

Lecture Week Nine – Food Literacies

1 Introduction: Food Skills in Decline

Britain's cookery skills and habits are in decline, with the least well-off consumers increasingly turning to a diet of calorie-laden convenience foods and fatty ready meals to beat austerity. Despite our obsession with high profile chefs, cookery books, and foodie TV shows, data compiled by retail analyst Kantar Worldpanel shows that consumers, particularly those who are short of money, time or both, are spending a bigger share of their food budgets on unhealthy frozen and chilled products. Home cooking has declined most among those whose food budgets are under the most pressure, especially families earning under £25,000 a year, as poorer consumers opt for cheap and "filling" prepared foods on offer in supermarket price promotions rather than fresh produce.

Giles Quick, director of Kantar Worldpanel, which electronically tracks the shopping habits of a sample of 30,000 British households, said the data showed British consumers had effectively cut their ties to the kitchen. Quick said that recession and the pressures of modern life had changed both the way consumers shop and their relationship with food in a way that was causing many to eat unhealthily and exacerbating existing serious public health problems such as obesity. He called for serious measures to be introduced to change consumer food buying habits, including reductions in VAT for the healthiest product lines, and restrictions on the ability of retailers to offer cheap "buy one get one free" promotions on food that is high in fat, sugar and salt. Although ministers prefer supermarkets to sign up to a "softly-softly" approach to changing consumer behaviour, Quick said this was not enough to change entrenched habits: "The 'nudge' approach – the principle of working with the grain of human psychology – needs a push or perhaps even a shove."

<http://www.theguardian.com/money/2013/sep/05/home-cooking-decline-low-income-ready-meals>

It is widely perceived that food skills in households are on the decline. For instance, our meals are substantially different from what our mothers or grandmothers prepared and we are less likely to cook from basic ingredients. The decline in domestic food preparation and cooking skills is thought to be due in part to the readily available, plentiful, affordable and convenience of processed, pre-prepared and take-out food. The devaluation of food skills may also have contributed to the decline. Whereas generations past may have taken great pride in the preparation of home cooked meals, this does not seem to be as commonplace today. Are food skills a lost art? This question raises some important issues such as, what impact do food skills, specifically a loss and/or devaluation of food skills, have on food choices and therefore diet quality, nutritional status and health?

http://www.moreaboutmilk.com/media/nutrition_file_newsletters/may_2013_nffhe.pdf

Debate about the decline of domestic cooking skills is sometimes focused on the disappearance of the skills themselves. Concern is associated with the self-identification and self-value that, it is argued, come from having useful and necessary cooking skills (Gofton, 1995).

More often however, concern lies with 'cooking skills as a means to an end'. It is argued that a decline of cooking skills can be connected with a commensurate decline in life-enhancement, family relationships and social processes (Longfield, 1996; Mintz, 1996; Shore, 2002), the role (whether subjugated or emancipated) of women as food providers (Dixey, 1996) and an ability to follow dietary guidelines and control diet (Department of Health [UK], 1996; Leather, 1996).

A decline in cooking skills is also a key reason for the ever-increasing power of food industries and retailers say Stitt et al. (1996) and Ritzer (1996).

<http://www.mv.helsinki.fi/home/palojoki/english/GBG%202007/francesshort.pdf>

This well-documented shift towards eating away from home has created a movement to focus on fast food and other chain restaurants as the target of public health initiatives combating obesity. However, few studies have examined whether these trends towards eating out more and cooking less have continued in recent years. There is no evidence to suggest that the trend towards increased away-from-home food consumption should continue indefinitely, and it is possible that US consumers have already reached a peak in terms of how much eat out. A levelling off of this trend could have implications for where efforts for improving the US diet and reducing excess energy intake are directed.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3639863/>

“Developing cooking and food preparation skills at a young age translates into making better food choices later in life”
<http://www.healcapebreton.com/2014/03/1900/>

Convenience has emerged as a key factor in consumer food choices, and many social and environmental factors have contributed to a decline in time spent in the kitchen. Increases in energy intake and sedentary behaviour have many health consequences, including excess weight, obesity and increased risk of developing non-communicable diseases. Based on these transformations to our food habits and environment, it is time to reassess what we now consider ‘food skills’ on the island of Ireland and how these skills might affect our diet and consequently our health.

