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January 24, 2017
Week 3
Word Count: 253

“Spices were valued because they were extremely difficult to obtain...because it was so heavily traded, pepper eventually lost its ‘golden’ status and fell to be considered among the most prosaic of spices” (Newman, 2013: 18,20)

“In raising the question of who gets to eat and who gets eaten or, alternatively, who is a ‘who’ and who is a ‘what,’ the literature of the hearth space box fixes and destabilizes social hierarchy...the end of the fireplace signals the beginning of modernity... The literary nostalgia for the hearth arose alongside a widespread unease with the “cheerless” stove” (Tompkins, 2012: 28, 32, 37).

“Essential oils can add great flavor to your cooking...people consume them topically, aromatically, or as a part of their diet...therapeutic grade essential oils are very complex, highly concentrated, and require a large amount of plant material to produce a small amount” (Witwicki, 2017).

At the center of the story of the hearth, we should consider the significance of heat. In *Racial Indigestion*, the hearth is the place of the contained fire that provides both light and warmth. As quoted by Tompkins, Nathaniel Hawthorne writes in his essay, “Fire Worship,” about the light of the fire that provides a scene that illuminates the heart of the human spirit (Tompkins, 2012: 32). The hearth is used in literature to bring all kinds of creatures to the heat and is a platform for storytelling and performance that destabilizes social norms. The sensation of heat is culturally and historically important in food. In *The Secret Financial Life of Food*, we learn that Roman banquets demanded spiced wines to add heat to the atmosphere (Newman, 2013: 18)

The texts this week continue to answer how nostalgia and tradition set a place for the food that we eat. If the hearth was a setting for connection across identities, we find that the modern stove closes the opportunity for those connections and reinforces cultural separation. The commodification of grain and spice has set a standard for value that relies on a hierarchical society for the success of a global economy. Despite this, eating traditions are still important. Certain techniques, such as the use of essential oils in cooking, occasionally make news and inform new people about old customs. Moving forward, my final question is how does this nostalgia happen and what does it mean to pretend that historical traditions are something new?

Newman, Kara. (2013). *The Secret Financial Life of Food: From Commodities Markets to Supermarkets*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Tompkins, Kyla Wazana. (2012). *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century*. New York: New York University Press.

Witwicki, Alysha. (2017). Cooking with essential oils can pack a flavor punch. *Journal Sentinel*. Retrieved from <http://www.jsonline.com/story/life/food/2017/01/17/cooking-essential-oils-can-pack-flavor-punch/96457560/>