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Article

Counter Culture: The Making of Feminist Food in Feminist Restaurants, Cafes, and Coffeehouses

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Abstract

Self-identified feminist restaurants and cafes of the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and Canada acted as spaces that challenged the status quo around cooking and consumption through their creation of feminist food. Each restaurant and cafe defined “feminist food” differently depending on the particular feminist ethics of the restaurant owners. Depending on the restaurant, making their food feminist revolved around vegetarian ethics, labour issues, cost, and sourcing of products. By looking at what was included and banned on these restaurant menus, this article shows the ways that food could be labelled as feminist. Furthermore, this piece demonstrates how one could assert feminism within a business dedicated to food—one in which complex relationships with the kitchen can also be analyzed (the kitchen being often labelled a "traditional" place for women).

Résumé

Les restaurants et les cafés canadiens et américains des années 1970 et 1980 qui s’identifiaient comme étant féministes constituaient des espaces pour contester les statu quo liés à la cuisine et à la consommation. C’est notamment par la création de plats ‘féministes’ que ces restaurants et ces cafés pouvaient contester certaines normes. Chaque lieu définissait ce type de nourriture différemment, soit par le type de féminisme préconisé ou l’éthique des propriétaires. Selon le restaurant, on pouvait noter des exemples de féminisme soit par le recours à l’éthique végétalienne ou végétarienne; l’organisation et la gestion de la main d’oeuvre; les prix; et l’inventaire des produits. Cet article, à la suite d’une analyse des menus, montre comment on peut qualifier un mets comme étant féministe. On aborde également le fait d’affirmer d’une identité féministe dans un contexte commercial, là où les liens avec la cuisine, comme lieu et comme activité, étaient complexes (la cuisine, étant, traditionnellement, le lieu des femmes).

1 Sociologists Nicki Lisa Cole and Alison Dahl Crossley argue that in present times, “when discourses of consumption and women’s independence intersect, they do so in a manner that equates independent womanhood with consumption.”[1] Scholars of post-feminism[2] often go one step further in arguing that consumption is the hallmark of post-feminism, in that a woman’s power is completely tied to her conspicuous purchasing as an individual rather than collectivist organizing. However, critical theorist Nancy Fraser recently made headlines with her piece in *The Guardian*, “How Feminism Became Capitalism’s Handmaiden,” in which she argued that while the women’s movement once critiqued capitalist exploitation, its ideas bolstered neoliberalism. For Fraser, these questions around money and power are not new to ideas of post-feminism; for her, feminism and economics have always been connected, whether they are viewed as diametrically opposed or mobilized as two complimentary concepts. North American feminists, living within a consumer society, face the tensions between capitalism and a multitude of feminisms daily. How does consumption impact feminist identities? Does feminist consumption even exist? I posit that rather than being a passive activity, feminist

consumption is interlinked with production. The creation of feminist food in feminist restaurants of the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and Canada illustrates this dynamic.

2 The idea of consuming as a feminist relies upon a liberal framework that produces and is produced by capitalism. The self-made individual is a self-bought individual. One's identity is constituted through purchasing, or not purchasing, specific material goods. The identity of the products shapes the identity of the individual; or, in the words of sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, "[t]aste classifies, and it classifies the classifier." [3] Structuralists such as Ferdinand de Saussure, who theorized how signs make meaning,[4] demonstrated that while all symbols are laden with meaning, certain material objects carry stronger signifiers. Scholars of Food Studies[5] have repeatedly argued, especially within the field's more anthropological writings influenced by Claude Levi Strauss's structuralist ideas, that food, likewise, has important ties to identity and culture.[6] Even though poststructuralists such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault showed how meanings can change over time, creating power relationships and moulding identities, the general premise that identities are constructed through alignment with symbols, purchased in the marketplace, remains a powerful framework.[7] Whether it is buying or making meals, daily choices over food, which have primarily been in the domain of women in the United States and Canada, make a statement about one's identity. "You are what you eat", whether made or bought. Choices over food cause a person to simultaneously consume and produce themselves. The seemingly simple act of eating an apple constructs one's identity and re-produces and creates new meaning out of this act.[8] Feminist consumption thus depends on feminist production and through feminist consumption, one reconstitutes and produces both present and future feminist culture.

3 The relationship between feminist consumption and production has historical roots. In 1971, essayist Judy Syfers wrote, "I want a wife who will plan the menus, do the necessary grocery shopping, prepare the meals, serve them pleasantly, and then do the cleaning up while I do my studying."[9] Journalist Pat Mainardi's 1970 piece "The Politics of Housework"[10] and Jane O'Reilly's "The Housewife's Moment of Truth,"[11] similarly provided feminist critiques focused on the physical and emotional labour of cooking. Coming out of the consciousness-raising groups of the late 1960s and early 1970s, feminists during the so-called Second Wave[12] generated a multitude of articles criticizing the social expectation that women be the primary cooks and cleaners within their households. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*[13] is one of the most famous examples and her influence has been extensively documented.[14] However, with the exception of Warren Belasco's *Appetite for Change*,[15] academics have largely ignored how some feminists during the 1960s and 1970s focused on the labour issues surrounding cooking, while being fully aware of the importance of cooking for health and the environment. Rather than resisting cooking, these feminists used women's socially naturalized relationship with the kitchen for empowerment.

