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## The Chopped Cheese: Traversing Upscale Foodways and the Struggle for Community Control

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The Chopped Cheese: Traversing Upscale Foodways and the Struggle for Community Control

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies  
of Bard College

by  
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York  
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## Introduction

As you head east on 110th street and round the corner onto 1st avenue, you come across a sight familiar in neighborhoods across New York City: a bodega.<sup>1</sup> An ice machine sits out front, and signs advertising the ATM inside hang from a blue awning. Large, colorful images of sandwiches and beverages adorn the windows and below a sign reads “Fresh Foods Served Daily.” Upon entering, you see the standard fixings of a bodega; shelves stocked with packaged goods, coolers filled with sodas and juices, and a cook busily working the grill. However, there is something special about this bodega that goes by various names including Harlem Taste, Blue Sky Deli, or more simply, Hajji’s. The menu boasts a long list of sandwiches, but the customers that periodically file in ask for the “chopped cheese.” The landline at Hajji’s rings frequently and a worker holds the phone in between his head and his shoulder while he jots down more orders for the chopped cheese. Orders pour in because Hajji’s is home of the chopped cheese, a sandwich they claimed to have invented twenty years ago. The chopped cheese consists of a beef patty, chopped up on the flat top grill with onions, and is typically layered with American cheese and pressed on a hero or a roll with lettuce, tomato, and your choice of condiments.<sup>2</sup> Like any bodega sandwich, the ingredients can be added or swapped to the liking of the customer. At Hajji’s the filling and delicious sandwich sells for \$5.00 on a hero, or \$3.75 on a roll.<sup>3</sup>

You would be hard pressed to spend more than five minutes in Hajji’s without hearing someone say, “chopped cheese,” but the sandwich that has become a mainstay in this East

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<sup>1</sup> The term “bodega” is just one name commonly used for the countless delis, corner stores, small grocers, etc. that populate New York City. In this project I use the term bodega, although I refer to all of these small businesses when I use this term. In reality, these terms are not always used interchangeably as each term bears with it unique historical associations. The term bodega is used more frequently in neighborhoods with large Hispanic populations, such as East Harlem. Despite the intricacies of these terms, “bodega” captures more broadly the businesses I intend to discuss in this project and is used often in both colloquial and scholarly discourse.

<sup>2</sup> A hero, is the name for the long, slim bread typically served in bodegas. It is comparable to the bread used in “subs,” “hoagies,” or other sandwiches that utilize oblong, narrow loafs.

<sup>3</sup> Great Big Story, “The Real New Yorker’s Sandwich.”



Harlem bodega has also spread to other bodegas, corner stores, and delis throughout New York City's five boroughs. It has become symbolic of bodega culture across the city, evidenced by its embeddedness within New York's creative scene. Hajji's itself was featured in the famous Harlem-born rapper Cameron Giles's (Cam'ron aka Killa Cam) music video titled "Child of the Ghetto."<sup>4</sup> Belcalis Almanzar (Cardi B), the Bronx-born rapper and burgeoning superstar tweeted to her 2.9 million followers about missing the "chop cheese" due to her mobile lifestyle that keeps her on the road.<sup>5</sup> Two comedians from The Bronx, Daniel Baker (Desus Nice) and Joel Martinez (The Kid Mero) mention the sandwich frequently in their podcast titled, "Bodega Boys," as well as their television show "Desus & Mero." Tschabalala Self, an artist from Harlem, had an exhibition titled "Bodega Run," that explores "the social, political and economic implications of these corner stores through an exploration of the products they sell and their aesthetic organization." In March of 2018, she unveiled a painting titled, "Chopped Cheese."<sup>6</sup> These young creators, along with many others not included here, demonstrate the sandwich's deep permeation through the fabric of New York's bodega culture.

Despite the chopped cheese's entrenched status as a hallmark of bodega cuisine, the sandwich has recently been featured in upscale restaurants and pricey supermarkets. You can now get a chopped cheese on the roof of the luxurious Refinery Hotel for \$21.00 in Midtown, and for a brief time, you could even buy one at the Whole Foods in Columbus Circle for \$8.00. However, the sandwiches' recent migration from bodega to upscale restaurants and high-end supermarkets has been controversial. Due to an outpouring of online criticism in 2016 that

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<sup>4</sup> Bolois, "The Cult of the Chopped-Cheese."

<sup>5</sup> Almanzar, "Nothing like a chop cheese"

<sup>6</sup> Pilar Corrias Gallery, "Tschabalala Self: Bodega Run.," Pérez Art Museum Miami, "Pérez Art Museum Miami"

accused the Whole Foods of “appropriating,” “gentrifying,” and “Columbusing,” the chopped cheese, the supermarket quickly ceased selling the sandwich. Whole Foods is only one of many non-bodega purveyors that have recently begun to sell the chopped cheese. The sandwich has even spread to restaurants on the opposite side of the globe, popping up in a “street food” restaurant in Australia and a sandwich shop in Spain.<sup>7</sup> Bodegas no longer serve as the exclusive purveyors who control the commercial and cultural production of the chopped cheese as chefs throughout New York City and across the world begin to cook and tweak the sandwich. These events raise fundamental questions regarding the chopped cheese: What does the sandwich symbolize and how is this threatened by its arrival in gourmet cognizance? What is the core tension present in the discourse of the controversy? How can the chopped cheese help us better understand disputes surrounding food more generally?

To answer these question, this project examines food systems, food histories, and food discourse. I examine both how food is defined by its social, political, and economic context, as well as how food comes to define the spaces it inhabits. My examination of the chopped cheese beings with a macroscopic perspective and progressively circles inward to focus primarily on the sandwich itself. Answering the questions I posed earlier necessarily requires a multifaceted approach due to the complex and interconnected nature of food, and more specifically the chopped cheese. This project is composed of three chapters, each consisting of a different approach to understanding the sandwich.

My first chapter addresses one simple question: What is the chopped cheese? I approach this question from both materialistic and cultural angles. My first section focuses on the chopped cheese and its relation to the industrial food system. Through analysis of an American classic,

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<sup>7</sup> Belly Bao, “Belly Bao.”; La Casa Tomada, “La Casa Tomada.”

the hamburger, I define the chopped cheese as a sandwich that is intrinsically derived from the mainstream American foodway as an amalgamation of widely available and cheap ingredients. In my second section I adopt a cultural lens to discuss how the sandwich is culturally defined in a context positioned *outside* of the mainstream, industrial foodway. I analyze two historical cases to conceptualize how or why dishes become incorporated into mainstream and upscale culture and determine what implications these processes have on these dishes and the people who eat them. Furthermore, I situate the chopped cheese as a sandwich that is firmly the product of the American food system, but operates as a culinary “other,” a cuisine culturally defined outside of mainstream American culture.

The second chapter draws closer still to the epicenter of the chopped cheese, East Harlem. I continue with my food-oriented approach, but ask the more trenchant question: What is the chopped cheese’s significance in East Harlem’s foodway? Although the chopped cheese has become popular in neighborhoods throughout New York City, I choose East Harlem as the focal point of this chapter because it is the supposed birthplace of the sandwich and it shares important characteristics with many of the other low income, African American and Hispanic neighborhoods where the chopped cheese is popularly served. In the first portion of the chapter I analyze the history of food retailing in East Harlem, the lack of chain supermarkets, and the importance of bodegas as manifestations of the community’s attempts to take control of the neighborhood’s food accessibility issues. Next, I recount the arrival of two chain supermarkets that entered the neighborhood in the past twenty years. Using food and environmental justice literature, I discuss the implications of Pathmark, East Harlem’s first supermarket that opened in 1999, as well as Whole Foods, the neighborhood’s most recent supermarket that opened in

2017.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, I detail residents' reactions to the two supermarkets to highlight the contrasting reception they received. I argue that the Pathmark alleviated East Harlem's issues of food scarcity and cemented the community's control of their food security while the Whole Foods not only failed to fill the void left by the Pathmark's closure, but also exacerbated the mounting process of gentrification in the neighborhood, threatening the displacement of East Harlem's residents. This chapter lays down important historical and contemporary context that centers on moments in East Harlem's history that highlight its community's struggle for control in regards to food security. The chopped cheese, a sandwich with strong symbolic attachments to both bodegas and East Harlem, should be conceptualized with these histories in mind.

My final chapter focuses directly on online discourse about the chopped cheese. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first portion focuses on discourse about the chopped cheese formed by "culinary legitimizers," or those who engage in the process of elevating, modifying, or introducing the chopped cheese into gourmet settings. I analyze this discourse to understand the mechanisms by which culinary legitimizers distinguish their versions of the sandwich. I also discuss how these mechanisms inherently function to produce tensions that cause controversy. The second portion of the chapter focuses exclusively on the discourse of controversy, to understand why it unfolded in the first place, and to reveal what issues lie at the core of this discourse. I find that many videos, articles, and tweets discuss topics related to "community control," and the perceived challenges to community control. The discourse of controversy builds on the understanding of the chopped cheese's significance as a staple of

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<sup>8</sup> The Whole Foods supermarket located on 125th Street and Lenox Avenue is technically located one avenue outside of East Harlem's borders. Nonetheless, it is only three avenues west of the now closed Pathmark, that was located on 125th Street and Lexington Avenue. The Whole Foods' position just outside the neighborhood only bolsters claims I make later relating to the inability of the new supermarket alleviate the food scarcity in the neighborhood that formed anew when Pathmark shut its doors.

bodega cuisine and its interconnectedness to East Harlem and the other neighborhoods where it is sold. This discourse analysis demonstrates broader connections to the complex cultural and spatial histories of the chopped cheese.

## Chapter One

One of the most iconic, if not the icon, of modern American cuisine is the hamburger.<sup>9</sup> We are reminded of this fact every time we turn on the TV and hear “I’m lovin it” or “have it your way.” Americans are never too far from a hamburger chain, whether they like it or not. However, in New York City, there is one kind of business that residents encounter even more frequently; bodegas. Nonetheless, one of New York City’s staple bodega offerings, the chopped cheese, has clearly drawn inspiration from America’s favorite fast food sandwich. In this chapter, I conceptualize the chopped cheese as a dish that was heavily influenced by the hamburger, and more generally, the industrial food system that has made the two sandwiches’ main ingredient, beef, widely abundant and cheap. In the second section of my chapter, I diverge from a food systems approach to emphasize how the hamburger and the chopped cheese differ in terms of their cultural significance by recounting two historical cases. The chopped cheese exhibits how New York City bodega cooks were able to demonstrate control over accessible food resources in their community and construct a culturally distinct dish with mainstream ingredients.

The rise of the American fast food chains and the popularity of their main attraction, the hamburger, has played an undeniably important role in influencing how food is produced and consumed in the United States. The success of the hamburger can be attributed to a changing cultural and technological landscape, which caused a nation that preferred pork to favor beef. Why is the history of the hamburger relevant to the genesis of the chopped cheese? The chopped cheese, a sandwich born out of New York City’s bodegas and corner stores, uses and reinterprets the main ingredient of the fast-food hamburger. Beyond the physical makeup of the sandwiches, the hamburger has played an instrumental role in influencing how Americans have eaten since

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<sup>9</sup> Levenstein, “Fast Foods and Quick Bucks,” 227.

the post-World War II era. In the following section, I trace the path of beef, and then the hamburger, as it has moved through the food system and evolved through history, to reveal its influence on American eating more broadly and thus, the on chopped cheese. I start with an overview of the local, yet gargantuan food distribution system in New York City to reveal how the chopped cheese's ingredients, including the beef patties, travel to bodegas across the five boroughs.

When someone steps up and leans on the counter to order a chopped cheese at their local bodega, they notice beneath them a refrigerated case full of meats, cheeses, vegetables, and other prepared foods. They will also surely notice the various non-perishable goods that fill the shelves of these stores. The variety of foods, both fresh and preserved, that are housed in bodegas throughout the city is immense. Each of these food items arrives at the city's thousands of bodegas through the complex web of New York's food distribution system. Around 19 billion pounds of food move through the city every year.<sup>10</sup> In this puzzlingly large behemoth of food, where and how does a bodega get all the ingredients it needs to quickly assemble a delicious, freshly prepared sandwich?

According to *Five Borough Food Flow*, a 2016 study of New York City's distribution network, the city's food system is composed of a variety of different distributors and purchasers. The purchasers, or point of sale outlets, include independent restaurants and cafés, bodegas, chain quick service restaurants, food markets, drug stores, chain supermarkets, chain convenience stores, clubs, and others. The distributors are composed of national food service distributors, national grocery distributors, cash and carry distributors, regional distributors, direct store delivery, and warehouses. Despite the dizzying number of actors, only a few are relevant to

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<sup>10</sup> New York City Economic Development Corporation, *Five Borough Food Flow*.

the case of the chopped cheese. The traditional point of sale outlets that have historically sold the chopped cheese are bodegas. However, recently, chain supermarkets such as Whole Foods and various restaurants have begun to sell the sandwich. Bodegas are served mostly by regional distributors—small-to mid-sized distributors primarily serving regional markets that sell to a range of customers—and cash and carry distributors—large warehouse distributors that require customers to shop onsite and do not deliver.<sup>11</sup>

Bodegas account for a significant amount of the annual food flow in New York City. One fifth of the more than 19 billion pounds of food that pass through the city is sold at bodegas, and they represent a quarter of the total point of sale locations in the city. As a result, an astoundingly large volume of food is distributed by the regional and cash and carry distributors who supply the majority of the food to bodegas. Most regional and cash and carry distributors can be traced to one location: Hunts Point. “The Hunts Point Food Distribution Center is the largest single geographic cluster of food distribution into New York City, measured by annual distribution volume (lbs.) to New York City customers” as detailed by the *Five Borough Food Flow*.<sup>12</sup> This distribution center supplies New York City with 25% of its produce and 35% of its meat. While nearly half of the food sold through Hunts point ends up at restaurants, 20% is sold directly to bodegas.<sup>13</sup>

We return now to the person waiting for their chopped cheese, still leaning over the refrigerated case at their local bodega. Directly beneath them lied the various ingredients that are now cooking on the grill, waiting to be wrapped up in wax paper and foil. The meats and produce that are sitting in this case probably have not been there for more than a few days.

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<sup>11</sup> New York City Economic Development Corporation, *Five Borough Food Flow*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> New York City Economic Development Corporation, *Five Borough Food Flow*.



Bodegas have limited inventory space so they typically only stock three to five days' worth of food at a time. Not too long ago, the owners of this bodega made a trip to one of New York City's large food distribution centers, probably Hunts Point, to stock up on more fresh food. The chopped cheese is a product of the highly complex and industrialized food system that makes fresh produce and meat available year-round to thousands of bodegas across the city. Moreover, the modern food distribution network allows bodegas to assemble cheap and convenient food for their customers, like the chopped cheese. This sandwich spawned out of these easily accessible ingredients, which were not widely available through other outlets in many of New York's low-income neighborhoods and also allowed bodega cooks to claim a dish of their own while still using standard ingredients. Furthermore, the chopped cheese is a filling, hot meal that could be cooked quickly and sold for cheap, just as conveniently as another American favorite, the hamburger.

Fast food ushered in a model of food retailing that emphasized cost efficiency and convenience.<sup>14</sup> While fast food establishments popularize the hamburger, simultaneously, they radically changed the manner in which Americans ate. The chopped cheese, like the hamburger, is a food contrived for consumers on the move. Bodegas usually don't offer seating, and unless one is friendly enough with the owner or workers to stick around and chat, one is expected to eat their food outside. Whether you walk out of a bodega with a chopped cheese safely in hand, or step on the gas and pull out of a drive through with a hamburger in the passenger seat, you are eating on the go.

Tracing the history of the hamburger, one can define both the physical and cultural characteristics that have culminated in the chopped cheese. The chopped cheese is a sandwich

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<sup>14</sup> Mennell, Murcott, and Van Otterloo, "Food Technology and Its Impact," 71-73.

that is intrinsically bound to a food system and food culture that have been shaped by the hamburger. Additionally, the convenience culture, and its emphasis on speed and ease of consumption, has been carved into the American subconscious by the proliferation of fast food restaurants peddling Big Macs and Whoppers all across the United States.<sup>15</sup> In the following paragraphs, I will recount the rise of the hamburger and its importance as a culinary and cultural agent of change.

Today, the average American consumes approximately three hamburgers a week.<sup>16</sup> Based on this figure, Americans consume about half a billion hamburgers *per year*. The hamburger has firmly lodged itself at the forefront of American eating. However, this phenomenon is only a relatively recent development, and if not for some crucial technological advancements, Americans wouldn't be ordering quarter pounders at their fast food franchise. The rise of the hamburger marked a significant shift in the kind of meat that was favored by Americans. Before beef, pork was the most widely consumed meat in the United States. Marvin Harris writes that, "beef consumption in the United States substantially surpassed pork consumption for the first time only in the 1950s."<sup>17</sup> As I will discuss, industrialization and its complex impact on the food system and culture played a major role in catalyzing this shift from pork to beef.

Prior to the construction of vast distribution networks, refrigerated train cars, and the development of feedlot farming and slaughterhouse butchering techniques, beef was an expensive commodity. Cows needed expansive pastures to graze on, took a long period of time to reach their slaughter weight, and once butchered, had to be eaten on sight due to the spoilage rate of the meat. The consumption of fresh beef was thus limited to wealthy land-owning aristocrats

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<sup>15</sup> Levenstein, "Fast Foods," 228.

<sup>16</sup> Schlosser, "Introduction," 6.

<sup>17</sup> M. Harris, "Holy Beef, U.S.A.," 110.

who could afford to raise these costly animals. The beef set aside for the poor was the less desirable dried or salted varieties that were able to travel. Thus, many of America's poor and landless favored pork, an animal that could be brought to weight quicker and more efficiently simply by foraging.<sup>18</sup>

Refrigerated transport was the first technological development necessary in beef's rise to superiority. Early attempts to ship beef in refrigerated containers were conducted in Paris, however they did not amount to economic success.<sup>19</sup> It was not until the turn of the 20th when Chicago packers utilized America's extensive railroad network to their advantage that industrialization of beef kicked off. Cows pastured in the Great Plains and fattened up on corn were shipped to Chicago where they were butchered en masse. The beef was then sent in refrigerated cars to markets across the East Coast. Local butchers could not compete with their prices and were given the option of abandoning their businesses completely or purchasing the meat sold by the Chicago packers.<sup>20</sup> The industrialization of this food system made the fresh, ground beef that makes up hamburgers and chopped cheeses both cheap and widely available.