<http://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Publications/Research%20Reports/Food-Skills-Edited-Final-Report.pdf>

<http://www.safefood.eu/Publications/Research-reports/Food-Skills-Definitions,-influences-and-relations.aspx>

Since the 1960s, Americans have been cooking at home less and eating out more. Only a little more than half of US adults report cooking on any given day. A Harris Interactive poll reflects this trend. Of 2,503 adults, 14 percent said they don’t enjoy cooking and seven percent said they don’t cook at all. Only 41 percent said they prepare meals at home five or more times a week. Why are people cooking less? Is it because home economic courses aren’t being taught at school as they once were? Or is the sheer abundance of frozen meals, prepared entrees, and convenience foods found in grocery store aisles too enticing? Maybe the countless restaurants you pass on your ride home have stolen your joy of cooking. It’s not necessary to avoid restaurants altogether, but if you stay out of the kitchen, it will have a negative impact on your health. There is a healthy balance between eating out and cooking at home, no matter your cooking skills.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/cooking-skills-decline-stacy-klone>

2 Same Edition – Contradictory Articles

The world’s gone mad. I realised this when I read that Ribena had been moved behind the shop counter, shrouded in a brown paper bag: Jamie Oliver had evidently been demonstrating outside No10 holding a square purple carton of the stuff. When I was growing up, a glass of Ribena was administered when I had tonsillitis. It was a luxury: healthy, delicious. Lucozade, too, in its coloured cellophane, like a parcel, was for medicinal purposes only. Fizzy drinks only appeared at Christmas, when mum was despatched to Bonds in Chelmsford to buy ‘bombs’ for the soda syphon (thank goodness Islamic radicalism had yet to be invented). Thus armed, she was able to render weak orange squash that bit more festive. It was partly poverty that kept me and my six brothers and sisters immune from obesity. We couldn’t afford ready meals, or shop-bought cake and bread, except on rare occasions. The difference now is that equation has been reversed, entirely. The well-off cook from scratch in their lovely Poggenpohl kitchens, while the poor live on processed food, laced with salt and sugar due to the poor quality of the raw ingredients.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3288195/LIZ-JONES-Forget-food-industry-s-mums-ve-kids-fat.html>

Like most well-meaning mothers, I try to shop sensibly for my husband Chris and our children, Rosie, four, and Felix, two. So when I was asked to work out our sugar consumption, based on a weekly shop, I didn’t think we’d have much cause for concern: we aren’t big on junk food and the children are young enough we are able to limit their intake. So it was staggering to discover that we were chomping through approximately 5lb of sugar a week. To put it another way, that’s the same amount of sugar as you find in 215 Krispy Kreme doughnuts. We wouldn’t eat that many in a decade!

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3288029/Oh-sugar-healthy-family-eating-equivalent-215-Krispy-Kremes-WEEK-One-mother-s-shockingly-sugary-meal-diary-converted-doughnuts.html>

3 Food Skills Across the Years

3.1 The Homestead

“From the perspective of a single life such as Martha Ballard’s, things can often seem unchanging. The ins and outs of Martha’s days – hoeing, sowing, weeding, harvesting, baking, cooking, churning, milking, year after year after year – seemed an ageless continuation of what had long been the province of rural women’s work. Martha passed these skills and responsibilities down to her daughters and to other young helpers who apprenticed in her household” (Vileisis, 2008, p. 28).

3.2 Generational Skills

“The skills of good cooking were most often passed from mother to daughter in preindustrial America, but not all young women had the advantage of motherly training... Simmons’s difficult path prompted her to write a book to guide other young women in the realm of cooking” (Vileisis, 2008, p. 30).

“While American Cookery corroborates the intimate ties between a late eighteenth-century cook, her food, and the places and particulars that produced it, the cookbook also hints at some significant trends that were just starting to diminish housewives’ first-hand knowledge of their foods and foodsheds” (Vileisis, 2008, p. 31).