4 Between 1972 and the late 1980s, self-identified feminists founded over 250 restaurants, cafes, and coffeehouses[16] in the United States and Canada, "serving up" activism with a side of "feminist food." Self-identified feminist restaurants and cafes[17] acted as spaces that challenged the status quo around cooking and consumption. Additionally these businesses fulfilled the desire for geographies separate from men.[18] Feminist restaurants and cafes also provided a space for political organizing, recreational activity, and commerce. "Feminist food" was usually vegetarian and represented the feminist and environmentalist values of its makers. Each restaurant and cafe defined feminist food slightly differently depending on the particular feminist ethics of the restaurant owners. While it may seem evident that the women's music these restaurants played, the women's art they displayed, and the visiting performers all promoted feminist principles, what is less obvious is how the *food itself* that these restaurants served was also a manifestation of their politics. Feminist bookstores sold feminist books, but it is less apparent how feminist restaurants sold feminist food. I argue that the types of foods offered on the menus of these restaurants were indeed integral to the restaurants' feminism. The kinds of dishes and drinks sold, the ingredients used, and the prices all reflected the different feminist ethics of the restaurant owners.[19] By looking at what was included and banned on these restaurant menus, my work shows the ways that food could be labelled as feminist. In this article, I also demonstrate how one could assert feminism within a business that was dedicated to food and that had a complex relationship with the kitchen (which is often labelled a "traditional" place for women).[20] Thus, within the feminist restaurants and cafes in the United States and Canada that were established in the 1970s and 1980s, food could be seen as feminist.

5 In 1972, when two women's movement organizers, journalist Dolores Alexander and management consultant Jill Ward,created Mother Courage, the first feminist restaurant in the United States, in New York City, many of the activist groups within the 1960s and 1970s countercultural movements already had incorporated food as part of their political outreach. For instance, in 1969 The Black Panther Party began The Free Breakfast for School Children Program in Oakland, California, which aimed to improve students' academic success by making sure that they were properly nourished before a day of learning.[21] The Back to the Land movement, in which thousands of North Americans left cities to begin farming or start communes, was in full force.[22] Although exact numbers are unknown, there were over 2000 communes during this period.[23] Alice Waters, the renowned founder and chef of Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California, had made the connection between the anti-war and anti-Vietnam movement and food, which inspired her to create her farm-to-table restaurant. The companies Monsanto and Dow Chemical that had manufactured Agent Orange, the defoliant used by the United States military during the Vietnam War that was linked to widespread birth defects, also produced the chemicals utilized in North American industrial agriculture. As a result, peace and environmental activists sought food from organic producers.[24] While not everyone in each movement was interested in the ways that food intersected with their activism, these kinds of connections were made in the feminist, anti-racist, anti-classist, and anti-war movements. Thus, the idea that food would be tied to activism is not new. But what was unique for these feminist restaurants was the discourse around why the food was feminist and vital to the feminism of the owners. For many of these establishments, choosing dishes was a primary concern. Even if selecting the food items themselves seemed secondary to the task of creating women-centred spaces that allowed women to b community and centralize their activism efforts, the decisions around the food further upheld their political convictions.

6 As there were numerous types of feminism in the 1970s—such as liberal, socialist, Marxist, radical, radical lesbian, and radical lesbian separatist—that had a diversity of ideas of how to implement their specific worldview, there were similarly diverse ideas about how the owners believed that their food could be feminist. While the feminist restaurant owners stated that either vegetarianism, their decisions about the items on their menus, and their low prices made their food feminist, any owner or manager who did not claim feminist ideological leanings could make the same business choices, such as operating a sandwich shop serving only inexpensive, vegetarian food. A large variety of restaurants have had vegetarian menu items to serve the small, but not insignificant percentage of the population that was vegetarian.[25] Other restaurants have charged lower prices to make food more economically accessible as part of an anti-capitalist or antipoverty agenda in order to prioritize a social justice agenda. Yet, it is the ideology and symbolism surrounding the food that makes the food feminist. The discourse around the food is as much a part of the preparation of the meal as the actual cooking of the ingredients. Understanding the owners' motivations behind their choices about the dishes to serve is key to understanding what makes feminist food indeed feminist. Making food feminist depends on a grounded ideology. There were practical reasons behind these choices that supported the owners' ideological agendas. The owners reflected thoroughly about the way they would build their menus and the restaurant experience in a way that would support their political and activist goals. These owners of feminist restaurants used food as a way to undermine oppressive sexist structures in the United States and Canada. In a more practical sense, food was the fuel of a revolution, nourishing the bodies of the activists.

7 Vegetarian food was not unique to feminist restaurants of the 1970s and 1980s. The earliest recordings of vegetarian diets are from the seventh century BCE in the Indus Valley.[26] People around the world have adopted vegetarian diets, usually due to respect for sentient life and a code of ethics motivated by various religious and spiritual beliefs, a prioritization of animal rights, reasons that are health related, political, cultural, environmental, aesthetic, economic, or a personal preference.[27] However, for feminist restaurants that decided to have vegetarian menus, the choice to be vegetarian was an integral part of their brand of feminism. The food on the menus was vegetarian for the following reasons: the ecofeminist philosophy of the owners, environmental concerns, the needs of the clientele, and for cost, which speaks to class needs and either a Marxist or socialist discourse.

