small plantations in the Bay Islands off Honduras's north coast and the establishment of early plantations by Standard Fruit, United Fruit, and others. Chapter 2, "Space Invaders," "examines the profound agro-ecological transformations that took place between 1910 and 1940, a period when people, the Gros Michel banana, and fungal pathogens 'invaded' the North Coast" (p.14). Chapter 3, "Altered Landscapes and Transformed Livelihoods," is key to understanding the overall shifts in the political economy and agricultural systems of north Honduras as plantation

farming expanded. Chapter 4, “Sigatoka, Science, and Control,” offers a fascinating analysis of the lengths growers went to in order control the epidemic of Panama and Sigatoka banana diseases. Chapter 6 (chapter 5 is discussed below), “La Quimica,” plunges into the complexity of insecticides and the employment crisis that occurred with the shift from hose and nozzle spraying to aerial spraying. Chapter 7, “The Life and Times of Miss Chiquita,” brings us to post–World War II American banana consumption, the efforts to replace the Gros Michel banana with the Cavendish (disease-free land was limited, so a disease-resistant variety was needed), and the marketing designed to stimulate flagging consumption.

Chapter 5, “Revisiting the Green Prison,” is to this anthropologist especially interesting in its portrayal of the Hondurans who were the backbone of banana production. Solari ably uses life histories to show people of different occupations, specialties, and status all fighting oppression and working their own angles, often to the detriment of the company. Foremen played important roles, and kin and place of origin were often critical in obtaining jobs. Spraying fungicide over trees was terrible work, but it carried a higher status and paid more than dragging the sprayer hose. Women were also important in the workplace; even though they did not labor in the plantation fields, they provided a crucial support system.

Banana Cultures leaves the reader with an understanding of the banana export trade that combines history and the botany and agriculture of the banana with a discussion of production, economics, and the changing culture of consumption in the United States. The reader will never take a banana for granted again.

—Marcus B. Griffin, Christopher Newport University

Food, Culture, and Survival in an African City

Karen Coen Flynn

New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005

xviii + 254 pp. Illustrations. \$27.95 (paper)

Recent studies have revealed how the problem of access to food is intertwined with issues of food availability, poverty, and social justice. In *Food, Culture, and Survival in an African City*, Karen Coen Flynn explores the multifaceted and complex routes traversed by people in Mwanza, Tanzania, as they attempt to obtain their food. The book illuminates the multiple reasons people go hungry and how people cope in an urban setting.

Flynn states her main goals in the first chapter: first, to expand the ethnographic record of urban Tanzania by showing how people in Mwanza fed themselves during the early 1990s and, second, to explore the nature of food exchanges and thus challenge their place in food acquisition theory. Her thinking is informed by the entitlement approach of Amartya Sen, that is, “the idea that in market economies a person’s success in acquiring food is directly related to the legitimate ownership, via production, exchange, or one-way transfer of a commodity (or commodities) that can be exchanged for food” (p.13). Because Flynn’s work is also shaped by a feminist and a moral economy perspective, she is able to broaden Sen’s entitlement approach and highlight the importance of charitable giving, social relations, and the links between local economies and the larger food system.

In the second chapter, “Researching Food in Mwanza,” Flynn explores the ways in which people living in an urban setting grapple with obtaining food on a daily basis. Through quantitative and qualitative methods, she draws a picture of food acquisition and consumption by focusing on variables of ethnicity, class, gender, and age. Enriching her analysis are the perceptions, life stories, and observations she collected from 357 people—market vendors and administrators, African and African Asian men and women, and street children.

Chapter 3 discusses changing patterns of food consumption and highlights the importance of the marketplace and purchased food. Chapter 4 considers food entitlement processes and provisioning through the lens of ethnicity and gender. Flynn shows how such basic activities as meal preparation, managing leftovers, and obtaining water for cooking, drinking, and cleaning—as well as such factors as distance to the market and lack of electricity—affect food provisioning, acquisition, and consumption. For the reader who has not experienced or even considered the daily life of the urban poor in a non-Western setting, these descriptions will be illuminating. They offer a different reality within which to frame a rethinking of the extraordinary complexities involved in bringing food to the table.

Flynn’s research has identified a variety of coping strategies, including urban farming (chapter 7). Her discussion of shifting government policies may enlighten readers about advocacy issues that need to be addressed in all communities where people are hungry and the source of food is insecure. Chapter 6, “Pooling, Straddling, Juggling, and Balancing on One Foot,” shows how household income is distributed, how decisions are made, and how a variety of alliances, including intra- and extrahousehold relations, have an impact on food availability.