**David Beriss, David E. Sutton, ed..** *The Restaurants Book: Ethnographies of Where We Eat.* Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2007. 256 pp. $29.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-84520-755-7.

From a historical perspective, the rise of the restaurant is often attributed to a perfect storm of social, political, and economic conditions that concentrated people (most notably travelers), money, and commercial activity in urban hubs. Those who ate out within a framework of social obligation, as opposed to those who did so as a commercial transaction, operated under specific, culturally defined obligations that often governed how travelers, strangers, and neighbors were to be treated. As people began to travel further from home, and were unable to dine with acquaintances, eating out was transformed into a commercial venture. The ethnographic lens of *The Restaurants Book* reframes some of the many types of encounters that take place in restaurants to account for exchanges and relationships that play out at different times in particular places.

The project grew out of a 2004 American Anthropological Association conference call for papers on "Restaurants," which elicited a number of ethnographic accounts of the internal dynamics of restaurants, as well as restaurants' relationships to larger communities, issues, and social concerns. *The Restaurants Book* is organized thematically, suggesting the progression of a meal. It opens with a "Starter" that prefaces the volume, and in which editor-collaborators David Beriss and David E. Sutton share their observations about the role of restaurants in reflecting the social and cultural lives of our contemporary world. Beriss and Sutton convincingly present the case for restaurants as "total social phenomena," asserting that restaurants are highly sensory environments in which identities are formed and maintained (p. 3). For these reasons and others, Beriss and Sutton suggest that contemporary restaurants are "ideal postmodern institutions" (p. 1).

It is only fitting that Beriss, an associate professor and chair of the University of New Orleans Department of Anthropology, also locates the evolution of this volume within the temporal context of the impact of Hurricane Katrina on the New

Orleans restaurant industry--arguably one of the nation's most revered foodie tourist destinations. He notes that "in the months following the disaster, restaurants became the index of the city's recovery, as well as an essential social space in which New Orleanians, working to rebuild their communities, sought each other out…. Sharing emblematic local foods in reopened restaurants proved to be an essential part of reconnecting with the city" (p. 2). Beriss argues that in post-Katrina New Orleans, restaurants seemingly exceeded their function as business ventures, and embodied public debates over the future of the city, the precarious nature of its political leadership, the fragility of racial and ethnic relations, and opinions about who should serve as stewards of local culture.

In the section titled "Small Plates," three contributing authors present ethnographic snapshots that provide a window into the embodied practices, kinship networks, and regional identifications that take place behind the scenes in restaurant settings, and might be invisible to casual diners. While these are glimpses of the intimate, internal relations and machinations that take place within the restaurant, they also connect to larger social issues. Sociologist Karla Erickson assesses how interpersonal relationships and exchanges are influenced by the staging of bodies within the social world of a Tex-Mex restaurant space. Anthropologist Michael Hernandez dispels the notion that food and family have become divorced from each other, and presents a modified concept of family structure that a Chinese immigrant restaurant owner uses to incorporate her employees into an improvised familial unit. Food studies scholar Amy Trubek counters a commonly held perception that modernization and the "era of global convenience cuisine" will drive regional American cuisine into one of two directions: elitist or populist (p. 35). Trubek presents a modern notion of a *"cuisine du terroir*, with fidelity to

place and season," as practiced by Wisconsin chef Odessa Piper (pp. 35-36).

The "Mains" section continues to build on these broadly defined themes, touching on social and historical contexts, and delving more deeply into the realms of nostalgia, authenticity, memory, tradition, ethnic identity, and continuity with the past. Winnie Lem and Gerald Mars critically assess gendered inequities and divisions of labor that impact the success of family-run ethnic restaurants in Paris and northern Italy. In his essay "Ethnic Succession and the New American Restaurant Cuisine," nutrition, food studies, and public health scholar Krishendu Ray draws attention to patterns of ethnic succession within the fine dining segment of the American restaurant industry. He attends to the ethnically segmented nature of the restaurant labor force itself, as well as its relationship with changing tastes.

While immigrant and ethnic cuisines are often discussed in terms of their commodification and appeal to tourists' appetites for the authentic or the exotic, several essays in this section also draw attention to local and heritage diners' engagements with preserving, maintaining, or representing their culture to visiting publics as well as themselves. In addition to his assertions about the significance of tourism to New Orleans culture and economy, Beriss posits that New Orleans' residents hold restaurateurs accountable for "correctly" or authentically representing the city's long standing local food culture and traditions. "Tourists might be the motor behind the economy, but their tastes would not be allowed to define New Orleans culture" (p. 153).

Similarly, in her study of spectacular restaurant practices in Russian Jewish New York City, performance studies scholar Eve Jochnowitz introduces culinary tourism as a form of exploratory eating in which locals, out-of-towners, and Russophones engage. In this instance, the appeal of the authentic is linked not only to travel to partic-

ular geographic locales, but also back in time. She asserts, "Most frequently, when we think of tourism, we are thinking of travel through space, or in the case of immigrant and ethnic cuisine, foodways coming to us from another place. In the Jewish context, culinary tourism is frequently about travel through time.... The message could not be more explicit: what is old is real" (p. 119).

For "Dessert," Sutton offers an anthropological meditation on tipping. The act of leaving a gratuity is neither a universal practice, nor central to the meal or the organizing principles of the institution of the restaurant itself. In Sutton's estimation, tipping functions as a kind of Maussian gift, a complex material and symbolic manifestation of social relations.

Within the semiotics of dining, the digestif is usually a heavy, sometimes dark or bitter, alcoholic spirit that aids in the digestion of a meal. Michael Herzfield's "Postprandial Imaginings" serve not to sweeten the palate, but to self-reflexively assess the omissions and "under represented critical issues" within the text that in his estimation require some additional chewing over (p. 205). Herzfield calls attention to the under-theorization of the physical space of the restaurant, and its implications for both kitchen and dining room performances. He also cautions readers to consider the cultural specificity of these ethnographies, the majority of which were conducted in American settings. In closing, Herzfield calls for ethnographic and historical investigations into the "uses of pace and rhythm [and] temporal frames of cultural change" (p. 208). I would echo his prompts, as well as push readers to explicitly consider each of these ethnographies in relation to overarching hospitality industry structures and practices.

Despite its anthropological bent, the volume does not stop at the level of thick description. This timely collection of restaurant-based ethnographies coherently weaves together a number of in-terdisciplinary perspectives and theoretical frameworks that have come to shape the emergent and diverse scholarly field of food studies. It soundly and successfully integrates political and economic analysis with specific cultural and historic contexts, and addresses many of the dynamic social processes that influence what, how, and where foods are being served to discerning diners. Moreover, the collection offers a rigorous assessment of what is at stake for those who cook, serve, and eat out.

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