8 Owners and cooks Selma Miriam and Noel Furie of Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant of Bridgeport, Connecticut have refused to cook meat since 1977.[28] Their vegetarian principles and activism were based on

ecofeminist ethics; both women linked the oppression of women and animals. In their first cookbook, the *Political Palate*, they wrote, “Feminism is not a part-time attitude for us; it is how we live all day, everyday. Our choices in furniture, pictures, the music we play, the books we sell, and the food we cook all reflect and express our feminism.” [29] Noel Furie and Selma Miriam were ecofeminists before the term “ecofeminist” existed. Ecofeminists made connections between the domination of nature and the exploitation of women. Ecofeminism began in the mid-1980s as part of anti-nuclear movements, environmentalist activism, and lesbian-feminism. Professor and activist, Greta Gaard, has repeatedly demonstrated the ways that vegetarian ecofeminists connected the kinds of foods women prepared and ate and a larger social activist framework. Furthermore she has shown “how vegetarian ecofeminists have developed critiques and activist strategies for responding to various situations involving the linked oppression of women, people of color, and nonhuman animals,” [30] which included not eating meat. The Bloodroot Collective explicitly put their ecofeminism at the forefront of their vision for the restaurant. In their third cookbook, *The Perennial Palate,* they stated, “eating meat is wrong for its cruelty to creatures who can feel and experience pain, and wrong because it contributes to worldwide starvation, mostly of women and children." [31] In no way was being vegetarian an accident or by-product of another cultural influence. The Bloodroot collective repeatedly insisted that their vegetarianism was integral to their feminism and that the food they served was feminist itself.

9 The changes in Bloodroot’s menu offerings over the course of its existence demonstrated how Selma Miriam and Noel Furie’s understanding of what made food feminist also evolved. Founded in the mid-1970s, Bloodroot committed to the idea of being vegetarian, and serving primarily local, seasonal, and organic food. In Miriam’s own words, “I do consider it important that we are much more than a coffeehouse or cafe. And as you know, I think, the food we serve is what many different peoples do, especially the poorer ones, and that perspective is very different from health food restaurants. We have always cared deeply about others' food possibilities and creativity.” [32] In addition to the creating a vegetarian menu, the Bloodroot collective, the group of women who managed the restaurant, has written and published five vegetarian cookbooks. Ideas about feminism and vegetarianism have been in flux since the 1970s and Bloodroot has adjusted to the changes. In the early 1970s, in North America, a common definition of the vegetarianism that many left-leaning, predominantly white, activists subscribed to usually included eating fish. [33] Bloodroot stopped serving fish in 1980 when ideas about vegetarianism began to shift. The restaurant also became increasingly vegan. This transition happened in part to the owners becoming more aware of environmental concerns over the dairy industry and also the needs and desires of their customer base. [34] The collective had 52 vegan recipes in their first book (published in 1980), 55 in the second (1984) and 138 or 85 percent in the third (1993). [35] Some of these dishes included their Shiitake mushroom with soba noodles soup, pappardelle pasta with butternut squash sauce, apple slices, sage, and walnuts , and their chocolate “devastation” cake. Meanings of what made food feminist then did not only vary from restaurant to restaurant, but also over time as ideas of feminism evolved.

10 Bloodroot was not alone in leveraging vegetarianism to promote feminist ideology. There were other feminist restaurants, cafes, and coffeehouses that were vegetarian because of their clientele’s interest in this sort of diet. Vegetarianism was widespread across politically active communities during the period. Historian Sherrie A. Inness discusses how women who did not decide to open explicitly feminist restaurants during the 1970s often focused on vegetarian or “natural foods” as a way to engage with the politics of the period. These women used the socially naturalized role of the woman ‘in the kitchen’ but subverted this role by opening small businesses that allowed them to financially support themselves while promoting their political views. [36] In this sense, the woman in the kitchen was not passive, but rather active in her role.

11 For the restaurants that were vegetarian due to the interest from the community, even when the owners were not vegetarians themselves, the owners were still enacting their feminist principles. Their feminism relied upon community building and supporting the activism of their fellow feminists. The decision to be vegetarian was not just a marketplace analysis, fulfilling an economic need rather than an emotional or activist need. Opening a feminist restaurant constituted a labour of love more than a profit-driven venture. This is not to say that decisions were never made to support the business, but the driving force behind deciding what items would be served was grounded in political decisions. The Common Woman Club of Northampton, Massachusetts was a private club and restaurant that was exclusively for women. [37] Common Woman would also occasionally host private dinners

as a way to fundraise, relying on the female faculty of the local universities and colleges to plan events there. The restaurant displayed women's art and hoped to foster a women-only, women's community. In the words of the owners, "We offer an imaginative and nutritious vegetarian menu including fish and dairy dishes. All women are welcome!" [38] The founders knew that many of the women in their town of Northampton, Massachusetts were vegetarian. Northampton was a very liberal community with many lesbian inhabitants who were vegetarian due to their various activist affiliations and politics. [39] Here the feminist principle enacted in their menu was about being supportive to the intersecting political interests of their customer base.