“When a food came from far away, a cook could not have intimate knowledge about where and how it was made” (Vileisis, 2008, p. 31).

“Beyond the lengthening distance between farms and city markets, American Cookery hints at another social shift that would play a key role in diminishing housewives’ first-hand knowledge of their foods’ provenance. In the well-heeled households... the mistresses were not doing the cooking” (Vileisis, 2008, p. 32).

3.3 Urban Life in the Cities

“Through most of the nineteenth century, cooking experts had agreed that a woman’s senses were her best guide when it came to choosing foods at markets. Appearance was paramount” (Vileisis, 2008, p. 74).

“This was all well and fine for most leafy, fleshy foods stacked in city market stalls, but by the 1890s, a whole new class of manufactured products – called ‘made-foods’ or ‘prepared foods’ began to enter the diets of urban middle-class eaters” (Vileisis, 2008, p. 74).

3.4 Transportation & Storage

“Now we live among so many black boxes – televisions, computers, cell phones, and microwave ovens – all of which operate in such hidden ways that one needs an advanced degree in electrical engineering to understand them. It may be difficult, then, for us to fathom living in a world where most objects in daily use made sense, where people expected that household tools and objects be transparent in their workings. But try to imagine, for it was into this world that cans made their debut” (Vileisis, 2008, p. 75).

“Today, canned foods seem comfortably familiar. When we cut open with a few cranks of a can opener, these perfect cylinders of shiny metal readily reveal their contents” (Vileisis, 2008, p. 75).

3.5 Mechanisation & Processing

“Most city shoppers had come to rely on the judgement of a local butcher. The best butchers took their responsibilities quite seriously, carefully inspecting the living animals for any signs of disease or mistreatment before slaughter” (Vileisis, 2008, p. 69).

“The monumental changes in the meatpacking industry illustrate a cycle that is worth notice, for it would happen again and again with other foods. The criteria that informed shoppers’ thinking how to buy meat derived from a time when people either raised their own animals to be butchered or trusted a butcher who knew the farmers supplying his meats” (Vileisis, 2008, p. 70).

During this transitional period, as more and more small farmers sent their products from greater distances by rail to more small farms sent their products from greater distances by rail to increasingly glutted and crowded city markets, food quality often declined because foods produced in traditional ways couldn’t endure travel and still meet shoppers’ customary expectations at the market” (Vileisis, 2008, p. 70).

4 Home Economics Learning Food Skills

<https://youtu.be/nyDjXLLGxVk>

4.1 Bake Cookies All Day?

<https://youtu.be/y8zdx3WFnVQ>

4.2 Food Skills

The cooking skills training was developed with an emphasis on enabling people who work or volunteer with community groups to learn how to make healthy foods and become Food 4 Health trainers. The knowledge and skills gained could then be used to provide education and training in communities across Middlesbrough. Anyone wishing to provide healthy cooking sessions would be supported by Food 4 Health materials, advice and information. Funding to create cooking groups and provide practical cooking sessions was also provided to trainers

<http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=1724&p=0>

This evaluation demonstrates that the Food Skills for Families program continued to achieve each of its stated goals and to have a positive impact on participants. Most significantly, the program has positively influenced healthier eating behaviour. Participants reported eating more fruits and vegetables every day as a result of taking this program; having a higher level of knowledge about what foods are healthy; cooking more meals from “scratch;” and having a higher level of confidence about preparing and cooking healthy foods, trying new foods, applying food safety procedures and understanding nutrition facts on food labels. These results are consistent with previous evaluations

http://www.foodskillsforfamilies.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Food-Skills-for-Families_WEB.pdf