By the 1950s, in the booming economy of Post-World War II America, feedlots could bring cows to their slaughter weight of 800 pounds in eight months and beef was ascending to prominence.<sup>21</sup> Americans needed something they could grill in the spacious backyards of their cookie-cutter suburban homes. Ground beef proved to be the ideal meat. It had a high fat content and maintained its form on the grill, unlike pork, and did not carry the deadly parasite that causes

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<sup>18</sup> M. Harris, "Holy Beef, U.S.A.," 113; Freidberg, "Beef: Mobile Meat," 149-154.

<sup>19</sup> French Engineer Charles Tellier had a vision to make fresh beef accessible to those in the working class. He successfully shipped fresh beef across the Atlantic, however both French businessmen and the French working class found refrigerated meat off putting. He lacked both investors and public support and despite his monumental achievement, is rumored to have died of starvation in Paris at the age of 85. Freidberg, "Beef: Mobile Meat."

<sup>20</sup> Freidberg, "Beef: Mobile Meat," 57-66.

<sup>21</sup> M. Harris, "Holy Beef, U.S.A.," 120.

trichinosis.<sup>22</sup> Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonalds also saw the utility of ground beef. He standardized the patty and utilized America's growing roadways to his advantage. His restaurants privileged speed, efficiency, and uniformity. He could hire unskilled laborers to cut down on costs and made his food convenient for consumption on the road. Many women, during this time, were also joining the workforce in increased numbers. They preferred to bring their families to fast food restaurants rather than devote extra labor to domestic chores.<sup>23</sup> Beef, with a boost in popularity from the fast food hamburger, became America's favorite meat. The meat's dominance continues today, in 2015, America's beef industry was valued at \$105 billion.<sup>24</sup>

The hamburger and the chopped cheese are both extremely convenient sandwiches. By now, the person who ordered their chopped cheese is eyeing the sandwich, fresh off the grill. The cook behind the counter hastily wraps the chopped cheese in wax paper and foil and hands it to the cashier. On the way to the register, the customer might grab a drink from the cooler. The cashier takes their money, hands them back their change, and just like that, the transaction is over. Now, all the customer has to do is find a place to sit down and enjoy their chopped cheese, or, if they are too eager to wait, peel through the wrapping on the street and dig in.

The whole process, from walking into the bodega, ordering the sandwich, paying, and leaving takes about five minutes. It mirrors the process by which hamburgers are swiftly grilled, assembled, and sold to the masses. The convenience of bodegas, and fast food chains alike, extends beyond just the speed at which the food is prepared, but is embodied in the convenience of their location. While fast food restaurants take advantage of America's miles of asphalt and car culture, bodegas bank on New Yorker's reliance on walking as a mode of transportation.

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<sup>22</sup> M. Harris, "Holy Beef, U.S.A.," 120.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>24</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, "Cattle & Beef: Statistics & Information."

There are over 10,000 independent bodegas in the city, so most New Yorkers encounter them in their daily commutes.<sup>25</sup> In fact, 92% of public school students in New York City have a bodega within 400 meters from their school compared to only 43.2% of students being within 400 meters of a fast food chain, making bodegas a more common sight, for school children at least.<sup>26</sup>

To summarize, the beef industry and the hamburger have set a logistical and cultural precedent for the chopped cheese. Technological advancements around the turn of the 20th century in the shipping and beef industry made possible a system whereby meat could be butchered in one location and sent great distances to another. This system lowered the price of fresh beef, making it affordable enough to be regularly consumed by the masses. The hamburger, cemented the ideal medium by which industrial beef could be consumed; ground up, and mixed with excess fat trimmings to maintain its form. In the 1950s, fast food restaurants, pushing these fatty beef patties, drastically changed the way Americans dined out by mirroring the efficient industrial model of the beef industry. They utilized the infrastructure of the roads to make eating a relatively cheap and convenient ordeal.<sup>27</sup>

From the ingredients in a chopped cheese to the way it is consumed, this New York sandwich has drawn from a historical and cultural context that is characterized by industrial beef and fast food. Hot, quick, and inexpensive beef, wedged between bread, has been a successful recipe for the hamburger and the chopped cheese. The two sandwiches undeniably have a lot in common, and it would be difficult to tell the two apart from looking at a list of their ingredients. So, what distinguishes the chopped cheese from a hamburger? Why isn't it just a new take on an American classic? So far, I have focused primarily on how the American food system and

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<sup>25</sup> New York City Economic Development Corporation, Five Borough Food Flow.

<sup>26</sup> Kathryn M. Neckerman et al., "New York City Public Schools," 198.

<sup>27</sup> Levenstein, "Fast Foods," 229.

mainstream, fast food culture have produced dishes like the hamburger and the chopped cheese. However, dishes are not only defined by the industrial food system, but by the qualities that *distinguish* them from these monolithic forces. As I will discuss in my next section, the chopped cheese is also defined by its cultural importance as a dish that is consumed within a highly specific cultural context.

### **Eating the “Other’s” Food**

The quotidian act of eating carries with it much more significance than the basic human drive to meet caloric needs. If this weren’t true, we would all be drinking the beige colored smoothies advertised as meal replacement drinks which can be shipped to your door in one business day with the click of a button.<sup>28</sup> Eating is an activity in which people exercise identity. Our dishes, traditions, and customs around eating are all mediums in which we communicate belonging. Therefore, even the banal act of eating a chopped cheese can be significant.<sup>29</sup> The sandwich’s rich history and cultural relevance cannot be understated. Every dish, no matter how marginally, or ubiquitously eaten, is representative of more than just its ingredients. In *We are What we Eat*, Gabaccia succinctly writes that food “entwines intimately with much that makes a culture unique, binding taste and satiety to group loyalties. Eating habits both symbolize and mark the boundaries of cultures.”<sup>30</sup> It is in the cultural context of food that the hamburger and the chopped cheese begin to diverge.

While the chopped cheese is derived from an industrial food system heavily influenced by the popularity of the hamburger, it cannot be defined by the mainstream cultural trends that

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<sup>28</sup> Soylent, “Soylent.”

<sup>29</sup> Personally, I find that eating a chopped cheese is far from a “banal” experience, but I use this word here to emphasize the lack of novelty in the act of eating itself.

<sup>30</sup> Gabaccia, “What Do We Eat,” 8.

dominate in this system. The hamburger, is a poster child for homogenized, mass produced, mainstream American food. The chopped cheese is an ancillary offshoot in the lexicon of American eating. This is due to the way mainstream foodway is constructed in the United States—a foodway, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary is, “the traditional customs or habits of a group of people concerning food and eating.” I would like to pause here, and mention that I am not attempting to define what the mainstream American foodway *is* or *consists of*. It is an inchoate term that can take on different meanings in different places and timeframes.

However, for the purposes of this paper, it is exemplified by fast food restaurants or chain supermarkets and the food that these outlets sell. The criterion for what is ‘normal’ or ‘familiar’ is increasingly defined through these retailers. By this definition, any ingredient or dish that is not regularly sold from these outlets is then perceived as abnormal or viewed as a culinary “other.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, the chopped cheese, unlike the hamburger, is a culinary other.

Otherness is constructed on a cultural and an individual level and no cuisine is inherently an other. Subsequently, who and what the culinary other is depends on the standpoint of the observer. However, culinary othering is a process in which we all participate, as we compare and contrast novel foods to those which are familiar. The process of distinguishing the other can be broken down into five categories, “culture, region, time, ethos/religion, and socioeconomic class,” and two less frequently used categories “gender and age.”<sup>32</sup> From these categories, it is possible to piece together why the chopped cheese may be considered a culinary other in relation to the mainstream American foodway.

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<sup>31</sup> Long, “Culinary Tourism.”; I put the term “other” in quotes here because it is the term used in “Culinary Tourism.” The authors express that the term encapsulates what is perceived as different *in regards to* mainstream norms. It is inherently a relational term, and for the remainder of this paper, I do not put other in quotes, but use it in the same manner these authors do. Although I explicitly express this point on various occasions, I use the term other in regards to the mainstream American foodway.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

The chopped cheese was created in East Harlem, a low income, predominantly Hispanic and African American community. It has spread through New York City's bodegas but remains most popular in neighborhoods with similar demographics to East Harlem. The chopped cheese is thoroughly embedded within neighborhoods that have been strongly influenced by the culinary culture of a diverse group of residents. Michael Adams calls Harlem "the cultural nexus of Black America," and Michele Higgins notes that East Harlem is defined by, "its deep-rooted Latino culture."<sup>33</sup> Along with African American and Hispanic culture the chopped cheese has also been influenced by recent Yemeni culture, as these more recent immigrants have found employment in bodegas across the city. I explore the unique history of food retailing in East Harlem in my second chapter, however I emphasize these points here to frame the chopped cheese in contrast to the mainstream foodway, which is defined more so by white, middle class, suburban culture. In respect to this mainstream foodway, the chopped cheese is representative of otherness culturally, regionally, racially/ethnically, and socioeconomically.

One claim, I made in the previous paragraph may have come across as a blatant generalization. It is wrong to assume that the white, middle class, and suburban culture are the only characteristics of the mainstream American foodway. This foodway has consistently incorporated the cuisine of the culinary other and normalized these tastes.<sup>34</sup> Even fast food chains, the emblems of American dining demonstrate the widespread acceptance of the culinary other in the mainstream foodway. Take for example, Taco Bell and Red Lobster. Both sell foods based on the cuisine of the culinary other. As I explore later in this chapter, both fajitas, a Mexican dish and lobster, were once not accepted within the mainstream foodway but now feature prominently within it.

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<sup>33</sup> Adams, "The End of Black Harlem"; Higgins, "New York's Next Hot Neighborhoods."

<sup>34</sup> Goody, "The Impact of the World System," 175-190; Inness, "Eating Ethnic," 1-13.



Why is it that the cuisine of the other, while not necessarily considered a part of the mainstream foodway, has been so widely accepted by American eaters? Answering this question requires close examination of individual cases, which I will explore shortly. However, key to understanding this process is the concept of culinary tourism. Culinary tourism is the voluntary act of engaging with an unfamiliar foodway.<sup>35</sup> The engagement and exploration of the unfamiliar foodway occurs principally because of its perceived otherness in the mind of the tourist. Superficially, this process likens to benign curiosity. Yet curiosity alone fails to capture the intricacies of interactions between the culinary other and mainstream palettes. The mainstream cooption of the cuisine of the culinary other challenges communities' symbolic and physical control over these dishes. Knowledge of the chopped cheese only recently spread from within the confines of New York City's bodegas, but the historical cases of the fajita and the lobster reveal both how communities perceive the integration of their food into the mainstream foodway and how these dishes change during the process.

### **Historical Case: The Fajita**

The fajita is the name given to a specific cut of beef, known as the skirt steak, which is the diaphragm of the cow. The term fajita itself is a folk name that was given to the cut of meat by Mexicans in the Rio Grande Border region.<sup>36</sup> However, currently, in the context of the mainstream foodway, the term fajita loosely refers to any meat, or even vegetable, as long as it is grilled and served with onions and peppers on a flour or corn tortilla, sometimes on a sizzling hot platter. The two "fajitas" share little in common. Why did this come to be? Mario Montaña

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<sup>35</sup> Long, "Culinary Tourism."

<sup>36</sup> Montaña, "Appropriation and Counterhegemony," 56.

answers this question and explains how a distinctly regional and ethnically oriented food became common fare around the United States.

Montaño argues that the root of the culinary acceptance and appropriation by the Anglo-American culture, “lies not in the alleged enlightenment of the dominant culture in appreciating the exotic, but in the concept of cultural hegemony.”<sup>37</sup> Through a process of reinterpretation, the American food industry has relabeled Mexican foods as “Tex-Mex” blurring the originally Mexican recipes and context of these dishes to give them qualities that appeal to mainstream eaters. Here, based on Raymond Williams writing, I define “hegemonic qualities” as qualities which are produced or influenced by the social and cultural forces imparted by the ruling body, in this case, the Anglo Americans.<sup>38</sup>

The reason that fajitas, or the Anglo notion of fajitas, were given more hegemonic qualities was because the fajita stood in opposition to the mainstream foodway through its association with the other. In this case, the fajita was associated with an ethnic minority who had been “militarily and politically conquered” in the period of 1836-1950 by Anglos.<sup>39</sup> This ethnic minority was then labeled as inferior by the Anglos and subjected to violence and “racist attitudes symbolically dispersed in food slurs.”<sup>40</sup> The development of ethnic slurs such as ‘greaser,’ ‘chili picker,’ and others like it encoded animus racial attitudes with culinary traditions.

The appropriation of Mexican cuisine, thus, necessitated a fundamental shift in what the fajita meant to Anglo eaters. In this case, the culinary other’s cuisine is first rejected by the mainstream (used symbolically to express perceived racial inferiority), then reappropriated and

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<sup>37</sup> Montaño, “Appropriation and Counterhegemony,” 56.

<sup>38</sup> Williams, “Hegemony,” 108-114.

<sup>39</sup> Montaño, “Appropriation and Counterhegemony,” 50.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

rebranded (labeling as Tex-Mex), and finally legitimized and consumed by Anglo eaters.<sup>41</sup> This appropriation has popularized a skewed version of a Mexican dish and priced it at a level which is unaffordable to some of its original producers. Furthermore, it produces a “manufactured” group identity that is at odds with “natural” Mexican group identity.

The case of the fajita reveals important insights that apply to the case of the chopped cheese. In order for Anglos to accept the fajita into the mainstream foodway, they had to create a manufactured identity surrounding the sandwich. The dish on its own was associated with Mexican cuisine, a culinary other that had itself been encoded with derogatory meaning within mainstream, Anglo culture. To create this identity, and thus distinction, the fajita was incorporated into a rebranded, anglicized cuisine, Tex-Mex. Along with the shifting identity of the fajita, the very ingredients came to resemble familiar anglicized taste as the fajita came to loosely define a wide range of dishes. Montaño argues that cultural hegemony’s effect on food works to reject the culture and cuisine of the other, while singling out some dishes that most closely resemble mainstream taste. These dishes are then adopted, relabeled, and altered to match hegemonic taste. The chopped cheese, is a prime example of dish that already matches mainstream taste. As I explore in my third chapter, some chefs who attempt to elevate the chopped cheese have already begun to behave in a similar fashion to the assimilating forces detailed by Montaño. These chefs praise the chopped cheese, yet reject the quality of the ingredients, which they do to distinguish the quality of their own versions. In doing so, they threaten bodega’s control over the identity of the chopped cheese and begin to manufacture a new identity for the sandwich.

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<sup>41</sup> Montaño, “Appropriation and Counterhegemony,” 57.

### **Historical Case: The Lobster**

Lobster has become part of the fabric that produces the regional character of Maine. In supermarkets across the country, tanks are packed full of lobsters whose claws are bound by brightly colored rubber bands. These unassuming creatures fetch a high price on the seafood market, and it seems that no other state's lobster is held with more prestige than Maine's. However, in the not so distant past, lobsters were of such diminished value that, some farmers in New England would rather plow them into their fields or feed them to their pigs than eat them themselves.<sup>42</sup> While some historians believe this fact is hyperbolized, there is consensus that lobster was a very low status food, one only eaten by fisherman to subsist so they could sell the rest of their more valuable catch.

The lobster's ascent into high class acceptance was influenced by an increased demand for the crustacean in large cities like Boston and New York. Regional fisheries for lobster were depleted, and by the late 1800s, canning and advancements in shipping made Maine's stocks of lobster available to the large urban markets. By the early 1900s, the country's wealthy elites had begun to arrive on the Maine coast in search of summer homes. These vacationers adopted a taste for lobster, which to them, resembled a regional food staple. George Lewis writes, "when the rusticators discovered Maine, they appropriated the lobster along with Maine real estate as a status symbol and badge of uniqueness within their social class."<sup>43</sup> To the longtime residents of Maine who were largely working class, the lobster was consumed because it was abundant and cheap, for the vacationers, it was exciting and new. The popularization of the lobster continued through the 20th century to such a degree that the year-round coastal residents of Maine, many of whom catch the lobster themselves, could not afford to eat them.

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<sup>42</sup> Lewis, "Shell Games in Vacationland," 250.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

In Maine, lobster has not only become an economically valuable commodity, but has become a symbol for the state itself. This has created tension between rural, inland, working class Mainers and coastal, urban residents. The lobster as a symbol of Maine seems ridiculous to these inland residents who are both geographically and economically estranged from the crustacean. The lobster has nothing to do with their daily lives and is only representative of the affluent residents and tourists who can afford to eat it. In the 1980s, these inlanders, much to their discontent, had to carry the image of the lobster everywhere they went, as it was featured on the Maine license plate. The lobster, “is now no more than an expensive regional food that, at most, evokes memories of a past when the coast was rugged, isolated, and unspoiled by the crass weight of middle-class tourism.”<sup>44</sup> The lobster, once a cheap food eaten for necessity, has risen to a position of symbolic identity of the state of Maine. Yet the meaning of this identity has been transmuted to a version that fails to represent the state’s inhabitants.

In many ways, the historical case of the lobster parallels the modern controversy of the chopped cheese. For many working-class Maine residents, the lobster might have been a salient piece of their regional identity, but now it has been rendered unaffordable from demand by wealthy eaters. In this case, the dish itself did not change, but its relevance as a marker of identity to its region’s poor residents did. Long ago, the influx of “rusticators” from the south hyped up the crustacean as an authentic piece of Maine’s culture and as they acquired Maine’s real estate, they also adopted the food of the working class. Today, wealthy gentrifiers from downtown enter neighborhoods like East Harlem while upscale restaurants begin to sell the chopped cheese. A parallel process of appropriation of land and food occurs as gentrification

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<sup>44</sup> Lewis, “Shell Games in Vacationland,” 260.

threatens the community of East Harlem’s cultural control of the sandwich and physical control of the neighborhood.