12 The decision for feminist restaurants to be vegetarian was not rare. Snake Sister Cafe of Rochester, New York, founded in 1981, was a women's collective vegetarian restaurant. The owners encouraged women in the community to come to a Sunday brunch to share great food and the Times (New York and New Women's) around the woodstove. Snake Sister's owners focused on building a community with board games, social events, a weekend coffeehouse performance, vegetarian meals, music, films, poetry, and live jazz Thursday through Sunday. [40] After it closed, Wild Seeds Feminist Bookstore and Cafe opened in Rochester in 1991. Like Bloodroot, it was a lesbian owned and operated bookstore and vegetarian cafe. The cafe featured meatless meals, snacks, and desserts. For weekend entertainment, the cafe showed movies, hosted poetry readings, and played acoustic music. There were others. In Portland, Oregon in 1978 Mountain Moving Cafe was a feminist cafe, owned by a collective of lesbians, which had ladies-only nights. It had a vegetarian menu, dancing, films. speakers, poetry, live music, kids' night on Fridays, and was very welcoming to the gay community. [41] In 198 Cleveland, Ohio, Genesis was a vegetarian cafe and bar that was collectively owned and inexpensive. [42] Al these establishments were vegetarian as they were part of left-leaning, activist communities in which a significant portion of the clientele was vegetarian. The note about the expense of the food speaks to another important component of what made the restaurants vegetarian apart from ethics and the desires of their clientele.

13 Vegetarianism was very popular in many activist communities and as part of the counterculture, not only due to ethical values but economic motivations. Cost impacted feminist restaurants' and cafes' choices to be vegetarian. Food did not have to be vegetarian for the restaurant to be feminist but often, vegetarian food was the cheapest to make and to sell at the cheapest price. Vegetarian had fewer associated health risks related to refrigeration and preparation. Furthermore, meat was more expensive to store and possible spoilage was a larger economic liability. Decisions about money were vital to the feminist identities of these establishments.

14 Chez Nous Cafe was a project of the Ottawa Women's Centre. As I have discussed in my article, "The Place We've Always Wanted to Go But Never Could Find: Finding Woman Space in Ontario's Feminist Restaurants and Cafes, 1974-1982," [43] in January of 1978 the decided to increase participation of women in the Ottawa Carleton community by creating a cafe for only women. [44] Chez Nous offered light lunches and games. The owners hoped to eventually sell beer and wine but problems in obtaining an alcohol license stopped them from proceeding. [45] The managers of Chez Nous discussed the menu endlessly at meeting after meeting, especially the price of the dishes. The food they decided upon was simple to prepare, which reduced the number of women that would need to work in the space. The light dishes included a "patre de fois plate ([which] include[d] celery, black olives, four slices of French bread), a cheese plate (Oka and Balderson cheddar cheese, apples, grapes, four slices of French bread), and Greek salad (cucumbers, tomatoes, feta cheese, oil, vinegar, dresses, four slices of French bread, black olives)." [46] Although the cafe sold meat, the operators of Chez Nous saw their menu as feminist. Within their business meeting notes, the creators of Chez Nous stated that by selling cheap or reasonably priced food, they were enacting their feminist principles. Women made less money than men in both the United States and Canada, especially during this time period. [47] Therefore it was important to the owners that the food that they sold would be accessible to as many women as possible. This choice spoke to the founders' intersectional awareness of gender and class.

15 Environmental activist and engineer, Patricia Hynes and writer, Gill Gane, created Bread and Roses Restaurant of Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1974. In their initial business prospectus they wrote that, "We are starting a women's restaurant, a place where women and their friends can get together and eat in a feminist atmosphere. We'll serve mainly good healthy good, much of it vegetarian. At least as important as the food is the atmosphere we hope to create. We want this to be a community centre where there will be a range of entertainments and

activities for the women of Boston. We want it to be a place where any women can feel comfortable, whether she comes on her own or with friends."[48] Thus, Hynes created a simple and nourishing menu. There were soups, breads, and salads, to which she gradually added more selections. Eventually they offered three entrees each night: two vegetarian dishes, one of which was the Poor Women's Special.[49] Hynes and her staff wanted people in their community to be able to afford the meals. However, unlike their counterpart feminist restaurants, in their business prospectus they mentioned that they would be mindful of the needs of the women who wanted to lose weight. Feminist restaurants, such as the L.A. Women's Saloon and Parlour, and feminist and lesbian publications during this period usually spoke of weight loss programs with disdain, as they believed that diets were a way for the patriarchy to further shame women's bodies.[50] However, Bread and Roses, in its initial incarnation was also trying to cater to its broader female clientele and not make women feel judged for being interested in losing weight.

16 There was a handful feminist restaurants whose owners marketed as higher class or gourmet, but these tended to be located in metropoles, such as New York, where resources for working class lesbians and feminists were readily accessible. In the mid-1980s, La Papaya advertised itself as "New York's Newest Women's Restaurant" that served gourmet vegetarian food.[51] However, these restaurants interested in being associated with elite labels were largely the exception.[52] The majority of feminist restaurants were operating on the lowest level and promoting themselves as such. Tactics like Eunice Hundseth's creation of the soup restaurant, Susan B's of Chicago in 1973, in which she chose to sell soup because it could be made simply and sold cheaply, were m prevalent.[53] Food was the medium through which feminist activism and community were enabled; maki cheaper food improved the accessibility to feminism itself.