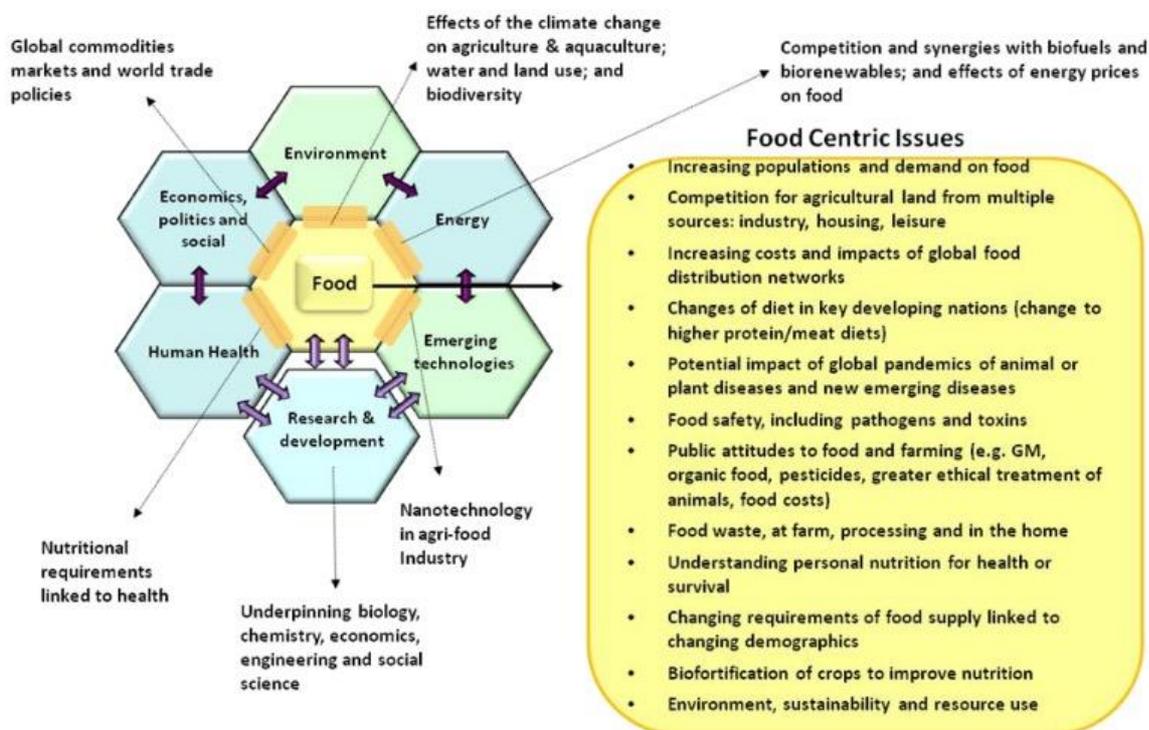
4.3 Community Food Skills

One of the barriers to a healthy diet is having the skills, knowledge and confidence to shop for, and prepare, healthy meals. Community-based cookery sessions can offer a relaxed environment to learn cookery skills. Sessions can either happen within an existing group or be open to all. They might take place in a local community centre but some areas have community kitchens for hire. CFHS works to demonstrate the benefits of community cookery sessions, and to share learning from community food initiatives in order to improve their practice.

<http://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/our-work/cookery-skills/>

4.4 Government Support for Food Skills

Food: from agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries to processing, consumer affairs and diet



https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/283195/10-929-high-level-skills-for-food.pdf

| Services |
|--------------------------------|
| Consultancy Services |
| Contract Services |
| Customised Awards |
| Examination Services |
| Credit Rating |
| Credit Rated Programmes |
| Case Studies |
| Contact Details |

Certificate in Community Food and Nutrition Skills

| Unit | SCQF Level | SCQF Credit Points | Period of Credit Rating From: | Period of Credit Rating To: |
|---|------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Healthy eating and cooking group facilitation | 6 | 5 | 25/11/09 | 30/11/14 |
| Teaching methods and community development | 6 | 2 | 25/11/09 | 30/11/14 |
| Catering for health | 6 | 2 | 25/11/09 | 30/11/14 |
| Barriers and solutions to a healthy diet | 6 | 2 | 25/11/09 | 30/11/14 |
| Nutritional guidance for babies, children and women of childbearing age | 6 | 2 | 25/11/09 | 30/11/14 |
| Nutrition and older people | 5 | 2 | 25/11/09 | 30/11/14 |
| Weight management and obesity | 6 | 2 | 25/11/09 | 30/11/14 |
| Introduction to cultural and ethical diets | 5 | 2 | 25/11/09 | 30/11/14 |