### **The Duality of the Chopped Cheese**

The chopped cheese is a sandwich that is defined as much by its embeddedness within the mainstream foodway as well as its qualities that distinguish it from this foodway as a cultural outsider. It owes its form directly to the hamburger, popularized in fast food restaurants thanks to the industrialization of beef. This has led to the proliferation in availability of beef patties and the hamburger’s other ingredients through food distribution outlets around the country. Some time in the early 1990s, a bodega cook creatively prepared these accessible ingredients, and thus spawned something new, a sandwich strongly influenced by the American food system. However, this sandwich was also uniquely the product of a New York City bodega. The owner of Hajji’s claims one of the cooks was inspired to chop up the beef based on a Yemeni dish called “dagha yamneeya,” that includes minced meat and vegetables on Yemeni bread.<sup>45</sup> Along the way Hispanic chefs contributed a piece of their own culture by seasoning the meat with adobo.<sup>46</sup> Although the core ingredients remain nearly identical to the hamburger, the chopped cheese demonstrated these cooks ability to create a culturally distinct sandwich by sampling and reinterpreting distinctly mainstream ingredients. The sandwich functions as device by which East Harlem’s residents used widely available ingredients to carve out a shared piece of cultural

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<sup>45</sup> Great Big Story, “The Real New Yorker’s Sandwich.”

<sup>46</sup> Adobo is not *always* added to the chopped cheese, however in my experience, it is more than likely to be added to the sandwich when purchased from bodegas. I’ve personally witnessed cooks adding seasoning to the sandwich, and when I asked them what they adding, they told me it was adobo. Hajji’s claims to add a seasoning to their version but won’t disclose exactly what they add. However, their sandwich tastes very similar to other versions that I’ve tried which I knew contained adobo, so I assume it is a similar seasoning.

identity. In this manner, mainstream food can be reimagined through subtle variations in preparation to demonstrate a community's control over cultural significance of their food.

The recent controversy over the chopped cheese and its adoption into mainstream and upscale restaurants and food purveyors bears crucial implication for the sandwich. When dishes that stand out as culinary others in regards to the mainstream foodway are coopted and reproduced within this foodway, the very composition of these dishes and their cultural identity begins to shift. The ingredients of the chopped cheese already closely resemble mainstream tastes, so, following Montaño's reasoning, it is a dish that is ripe for cooption. Although it is too early to understand how non-bodega food retailers have impacted the cultural identity of the chopped cheese, the historical cases suggest that as the sandwich is increasingly prepared outside of bodegas, the more the sandwich's identity will be altered.

In this chapter, I've taken a macroscopic perspective to first, understand the chopped cheese in the broader context of the industrial food system and second, understand the chopped cheese as a culinary other. Along the way I have defined the sandwich as a representation of one community's ability to control mainstream culinary resource and redefine them in a way that is symbolic of their culture. In my next chapter, I adopt a more pointed perspective and examine food retailing in East Harlem, the home of the chopped cheese. I do this to answer implicit questions presented in this chapter. Why are bodegas so important to East Harlem, and other neighborhoods like it in New York City? Why were the ingredients in the chopped cheese some of the only accessible foods in these neighborhoods? In answering these questions, I argue that bodegas are manifestations of the attempts by community members within East Harlem to control their own food retailing in the face of systemic obstacles.

## Chapter Two

NY Grill & Deli is located on Madison Avenue between 124th and 125th street close to the border of East Harlem. I walked in one evening around 7:00 pm after getting off the Metro North train that stops a block and a half away. It was a mild February night, and a few people were gathered under the scaffolding outside of the bodega to stay out of the light rain. Someone had draped their portable speaker over one of the metal bars of the scaffold and played music in front of the door. The interior of the store was well-lit with bright fluorescent lights. Two men stood conversing next to the ATM that was located directly to the left of the entrance.

The store was stocked with a mix of items typical of many bodegas and corner stores; the rows of shelves were filled with pre-packaged snack foods like chips and baked items, as well as a candy counter shielded by a plexiglass window. Behind that stood the cashier, a young man, and behind him a wall of cigarettes, lottery tickets, and miscellaneous items like batteries and condoms. The left wall of the store housed the columns of coolers that held beer and other alcoholic beverages followed by juices, teas, and sodas. These coolers continued to the back wall of the store, which was devoted to non-perishable, staple foods like beans, flour, sugar, bread and other household items like cleaning supplies and pet food. Along the right wall, continuing from the counter that housed the candy, a cooler case stored egg cartons, blocks of Boar's Head meats and cheeses, as well as some pre-made goods and the fixings for salads. The grill was located behind this case, and one man in an apron worked the station while another man in plain clothes sat behind the case talking to the cook. Above them, a colorful menu was fixed to the wall boasting a variety of sandwiches and other items that could be purchased from the grill area, including something labeled "NY Cheesesteak," which appeared identical in make to the chopped cheese.



The chef, an older man who spoke with a slight Spanish accent, turned around and asked me what I wanted. I told him “a chopped cheese on a roll” and he replied, “you want everything, lettuce, tomato, ketchup, mayo?” I told him I did and asked him to add onions too. He said “okay” and turned around to start making the sandwich and once more struck up a conversation with the man seated next to him. While I waited, I walked around the store in search of something to drink. As I browsed, I noticed a lone rack holding some bananas, oranges, and lemons in a recessed part of the counter with a sticker above it reading “Shop Healthy” with a NYCEDC (New York City Economic Development Corporation) logo written in the corner.

While I was waiting, several more customers entered the store, many saying a brief hello to the cashier. A group of women walked in who knew the men standing by the ATM. The men tried to convince the group of three women to meet up with them later. They talked for a few minutes next to a sign that read “No Loitering” signed by the management, but none of the workers seemed to mind their presence. Another man came in and approached the case of prepared foods and noticed some brownies. He got the chef’s attention and asked them if they tasted as good as they looked. The chef told him they were \$2.50 and assured him in a confident tone that were very delicious. The customer still seemed to have his doubts and went on discussing it for a couple of minutes while the chef cooked. Another man walked in with a couple of dollars in his hand and went straight to the cashier, and simply said “what kinds do you have.” The young man working the register listed a few cigarette brands, and the customer picked one, and exchanged the dollars for a couple of cigarettes.

About five minutes after I ordered, the chef finished the sandwich. He wrapped it tightly in a layer of wax paper, followed by a foil shell. He yelled to the cashier just before handing him the sandwich, “chopped cheese on a roll,” and the young man took the sandwich and quickly put

it in a small black to-go bag with napkins. He told me the total for the transaction was \$6.00, \$5.00 for the sandwich and \$1.00 for an iced tea I had grabbed from the cooler. As I thanked the man and handed him the money, I recognized the song playing from the speaker just outside.

The song was “Plain Jane” by the Harlem born rapper A\$AP Ferg, who is part of the rap collective A\$AP Mob. The collective, in January of 2016, released a song titled “Yamborghini High” that boasts over 71 million views on YouTube.<sup>47</sup> The extended version features a two minute long intro in which a man can be heard saying in a conversational tone, “Let me get a chopped cheese Papi, chopped cheese and a loosey.”<sup>48</sup> This phrase is presumably addressed to an employee at a New York City bodega, as it is the only location in the world where one could purchase both the chopped cheese and a loosey (a single cigarette).<sup>49</sup> The intro seemingly takes place within a New York City bodega uses language unique to this location and evokes a strong association with place, without directly expressing it. For many listeners, the introduction’s relationship to place would be missed. The significance of the few lines would even slip by many New Yorkers. It certainly wouldn’t have made sense to me five years ago, before a friend of mine who was living in Harlem introduced me to the sandwich one night. Yet the chopped cheese is significant in its own corner of the world. A\$AP mob, the producers of “Yamborghini High,” the first track on the collective’s mixtape *Cozy Tapes: Vol. 1 Friends* thought it was important enough to include on a track honoring A\$AP Yams, a deceased member of their collective whose baby picture serves as the album’s cover art.

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<sup>47</sup> Asap Mob VEVO, “Yamborghini High ft. Juicy J.”

<sup>48</sup> A\$AP Mob, “Yamborghini High.”

<sup>49</sup> Loosies are commonly sold at bodegas around the city. However, bodegas do not usually advertise this practice because it is illegal. In 2014, Eric Garner was murdered by a New York City Police officer when he was confronted and assaulted for selling loose cigarettes.

The chopped cheese is not only a sandwich beloved by some New Yorkers, but also serves as a window into these people's lives. Entwined in the history of the sandwich is the fixture of the bodega, and the significance these businesses have had in the neighborhoods they are located in. What's obvious even from short visits to bodegas is the sense of community imbued within them. People kindly greet the workers and catch up with each other, taking their time to talk rather than hurriedly making their purchase and leaving. These spaces are often multilingual too, as bodegas and delis have been owned and operated by immigrants and their offspring who have arrived in New York in successive waves for generations. Historically, these small businesses have provided their neighborhoods with food when chain retailers were fleeing African American and Hispanic communities in great numbers. The entrepreneurial drive exhibited by these bodega owners provided a life line to food before supermarkets opened in neighborhoods like East Harlem in the late 1990s, a few years after the first chopped cheeses started flying off of bodega's grills. Bodegas were, and still are spaces where immigrants of color could own their own businesses and cater their products to their fellow community members. The chopped cheese is not only connected to a rich history, but its importance extends into contemporary discourse about gentrification. Neighborhoods where the sandwich is sold now face encroaching developments that threaten to displace many of the lasting low-income residents. The chopped cheese serves as a window into bodegas, and further, the history of food retailing in East Harlem, which contextualizes current tensions surrounding food retailers like Whole Food that recently opened in the neighborhood.

## **Supermarket Disinvestment and Challenges to Food Accessibility**

Today, East Harlem's food retailing options for consumers look far different than it did twenty years ago. Independent grocery stores of various scales populate the neighborhood's blocks, and now, even larger chains like Aldi and Whole Foods boast locations in, or adjacent to the neighborhood. However, longtime residents of the neighborhood know that only a short time ago, living close to a supermarket in East Harlem was impossible. The current saturation of supermarkets in the neighborhood is a legacy of the victories of community advocacy groups that petitioned the city and private companies to open a supermarket long before any CEOs bothered to deal with the neighborhood. Yet unlike virtually all white, middle class American neighborhoods, why did East Harlem's residents have to fight to open a supermarket in their community at all? Much like many low income urban neighborhoods in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, East Harlem's residents lived without a supermarket for decades due to industry practices termed 'supermarket redlining.'<sup>50</sup> During the long decades of disinvestment by supermarket chains, Harlem's residents were served instead by bodegas and small grocers. While national grocery chains turned their attention away from Harlem for nearly half a century, bodegas populated the neighborhood and supplied Harlem with produce, albeit in limited quantities and at elevated prices, as well as household goods. The bodega is, and has been, an important institution in Harlem and other low-income communities.

In this chapter, I discuss the history of food retailing in East Harlem, beginning with the process of supermarket redlining that left neighborhoods like East Harlem and other low-income communities of color around the country devoid of supermarkets. Then I discuss the importance of the bodega in East Harlem as a space where various immigrant communities could take

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<sup>50</sup> Eisenhower, "In Poor Health."

control of food accessibility issues in their neighborhoods and create spaces tailored towards their diverse customers. Next, I explore the arrival of East Harlem's first supermarket, Pathmark, to reveal both the positive and negative impacts this market had on the neighborhood. Finally, I recount the arrival of Whole Foods, and using recent environmental justice scholarship, critically analyze the implications this supermarket's arrival has had on food security and gentrification in East Harlem.

Supermarkets as we know them began to take shape in the post-World War II years in the United States. The 1950s marked the beginning of the middle class' swift exodus from the country's urban centers. Many of the nation's urban neighborhoods were on the decline in this era due in part to the practice of redlining that systematically denied African American and other non-white urban residents access to mortgages and other loans. The nation's new road network and other technological advancements such as the telephone also made suburban life viable for many middle-income Americans. However, due to socioeconomic disparities along racial and ethnic lines, the suburban dream was realized largely by white Americans. Additionally, even affluent and upwardly mobile African Americans, Hispanics, and other non-white American were denied entry into white neighborhoods due to discriminatory housing covenants. All in all, this fueled rampant residential segregation and furthered the dilapidation of urban neighborhoods.<sup>51</sup>

The contemporaneous process of suburbanization and the ensuing racially segregated landscape that proliferated around the United States vastly impacted the ways the nascent food

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<sup>51</sup> Here, I make sweeping generalizations about the process of suburbanization in the United States. Suburbs took many shapes and forms throughout these years including poor white, affluent African American, middle class mixed race, etc., yet it is not an exaggeration to claim the process of suburbanization did amplify racial stratification in the United States. Through processes of both *de facto* and *de jure* segregation, urban poverty was concentrated in communities of color while whites were provided with tools to achieve middle class status and economic security. For more information, see Rothstein, *The Color of Law*, and Nicolaidis and Wiese, *Suburban Reader*.

retailing industry would take shape. As supermarkets vied for ever increasing square footage to house their large inventory, they followed white America into the spacious suburbs where they hoped to capitalize on new markets.<sup>52</sup> These superstores quickly began capturing a larger market share in food retailing, and from 1950 to 1960, they doubled their share in the food retailing sector from 35% to 70%. Independent grocers couldn't compete with large grocery chains and were either out competed or bought up in mergers.<sup>53</sup>

Although supermarkets started adopting an increasingly large share of the food retailing market, their impact on urban neighborhoods like Harlem remained minor. So called 'urban renewal' projects began to take hold of cities that aimed to alleviate urban issues. These projects usually took the form of massively destructive, publicly funded construction projects that greatly altered urban landscapes. In neighborhoods across the country, including Harlem, people's homes and businesses were razed as monolithic, state owned housing developments were built and miles of cities were carved out to lay the asphalt that would become the roads connecting the urban core to the suburbs. If the competition from supermarket chains wasn't enough to put some small grocers out of business, the demolition of the existing urban structures would destroy many businesses for good.

By the 1970s, supermarkets had firmly established their dominance in the food retailing sector. Through improved technologies like computerized inventory systems, these supermarkets were able to increase the efficiency of their outlets by tailoring deliveries to their locations, thereby reducing spoiled products. These corporations grew so powerful that the greatest competition they faced were competing chains. Fierce price wars between supermarket chains erupted, further undermining the profitability of surviving independent grocers. In order for

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<sup>52</sup> Gottlieb and Joshi, *Food Justice*, 43-46.

<sup>53</sup> Eisenhower, "In Poor Health."

chains to persist through these price wars and avoid sequestration by competing companies, many corporations engaged in leveraged buyouts (LBOs), a technique used by corporations to gain an edge over their competitors. LBOs had serious implications on consumers as well, they caused prices in urban supermarkets to soar so prices could be lowered in suburban markets where other companies were competing for suburbanites' dollars. Essentially, this shifted increased economic burden onto urban consumers.<sup>54</sup>

By the 1980s, many of the nation's supermarkets had coalesced through mergers and leveraged buyouts, leaving only the national behemoths standing. These remaining chains had shifted their strategy even further in the direction of sprawling superstores located in suburban areas. Urban neighborhoods, such as East Harlem, that had previously faced higher prices now faced the loss of their supermarkets all together. Even as the net openings of supermarkets surpassed net closings nationally, urban neighborhoods experienced a net loss. For example, from 1968 to 1984, eleven of Hartford, Connecticut's thirteen supermarket chains left the city.<sup>55</sup> In Manhattan alone, 125 supermarkets left the borough from 1970 to 1990.<sup>56</sup> These trends continued well into the 1990s. By 1995, there were 44% less supermarket retail space in the poorest 20% of urban neighborhoods in the United States than the richest 20%.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Leveraged buyouts allow companies to acquire assets, such as other competitors' stores, without investing a large amount of capital. Instead, the purchasing company is loaned money from a financial institution, thus incurring a large amount of debt, in which the acquired assets serve as the collateral. The encumbrance of debt by leveraged buyouts usually led to three outcomes: non-profitable stores were sold, prices in profitable stores in competitive locations would drop, or prices in profitable stores in noncompetitive locations would rise. These profitable, noncompetitive stores were often located in urban neighborhoods where shoppers could not drive to alternate supermarkets, while competitive markets were located in the suburbs where shoppers could drive to a competitor's store. The competition between corporations actually increased prices in urban supermarkets and decreased prices in the suburbs. Basic capitalist intuition would assume that increased competition would be beneficial to consumers, yet supermarket chains used urban residents' lack of mobility and option to choose between markets (hence creating noncompetitive markets) as a means to raise prices in these stores. Investopedia "Leveraged Buyout-LBO."

<sup>55</sup> Martin et al., "What Role Do Local Grocery Stores Play?" 9.

<sup>56</sup> Newsweek Staff, "Where the Food Isn't."

<sup>57</sup> Eisenhauer, "In Poor Health," 128.

The disinvestment of supermarkets in urban neighborhoods cannot be attributed to the workings of the free market alone. While it is true that urban neighborhoods were not conducive to the gargantuan size that supermarkets occupy and generally demanded higher labor and land costs, many experts classify supermarket chain's resistance to opening urban locations as a form of redlining.<sup>58</sup> Chains like Pathmark and Shaw's have proven repeatedly that supermarkets can be very profitable in urban areas, yet countless other chains chose to disinvest in urban neighborhoods due to discriminatory practices. Companies that are successful within urban neighborhoods do so by fostering community partnerships and developing community tailored inventories. Eisenhower writes, "adaptations...require *a willingness to become a part of a community*, rather than simply locating within it, and those chains which do so are often so successful that they may open additional stores in underserved communities" (emphasis added).<sup>59</sup> Pathmark, a chain known for its collaboration with underserved communities would indeed be the first supermarket chain to arrive in East Harlem in 1999 after decades of disinvestment and supermarket redlining. Pathmark succeeded due to its willingness to work *with* community groups and cater towards their needs, improving the community's control over their food security.

Long term neglect from supermarket chains was far more serious than an annoyance for Black and Hispanic residents living in East Harlem during the many decades of supermarket redlining. Scholars have documented the negative health impacts that are associated with the lack of supermarket access in neighborhoods.<sup>60</sup> Higher rates of obesity found in low access neighborhoods lead to life threatening illness including diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, high

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<sup>58</sup> Newsweek Staff, "Where the Food Isn't."