17 The owners of feminist restaurants and cafes that incorporated class-consciousness into their business plans would often undermine their own principles while enacting them. On the one hand. the women were embodying their feminist principles by making food and thus the space more readily available and accessible. Yet, on the other hand, they were compromising their feminist principles by underpaying themselves and relying on what Arlie Hochschild in 1979 would later call, "emotional labour."[54] By keeping the restaurant in business by depending on in -kind of labour, they found themselves in a complicated situation. At Common Woman Club in Northampton, all the employees were "super broke," at times making less than seventy dollars (USD) a month.[55] One founder of the restaurant, Marjorie Parsons, said that she was paid in part by being able to fulfil her dream of creating a women's space, but when a woman was trying to operate a space where she was charging the least possible for her product, turning a profit was near impossible.[56] The owners of Bloodroot have repeatedly stated that they also did not make money in the endeavour.[57] These feminist principles of making the food financially accessible to the masses usually led to the restaurants' demise. Paying women to cook was an activist gesture in that it gave economic value to the typical female task of cooking. It gave monetary value by paying for a task traditional unpaid in non-feminist spaces and kitchens, heightening the respect the task received within a capitalist framework which awarded value with money. However, even when profits were distributed among the collective staff, most employees were still underpaid, forcing them, in turn, to live in poverty. Therefore, even though the goal was to undermine sexist traditions, this type of remuneration played directly into the very sexist traditions it was seeking to undermine.This kind of contradictory economic dynamic was prevalent. For oppressed peoples, especially women, the emotional value was supposed to be reward enough, above their actual remuneration. Furthermore, undercharging customers and under paying staff made it difficult to maintain feminist ethics in the purchase of the raw food goods. Often what made the food feminist was what was behind the menu: the sourcing of the products.

18 The Brick Hut Cafe of Berkeley, California which was founded in 1975 by a collective of mostly lesbian women, both of colour and white, and one straight man, constitutred an example of the difficulty related to the sourcing of products in a feminist manner. Brick Hut's staff served breakfast and lunch food.[58] At one point, when former beauty pageant winner and spokesperson for the Florida Citrus Commission, Anita Bryant, developed a media campaign against gay rights in Dade County, The Brick Hut collective discussed boycotting Florida orange juice. The straight male in the group found this decision absurd, but the rest of the group was in favour. He asked what customers would think of a breakfast cafe that did not serve juice. The women replied that when their customers would ask, they would explain how they could not promote a product that capitalized on their oppression. [59] The

man left the collective and the women placed a poster in the window announcing the boycott. This decision came at a cost when their windows were broken. Joan Antonuccio, one of the owners of The Brick Hut, said that while they expanded the menu offerings over time, the restaurant continued to serve mostly standard breakfast and lunch items. However, she wanted to, in her own words, "serve only organic, cruelty-free eggs because the chicken industry is a nightmare, but they were not available. Customers who raised chickens brought us some, but not enough; we used upwards of 3,000 eggs per week." [60] Otherwise, she noted, "We were in Berkeley; we served Berkeley food, which meant a lot of vegetarian options and we made everything from scratch." [61] Berkeley, California housed a large progressive and hippie community filled with vegetarians. [62] Antonuccio's story reflects the tension that these establishments faced between dreams and reality. Economic concerns and practical constraints, such as being able to obtain local eggs, curtailed some of their dreams. When practical decisions limited utopic vision enactment, rhetoric and discourse around the food allowed the owners to continue to promote their feminist vision.

19 Feminist restaurants, besides The Brick Hut, also thought politically about the sourcing of their products. Selma Miriam and Noel Furie of Bloodroot Feminist Vegetarian Restaurant have continuously tried to serve local and seasonal food. They wanted to buy products from local industries and would act in solidarity with growers and farms that were protesting. In this way they showed class and activist solidarity. [63] The L.A. Women's Saloon and Parlour likewise supported farm workers' protests against unfair wages and they boycotted lettuce and grapes. [64] Thinking about the source of the ingredients was not just about supporting local agriculture or ac in solidarity with boycotts. Rather, when Mary Banheman, owner of Ruby's in Minneapolis Minnesota, decided use fresh rather than frozen potatoes, she was interested in making food taste good, which feminist restaurant owners saw as part of their politics.

20 Did feminist food taste differently? While the idea of what made food "good" was subjective, the idea that feminist restaurants needed to serve "good" food was both prevalent and political. Flavia Rando, who cooked for the Women's Coffeehouse in New York City, believed that "people deserve good food" and "it was a matter of dignity." [65] Rando, when designing the menu for the Women's Coffeehouse, took great pride in offering a delicious menu. She would source fresh ingredients at Hunts Point, the produce market for all NYC food retailers, and at the wholesale warehouses that supplied packaged goods to NYC retailers. She learned this skill set while working with The Lesbian Food Conspiracy, a project of Radicalesbians, in prior years. [66] Additionally, she purchased cheese and baked bread at small traditional Italian stores and artisans. Preparing nourishing, affordable meals was part of an ethics of care that placed human needs above advancing a business agenda. Selma Miriam and Noel Furie echoed the desire to serve "good" food, pushing against stereotypes that vegetarian food was bland. [67] Numerous cultures around the world have rich vegetarian traditions and tasty cuisines and Bloodroot drew upon these traditions. Bloodroot employed women from a wide range of cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. In this space, the women in the kitchen had agency and shared their own cultural food knowledge. As a result Bloodroot had a menu with offerings as diverse as the women who have worked in the kitchen over the past four decades. Bloodroot's vegetarian fare has received high praise by restaurant reviewers for almost forty years for its satisfying flavours. [68] Not every restaurant was as successful at making good food. Restaurant reviews from the 1970s recall that the food at Mother Courage was lacking. [69] However, the desire to create good food, that nourished bodies and feminist communities, remained important.