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/38495.html>

To equip participants with the nutrition knowledge and skills to cascade evidence based, consistent food and nutrition messages to community groups they work with.

www.cardiffandvaleuhb.wales.nhs.uk/community-food-and-nutrition-skills-course

Our mission is to shape the health and wellbeing of current and future generations and contribute to a healthier world, by providing better access to food education for everyone. We work in schools, where our Kitchen Garden Project resources educate primary school children about the joys of growing and cooking from scratch; in communities, where our Ministry of Food programme inspires people of all ages to get in the kitchen and give cooking a go; and with disengaged young people, where our Fifteen Apprenticeship Programme provides inspiration and support to those pursuing a career in the food industry.

<http://www.jamieoliverfoodfoundation.org.uk/>

NUTRITION SKILLS FOR LIFE™ formerly the Increased Dietetic Capacity Grant Scheme is a programme of quality assured nutrition skills training and initiatives developed and co-ordinated by dietitians working in the NHS in Wales. The programme aims to support a wide range of community workers, including those from health, social care and third sector organisations to promote healthy eating and incorporate food and nutrition skills into their work. The programme aims to reach community groups who may not have the confidence to prepare and eat a healthy balanced diet. By training those who work closely with, and understand the needs of local people, the programme successfully supports communities across Wales to learn more about healthy eating.

<http://www.physicalactivityandnutritionwales.org.uk/page.cfm?orgid=740&pid=29569>

More and more people in the UK are lacking the skills and knowledge they need to make healthy food choices. It's no wonder the obesity epidemic is growing at an alarming rate. So we work within communities that need us most to help people of all ages learn and pass on knowledge about food, cooking and healthier lifestyles.

<http://www.focusonfood.org/>

The evaluation shows that a year after the course, participants had increased, beneficially, the percentage of energy they obtained from carbohydrate (2.4% more than people who had not attended a club). Less desirably, a year after the programme was completed, cooking club members were more likely to describe their diet as healthier than it actually was, compared to people who had not taken part in the clubs. There was no evidence that the cooking club had an

effect on other aspects of diet, or on knowledge, attitudes or physical health, though it is possible that the study was too small to be able to detect such changes

<http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=vURg7hgAOGM%3D&tabid=3322>

5 Food Skills Replaced by Convenience

How Convenience Has Taken Over American Food

<https://youtu.be/QdvGEgLQIW0>

Japan Vending Machines - Eric Meal Time #19

<https://youtu.be/4uYOTxsy4Zk>

5.1 Jamie & Nigella

Jamie Oliver's Incredible Christmas Turkey Recipe

<https://youtu.be/Y6wJnu7fPTQ>

Nigella LAWSON'S Golden Spaghetti RINGLETS

<https://youtu.be/np4Vtow-sbQ>

5.2 Hells Kitchen

Gordon Ramsay Reaches Breaking Point - Best Of Kitchen Nightmares

<https://youtu.be/WwjUfM54ehE>

5.3 Great British Bake Off

Great British Bake Off - Balaclavas

<https://youtu.be/B19hdbfyulY>

5.4 Grassroots Food Skills

Made In Hackney Video

<https://youtu.be/olmOoVkbqRE>

6 Summary

“Ultimately, if our market-driven society is to build a healthier food system, we as consumers will need to recognise how our everyday choices effect the larger environment and, then, to forge a new and influential role for ourselves. In an age when farms and factories of food production seem impossibly remote from our dinner plates, history can sharpen our outlook with its perspective and its ironies, and remind us of the opportunity for change” (Vileisis, 2008, p. 11).

“What is needed for this experiment to succeed is the development of a new kitchen literacy that encompasses awareness that what we eat is linked to real people and real places. It must include a practical understanding of how to decipher the full range of information offered up on food labels – from organic certification, to disingenuous strategies some companies may use to ‘green up’ a standard product. But it must also encompass a broader understanding of how our culture and our politics affect the people and land that supply our food.” (Vileisis, 2008, p. 238).

7 References:

Vileisis, A. (2008). *Kitchen Literacy*. Washington: Island Press.