<sup>59</sup> Eisenhower, "In Poor Health," 128.

<sup>60</sup> Gordan et al., "Measuring Food Deserts in New York City's Low-income Neighborhoods," 696.



blood pressure, high cholesterol, and cancers.<sup>61</sup> In New York City, on the Upper East Side, a predominately white and wealthy neighborhood, obesity and diabetes rates measured 9% and 5% respectively in 2006. In low income minority populations, including East and Central Harlem and North and Central Brooklyn, obesity and diabetes rates ranged from 21-30% and 10-15% respectively.<sup>62</sup> This trend is not unique to New York City; scholars across many disciplines have devoted attention to the disparities in supermarket access along racial and socioeconomic lines and have found that low income and minority communities have increased difficulty accessing supermarkets than wealthier, white neighborhoods. The proliferation of these low access neighborhoods has led scholars to coin the term ‘food desert,’ which is an area, that is not located in close proximity to supermarkets.<sup>63</sup>

The prevalence of food deserts, as mentioned above, is an issue that affects populations not only along the lines of socioeconomic status, but on a racial and ethnic axis. It should come as no surprise that the discriminatory practice of supermarket redlining bred disparities along racial and ethnic lines. Supermarket redlining has led to quantifiable distinctions in the rates of deadly diseases in two urban populations (Central and East Harlem and the Upper East Side) that share spatial proximity but deviate in terms of socioeconomic status and racial and ethnic composition. The lack of supermarkets is not the only factor by which low income neighborhoods differ from their wealthier counterparts. Of the food retailers that do exist in poorer areas, the price of fresh produce is often *higher* than supermarkets in middle and high-

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<sup>61</sup> Gordan et al., “Measuring Food Deserts in New York City’s Low-income Neighborhoods,” 696.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Many technical definitions exist for demarcating and measuring food deserts, however definitions often vary widely. Most take into account spatial proximity to supermarkets or food retailers as well as the income level of the areas they study. More comprehensive definitions also take into account access to public transportation and affordability of food retailers. Definitions can and should change based on the unique barriers to access that different communities face, so I decline to provide one sweeping definition. See the introduction of Martin et al., “What Role Do Local Grocery Stores Play?” for a conversation on this topic.

income neighborhoods. The supermarkets that do decide to locate in low income neighborhoods are often independently run, and do not benefit from the same economies of scale that national chain brands take advantage of. A 1993 study conducted by Judith Bell and Bonnie Burlin in Oakland, California showed that even within low income neighborhoods, groceries were 41% more costly at an independent grocer when compared to a separate chain location based in a different low-income neighborhood.<sup>64</sup>

Independent grocers do not strive to sell costly produce to their surrounding low-income communities, rather, Bell and Brulin's study revealed that independent grocers operating in low income, urban neighborhoods face systemic issues that prohibit them from selling food as inexpensively as large chain supermarkets. Independent supermarkets in low income portions of Brooklyn and Manhattan serve, on average, around twice as many customers as those in middle income neighborhoods. Customers have fewer options in low income neighborhoods, thus flock to the same market(s). The increased number of customers in these stores imposes higher labor costs on these independent businesses. Bell and Brulin also discuss certain forms of discrimination that independent grocers and bodegas face at the hands of their distributors. The study claims that some businesses face "'extra' charges or a complete lack of willingness among wholesale distributors to deliver in low-income areas."<sup>65</sup> This barrier amounts to a form of distributor discrimination that further impinges on independent businesses capabilities to keep costs low for their customers. Furthermore, independent grocers, especially those located in New York City, already face challenges in the form of reduced inventory space and cannot take full advantage of large wholesale orders. Independent grocers operating in poor, urban neighborhoods face confounding burdens that hinder their ability to provide affordable produce.

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<sup>64</sup> Bell and Burlin, "In Urban Areas" 268-270.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

## The Bodega's Deep Roots in East Harlem

Despite independent grocers' setbacks, small stores and bodegas were the predominant food retailers in neighborhoods abandoned by chain supermarkets. East Harlem's lack of supermarkets in the decades preceding the turn of the 21st century can be attributed to the same troubles that befell urban neighborhoods around the country. Ethnic white enclaves including Italian and Jewish sections of Harlem began to dissipate beginning in the early part of the 20th century when an influx of African American and Puerto Rican migrants and immigrants began filing into the neighborhood.<sup>66</sup> By the middle of the 20th century, white flight to New York City's surrounding suburbs had left East Harlem hyper segregated. Supermarkets followed the white middle class outside of New York City, turning their attention away from East Harlem. Yet food retailing would not be utterly absent from the neighborhood.

Perhaps the most crucial factor to the success of bodegas was their embeddedness within the community. Although corporate chains only viewed urban neighborhoods and their poverty and higher crime rates as obstacles to economic success, the insightful bodega owners acknowledged the community need for food and recognized how to supply it. Especially in East Harlem, also known as Spanish Harlem due to its large Puerto Rican and more recently Dominican population, bodega owners understood their customer base. Bodegas stocked food items that were culturally appropriate for East Harlem's inhabitants, of which a large portion were Hispanic. Unlike national chain supermarkets, bodegas stocked twenty-pound bags of rice and avocados.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, the owners and workers running these shops often spoke Spanish, the language commonly spoken by East Harlem's residents. Shoppers who might feel alienated in other stores found a sense of belonging and community in bodegas across the neighborhood.

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<sup>66</sup> Sharman, *The Tenants of East Harlem*, 51-52.

<sup>67</sup> Boss, "Big Business Springs from Bodegas."

Unlike the more sterile self-service supermarkets of the time, bodegas were filled with the sights and sounds familiar to the Hispanic immigrant population living in Harlem.<sup>68</sup> While these stores couldn't offer the standardized selection of produce that supermarkets of the day could, their smaller but more tailored inventories provided a much-needed service. Bodegas became spaces that were both culturally and commercially relevant to East Harlem and functioned as spaces where residents could empower their communities by providing appropriate sustenance.

Bodegas not only provided sources of food and community cohesion, they were also lucrative enterprises. Mariano Diaz, an immigrant from the Dominican Republic, began opening bodegas in Harlem in the 1960s, and by the 1990s, had worked his way into opening full-fledged supermarkets in the neighborhood. Diaz says, "I think we've developed a unique style of addressing the different ethnic needs of neighborhoods as opposed to the chains. Being an independent gives you the advantage to be able to adapt."<sup>69</sup> Diaz applied the knowledge of his consumers to provide appropriate foods to his shoppers, and rather than being hindered by corporate standards, his flexibility cultivated success.

Diaz himself was part of a wave of Dominican immigration that was spurred by political unrest in the country that began in the 1960s.<sup>70</sup> Diaz had followed the steps of Puerto Rican immigrants, who in the 1930s began arriving in East Harlem. This wave of immigration led to the opening of the first bodegas in the neighborhood and other Puerto Rican enclaves throughout New York City. For recent immigrants who lacked higher education and access to large amounts of capital, opening an independent business like a bodega proved to be a reliable business venture. Labor costs could be kept lower by hiring family members and businesses could be located

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<sup>68</sup> Boss, "Big Business Springs from Bodegas."

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Gonzalez, "Dominican Immigration Alters Hispanic New York."

within the Puerto Rican community. By the 1960s and 70s, the first-generation children of Puerto Rican immigrants had come of age, and with their higher educational attainment and aspirations for professionalism, did not all follow their parents into the business. This, however, opened the door for Dominican immigrants who were flowing into East Harlem and other parts of New York City who, facing similar constraints as Puerto Rican immigrants had a few decades earlier, grasped at the opportunity to run their own independent business. The stores were, sometimes begrudgingly, handed over to Dominican immigrants like Mariano Diaz who continued to carve out a place for these stores in Harlem for years to come.<sup>71</sup>

Today, a newer wave of immigration into New York City has once again manifested itself within the city's bodegas. Thousands of Yemeni immigrants now own and work in these stores all across the city.<sup>72</sup> Bodega's remain an alluring business for first time immigrants trying their luck in the United States. Just as waves of immigration wax and wane, so does the demographic of this prevailing institution. However, along the way, these businesses have been culturally influenced by the diverse populations that have owned and worked within them. Bodega owners have chosen to locate their stores throughout New York's communities of color, long before supermarkets gave up their discriminatory practices. Although these stores only could provide a limited selection of fresh foods and staple items, they did so in a culturally relevant manner. These spaces became hubs in their neighborhoods, where community members could conveniently fulfill their commercial needs. Bodegas themselves have become both commercially and culturally significant institutions within neighborhoods like East Harlem. The chopped cheese, a sandwich that has demonstrated the bodega's ability to transmogrify

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<sup>71</sup> Gonzalez, "Dominican Immigration Alters Hispanic New York."

<sup>72</sup> Stack, "Yemenis Close Bodegas and Rally to Protest Trump's Ban."; Chandler, "'The Yemeni Bodega Strike.'"

mainstream ingredients into a culturally unique item, is intrinsically bound to these important, multicultural institutions that have served communities of color for decades.

### **Pathmark: East Harlem's First Supermarket**

It wasn't until 1999, some years after a cook at Hajji's created the chopped cheese, when Esat Harlem's first supermarket opened; the 125th street Pathmark. By this time, community organization had been fighting to attract a supermarket to the neighborhood for decades. The Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle (CAEHT), founded in the 1960s in response to an impending urban renewal project, had completed a comprehensive plan in 1968 for the neighborhood that would include the construction of a cooperatively owned grocery store and other much needed amenities including a daycare, health clinic, and job center.<sup>73</sup> The grocery store that CAEHT had desired in their 1968 comprehensive plan was never constructed, but their proposal to build the structure was emblematic of community members long standing desire for improved amenities, including better access to fresh food. Decades later in the 1990s, CAEHT revisited their past aspirations and played an important role in finalizing the deal that brought Pathmark to 125th street.

East Harlem was not the first low income, urban neighborhood where Pathmark had chosen to open a new location. Pathmark had demonstrated that operating stores in low income, urban areas could be a profitable venture, despite industry norms that usually overlooked these neighborhoods. In 1979, Pathmark opened a successful store in Brooklyn's Bedford Stuyvesant, and in 1990, opened a location in Central Newark, which, similar to East Harlem, had not seen the construction of a new supermarket since 1967.<sup>74</sup> While other chains feared opening locations

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<sup>73</sup> Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance*, 39-57; Architects' Renewal Committee, "East Harlem Triangle Plan."

<sup>74</sup> Lavin, "Supermarket Access and Consumer Well-being," 392.

in low income communities of color, Pathmark had made somewhat of a name for itself doing the opposite. As I will discuss in the following section, in the case of Harlem, Pathmark's success was due to the chains willingness to work *with* community groups.

The ground on which the 125th location would be constructed was jointly owned by CAEHT and the Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC). From their creation in 1989, the ADC adopted a strongly development-oriented approach for the advancement of the community. Unlike the CAEHT, which had come together in the more radical era of the 1960s, the ADC adopted a development focused approach that some commentators critiqued for its dependence on outside investors who would pocket the returns on developments in the neighborhood. Despite these groups' ideological differences, the two aligned on the issue of food retailing and the desire to build a supermarket. East Harlem's residents shared these organization's desires. A marketing research firm hired by Pathmark found that 90% of residents agreed a supermarket was needed.<sup>75</sup> CAEHT and ADC would receive rents from Pathmark, which assuaged some fears that outside developers would be the sole beneficiaries of the development.

However, one slice of East Harlem's populace was unconvinced: the neighborhood's bodegas and independent grocers. They feared that the arrival of the large, self-service supermarket and pharmacy would put independent shops out of business. The opposition to Pathmark was divided across racial lines, as many of the small business owners were Hispanic, while the community groups that organized the project were predominately African American. Mayor Giuliani, who's voter base consisted of a large segment of Hispanic backers, felt compelled to chime in. The Mayor claimed that he would support the project on the condition that a 49% stake be set aside for a Hispanic developer.<sup>76</sup> Protests and opposition from Hispanic

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<sup>75</sup> Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance*, 261.

<sup>76</sup> Hicks, "Giuliani Bows to Reality of Ethnicity on Pathmark."

groups delayed the construction of the supermarket for years. The plan to construct the market had been conceived in 1991 and would only open eight years later in 1999.

In reality the Pathmark did not pose such a considerable threat to East Harlem's bodegas and small businesses. The city conducted an impact assessment of the proposed Pathmark in 1992 that found "that the area had been underserved for so long that residents could support another 40,000 square feet of food retail and the same amount of pharmacy retail, far in excess of the size of the project," meaning the neighborhood's bodegas would probably not lose much business.<sup>77</sup> Additionally, a Baruch College study of the Lower East Side Pathmark that opened in the 1980s found that the supermarket's arrival to the neighborhood led to the closure of six out of seven large food retailers, but 66 small stores, which sold food, clothing and other items remained unaffected.<sup>78</sup> Nonetheless, fears from the neighborhood's Hispanic population signified some resident's concerns about relinquishing the community's control over its food retailing. Although the supermarket provided a much-needed service, it also shifted the community's resources to a corporation that could not be completely managed by the community. These early fears would only grow as the years went on.

Regardless of some critical opinions, once the supermarket finally opened its doors, the community responded with excitement. Carolyn Boyd, a secretary and resident of Central Harlem said "I'm just going crazy in here...Everything I need in a store is right here."<sup>79</sup> Residents finally had a one stop shop in their neighborhood that could supply them with high quality, fresh produce at prices the bodegas could not beat. Additionally, a subsequent study of the East Harlem location provided healthful and unhealthful foods in the same ratio that its

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<sup>77</sup> Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance*, 261.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Pristin, "A Supermarket as a Spur for Change."



suburban locations did.<sup>80</sup> Produce was prominently displayed near the entrance of the store and large amount of the store's square footage contained high quality fish, poultry, and meats. The supermarket did not compromise the quality of its foods in East Harlem, and residents were glad to finally have access to cheap and healthy foods within their neighborhood.

The 125th street Pathmark demonstrated that it could make accessible, fresh produce a reality in East Harlem. The arrival of the supermarket was also demonstrative of a broader shift in thinking that occurred in Harlem during the time. Despite pockets of discordance among some residents, Harlem community groups often vied for increasing commercialization. There was faith that corporate expertise and outside investment could foster improvements in the livability and amenities in the neighborhood. Pathmark bolstered this ideal, as residents were gleeful to have a market whose quality and price they could depend on. However, in the coming decade this unbridled enthusiasm for commercial and residential development would escalate into mounting fears of gentrification. While almost all East Harlem residents agreed that the 125th street Pathmark was a necessary development and would lament its closure in 2015 due to the bankruptcy of its parent company, the supermarket was part of a wave of commercialization at the hands of community development corporations like the ADC who ushered in great change in the neighborhood and Harlem at large. The ADC's organizational thrust, after all, was routed in development, not food security. After the supermarket's closure, Karen A. Phillips, then chief executive of the ADC remarked that Pathmark had "done what it was supposed to do—inspire new commercial development."<sup>81</sup>

Despite the ADC's lack of remorse, residents were saddened by Pathmark's closure and the subsequent loss of accessibility. ABC News quoted customers of the supermarket including

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<sup>80</sup> Lavin, "Supermarket Access," 392-396.

<sup>81</sup> Pristin, Harlem's Pathmark Anchors a Commercial Revival on 125th Street."

Asia Dogostiano, who said “I would get my French-cut lamb chops here, different things that you can't buy in the local stores,” and Kimara Brown who remarked, “We have the regular corner stores but they don't sell what Pathmark carried, so it's not the same.”<sup>82</sup> These customers reinforced the important role the market played in increasing accessibility to fresh foods, and distinguished it as a step above the other options in the neighborhood.

Both the City of New York and community groups like CAEHT and the ADC had originally sided with Pathmark, a chain supermarket with a history of success in low income neighborhoods. Although the operators of medium sized grocers and bodega owners protested the encroachment of big business into their communities, a large portion of East Harlem's residents and organizers saw the expertise and dependability that large chains could bring to the community as an irreplaceable good. However, as the years went on, the Pathmark became symbolic of a pivotal moment in East Harlem's history. By the second decade of the 21st century, an era of rapid development and swift demographic shift in the neighborhood was underway, stoking fears of gentrification. The Pathmark was greeted with widespread community acceptance when it opened its doors in 1999, but by the time another major supermarket opened on 125th street the community's reception mirrored bodega owners' concerns eighteen years earlier. In 2017, Whole Foods opened adjacent to the closed Pathmark, fueling apprehension among East Harlem's residents. In my next section, I examine the Whole Foods' opening on 125th street with a critical lens and use food justice and environmental justice scholarship to demonstrate that resident's fears were far from unfounded.

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<sup>82</sup> Allicot, “East Harlem Residents Upset over Closing of Pathmark Supermarket.”

## Whole Foods and Gentrification

In 2015, Harlem's residents mourned the closure of the 125th Street Pathmark that served 30,000 customers a week. The supermarket shut its doors due to the failure of the brand's parent company, A&P, in 2015.<sup>83</sup> Pathmark had filled East Harlem's food gap years earlier and its closure left many residents facing the same food accessibility problems they had dealt with before. The community organizations that placed their faith in Pathmark's corporate expertise now faced the downside of relying on a chain brand; the company's susceptibility to corporate failure. A year before the store's closure, the ADC sold its majority share of the land to Extell Development for \$39 million, a company whose holdings include a 1,550-foot-tall tower called 'Billionaire's Row' bordering Central Park housing, "179 of the most exclusive homes in the world."<sup>84</sup> Shortly after Pathmark's closing, news broke that a new supermarket would open on the same block. On July 21st, 2017, Whole Foods opened on 125th Street and Lenox Avenue just a few avenues west from the defunct East Harlem Pathmark.