21 Food as a raw material has its own discourse: the working conditions of the farmers, the distance it has to travel, and the kinds of inputs into the soil. What cooks, chefs, and feminist restaurant owners decided to then do with those ingredients was also key to their feminism. The feminism, however, did not end at the plate. Sometimes it was not the type of food that was different but the name. The marketing of their products as feminist showed the owners' awareness of the importance of discourse. Mary Bahneman started Ruby's in the 1980s as a self-styled, "breakfast joint." The restaurant had a simple menu of eggs, pancakes, toast, and other common breakfast foods. [70] Ruby's was a welcoming place for members of the lesbian and gay communities of the Twin Cities. [71] While the menu seemed typical for a breakfast or brunch spot, the main difference was that the omelettes were all named after women. [72] This process of naming might not seem significant in itself; however, this technique of paying homage to women within the community or famous feminists was not exclusive to Ruby's. It was a common activist technique in women's spaces of the period, especially those that engaged with cultural

feminism.[73] Naming products after women seems subtle but it was a way of bringing attention to women's contributions, which have long been hidden and undermined. It was a way of countering subtle but insidious sexism that continuously praised and recognized men's efforts and often erased important female figures in history.

22 The final ways in which feminist restaurants considered their food feminist was in terms of labour. The restaurants did not want to render the process of cooking invisible. Ruby's, Bread and Roses, and Bloodroot, for example, all had large windows that looked onto the kitchen so that way customers would not divorce the product from the workers. These kitchens were filled with women cooks. While women were typically associated with the kitchen, they were not typically paid for this labour, which accounts for, as food scholar, Barbara Haber writes, the understanding that when we typically think of feminism and food we think of the "feminists [who] disdained women's role in the kitchen, seeing it as a symbol of subjugation because of the persistent and repetitious demands made on women throughout history to fill the waiting maws of husbands and children."[74] With the unique structural design of feminist restaurants, women were paid for their labour and customers were reminded who was cooking their food.

23 Feminist restaurants also changed the way that the food was delivered to the table. Many of these restaurants did not have waitresses. They wanted to challenge the typical restaurant dynamics between the staff and the clients. Instead at these restaurants customers would go to a window to pick up their own food (like Bloodroot) at least their own bread (like Bread and Roses). They would also have customers bus their own tables. Ra than tips, most of these spaces had jars in which customers could donate to local feminist causes, women's shelters, and women's softball teams. [75] Such tactics not only upended the problematic gendered hierarchy that existed in dominant restaurant culture but also were part of a strategy that saved money. Self-serve techniques lowered the need for hiring as much staff and could enable restaurants to sell their food at lower prices.

24 This alternative form of restaurant management showed that feminist restaurants were challenging the entire process of food production. Feminist restaurant owners supported alternative farming practices, they bought raw products from their local communities, they often served vegetarian dishes, and they employed primarily women and thus paid women for a task that was, when confined to domestic spaces, unpaid. They changed the kinds of dishes served, what the items were called, the way the dishes made it to the table, and the way the space was cleaned. Furthermore they changed the way that customers interacted with the staff, challenging the typical restaurant hierarchy that not only promoted class differences, but gendered and racialized differences as well.

25 Depending on the restaurant, making their food feminist revolved around vegetarian ethics, labour issues, cost, and sourcing of products. The reasons that explain why food was framed, viewed or understood as feminist may seem disparate or jumbled. If "feminist food" meant a different thing in each place, did it really have a meaning? [76] Such questions were discussed during the 1970s and 1980s as well in feminist and lesbian periodicals, such as the 1978 edition of *Amazon News* "Food as a Feminist Issue" and *Ain't I A Woman's* piece on food and feminism.[77] Even though the meanings of food symbols were as diverse as the feminisms of the restaurant owners themselves, it was still important that they called the food feminist because they wanted to show they had feminist intent behind their cooking. Acknowledging the importance of this discourse was within the feminist framework that politicized the personal. Within these feminist communities then, living one's politics was intrinsically tied to creating the kind of world that these feminist restaurant owners wanted to see. Furthermore, the rhetoric about the food was grounded in feminist ideologies and the choices made in constructing the menu reflected these ideologies, whether they were about the sourcing of the products, the process of cooking, or the mode of consumption.

26 Although each restaurant and cafe championed the idea of feminist food in different ways, and some restaurant owners were more self-aware than others, these examples remind us of the importance of thinking about gender and sex in relation to food. Modern day food activists and restaurant owners more broadly should continue to discuss these same principles.

Note biographique

Alexandra Ketchum is a doctoral candidate in History at McGill University, focusing on feminist restaurants in the USA and Canada from 1960s to the 1980s. Her work integrates food, environmental, and gender history. She is a co-founder and editor of the Historical Cooking Project (historicalcookingproject.com) and The Feminist Restaurant Project (thefeministrestaurantproject.com).

Notes

[1] Cole, Nicki Lisa, and Alison Dahl Crossley, "On feminism in the age of consumption." *Consumers Commodities and Consumption* 11, no. 1 (2009).

