

# Feeding the body, the mind and the soul



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# Introduction

- **Eating Healthily in an anthropological perspective**
  - To unpack the discourses and the set of values behind them
- **The Title**
  - Feeding the body, the mind and the soul



# Food and Eating in Contemporary Society

- **Centrality and Visibility of Food and Eating**
  - Their virtual omnipresence in our lives
    - **What we eat is also what we talk about, discuss, watch on TV, read**
    - **Meeting point for political, environmental, ethical and identity issues**
    - **From the kitchen table to the dining and bedroom**



## Food and Eating in Contemporary Society

- Centrality and Visibility of Food and Eating
  - Their virtual omnipresence in our lives
    - New eating disorder: orthorexia, or how to eat right
    - Foodscape – a form of art with food as a medium
    - Leisure, entertainment and cultural product
    - Cooking as a new way to stardom

Carl Wener Photographer

# Food and Eating in Contemporary Society



- Theoretical Explanations
  - Claude Fishler and gastroanomie
  - Jean Pierre Poulain and the globalization process
  - Bauman and Giddens and the growing Individualism
  - Mary Erbstat : we are evaluated by what we put on our plate
  - Sander Gilman and the quixotic task of controlling our body

Aqui você escreve o título



- Medical and Demographic Explanations
  - Increasing rates of chronic heart diseases, diabetes, obesity
  - Ageing of the world population
  - Nutritional Knowledge
  - Environmental Crisis

# Food and Eating in Contemporary Society

- Two ideological trends:
  - Gastronomization of everyday life – a sensuous approach to food and eating
  - Healthy Eating - retraining us in how to eat correctly
- Why retraining?
  - To eat is a continuous learning activity throughout our lives
    - **To choose what is edible**
    - **Good and bad food**
    - **Eating rules: what, who, when and how to eat**
    - **New nutritional knowledge**



# Food and Eating in Contemporary Society



- Healthy Eating is a social construction
  - **It is not an objective reflection of nutritional and environmental facts**
- “Eat organically, eat naturally , eat healthy, eat high fiber, eat low carbon, eat slowly (or at least eat slow food) and you are by definition a better person than those who don’t.” (Sander Gilman, Fat, A Cultural History of Obesity, 2008,pp.174)

# Healthy Eating

- Healthy Eating through history
  - “Mediterranean diet” of Italians immigrants and the North American diet of XX century (Levenstein)
- Unpacking modern Healthy Eating
  - Internet(blog, sites, etc.) and different written materials (social movements, government agencies,etc)
  - Empirical research
  - Interviews with Brazilians
  - Advertising Campaings



# Healthy Eating Discourses



## – Differences

- **Hierarchy among foods and cooking techniques**
- **The function of food and eating in healthiness**
- **Conceptions of the body (machine, temple , etc.)**
- **The role of exercises and fitness for our health**
- **Conceptions of nature and our relationship with it**
- **The role of production chain/network for healthy eating**
- **The links between food and pleasure**
- **The individual's responsibility for change**
- **The role of the hectic contemporary urban lifestyle , capitalism, food industry and nutritional knowledge**
- **Proponents and intermediaries**

# Healthy Eating Discourses

- Functional and medical

- “Let your food be your medicine and your medicine be your food”

*“Food is medicine; some are good and others are bad. In each meal we can contribute to our health and longevity or to injure them. Most people choose food based in what makes them feel well in the short term, that satisfies their senses and gives them pleasure: they do not understand that the banquet of today can be the tragedy of tomorrow.” (Dr. Carlo Braghini, Brazilian, Interview to Caio Fleury, 26/03/2013).*

- Proponents: government agencies, medical doctors and nutritionists, public policies, academics, food complements industry



Antidote dishes  
Cancer  
Alzheimer



# Healthy Eating Discourses



- Political and ethical eating
  - Food and eating are instruments for changing the way we produce our food. We cannot eat healthily if we do not produce healthily. Healthy food is a human right.
  - ***“Through adding value to the product and creating spaces for markets which allow for direct sales between producers and consumers we can eliminate the middleman and those who speculate on the fundamental right to healthy food and ensure, regularity, quantity and quality in the supply of food.” Patrus Ananias, Brazilian Agriculture Minister. 38 Expointer,4/07/2015***
- Proponents: government and international agencies, social movements, public policies, politicians, academics, eco chefs

# Healthy Eating Discourses



- Spiritual and Esoteric Eating
  - Food is the ambassador to the cosmos, linking everybody to everybody and everything. To eat healthy is to eat with good energy, eat with mindfulness.
- ***“Now I have been interested in spiritual nutrition and nutrients. I am reading a book about spiritual baking and meals...”(F. 32 years old, no religion)***

Proponents: esoteric, buddhists, spiritual and alternative groups and movements

## Healthy Eating Discourses

### – Pop Healthy Eating

- The search for the newest food and ingredient that can help you to be health and thin. Healthy eating, can be anything so long as it is a novelty: yoggy berry, almond milk, gluten free, organics , spiritual ingredients, etc.

### – *“I am always looking to something new. I post things that I think are interesting and also see Carol Buffara’s blog, Gwyneth Paltrow’s site,...I trv everything that make sense to me. .. No strict rules and I exercise a lot. That is my only body...)*F,25 years old)

- Proponents: artistic circles, fashion bloggers, yuppies, ”diets enthusiastic”, “gurus” of all types



# Healthy Eating Discourses



- Healthy eating discourses are social constructs to approach reality
- Blurred boundaries among them
  - **Mindfulness ,energy, pollution, detox**
  - **Nutritionist vocabulary**
- Real people in real life
  - Patchwork of ideas and practices that are negotiated in relation to existing culinary traditions ,eating habits, perceptions of food, body, etc. and personal circumstances.
  - Development of strategies to eat healthily
  - “If I will listen to everything and everybody I would not eat. I make my own choices, after pondering the alternatives.”

# Healthy Eating-Morality



- To eat healthily has become a categorical imperative
  - Food and eating it is not a private act any more
  - It is a public concern
- Reestablishment of a new link between food and health
  - Sickness is not only a question of medicine but also of food
- De-culturalized /traditionalized notion of food where taste and pleasure are almost absent as key references
  - Culture reserved for traditional community and preservation of their lifestyle (artisan foods etc)
  - Eco chefs as key intermediaries between healthy food and tasty food

# Healthy Eating-Morality

- Body size control (Fativism and Body Acceptance)
  - Fat as unhealthiness
  - Fat as a question of morals: what you eat shows what you are

Nature is seen as our ideal model

- Healthy eating is an attempt to bringing us closer to nature.
- The culture intervention in food is now what represents regression
- The irony is that “civilization” in its original sense is counterposed nature; but this is no longer the case.





The End  
Thanks