Community reception to the Whole Foods vastly differed from their reception to the Pathmark. In an article titled 'The End of Black Harlem,' Michael Adams writes, "for so many privileged New Yorkers, Whole Foods is just the corner store. But among the black and working-class residents of Harlem, who have withstood red lining and neglect, it might as well be Fortnum and Mason. To us, our Harlem is being remade, upgraded and transformed, just for them, for wealthier white people."<sup>85</sup> Here, Adams simultaneously remarks on the disparities between affluent and low-income neighborhoods and the prevalence of Harlem's corner stores, or bodegas. For white, "privileged New Yorkers" Whole Foods are so abundant and affordable

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<sup>83</sup> West, "Pathmark Closure Jars East Harlem."

<sup>84</sup> Extell, "Central Park Tower."

<sup>85</sup> Adams, "The End of Black Harlem."

that they function as their corner stores. For Harlemites, however, Whole Foods is far too expensive and indicative of their impending displacement.

The sentiments that Adams expressed echoed the earlier fears posed by Preston Wilcox, a civil rights activist and proponent of community control, commenting on the soon to open Pathmark, “What we have here is a bunch of capitalists coming into our community, but not really showing us how capitalism works.”<sup>86</sup> If Wilcox was worried about outside developers reaping the benefit of development, at least his fears could be assuaged by the indisputably beneficial service the Pathmark provided. In Adams critique of the Whole Foods, this aforementioned ‘beneficial service’ is called into question. Adams expresses concerns that the food offered by Whole Foods is simply out of the economic reach of Harlem’s low-income residents. To him, the opening of the Whole Foods symbolized the ever-encroaching cranes and bulldozers of rapid development and displacement and unlike Pathmark, he perceived the supermarket as posing *increased* challenges to food accessibility rather than alleviating food scarcity.

Adams’ criticisms of Whole Foods and his observations about the rapid change in the neighborhood are corroborated by recent studies in environmental justice literature. In “Healthy Food Stores, Greenlining and Food Gentrification,” Isabelle Anguelovski discusses the takeover of a long-standing supermarket, Hi-Lo Foods by a Whole Foods in Jamaica Plain, Boston. Much like East Harlem, Jamaica Plain was once a predominately Hispanic neighborhood that began rapidly gentrifying and experienced significant demographic shifts in the 2010s as white residents moved into the neighborhood. In her study, Anguelovski details the divide in support and opposition for the Whole Foods that largely broke down across racial and ethnic lines. Many

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<sup>86</sup> Wilcox quoted in Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance*, 259.

older, Hispanic residents of the neighborhood expressed their support for Hi-Lo Foods noting its significance as a “cultural safe haven” as well as its inventory which was economically and gastronomically sensible to the surrounding community.<sup>87</sup> Instead of *fostering* food security, Anguelovski argues that the arrival of the new Whole Foods posed a *threat* to food security in the community, as the increased prices of food in the new market made comparable food items significantly more expensive. Although Hi-Lo foods was being replaced by another supermarket, notably one that prides itself on its fresh and organic produce, the *real* accessibility to this produce was limited to the newer, wealthier residents of Jamaica Plain. Burgeoning scholarship has labeled places like these ‘food mirages,’ or locations where supermarkets may be spatially abundant, but their inventories are priced above the economic reach of low income residents.<sup>88</sup>

Anguelovski’s analysis builds on previous environmental justice scholarship on locally unwanted land uses (LULUs). Scholarship on LULUs has focused mainly on the disproportionate amount of environmental disamenities (hazardous waste dumps, bus depots, sewage treatment plants, etc.) that occupy communities of historically marginalized populations.<sup>89</sup> Anguelovski argues that the presence of healthy food markets manifest a new sort of LULU, that unlike environmental disamenities, are not ostensibly environmentally deleterious, but is still inappropriate for communities and exacerbate environmental inequalities. The harmful presence of healthy supermarkets like Whole Foods is evidenced by their active and conscious role in the gentrification of communities where they locate their stores. John Mackey, the CEO of Whole Foods was quoted in 2007 saying, “The joke is that we could have made a lot more money just buying up real estate around our stores and developing it than we could make

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<sup>87</sup> Anguelovski, “Healthy Food Stores, Greenlining and Food Gentrification,” 1225.

<sup>88</sup> Breyer and Voss-Andreae, “Food Mirages.”

<sup>89</sup> Agyeman, Evans, and Bullard, *Just Sustainabilities*; Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie*; Sze, *Noxious New York*.

selling groceries. That's one reason we have a lot of landlords aggressively [trying] to get us in as tenants.”<sup>90</sup> The construction of Whole Foods supermarkets not only facilitates the creation of food mirages in places like Jamaica Plain, but actively fuels the displacement of communities’ low income residents. National chain supermarkets similar to Whole Foods, once notorious for utterly disinvesting in minority and low-income communities through the process labeled supermarket redlining, now target these urban neighborhoods in the hopes of capturing the dollars of incoming gentrifiers. Anguelovski labels this process ‘supermarket greenlining.’<sup>91</sup> Just as supermarket redlining posed increased challenges to food accessibility in urban areas, supermarket greenlining creates a false sense of food accessibility while having the additional effect of amplifying the process of gentrification.

The parallels of Jamaica Plain and East Harlem are abundant and these cases are demonstrative of what Kenneth Gould and Tammy Lewis have labeled ‘green gentrification.’ These authors encapsulate more broadly what Anguelovski’s case study details. Gould and Lewis argue that the creation and development of environmental amenities labeled ‘green initiatives’ undertaken by governmental or private bodies like parks, bike paths, community gardens, or healthy supermarkets, “generates green gentrification that pushes out the working class, and people of color, and attracts white, wealthier in-migrants.”<sup>92</sup> Green initiatives are purported to have intrinsically beneficial qualities through their role in aiding ‘sustainable development,’ which consists of three pillars: environmental protection, economic growth, and social equity. However, it is often the case that green initiatives fail to live up to the core tenets of sustainable development. Although companies like Whole Foods and its supporters in Jamaica

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<sup>90</sup> Boyle, “The Man Who Brought Organics to Main Street.”

<sup>91</sup> Anguelovski, “Healthy Food Stores,” 1209-1230.

<sup>92</sup> Gould and Lewis, *Green Gentrification*.

Plain utilized the discourse of sustainability to portray the stores development as a community good, they failed to acknowledge the inability of the supermarket's construction to live up to the social equity pillar of sustainable development, as their supermarket exacerbates issues of food accessibility and the process of gentrification. The community activists who opposed the arrival of the Whole Foods in Jamaica Plain recognized this fact and feared that the Whole Foods market actively hindered social equity.

Both Hi-Lo and Pathmark were closed due to the dealings of their parent companies that the local community had no power over. In the end, each community lost a well-received supermarket and gained a Whole Foods. The implications of this transition were not lost on residents in both neighborhoods. In Harlem, Adams was joined by Angela Helm in criticizing the new supermarket. Her article, titled "On Whole Foods, Gentrification, and the Erasure of Black Harlem" evokes the same grievances that activists resisting Whole Foods in Boston voiced. Her article notes the symbolic nature of the arrival of Whole Foods in the neighborhood as a "nail in black Harlem's coffin," an entity that did not start gentrification in the neighborhood, but certainly doesn't alleviate it.<sup>93</sup> Helm also notes the resounding blow to the cultural elements of Harlem, citing previously Black-owned businesses that produced Harlem's character that have all now closed. She perceives the market as a force that challenges her community's control over the neighborhoods cultural resources and threatens their displacement. Her outlook is not entirely unfavorable though, as she writes "We, too, deserve weird-looking, bumpy heirloom tomatoes and organic bok choy and grass-fed beef in our neighborhoods. We also deserve quick access to five types of rice milk for our lactose intolerance, wild-caught fish and organic cereal for our kids. We fucking deserve 17 million types of cheese and rows of probiotics for our guts."<sup>94</sup> Helm

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<sup>93</sup> Helm, "On Whole Foods, Gentrification and the Erasure of Black Harlem."

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

elicits what previous proponents for Pathmark had also demanded years before when they called for the development of the neighborhood's first supermarket: that East Harlem deserves access to fresh and healthy food.

Helm's article brings to light the complex nature of Whole Foods' arrival in East Harlem. The products that the store carries are sorely needed by the community's residents, especially considering the decades of neglect that East Harlem bore by supermarket institutions. Additionally, the Whole Foods on 125th street has made an effort to support community producers by stocking around twenty Harlem based brands, garnering support from some small business owners.<sup>95</sup> Yet, the market is also viewed as an ominous sign of change to come, and according to Gould and Lewis' scholarship, is more than a sign, but an entity that contributes to the displacement of East Harlem's residents.

Whole Foods' arrival in Harlem was predated by another controversial action the supermarket had taken a year before. In December of 2016 the Columbus Circle Whole Foods, just a short subway ride downtown from the soon to be 125th street location, started selling the chopped cheese. Hundreds of tweets and coverage by many news outlets including the New York Times and the Daily News commented on the story labeling the sale of the sandwich as 'gentrification.'<sup>96</sup> Why was the sale of the chopped cheese met with such firm backlash when Whole Foods sells a variety of foods from different culinary traditions every day? The sandwich was sold for \$8.00 from a cart labeled 'Cart 1492,' the irony of which was not missed by observers. The disturbing nods to the colonizer of the Americas Christopher Columbus aside, perhaps equally aggravating for many was the price tag of the sandwich. Depending on where

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<sup>95</sup> K. Harris, "Whole Foods Market Harlem Opens."

<sup>96</sup> Bellafante, "Gentrification and Junk Food.," Gunderman, "Whole Foods under Fire for Selling Cheap Bodega-style Chopped Cheese Sandwich for \$8 in NYC."



you go in New York City, the chopped cheese is regularly sold for \$5.00 or less. However, this price hike, albeit common among many items sold at Whole Foods, signified something much more tangible in the lives of many New Yorkers: Gentrification. Whole Foods had already garnered a reputation for itself as a gentrifier, and its physical encroachment into neighborhoods presented a real threat of displacement for many of New York City's low-income renters.<sup>97</sup> However, in selling the chopped cheese, a relatively cheap and filling staple item in many bodegas, the market mimicked its gentrifying actions in a culinary context. Rather than Whole Foods purchasing and occupying a lot on a block in the typical fashion of gentrification, the market coopted a salient cultural item to be sold with an accompanying price bump. Here, I am not arguing that the sale of the chopped cheese at Whole Foods has a ripple effect on all other chopped cheeses in the city that will subsequently cause their price to rise. Instead, I associate the processes of residential and commercial gentrification to the manner in which Whole Foods coopted the chopped cheese and raised its price. In both cases, the community perceives that the supermarket coopts and elevates the prices of resources that once belonged to them. It hinders the ability of how both land and cultural resources are liable to be controlled from within the community. Furthermore, it extends Whole Foods' association with gentrification to the actions they take *within* the supermarket.

The struggle for community control has played out over generations, particularly in East Harlem. In the 1990s community organizations brought Pathmark into the neighborhood but ceded their ownership of the property when the supermarket closed. Early critics including bodega owners were anxious about the arrival of a corporate chain. These same anxieties were expressed by critics of the impending Whole Foods. These critics noted the loss of control

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<sup>97</sup> Bonislawski, "The Whole Foods Effect Is Coming to Harlem."

through fears of gentrification as well as the loss of cultural control. Adams and Helm write that Whole Foods threatens Harlem's Black culture as national chains enter the neighborhood and physically uproot historic structures like businesses and churches.<sup>98</sup> These writers remind us that displacement does not only remove people from their neighborhoods, but the sense of culture that people project on the space around them. When Whole Foods began selling the chopped cheese seven months before the opening of the Harlem location, critics also voiced their disdain over the market as a thief of a cultural commodity. The supermarket imposed its physical presence on the neighborhood where the chopped cheese had originated and coopted the sandwich and sold it within the confines of the store. In simpler terms, the market is perceived to both *push* the residents who produce the culture of Harlem outside of the neighborhood while it *takes* the cultural production of these very residents. While Whole Foods cannot actually 'take' the chopped cheese in terms of ownership as it can with real estate, it can take some agency in the production of meaning embedded in the sandwich. Viewed through the lens of community control, this marks a loss of agency in the production of meaning behind the chopped cheese.

This loss of control over the cultural production of meaning is similar to what Mario Montañó and George Lewis discuss in their chapters on the fajita and lobster respectively.<sup>99</sup> Recalling Lewis' writing, he claimed that "when rusticators discovered Maine, they appropriated the lobster along with Maine real estate as a status symbol and badge of uniqueness within their social class."<sup>100</sup> This process appears eerily similar to the events that unfolded in 2016 and 2017 in East Harlem. Whole Foods, within the span of a year, appropriated East Harlem's signature sandwich, and then, real estate directly adjacent to the neighborhood. In my next chapter, I turn

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<sup>98</sup> Adams, "The End of Black Harlem."; Helm, "On Whole Foods, Gentrification and the Erasure of Black Harlem."

<sup>99</sup> Montañó, 'Appropriation and Counterhegemony.'; Lewis, "Shell Games in Vacationland."

<sup>100</sup> Lewis, "Shell Games in Vacationland," 250.

to the discourse surrounding the sandwich First, I analyze the discourse produced both by those that seek to elevate the sandwich by removing it from the context of bodegas. Second, I analyze the discourse surrounding the controversy of the sandwich, who take issue with culinary legitimizers.

### Chapter Three

White Gold Butchers occupies the corner storefront property on the southeast side of 78th and Amsterdam. A black and white striped awning hangs over the large pane windows that make up the front of the store. These windows contain portraits of a cow, pig, chicken and sheep. The portions of the storefront that are not glass are painted black with gold trim. I walk into the store on a windy day in March and immediately file into the line that runs to the entrance. White Gold Butchers is just as much a restaurant as it is a butcher shop. Tables with booths and chairs wrap around the exposed brick interior walls on the right-hand side of the store and a communal table with benches sits in the middle. From the end of the line, I can see the acclaimed butchers Jocelyn Guest and Erika Nakamura behind one of the cases on the left-hand side of the store. They are joined by about six other employees who cook the food, take customers' orders, and clear their plates. Almost every seat is filled in the restaurant by families, couples, and others who appear to be tourists. The demographic of the clientele matches that of its Upper West Side neighborhood; many are white. Soft rock plays at a medium volume but the restaurant is noisy due to the chatter of the customers.

As I stand in line I glance around. Immediately to my right is a small bookcase that holds food magazines for patrons to read while they wait. Up front by the register, cookbooks written by celebrity chef April Bloomfield, the owner of the restaurant, are for sale. The walls are adorned with posters depicting various cuts of meat, types of knives, and other butcher related paraphernalia. The wall above the pane glass windows is filled with shelves holding large jars of pickled vegetables. White Gold spares no opportunity to utilize the restaurants' namesake in its decor. A large mirror hangs on one wall with the restaurant's name and a chicken head gilded

onto it. On another wall, a gold cows head juts out of the wall in typical taxidermy fashion. Looking up, I see that the entirety of the ceiling is painted gold.

Almost ten minutes have passed, and I'm now second in line. An old-fashioned menu board with removable letters hangs above the register listing the restaurants offerings. On the ground, an open cooler with ice holds a few Narragansett beer cans and Saratoga sparkling water. The woman directly in front of me orders two chopped cheeses and is handed a small metal stand with a number card in it. I step up to the register and the cashier kindly greets me. I order a chopped cheese too, and the cashier asks me how I'll be paying. I tell him, "with a card," and he swipes my card then swivels around an iPad where I select a suggested tip and sign with my finger. After tax and tip, the sandwich that is originally advertised for \$11.00 costs \$13.63.<sup>101</sup> I take my metal stand and number card and find a wooden bar with a stool facing a smaller window to the left of the entrance. I turn around and see Erika Nakamura has come out from behind the butcher counter to talk to a father and his son. She's wearing white with a black apron, like all of the other butchers and chefs. The other employees working the register or cleaning up plates are dressed all in black.

As I'm waiting, I hear some customers ask "what's a chopped cheese?" to the cashier. He politely tells them about the sandwich and what the White Gold version consists of (ground beef, cheese, jalapeños, and pickles on a seeded bun), in a calculated fashion, making it sound like he receives the question a lot. The chopped cheese appears to be a popular item at the store. As I wait, at least five people order the sandwich, some of whom have just learned about it for the first time. Another ten minutes pass before a woman comes out and places the sandwich in front

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<sup>101</sup> Of course, I'm happy to pay tip, however the sandwich was \$2.63 more than what it is advertised as on the menu (the tax and tip alone amounted to more than half the price of the bodega version). In bodegas, the price you pay is the price you see.

of me on a small white plate inlaid with red decorative designs. The sandwich looks fairly identical to the standard bodega versions minus the familiar wax paper and foil wrapping. Once I eat my sandwich, I leave my seat to walk deeper into the store by the cases of meat. One case, devoted to beef, holds skirt steak (\$22.00/lb.), eye rounds (\$15.00/lb.), flat irons (\$23.00/lb.), filet mignon (\$34.00/lb.), dry aged ribeye (\$40.00/lb.), and several other cuts for similar prices. The cheapest of which is the ground beef for \$11.00/lb. After browsing the cuts, I leave the store.

White Gold's chopped cheese was the first 'upscale' version of the sandwich I had eaten. Eating a chopped cheese in a sit down restaurant in the presence of two mildly famous butchers that I had been researching for months was peculiar, however, my feelings of novelty and bizarreness lacked any notion of offense or outrage.<sup>102</sup> This may be because I am a white man who grew up in Chelsea and had no personal connection to the sandwich prior to the age of seventeen.<sup>103</sup> In 2016, for many New Yorkers who grew up in the various neighborhoods where bodegas have been selling chopped cheese for years, news of White Gold's chopped cheese sparked heated discussions. Everyone from accomplished chefs to anonymous twitter users chimed in claiming that White Gold's chopped cheese illustrated the growing trend of food gentrification, cultural appropriation, and even culinary colonization.<sup>104</sup>

These discussions erupted into a full-out controversy in December of 2016 when Whole Foods sold a version of the sandwich. In this chapter, I examine the discourse on both sides of the controversy. I explore other 'upscale' versions of the sandwich to understand how chefs, restaurants, culinary writers, and 'foodies' in general talk about and present their versions of the

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<sup>102</sup> Here, I want to stress how vastly different ordering and eating and chopped cheese is in White Gold compared to a bodega. Everything from the decor, the service, and the people working at and dining in the store appear different. It truly is a bit of a jarring experience, hearing so many people learn about the chopped cheese in the context of this space rather than a bodega.