[2] In the words of cultural theorist Angela McRobbie, postfeminism “actively draws on and invokes feminisms as that which can be taken into account in order to sugest that equality is achieved, in order to install a whole repertoire of meanings which emphasize that it is no longer needed, a spent force.” Angela McRobbie, "Notes on postfeminism and popular culture: Bridget Jones and the new gender regime." *All about the girl: Culture, power and identity* (2004): 3-14.

[3] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* (Harvard University Press, 1984), 6.

[4] Ferdinand De Saussure, Wade Baskin, and Perry Meisel, *Course in general linguistics* (Columbia Univer Press, 2011).

[5] Some examples are, Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik. *Food and culture: A reader* (Routledge, 2012) and Massimo Montanari, *Food is culture* (Columbia University Press, 2006).

[6] Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The culinary triangle." *Food and culture: A reader.* (London: Routledge,1997), 28-35.

[7] Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*. Pantheon, 1984 and Jacques Derrida, and John D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in a nutshell: A conversation with Jacques Derrida*. No. 1. Fordham University Press, 1997.

[8] In the way that Judith Butler claims gender is performed and constructed through each performance. Judith Butler, *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* (Routledge, 2011).

[9] Judy Syfers, “Why I want a wife,” *Know, Incorporated*, (1971).

[10] Patricia Mainardi, "The Politics of Housework," (1968).

[11] Jane O'Reilly, "The Housewife's Moment of Truth," *Ms. Magazine* (1997): 16-17.

[12] Nancy A. Hewitt, *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of US Feminism*. (Rutgers University Press, 2010).

[13] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2013).

[14] Marcia Cohen, *The Sisterhood: The True Story of the Women Who Changed the World. (*New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988); Estelle Freedman, *No Turning Back* (*New York: Ballantine Books*, 2002); Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the modern women's movement changed America* (Tantor, 2013).

[15] Warren Belasco, *Appetite for Change: How the counterculture took on the food industry* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007).

[16] For a complete list, visit the directory at my website, www.thefeministrestaurantproject.com.

[17] For the purpose of this study, feminist restaurants, cafes, and coffeehouses defined themselves as such in either their title, their promotional materials, or in their publications. Although many restaurants focused on social justice principles more broadly, the restaurants, cafes, and coffeehouses in this study emphasized that they were/are feminist.

[18] The founders felt that they needed spaces separate from male-dominated establishments in order to escape oppressive formal restraints that regulated female socializing.

[19] There were differences between Marxist feminists, socialist feminists, radical feminists, radical lesbian feminists, radical lesbian separatist feminists, and ecofeminists. Liberal feminists were less likely to open feminist restaurants.

[20] Similarly, other feminists during the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and Canada used cookbooks to share not only a recipe for a dish but for a new world order.

[21] The program was so successful that by the end of the year, the Black Panther Party developed kitchens in cities across the US, feeding over 10,000 children every day before they went to school. Geographer Nik Heynen argues that that the breakfast program was significant because it “was imperative for the social reproduction of

many inner-city communities and that it was both the model for, and impetus behind, all federally funded school breakfast programs currently in existence within the United States." Nik Heynen, "Bending the bars of empire from every ghetto for survival: the Black Panther Party's radical antihunger politics of social reproduction and scale." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99, no. 2 (2009): 406-422.

[22] Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the rise of digital utopianism*. University Of Chicago Press, 2010.

[23] Timothy Miller, *The 60s communes: Hippies and beyond* (Syracuse University Press, 1999),xviiii. This number is highly disputed.

[24] Alice Waters and Daniel Duane, *Edible Schoolyard* (Chronicle Books, 2008).

[25] While it is difficult to find the exact numbers of how many people were vegetarian in the United States in Canada in the 1970s and 1980s, studies tend to estimate between 3 to 7 percent of the population. Thomas Dietz, Ann Stirling Frisch, Linda Kalof, Paul C. Stern, and Gregory A. Guagnano. "Values and Vegetarianism: An Exploratory Analysis1." *Rural Sociology* 60, no. 3 (1995): 533-542. This study claims that in the 1990s, 7 percent of the United States population was vegetarian.

[26] Colin Spencer, *The Heretic's Feast: A History of Vegetarianism* (UPNE, 1996). 69.

[27] Jennifer Jabs, Carol M. Devine, and Jeffrey Sobal. "Maintaining vegetarian diets: Personal factors, social networks and environmental resources." *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research* 59, no. 4 (1998): 183.

[28] “We don’t use meat-- not only because it’s not healthy, but because we equate the oppression of women with that of animals. As women, we do not want to profit from the sale of animal flesh.” The Bloodroot Collective. *The Political Palate: A Feminist Vegetarian Cookbook* (Bridgeport, CT: Sanguinaria Publishing, 1980).

[29] The Bloodroot Collective. *The Political Palate: A Feminist Vegetarian Cookbook* (Bridgeport, CT: Sanguinaria Publishing, 1980).

[30] Greta Claire Gaard, "Vegetarian ecofeminism: A review essay." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 23, no. 3 (2002): 117-146.

[31] Bloodroot Collective, *The Perennial Political Palate: The Third Feminist Vegetarian Cookbook* (Bridgeport ct: Sanguinaria Publishing, 1993), 3.

[32] Selma Miriam, e-mail message to author, June 28, 2016.

[33] Peter Singer’s text, “Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals” from 1975 reflected the belief of other vegetarians in the 1970s where eating some kinds of seafood was permissible and even included in vegetarian belief frameworks that were based around the idea of pain.