<sup>103</sup> This is not to say you can't find a chopped cheese in Chelsea. In doing research for this project, I recently discovered a bodega only two blocks from my house had been selling chopped cheeses for years.

<sup>104</sup>I discuss these examples later in the chapter.

chopped cheese. I also analyze the discourse surrounding the controversy by analyzing media produced by news outlets, journalists, twitter users, and more, to explore *why* certain New Yorkers took issue with the sale of the sandwich from non-bodega vendors and *how* they formed their arguments. I argue that discourse of culinary legitimizers works to distinguish their upscale versions of the sandwich, which in turn, disparages the original bodega version. The controversy, which erupted in response to Whole Foods and other culinary legitimizers, was a manifestation of the struggle for one community's control over the cultural identity of the chopped cheese.

### **Methodology**

All of the discourse that I analyze in this chapter is sourced from online outlets. The internet allows for a certain level of democratization in discourse, as all users are free to create, share, and respond to content. This freedom in the flow of information facilitates discussions that are heavily rooted in active engagement among disparate contributors. I opted for the qualitative research method of discourse analysis over other methods grounded in participant observation or interviews because my primary focus lied in the discussions, arguments, and feuds *between* various actors. I am interested in what people said in moments of tumult, unmitigated by retrospection or hindsight. I wanted to observe *who* is criticizing *whom*, and for what reason. I also wanted to source discourse from a wide variety of actors ranging from gourmet chefs that inspired parts of the controversy to enraged Harlem residents that posted rants on YouTube. Since I sought to understand why the sandwich was controversial, I also wanted to examine a large enough quantity of sources to gain an accurate sense of trends in the discourse's content. Fortunately, the discourse surrounding the chopped cheese is not so voluminous that one could browse the pages of search engines indefinitely, gleaning a seemingly endless body of material,

nor is it so scant that one must spend hours combing through articles, videos, tweets, and any other leads to find sources of substance.

My methods for acquiring sources for the two sections in this chapter differed due to the nature of what I was studying in each body of discourse. My first section, which focuses on the discourse of culinary legitimizers did not necessitate a set of rigorous standards for the manner in which I conducted research. This was because in this section, I was less concerned with how culinary legitimizers interact in relation with one another, but rather in how individuals distinguish their chopped cheeses from the standard, bodega version. I then analyzed the legitimizers as a group to understand trends in their discourse. The initial sources I found for this section were mentioned directly in the discourse of controversy. However, this only led to a limited pool of sources. Twitter and Instagram served as valuable platforms that guided me to the websites and menus of other restaurants that serve the chopped cheese. Some users tweeted photos or recounted their experiences of eating the chopped cheese at specific restaurants, whose web pages I then found where I could access their menus. On Instagram, restaurants and other purveyors self-advertise. Again, due to the limited nature of the discourse surrounding the chopped cheese, there were not so many sources that I had to devise a process of selection, rather I conducted periodical searches to gain a large enough body of discourse. I would simply search these platforms with variations of the phrase “chopped cheese” that led me directly to posts with these terms.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Variations of the term “chopped cheese” included, “chop cheese,” “#choppedcheese,” and “#chopcheese.” On Twitter, the majority of posts relating to these search terms were unrelated to culinary legitimizers, however it served as a valuable way to obtain unexpected information about the chopped cheese. Instagram functioned in a similar manner. On both platforms, I browsed both the “top” feeds that show the most popular content, as well as “most recent” feeds which simply show the latest posts. My searches were never truly exhaustive, however even browsing these platforms approximately once a month did not always yield new sources, and I encountered many of the same sources each time I conducted research on these platforms.



Gathering sources for the second section of my chapter necessitated a far more rigorous set of standards, as I was gathering materials from an amorphous body of discourse: a controversy. Discourse in the controversy could take shape in very different kinds of mediums; long format articles by reputable sources, expletive laced rants from YouTube personalities, or even pithy tweets from anonymous users. I wanted to fairly represent the discourse from this wide breadth of sources while still restricting myself to a specific and coherent body of discourse. To begin, I used Google’s search engine as well as DuckDuckGo, a browser that claims to help user avoid the “filter bubble,” a side effect of many search engines in which curated content is displayed in accordance with users previous searches.<sup>106</sup> I found a foundational base of articles and videos that clearly related to issues of controversy, and from there, used a technique similar to “snowball sampling” that is usually used when conducting interviews.<sup>107</sup> I found other sources related to the controversy by exploring links, tweets, videos, etc. that were embedded within sources I had already found. Through this method, I could restrict my search to pieces of discourse that were directly connected to the controversy through obvious linkages.

Here, one may ask why quantitative methods were not more appropriate for the current study. Surely, quantitative methods would be better at finding and analyzing web-based linkages. This is true; however, I am far more concerned with the *content* of the controversy than its

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<sup>106</sup> The complexities of the algorithms that search engines that employ to deliver content to users is well beyond my intellectual grasp, however, I want to make clear that I am aware that the sources I found directly from web searches may have been influenced by these algorithms. These algorithms steer users to receive results that are increasingly similar in form and content. DuckDuckGo claims to alleviate this issue, thus providing less biased results, however I found Google to be a more efficient search engine at times, providing me with novel results that never appeared through DuckDuckGo’s engine. That being said, I was still able to find sources on both sides of the controversy, although the majority of the sources in the discourse that I found took a critical angle on the sale of the chopped cheese from Whole Foods and other upscale vendors.

<sup>107</sup> “Snowball sampling” is a research tactic used in qualitative research. The term usually refers to the process by which interviewees are asked to refer their acquaintances to provide researchers with more subjects. This tactic helps researchers find subjects who may be harder to seek out by traditional methods. I borrow the term to describe the process of uncovering new sources within sources that I have already located.

interconnectedness. I analyze the arguments and opinions voiced by contributors to the controversy to understand what issues were at the core of this controversy. I am less interested in how many times certain phrases are mentioned, rather, how contributors justify complex claims that are rooted in contemporary processes. What underlying topic do contributors express when criticizing upscale chopped cheeses? What is it about gourmet versions that aggravated many users? These questions necessarily demand deep, contextual analysis.

### **Omnivorousness and the Introduction of the Chopped Cheese into Gourmet Cognizance**

The deluge of articles, videos, and other media coverage that the chopped cheese received from 2016 onwards was due largely to increased recognition of the sandwich in the mainstream and highbrow foodways. The ensuing discourse's content focused largely on issues of community control, centering around the politics of the cultural ownership of cuisine. However, before analyzing the charged discourse surrounding the chopped cheese, I explain why the chopped cheese entered the purview of highbrow cuisine in the first place and turn to the discourse of culinary legitimizers, those who now remove the sandwich from the context of the bodega.

The dominance of haute French cuisine that reigned supreme in the hierarchy of elite dining is a far cry from what is considered gourmet eating today. Gourmet is no longer strictly synonymous with French, or even Anglo culinary traditions. Browsing the pages of *Bon Appetit* and *Saveur* magazine, it is clear that these gourmet tastemakers privilege culinary diversity rather than exclusivity. These magazine's online "recipes" pages reveal dishes that hail from culturally disparate foodways. Featured recipes include Korean kimchi, Eastern European Jewish cookies,

Chinese braised pork, and Middle Eastern hummus.<sup>108</sup> This is not to say these tastemakers have completely abandoned any and all associations with their haute leanings. Western European culinary tradition still appears to hold its fair share of the limelight in gourmet discourse, however the trend towards the diversification of gourmet interests and departure from exclusive tastemaking has become glaringly obvious.

This trend falls under the greater cultural umbrella of what Peterson and Kern have termed omnivorousness. These scholars argue that highbrow taste, including preferred musical genre and artistic aesthetic has diverged from the exclusive, snobbish consumption of, for example, classical music and opera, the fine arts, and French cuisine, to an open consumption of middle, and even lowbrow cultural materials.<sup>109</sup> Following a similar vein of thought as culinary tourism, which I introduced in my first chapter, omnivorousness encourages the exploration of and interaction with various cultural materials, even those that do not fall under highbrow taste. It is important to clarify that increased omnivorousness marks a shift in the manner snobbishness is expressed, not necessarily a devaluation of cultural materials once considered elite, but a categorical broadening of elite cultural consumption. The implications of increased omnivorousness, clearly visible in culinary trends as discussed above, does not necessarily signify the end of highbrow exclusion, a defining feature of elite tastemakers. Johnston and Baumann explore this case in their analysis of omnivorousness in gourmet magazines. They argue that while the cultural trend of omnivorousness has eroded haute emphasis on rigidly defined culinary norms, elites still express status and distinction within the context of omnivorous consumption.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Bon Appétit, "Recipes."; Saveur, "Recipes."

<sup>109</sup> Peterson and Kern, "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore."

<sup>110</sup> Johnston and Baumann, "Democracy versus Distinction."

Cultural omnivorousness is what allowed the chopped cheese enter into the kitchens and griddle tops of some of New York's highbrow eateries and this highbrow treatment created further complexities and tensions for the sandwich. Johnston and Baumann provide a framework categorizing how elites "legitimize" certain cultural materials. They argue that, "high-status culinary consumption emphasizes authenticity and exoticism in cultural selection." However, "frames of authenticity and exoticism contain elements of democratic inclusivity, but also legitimize and reproduce status distinctions."<sup>111</sup> This last point is key, as it refutes the notion that highbrow distinction, or more simply snobbishness itself has disappeared. Instead the manner that status is demarcated has transmuted to effuse "democratic inclusivity," while simultaneously exhibiting distinction. Simply put, omnivorousness and its veiled democratic inclusivity does not mark a shift towards the end of cultural hierarchy, rather a change in the manner that elites craft this hierarchy. Although elites dine on a diverse range of culturally disparate foods and cuisine, their discourse about so called 'authentic' foods is itself a means by which they demonstrate their elite cultural status. The knowledge of a diverse range of foods becomes the cultural capital producing status. The chopped cheese's ascendance into upscale eateries should be examined with this context in mind. While the contemporary trend of cultural omnivorousness may have laid the necessary foundation for a bodega sandwich's entrance into the purview of high status cuisine, this very trend is also mired in the same tradition of status distinction that produces and legitimizes cultural hierarchy.

In this section, I begin my analysis of the discourse by examining the sources that belong to the group I call "culinary legitimizers." Sources in this category consist of menus, reviews, and videos that are written or recorded by restaurateurs, chefs, food critics, and 'foodies.'

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<sup>111</sup> Johnston and Baumann, "Democracy versus Distinction," 169.

Culinary legitimizers consist of ‘elite’ producers, consumers, and tastemakers who are involved with the chopped cheese. Members of this group use the language of authenticity to demarcate elite status in their discourse, whether they do so intentionally or not. Johnston and Baumann argue that the frame of authenticity is produced through the discussion of certain “qualities” of food.<sup>112</sup> Based on a thorough review of literature, they posit that *geographic specificity*, *simplicity*, *personal connections*, and *historicism* form authenticity. In culinary legitimizer’s discourse surrounding the chopped cheese, the language of geographic specificity and simplicity are frequently employed to convey authenticity, while personal connection and historicism are evoked more rarely. I argue that when culinary legitimizers use the frame of authenticity to discuss the chopped cheese, they often do so to distinguish their versions and frame the sandwich as both authentic, yet superior to the bodega version.

### **Geographic Specificity**

Geographically specific language is pervasive within the discourse of culinary legitimizers when discussing the chopped cheese. References to place usually fall into one of two categories: associating the sandwich itself with New York City or a specific neighborhood, or associating ingredients with a particular place to connote higher quality. Some restaurants, like Egghead, utilize both forms of geographic distinction. Egghead is an, “All-Day, Egg-Centric Sandwich Shop” located in Moxy Hotel in Times Square.<sup>113</sup> All of its sandwiches are made with, “Golden Jidori Eggs served on freshly baked Kennebec potato brioche,” except for its “Uptown Chopped Cheese” which is served on a “Hero Roll” for \$12.00.<sup>114</sup> Egghead’s chopped cheese

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<sup>112</sup> Johnston and Baumann, “Democracy versus Distinction,” 179.

<sup>113</sup> Egghead, “Egghead.”

<sup>114</sup> Egghead, “Menu.”

includes a reference to the sandwiches supposed region of origin, portraying authenticity, however a “Hero Roll” might confuse uptown consumers who typically order the sandwich on a hero *or* a roll, the latter being a smaller size. They also make sure to emphasize that it’s eggs and bread, the building blocks for many of its menu items, are of superior quality.<sup>115</sup>

Other restaurants exclusively use geographic specificity to connote the high quality of their ingredients. White Gold Butchers, whose restaurant I visited, received sizeable backlash for selling a version of the chopped cheese, while also priding itself on the geographic traceability of its meats. On its website, you can find the farms where the butcher shop sources its beef, poultry, pig, and lamb, many of which are located in New York State’s Catskill region. Black Seed Bagel, which has locations in Nolita, Battery Park City, and the East Village, sells a chopped cheese for \$10.50 consisting of “Fleisher’s Seasoned Grass-Fed Beef.”<sup>116</sup> Fleisher’s, while not explicitly stated, is a craft butcher shop with locations on the Upper East Side, NY; Park Slope, NY; Westport, CT; and Greenwich, CT.<sup>117</sup> Eaters, supposedly, should recognize Fleisher’s by name. Black Seed’s chefs expect their clients to recognize the butcher shop by name, reflecting an assumption of their patrons’ cultural capital. Johnston and Baumann argue that the very knowledge of and literacy within foodie circles serves as cultural capital used by elites to form status distinctions.<sup>118</sup>

Geography is explicitly referenced by restaurants that are located within neighborhoods that are usually associated with the chopped cheese. Seasoned Vegan, located on 113th Street and Saint Nicholas, sells a “Harlem Chopped ‘Cheeseburger’” for \$11.00. Below the sandwich,

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<sup>115</sup> According to San Francisco Magazine, a publication of Modern Luxury, “Jidori” eggs references eggs from a specific lineage of Japanese hens and are prized for their deep orange yolks. American “Jidoris” are “likely a smooth, dark imposter.”

Sewell, “What’s the Deal with Jidori Eggs?”

<sup>116</sup> Black Seed Bagels, “Menu.”

<sup>117</sup> Fleishers Craft Butchery, “Locations.”

<sup>118</sup> Johnston and Baumann, “Democracy versus Distinction,” 196.

they write, “Our version of the classic Harlem staple,” before listing the ingredients.<sup>119</sup> Seasoned Vegan clearly reiterates the sandwich’s strong association with Harlem, the neighborhood where it does business. Bronx Ale House, a craft beer pub with a restaurant, sells a “Chopped Cheese Chimichanga” for \$14.00 and displays its geographic association in the name of the business.<sup>120</sup> Explicit geographic references are made when it is obvious to the patrons which neighborhood they are dining in.

For restaurants located outside of New York City, geographic reference remains an important quality of authenticity. Troy Kitchen, three hours up the Hudson River from New York City in Troy, NY hosts six food vendor stalls. Five of the six food vendors make explicit geographic claims on Troy Kitchen’s website including Chopped Cheezus, a vendor that sells chopped cheese inspired dishes. On the Troy Kitchen website, they write, “The New York Version of the Philly Cheesesteak” and sell the “Original (OG) Chopped Cheezus” for \$10.00. Customers have probably never heard of the chopped cheese, so the geographic references serve to inform them by providing them with a more well-known geographically associated sandwich. Furthermore, it portrays itself as an authentically “New York” sandwich. Troy Kitchen also hosts Halal Palace that sells “NYC Style Halal Cart Food,” M&K Island Hut that sells “Authentic Jamaican Cuisine,” Mexicocina that sells “Authentic Mexican Cuisine,” and Grandma G’s that sells “Southern Comfort Food.”<sup>121</sup> These five vendors all utilize geographic language to portray authenticity.

The propensity of mentioning the geographic place mirrors the findings of Johnston and Baumann’s case noting that 100% of gourmet writing in their case study featured some sort of

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<sup>119</sup> Seasoned Vegan, “Dinner Menu”

<sup>120</sup> Bronx Alehouse, “Pub Menu.”

<sup>121</sup> Troy Kitchen, “Troy Kitchen.”

specific geographic reference.<sup>122</sup> It is the most utilized tool by culinary legitimizers to portray authenticity and construct high status distinction. The chopped cheese provides an excellent basis for geographic reference because it's associated with a geographically specific area.

Interestingly, few restaurants make the explicit reference to Harlem, and settle for broader geographic designation. Alternatively, when restaurants wish to express the high quality of meats they sell, they make direct references to farms or butchers in geographically explicit manners.

This highlights a tension that exists in elevating the status of the chopped cheese that is revealed further when looking at culinary legitimizers through the lens of simplicity.

### **Simplicity**

The chopped cheese is bound to the American industrial food system: a quality that culinary legitimizers view as inauthentic.<sup>123</sup> To make reference to the specific to bodegas, where the chopped cheese is commonly sold would force culinary legitimizers to confront the unsavory truth that the sandwich is made using use beef purchased from large distribution centers like Hunts Point. In contrast, the ingredients touted by some of these upscale establishments can be traced to specific farms located in scenic upstate New York. Thus, culinary legitimizers use the quality of “simplicity” to distinguish their versions of the chopped cheese from the sandwiches sold at bodegas that are associated with the agroindustrial system to express authenticity and thus a gourmet, elevated status.<sup>124</sup> Recalling chapter one, as opposed the process by which Anglos imposed hegemonic ingredients on the fajita to make it suitable for their tastes, today, culinary

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<sup>122</sup> Johnston et al. “Democracy versus Distinction,” 180.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 179.

<sup>124</sup> I introduce the term simplicity in quotes here for two reasons. First, I borrow it from Johnston et al, and second, because the term, in this context, has come to adopt a different meaning in the context of culinary distinction. I explain this definition in the following paragraph and refer to the term without quotation marks throughout the rest of my paper.



legitimizers highlight the quality of their ingredients in place of the hegemonic, or more mainstream ingredients that are now considered a marker of low status cuisine.

Culinary legitimizers tend to distinguish their versions of the chopped cheese by contrasting their sandwich to the version served at bodegas around New York City. Discourse about simplicity reveals how the chopped cheese *does not* fit typical high-status notions of gourmet food and the steps culinary legitimizers take to make the sandwich gourmet. Before analyzing how culinary legitimizers use simple discourse, it is important to understand what exactly simplicity encapsulates. Johnston and Baumann write “Food writers valorize simplicity in everything from simple nonindustrial harvesting techniques, to simple cooking methods in upscale restaurants, to simple modes of preparation of handmade tortillas, to the simple pleasures of a vine ripened, organic tomato harvested on a family farm.”<sup>125</sup> Simplicity, thus, is anchored on production, preparation, and consumption that occurs *outside* of the complex, industrial food system.

The valuation of food outside of the industrial sphere has been a growing trend, even in the non-gourmet sphere. Books like Eric Schlosser’s *Fast Food Nation* and Michael Pollan’s *Omnivore’s Dilemma* have seen widespread success and have revealed some of the more unsettling truths of industrial food while praising organic foods and alternative forms of agriculture. Culinary legitimizers have certainly been influenced by this wave of thinking that has culminated in campaigns stressing organic and local consumption and production like the locavore movement. Consuming organic and local foods is also associated with moral and ethical superiority, as consumers believe they are supporting foodways that are more environmentally sustainable or humane. Although this notion is deeply flawed, participating in these ‘alternative’

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<sup>125</sup> Johnston et al. “Democracy versus Distinction,” 181.

foodways imparts upon eaters a clean consciousness.<sup>126</sup> Discourse about simplicity should be understood as implicit references to ethically superior activities packaged in innocuous language.

The use of simplicity and its reference to ‘nonindustrial’ foodways is evidenced in the language of many culinary legitimizers concerning the chopped cheese. A review of White Gold’s chopped cheese written in 2016 for Grubstreet, a food-oriented publication of New York Magazine, says the sandwich “will consist of a whole-animal blend of beef from well-contented cows who graze among the lush meadows of At Ease Acres farm in Schoharie County, New York.”<sup>127</sup> The authors of this article use the language of simplicity, emphasizing that the cows that will produce the ground beef for White Gold’s chopped cheese are “well-contented.” There is no blatant ethical distinction being made in this sentence, however, inherent in the language of simplicity, is a hierarchy of consumption. The article continues,

White Gold’s chopped cheese will not be, nor is it intended to be, a reinvention of the original, but rather an homage. “We’re big fans of bodega sandwiches,” says Guest [butcher at White Gold]. “So we’re trying to make, like, *guilt-free bodega food*.” Salvation from said guilt will run you “under \$15, including a vegetable side,” says Guest. But there’s room enough in this sandwich-eating metropolis for both takes on the chopped cheese: the boutique-beef, ingredient-driven, double-digit celebrity-chef one, meant to be consumed in a comfortable dining room in a high-rent neighborhood with a good beer or glass of wine, and the late-night guilty pleasure, wrapped in foil and gobbled down under the fluorescent lights of a 24-hour convenience store.<sup>128</sup> (emphasis added)

Guest’s designation that her version of the sandwich will be “guilt-free” speaks volumes about culinary legitimizers’ outlook on the mainstream foodway. The simple ingredients in White Gold’s chopped cheese absolve its eaters from guilt, while the consumers of the bodega version

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<sup>126</sup> See: Holmes, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies*, and Gray, *Labor and the Locavore* for discussions about the human rights violations that migrant farmworkers suffer working on organic and family farms. Notions that organic foods are any less part of the industrial food system are misguided, and local, small scale agricultural operations are still mired in the same exploitative system that abuse migrant workers.

<sup>127</sup> Raisfeld and Patronite, “April Bloomfield’s Chopped Cheese Is the Sandwich We Can’t Wait to Eat.”

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

are mired in the evils of industrial agriculture. Furthermore, the moral “salvation” from bodega lowliness comes with a \$15.00 price tag. The chopped cheese, in terms of culinary legitimizers’ standards of authenticity, has innate qualities that make it non-simplistic, so they work to rid their versions of this image to create distinction and elevated status. The authors of this article even distinguish *where* these two sandwiches should be eaten and thus *who* should be eating them. Although not explicit, White Gold is located in “a high rent neighborhood” on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, which is predominantly white, while bodegas are dispersed through African American and Hispanic neighborhoods across the city. This language extends out of the realm of “simplicity” and into associations with geographic place, but “simplicity” is still used to designate which neighborhoods deserve the ‘guilt-free’ or ‘guilty’ version of the sandwich.

White Gold was not the first upscale butcher shop to add the chopped cheese to its menu. At least a year earlier in 2015, Meat Hook Butchers in Brooklyn’s Williamsburg sold a version, which Pete Wells, a restaurant critic for the New York Times, called “the greatest cheeseburger I’ve ever tasted if not for the inconvenient fact that it wasn’t a cheeseburger.”<sup>129</sup> Like White Gold, Meat Hook prides itself on the quality of its meats. The home page of their website reads,

We’re a whole animal butcher shop located in Brooklyn, N.Y., specializing in local meat from small, family-run farms in New York state. All of our beef is 100% grass-fed and grass-finished and our pork and lamb is pasture raised, the way it should be! Feedlots and CAFO’s [concentrated animal feeding operations] need not apply! Our meat travels directly from the farm to family-owned slaughterhouses to our shop with no middle man.<sup>130</sup>

This blurb is rife with the language of “simplicity” and distinction. They make it clear they only source meat from nonindustrial, “small, family-run farms” and that this meat is delivered to the butcher shop passing through as few hands as possible before it arrives there. Gil Calderon, then

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<sup>129</sup> Wells, “Restaurant Review: Meat Hook Sandwich in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.”

<sup>130</sup> The Meat Hook, “The Meat Hook.”

chef de cuisine at the Meat Hook, expresses similar sentiments about Meat Hook’s version of the chopped cheese in a short documentary about the sandwich made in 2016. Calderon says, “at some point our beef is going to be so tainted that the corner shop is not going to be able to sell chopped cheeses anymore...people come and visit our shop and they take away something and they go back to their neighborhood and they can say, ‘hey, well these guys are serving a...sustainably raised like [*sic*] grass fed, grass finished chopped cheese.’”<sup>131</sup> Calderon imparts intrinsic value on the meat that the butcher shop uses. Again, the language of simplicity functions to bolster the ingredients used in upscale eateries and distinguish it from the “tainted” meats that are sold in corner stores. Like the reviewers of White Gold, Calderon also makes explicit that “there is a fine line between...pirating of ideas and tributing,” and that he’s, “here to...spread the gospel, I’m here to show people...this is our version...I think it’s a sandwich worthy of being copied and, of being replicated everywhere.”<sup>132</sup> These culinary legitimizers express that they have respect for the original version of the chopped cheese, but simultaneously highlight the simple qualities of their ingredients to reflect the superiority of their sandwiches.

Although the chopped cheese originated from bodegas that were deeply embedded within the industrial food system, gourmet chefs manage to strip their versions of the sandwich from its inauthentic associations by stressing the “simplicity” of their ingredients. White Gold Butchers and the Meat Hook are joined by other upscale restaurants that sell the chopped cheese in their use of “simplistic” language in their discourse. Even brief pieces of text like restaurants’ mottos express “simplicity.” Black Seed Bagels’ motto reads, “hand rolled wood fired.”<sup>133</sup> Illusive Restaurant & Bar’s motto reads, “locally sourced x crafted with love.”<sup>134</sup> These mottos express

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<sup>131</sup> First We Feast, “Hometown Hero.”

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Black Seed Bagel, “Black Seed Bagels.”

<sup>134</sup> Illusive Restaurant & Bar, “Illusive.”

the restaurants' deviation from standard practices, which in turn implies authenticity. Rooftop Refinery, the "crown jewel" of the luxurious Refinery Hotel, whose chopped cheese sells for \$21.00, writes on their webpage, "in the kitchen, Executive Chef Jeff Haskell's culinary foundation lies in high quality, locally sourced ingredients combined to make straightforward and approachable dishes."<sup>135</sup> While these restaurants do not make specific mention of the simplicity of their chopped cheeses, they predominantly display mottos or blurbs that ensure their patrons that all of their food is simple and thus authentic.

### **Personal Connection and Historicism**

Geographic specificity and simplicity both appear predominantly in the discourse of culinary legitimizers. However, Johnston and Baumann noted two other qualities, personal connection and historicism, that frequently formed authenticity, which do not appear so readily in the discourse I analyzed. Except for a few notable exceptions, culinary legitimizers rarely evoke personal connection and historicism when discussing the chopped cheese. The lack of emphasis placed in these qualities of the chopped cheese exhibits many culinary legitimizer's lack of knowledge about the sandwich and thus, its cultural significance. A few culinary legitimizers, however, do mention qualities of historicism and personal connection in their discourse about the chopped cheese.

Papi's Food & Grille is a takeout, delivery, and catering service in Cypress Hills, Brooklyn. They are not necessarily a gourmet restaurant, as they do not offer dine-in service, but they have a professionalized, navigable website and their own mobile app. On their website, the "Who is Papi" page reads,

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<sup>135</sup> In Good Company Hospitality Group, "Refinery Rooftop."

When my father came to America, he didn't know the language. He didn't have money. But what he did have was *determinación*. He worked in kitchens, saving his money until he could buy his own *bodega*, and eventually, his own restaurant...Today, everyone calls me Papi, and I love sharing my Dominican culture and spreading my positive attitude to my customers, my neighborhood and beyond...Our menu features authentic Dominican dishes that you'll love. They're vibrant and rich, just like the island itself, and every bite bursts with flavor...I'm proud to share my culinary heritage with you. (emphasis present in original text)<sup>136</sup>

Papi (the owner's real name isn't posted anywhere on the website) evokes the typical language of authenticity through geographic specificity, however the cornerstone of his blurb is familial heritage. Johnston and Baumann argue that personal connection connects "food with a face," which bolsters the quality of the cuisine and its authenticity. In their findings, personal connection was often manifested through references to famous chefs or specific familial traditions.<sup>137</sup> In my research, culinary legitimizers' discourse includes many references to specific chefs or employees, but almost none of this content relates directly, or even indirectly, to the foodways associated with the chopped cheese. Papi's blurb emphasizes his Dominican familial connection as well the histories associated with this heritage. The importance of the bodega's cuisine is evidenced in his menu which includes a "build-your-own Boar's Head sandwiches" section, a staple brand in countless bodegas, and of course, a chopped cheese.<sup>138</sup> Papi uses his personal connection and historicism to express his foods' authenticity, which has had direct influences on his menu that contains Dominican and bodega inspired dishes.

Ghetto Gastro, a culinary collective and catering service whose clients include singer-songwriter Solange Knowles, Ralph Lauren, and the whiskey distiller Jack Daniel's are also among those culinary legitimizers who expressed personal connection and historicism in their

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<sup>136</sup> Papi's Food & Grille, "Who is Papi?"

<sup>137</sup> Johnston and Baumann, "Democracy versus Distinction," 184-185.

<sup>138</sup> Papi's Food & Grille, "Daily Menu."

discourse about the chopped cheese.<sup>139</sup> In an interview, Jon Gray, a member of the collective discussed his first time eating the chopped cheese, which he estimates was in 1992 when he was about six years old. His girlfriend introduced it to him and the two cut church in Harlem to go eat the sandwich. He says, “I think it’s so regional and...a fairly new creation, but this chopped cheese is something...that started in our lifetime.”<sup>140</sup> Gray underlines the chopped cheese’s rootedness in Harlem as well as its recent genesis. These points lead the conversation in the direction of the topic of culinary ownership and other iterations of the sandwich, in which, Giuseppe González, owner and bartender at the “modern cocktail pub” Suffolk Arms, brings up White Gold’s sandwich.<sup>141</sup> He says, “when you’re charging \$15.00 for a sandwich that’s \$4.00 and your place is called ‘White Gold’...it’s like, *come on*”(emphasis added), he continues, in response to the White Gold’s comment about guilt-free bodega food, “what the fuck does that mean...I don’t feel guilty eating the chopped cheese...if you really wanted to pay homage, imagine April Bloomfield (owner of White Gold) or any topnotch chef [selling] a sandwich for \$4.00.”<sup>142</sup> In González’s Lower East Side bar, he does just that. “Joey’s Chopped Cheese” sells for \$5.00 while the majority of other sandwiches on his menu sell for \$13.00 or higher (Joey is González’s nickname).<sup>143</sup>

Gray and González, both Bronx-born men of color, express their personal and historical connections with the chopped cheese, and reflect an understanding of the origins of the sandwich. González also goes on to criticize White Gold’s chopped cheese for being expensive and alludes to the irony of the restaurant’s name. Gray builds on González’s sentiments, “it’s

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<sup>139</sup> Epstein, “A Crumble in the Bronx.”

<sup>140</sup> First We Feast, “Hometown Hero.”

<sup>141</sup> Suffolk Arms, “About.”

<sup>142</sup> First We Feast, “Hometown Hero.”

<sup>143</sup> Morgan, “The Veteran Bartender Whose New Pub Is an Ode to New York Authenticity.”

always like the poverty tourism, digging for gold in the hood or whatever, ‘hood foraging’ I like to call it. Maybe there’s a way where a portion of their proceeds could go to an organization like an edible schoolyard that are doing edible gardens in these neighborhoods in East Harlem, Brooklyn, and the Bronx where they’re ordering chopped cheeses.” These men discuss issues that reflect an understanding of the historical and contemporary processes that are associated with the chopped cheese. For González, a man who is familiar with the sandwich and presumably with the process of gentrification, the irony of a \$15.00 chopped cheese from a restaurant called White Gold is palpable. Gray’s suggestion of supporting edible schoolyards reflects his understanding of food accessibility issues in neighborhoods where the chopped cheese is sold. Gray and González’s personal connection and historical knowledge gives them a negative outlook on the “elevated” chopped cheeses. They urge their listeners to reflect on the questions of ownership and community control. Who has a right to make the chopped cheese? How much should it cost? While the discourse of other culinary legitimizers often lacks reference to qualities of personal connection and historicism, Gray and González use these qualities to raise questions that are absent from other legitimizers’ discourse. Like other culinary legitimizers, these chefs do convey authenticity with these qualities, but not necessarily distinction. Gray and González are culinary legitimizers themselves and are not removed from the formation of distinction. Rather, they critique the manner in which other chefs use authenticity to elevate the chopped cheese when they see this behavior as disingenuous and offensive to their personal connection with the origins of this sandwich.

Culinary legitimizers employ the qualities of authenticity to distinguish their versions of the chopped cheese. However, the use of this authenticity frame functions to disparage the standard bodega chopped cheese as an inferior product while the highbrow version is praised.



This process of distinguishing the chopped cheese is one that simultaneously rejects the sandwich in its original form and coopts the dish, so it can be served at a higher price and touted as upscale cuisine. These actions fundamentally dislodge the bodega community's control over the production of the sandwich both commercially and culturally. Some culinary legitimizers who make upscale versions of the sandwich themselves, voiced their criticisms of other upscale chefs who sell the chopped cheese. These sentiments are echoed and amplified in the discourse of controversy, which centers around issues of community control.

### **The Discourse of Controversy**

The chopped cheeses' entrance into the domain of highbrow eating is only one sign of the sandwiches permeation through the culinary world. Even multinational corporations have caught wind of the sandwich. McCormick & Company, a Fortune 100 company who manufactures spices, herbs, and flavorings has a recipe on their website for "Asian egg crepes with NY style chopped cheese filling."<sup>144</sup> Sara Lee Bread, a brand name owned by Bimbo Bakeries USA, the largest baked goods company in the United States, has a "chopped cheese" recipe on their website.<sup>145</sup> In My Kitchen, a recipe website owned and operated by Sodexo, one of the largest multinational corporations in the world, lists a recipe for a "beef chopped cheese sandwich with fried onion rings."<sup>146</sup> The chopped cheese, has made a swift and sprawling jump from its beginnings in New York City's bodegas. But, what caused the sandwich to gain widespread attention from culinary legitimizers and corporate food vendors?

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<sup>144</sup> McCormick, "Asian Egg Crepes with NY Style Chopped Cheese Filling."

<sup>145</sup> Sara Lee Bread, "Chopped Cheese."

<sup>146</sup> Sodexo, "Beef Chopped Cheese Sandwich with Fried Onion Rings."

In late December of 2016, the Whole Foods in Columbus Circle started selling the chopped cheese. Google Trends shows that the term “chopped cheese” was searched more in the week of December 18, 2016 to December 24, 2016, than it ever was, or has been since.<sup>147</sup> Twitter simultaneously erupted as articles broke from various outlets, which centrally featured many twitter users’ posts. The media reaction to Whole Foods selling the sandwich focused predominantly on the topics of “gentrification,” “appropriation,” and “colonization.” Of the first five pages on a Google search of the phrase “chopped cheese whole foods,” around two thirds (33/49 search results) of the results corresponded directly to articles or posts written in December of 2016 and nearly three quarters (35/49) directly mention “gentrification,” “appropriation,” “colonization,” or a mixture of these topics.<sup>148</sup> These themes were present in the discourse prior to Whole Foods’ sale of the sandwich, evidenced by two widely referenced videos, one a short documentary piece by First We Feast and the other a rant by Jeffrey Almonte. However, they become almost uniform in the discourse after Whole Foods sold the sandwich. Recalling chapter two, the supermarket had already been symbolically associated with appropriation and gentrification, therefore, it isn’t surprising that this discourse flowed profusely after news broke they were selling the chopped cheese.<sup>149</sup>

The three threads of discourse—gentrification, appropriation, and colonization—I argue, are encapsulated in the broader subject of “community control.” I use this phrase to define these disparate terms because at the core of each three is struggle between groups over ownership.

*Appropriator(s)*, *colonizer(s)*, and *gentrifier(s)* are individuals or collectives that challenge

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<sup>147</sup> Google, “Google Trends: Chopped Cheese.”

<sup>148</sup> The phrase “chopped cheese whole foods” was input into Google’s search engine on March 22, 2018 after clearing all browsing data and cookies in order to avoid receiving tailored results. Admittedly, the complexities of Google’s search algorithm are well beyond my understanding, but these figures serve not to provide rigid quantitative evidence of some truth, but a general idea of the temporal trend and similarity in content of the search results that I, or someone else searching this phrase would receive.