[34] Selma Miriam and Noel Furie, in discussion with the author, May, 2012.

[35] Lisa Pierce. "A Vegetarian Spot Where Feminism Is a Main Course." *The New York Times*, November 16, 2002.

[36] Sherrie A. Inness, *Dinner roles: American women and culinary culture* (University of Iowa Press, 2001), 87-91.

[37] The reason it was a called a “club” was so that they could exclude men. Any woman could eat there as a guest of a club member, including all of the staff. Marjorie Parson, “Coffeehouse Meeting Interview, 1979.” Northeastern University Archives. Tape AV2316 in Box M120.

[38] Marjorie Parson, “Coffeehouse Meeting Interview, 1979.”

[39] Ibid.

[40] Sandy Horn, *Gaia’s Guide 1981* (San Francisco, California, 1981).

[41] Sandy Horn, *Gaia’s Guide 1978. (*San Francisco, California, 1978).

[42] Sandy Horn, *Gaia’s Guide 1981.*

[43] Alex D. Ketchum, "'The Place We’ve Always Wanted to Go But Never Could Find': Finding Woman Space in Ontario’s Feminist Restaurants and Cafes, 1974-1982," *Feminist Studies*, forthcoming release.

[44] May 8, 1978 General Meeting Minutes. Chez Nous. Box 509. Folder 18. Canadian Women’s Movement Archive.

[45] Proposal. Chez Nous. Box 512. Folder 16. Canadian Women’s Movement Archive.

[46] Proposal. Chez Nous. Box 512. Folder 16. Canadian Women’s Movement Archive.

[47] Doris Weichselbaumer and Rudolf Winter-Ebmer, "A meta-analysis of the international gender wage gap." *Journal of Economic Surveys* 19, no. 3 (2005): 479-511.

[48] Patricia Hynes, "Business Prospectus of Bread and Roses.” October, 1974. Print. Papers of Patricia Hynes. Box 1. Folder 3. Schlesinger Archive at the Radcliffe Institute of Harvard University. 2.

[49] Patricia Hynes, "Business Prospectus of Bread and Roses."

[50] The women's saloon avoided diet plates and sodas deeming them insulting to large-sized women. Jan Whitacker, "Women's Restaurants," *Restauranting Through History*, June 18, 2013. https://restaurantingthroughhistory.com/2013/06/18/womens-restaurants/

[51] Sandy Horn *Gaia's Guide 1980 (*San Francisco, California. 1980).

[52] In the case of La Papaya, calling the restaurant "gourmet" may have only been a marketing technique as Sarah Schulman remembers it not as a fancy restaurant, but rather as a lesbian hangout in a working class, Irish and Latino neighbourhood without exorbitant prices. Sarah Schulman, in discussion with the author, August 11,2016.

[53] Anne Finn Enke, *Finding the movement: Sexuality, contested space, and feminist activism* (Duke University Press, 2007): 83- 88.

[54] Arlie Russell Hochschild. "Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure." *American journal of sociology* (1979): 551-575.

[55] Parson, Marjorie. "Coffeehouse Meeting Interview, 1979."

[56] Ibid.

[57] Selma Miriam, in conversation with the author, April 5, 2011.

[58] Joan Antonnucio, email correspondence with the author, June 9, 2015.

[59] Sharon Davenport. "LGBT Pride: Remembering The Brick Hut Cafe – Part 1." *Bay Area Bites*, 23 June 2011. Web. 15 June 2016. http://ww2.kqed.org/bayareabites/2011/06/23/lgbt-pride-remembering-the-brick-hut-cafe-part-1/

[60] Joan Antonnucio, email correspondence with the author, June 9, 2015.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Noel Furie and Selma Miriam, in conversation with the author, December 13, 2011.

[64] Jan Whitacker, "Women's Restaurants."

[65] Flavia Rando, in conversation with the author, March 2015.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Dozens of restaurant reviews of Bloodroot clearly challenged the misconception that vegetarian food was bland and state that Bloodroot has very tasty food. One example is, Joan Cook, "Feminists Publish a Cookbook," New York *Times,* June 13, 1982.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Linda Wolfe, "Among Friends," *New York Magazine*, May 14, 1973.

[70] Mary Bahneman, in conversation with the author, October 15, 2015.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Alice Echols, *Daring to be bad: Radical feminism in America, 1967-1975* (University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

[74] Barbara Haber, "Cooking with joy. " *The Women's Review of Books*. 21.1 (Oct 2003): 23(3).

[75] Gale Goldberg "Feminism and Food: An Alternative to Restauranting." Thesis. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1976. Print. Papers of Patricia Hynes. Box 1. Folder 3. Schlesinger Archive at the Radcliffe Institute of Harvard University.

[76] Poststructuralists like Jacques Derrida note that symbols change meaning rapidly but also speak to the deferment of the symbols in that meaning is built on meaning.

[77] *Amazon News.* 1978. and *Ain't I A Woman* (volume 1, number 7).

Note biographique

Candidate au doctorat en histoire à l'Université McGill, **Alexandra Ketchum** écrit présentement une thèse au sujet des restaurants féministes aux États-Unis et au Canada des années 1960 à 1980. Son travail intègre l'histoire de l'alimentation, de l'environnement, et du genre. Elle est la rédactrice en chef et cofondatrice

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