<sup>149</sup> Friedersdorf, “What’s Leafy, Green, and Eaten by Blacks and Whites?”

another community's control over cultural or spatial resources. Hence, the phrase community control refers to all of these terms. I choose to use this phrase because the aforementioned terms are strongly defined by contemporary and historical processes that do not always neatly fit into discussions about food, a resource that arguably *cannot* always be spatially or even culturally defined. How exactly can a culinary item be appropriated, colonized, or gentrified? A chopped cheese can be made by anyone, anywhere, without excluding anyone else from making and eating it themselves. Thus, a dish cannot be 'taken' or 'owned' in the way that land or resources can be in processes like gentrification, colonization or even appropriation.<sup>150</sup> To avoid this problem, I use the phrase community control to generalize these terms and avoid these definitional incongruities, thereby uncovering what is really at issue when this language is used in the discourse.

Of course, community control is not the only common theme throughout the discourse. Other linguistic devices are frequently employed by contributors that validate (and more rarely refute) claims that the sandwich is being "appropriated," "gentrified," or "colonized." There are four devices that contributors use to substantiate their claims: "geographic specificity," "references to bodegas", "price," and "race or ethnicity." These topics are not *only* discussed in conjunction with conversations about community control; in fact, the first two of these topics (geographic specificity and references to bodegas) are discussed almost ubiquitously in the discourse whether or not articles mention anything related to community control. Nonetheless, I am more interested in how contributors to the discourse use these devices to craft arguments. Furthermore, I examine how the discourse of controversy often exists at odds with that of culinary legitimizers and the language of distinction.

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<sup>150</sup> Here I include some opinions on how food *cannot* be appropriated or gentrified. Cooper, "Sorry, There's No Such Thing as 'Food Gentrification.'"; Kapadia, "I Still Don't Understand the Cultural Appropriation of Food."

## Early Influencers in the Discourse of Community Control

The most seminal and perhaps influential pieces of discourse that focus on the topic of community control were two videos released months before Whole Foods began selling the chopped cheese. The first is a seven-minute response-rant style video posted on YouTube by Jeffrey Almonte on May 12th, 2016. The second is a nineteen-minute-long documentary about the sandwich by First We Feast, a food blog, posted on November 16th, 2016. These videos were widely referenced in the ensuing discourse of controversy, and their language, specifically about community control, subsequently influenced the language in the discourse that followed.

Almonte's video, which has been viewed millions of times, is titled "Hipsters Invade Harlem - Insider Food REACT & REVIEW," is a strongly worded, seven-minute response to a video posted by Insider on February 10, 2016.<sup>151</sup> Insider's short video is titled "New York's answer to the Philly Cheesesteak | One Cool Thing," and uses language that is typical of culinary legitimizers. In only 54 seconds, the host, Sarah Schmalbruch, makes references to geographic specificity, simplicity, and historicism "This is New York City's answer to the Philly cheesesteak, and most New Yorkers don't even know it exists...we took a trip up to Harlem to the Blue Sky Deli, which is also known as Hajji's...the chopped cheese is pretty simple (lists ingredients)...it was really good, nothing revolutionary but still delicious and for \$4.00, it's a steal."<sup>152</sup> Almonte takes issues specifically with this language and introduces the notion of "Columbus syndrome," criticizing Insider for 'discovering' something that already existed, in this case the chopped cheese. He says, mocking Insider's video "most New Yorkers don't know

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<sup>151</sup> Orlav, "This Video Tearing Apart Hipster Media for "Columbusing" in Harlem Is Going Viral."; Bolois, "What a Celebrity Chef's \$15, "Guilt-Free" Chopped Cheese Says About New York."; Rosenberg, "The Chopped Cheese's Sharp Rise to Fame."; Hester, "When Food Gets Gentrified."; Conde, "Watch: When Food Gets Gentrified."

<sup>152</sup> Insider, "New York's answer to the Philly Cheesesteak."

about [the chopped cheese],’ you mean the motherfucking yuppies that’s coming down from the Midwest and don’t know shit about New York don’t know about this [*sic*].” Almonte continues, “once these deli-grocery owners see all these white people coming in, they’re going to say ‘oh shit, it’s clicking, I got to raise my prices cause these niggas got money.’ Now people that look like me can’t even afford to live here and eat here.” He clearly references gentrification, and mentions the term explicitly later in the video, and discusses how the process leads to whites displacing people of color from their neighborhoods. He even mentions how, “white motherfuckers is trying to get Japanese culture and selling sushi cones,” mocking the plethora of sushi-infused foods like “sushi burritos” and “sushi sandwiches.” Almonte ridicules the language of authenticity and equates this discourse to colonization, gentrification, and appropriation.

First We Feast’s documentary does not take such an objectional stance throughout the duration of the film, but presents many perspectives about community control. Towards the beginning of the film, they include an interview with Almonte, in which he explains his reaction to Insider’s video and discusses what he calls “Columbus syndrome.” Later in the video, they show footage of Gil Calderon, whose commentary I quoted earlier in this chapter, explaining, “there’s a fine line between complete copying...[and]...pirating of ideas, and tributing, and referencing, and honoring. I mean that’s kind of our vibe at the Meat Hook in general, we’re sort of borrowing a lot from different regions and cultures.”<sup>153</sup> Calderon is very aware of the “fine line” he walks in making the chopped cheese and how it may be perceived as cultural appropriation. It is not completely clear how he defines the difference between “pirating” and “tributing,” to put it in his words, however the issue of appropriation is palpable in his remarks. Other’s view the sale of the sandwich from the Williamsburg based butcher shop as blatant

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<sup>153</sup> First We Feast “Hometown Hero.”

appropriation. The film cuts to an interview with Speedy Morman, an editorial producer at Complex News. He says, “the fact that Williamsburg is stealing a chopped cheese and selling it for eleven cash doesn’t surprise me, cause that’s what’s already happening in Williamsburg... anybody who’s from Williamsburg doesn’t even live in Williamsburg anymore.”<sup>154</sup> Morman’s use of the word “stealing” is accusatory and insinuates that he perceives Meat Hook’s actions as appropriative. Furthermore, Morman makes references to gentrification, by explaining, albeit indirectly, that those who were born in the neighborhood have left due to the increased cost of living. Although he does not use the term “gentrification,” considering the context of the conversation and the direct reference to the price of the Williamsburg chopped cheese, this statement can only be interpreted as an allusion to gentrification.

Almonte’s response video and First We Feast’s documentary influenced the tone of the controversy that was about to unfold in December of 2016, and the comments made in these videos preview how contributors to the controversy craft discourse relating to community control. In the next section, I analyze how contributors produce these arguments related to community control within the controversy to understand why these topics became central to discussions about the sandwich. I illuminate how the discourse and actions of culinary legitimizers essentially challenges notions of *who* the sandwich *belongs to* i.e. which community controls the commercial and cultural production of the sandwich.

### **Forging the Discourse of Community Control**

Discourse in the controversy of the chopped cheese reflects the varied ways in which contributors form arguments and opinions about the sandwich and community control. In the

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<sup>154</sup> First We Feast, “Hometown Hero.”

same manner that culinary legitimizers highlight certain qualities of food to create authenticity, I find that contributors to the controversy use certain linguistic devices—including geographic specificity, references to bodegas, price, and race or ethnicity—to make assertions related to community control. Frequently, multiple linguistic devices are used simultaneously by contributors to justify their arguments and sometimes. Perhaps one of the most overarching, yet tacit devices used in the discourse are references to race and ethnicity. Although I observed specific references to either race or ethnicity less frequently than the other devices, they become implicit in the use of the other linguistic devices. Racial and ethnic associations with space and class necessarily infuse the three other devices with underlying meaning. Certain neighborhoods, like Williamsburg, become associated with gentrification and whiteness and prices above a certain threshold, usually anything over \$5.00, is associated with affluence and whiteness. Whiteness functions explicitly, or implicitly, as a signifier of challenges to community control in the discourse. The significance of race and ethnicity is evidenced in language commonly used when ordering the sandwich.

The embeddedness of the chopped cheese within bodegas has left its imprint on vernacular commonly used in relation to the sandwich. As I hinted at in the opening portion of my second chapter with Yamborghini High, colloquialisms have developed to address the cooks at bodegas. The line, “let me get a chopped cheese Papi,” showcases how Hispanic bodega chefs are oft labeled. Customers generalize cooks of diverse Hispanic descent with a racialized signifier. A complimentary label is also used to address chefs of Arabic descent. A lyric in a song named “Chinatown Swing” by New York-born rapper Patrick Morales, known as Wiki, goes, “I been traveling but I’m back/ To my Ahki and I ask for a chopped cheese.”<sup>155</sup> The

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<sup>155</sup> Genius, “Chinatown Swing.”

signifiers “Papi” and “Ahki” are racialized terms and stereotypical in nature, but are used amiably by many customers when addressing bodega cooks.<sup>156</sup> These terms have come to reflexively imbue authenticity into the preparation of the chopped cheese. Daniel Baker (Desus Nice), says, “A good chopped cheese has to come from a bodega that has bulletproof glass, a cat, and a guy behind the counter named Mohammed, Papi, or Ahki.”<sup>157</sup> Baker uses race and ethnicity to express what makes a “good chopped cheese.” While these signifiers seldom appear in the discourse, other contributors use race and ethnicity, specifically whiteness, to demonstrate mishandlings of the sandwich.

The use of a vernacular has significance in regards to community control. These terms, as well as the relatively ambiguous name of the sandwich itself, encode meaning into language that is inaccessible to mainstream white culture. This language insulates the chopped cheese, whether or not speakers intend to do so. Historically, vernacular has served a similar purpose, allowing communities to converse discreetly in the presence of hegemonic forces. While these signifiers cannot be as viewed explicit attempts to conceal bodega culture, they do accomplish this to a certain degree. The chopped cheese is deeply embedded within New York City’s bodega culture and its complimentary vernacular. Race and ethnicity hold significance within the vernacular as evidenced by terms like “Ahki” and “Papi,” and race and ethnicity remain significant in the controversy, as white chefs inherently challenge a role that is often filled by Hispanic or Arabic workers.

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<sup>156</sup> Mlynar, “New Yorkers Explain Their Bodega Dialect.” These terms are widely referenced in songs and other more colloquial forms of discourse. Prior to conducting research for this project, I had heard these terms used frequently in bodegas. I also came across the signifier “Aki,” In *The Tenants of East Harlem*. Sharman writes, describing a West African street vendor, “Aki, as his customers knew him, sold an odd assortment of tube socks, T-shirts, and hats culled from the same suppliers Mohamed contracted.” See Sharman, “Third Avenue,” 150. The author acknowledges this may not be his real name but does not elaborate further. It’s likely that “Aki” was not his real name, and had simply told Sharman, an ethnographer, how he was commonly addressed.

<sup>157</sup> Santana, “Whole Foods \$8 Chopped Cheese vs. the \$4 New York Borough Gem.”



In the following section, I present examples of discourse in the controversy beginning with shorter format sources, like tweets, that utilize linguistic devices to validate the claims they make about community control. Then, I analyze extended format sources, like articles and blog posts that use these devices in a similar fashion. As I discussed previously, linguistic devices are often used in conjunction with one another, or contain underlying associations, often about race and ethnicity. Thus, I do not attempt to analyze how each linguistic device works individually to validate arguments related to community control, rather, I analyze discourse that demonstrates how these devices work collectively to shape the discourse of community control.

Twitter posts exemplify the most succinct pieces of discourse in the controversy. Despite their brevity, they utilize linguistic devices to bolster their claims. One user @Harambhai commented in response to an image of the Whole Foods cart selling the chopped cheese, “This is gentrification inception, whole foods chopped cheese out of a Christopher Columbus cart. Sounds about white.”<sup>158</sup> The food cart reads “Cart 1492, Columbus Circle,” with an image of sales above the date. Also, clearly visible is a sign reading “Chopped Cheese \$8.” The user notes the many dimensions of the “gentrification” of the sandwich. Not only is the chopped cheese being sold from Whole Foods, but from a cart with imagery of Christopher Columbus. The use of this imagery is of course due to the stores location in Columbus Circle, however it becomes symbolic of gentrification and overtly representative of colonization.

The tweet concludes with a play on words that introduces the element of race. Although there is no white person in the image (the employee working at the cart is reportedly Bangladeshi), the twitter user likens the store, the imagery, and the sale of the sandwich and the claim of gentrification to whiteness. In response to the same image, another user, @ChriStylezz

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<sup>158</sup> Quoted in Kimber, “Liberals Are Freaking Out about a Racist Whole Foods Sandwich.”

writes “only white people really gonna pay \$8 for a chopped cheese tho [two emojis omitted]”<sup>159</sup> Here, the use of race and price expresses that “white people” lack knowledge of the sandwich, because if they truly knew about the chopped cheese and how much it typically costs, they would also know that it could be purchased for half the price at a bodega. These claims are not simply conjecture. One reporter writes, “a white woman passing by the sandwich cart Monday afternoon stopped to look at it, confused. ‘Is it just chopped cheese?’ she asked.”<sup>160</sup>

While these users simply associate whiteness with gentrification or elevated price, other users make more direct assertions about the Whole Foods chopped cheese. In response to the same image @RealLifeKaz writes, “selling gentrified bodega sandwiches at Whole Foods with Christopher Columbus banners. You can’t make this up.”<sup>161</sup> This user references bodegas in contrast to Whole Foods, using this distinction to claim the Whole Foods version is gentrified. Furthermore, the claim is bolstered by the imagery present in the image that is symbolically associated with colonization. White Gold faced similar accusations for selling the sandwich in their restaurant. Twitter user @cladwellwilldo wrote in response to Grub Streets twitter post sharing their article about White Gold’s chopped cheese, “Can we have anything?! How [the fuck] do you gentrify food? How do you make a hood sandwich hipster?”<sup>162</sup> This user genuinely expresses confusion about how food can be gentrified, hinting at the dialectical incongruity in using this term to discuss food. Also, the user clearly frames the issue as a matter of community control. White Gold is accused of *taking* the sandwich, evidenced by the first sentence of the tweet. In this users’ eyes, “the hood” is the community who originally controlled the sandwich and “hipsters” are those challenging this control. The term “hood” is employed by other users to

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<sup>159</sup> @ChriStylezz, “only white people.”

<sup>160</sup> Wilson, “Manhattan Whole Foods Now Selling Chopped Cheese Sandwiches.”

<sup>161</sup> Quoted in Golding, “Whole Foods Is Now Selling The N.Y. Bodega Chopped Cheese Sandwich For \$8.”

<sup>162</sup> @Caldwellwilldo, “Can we have anything?”

make related comments about community control. Daniel Baker tweets, “#peak #bodegaasure #hoodappropriation,” in response to White Gold’s chopped cheese.<sup>163</sup> User @VerytrueOso writes, “Hood 0 Gentrification 734,” and @apadillafilm6 writes “Whole Foods sellin \$8 chopped cheese [at] a cart named "1492" Yal tryin to piss the hood off? #gentrification...” in response to Whole Foods chopped cheese.<sup>164</sup> These users stress the chopped cheese’s connection to bodegas and the “hood,” and claim the act of removing it from these spheres is representative of gentrification, appropriation and colonization.

Tweets concisely express how contributors to the discourse understand and rationalize the sale of the sandwich from some vendors as gentrification, appropriation, or colonization. Longer format sources in the discourse exhibit usage of the same linguistic devices to report on the controversy of the chopped cheese. Twitter comments referenced in the discourse were indicative of a critical perspective towards the sale of the chopped cheese from non-bodega vendors. This does not mean no opposing opinions exist on twitter, but reporters and journalists writing about the controversy only shared these critical viewpoints. Even the few articles that argued against the perspective that food could be gentrified, appropriated, or colonized, shared these same kinds of tweets. Despite the articles more varied outlook on the controversy, issues of community control remained central to the discourse.

Many popular local media outlets, including the New York Times, the Daily News, and Pix 11 all published articles that hinged on coverage of the controversy, covering the issues related to community control. While these news outlets were not as opinionated as some tweets,

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<sup>163</sup> Daniel Baker, “#peak #bodegaasure #hoodappropriation.”

<sup>164</sup> @VerytrueOso, “Whole Foods sellin \$8 chopped cheese.”

their content was overtly referenced “gentrification,” “appropriation,” and “Columbusing.”<sup>165</sup>

Even conservative outlets focused their coverage on the controversy of the chopped cheese and the ensuing topics of community control, albeit in opposition to these claims. Kevin Williamson writes for the National Review in Response to the Whole Foods chopped cheese,

the culture warriors lost their damned minds. The usual noises were made: cultural appropriation, imperialism, etc., evil Corporate America selling a ghetto staple to white-bread tourists in an entirely anodyne corner of Manhattan. But the real cultural appropriation here is being done by those black and brown critics of Whole Foods: If there is a definition of well-off white-people problems, it’s worrying about what’s for sale at Whole Foods.<sup>166</sup>

Although Williamson never goes on to explicate how exactly “black and brown critics” are guilty of appropriation, his analysis focuses on the outpouring of criticisms that Whole Foods received, especially those related to issues of community control. Williamson turns this language back on those who make these claims, despite the fact that he does not use the term “cultural appropriation” in a cogent fashion.<sup>167</sup> The clause that follows this statement is reductive and does not prove how “black and brown critics” appropriate anything. Another article titled, “Liberals Are Freaking Out About A Racist Whole Foods Sandwich,” published by Chicks On the Right, a conservative blog, joined Williamson in his oppositional view.<sup>168</sup> Again, the coverage in this article centers on issues of community control, even though the authors disagree with the views many twitter users shared. However, these two sources stand alone, as many of the longer format

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<sup>165</sup> Bellafante, “Gentrification and Junk Food.”; Ford, “Whole Foods Faces Backlash for Serving Chopped Cheese, an Emblem of Working Class NYC.”; Gunderman, “Whole Foods under Fire for Selling Cheap Bodega-style Chopped Cheese Sandwich for \$8 in NYC.”

<sup>166</sup> Williamson, “Whole Foods’ ‘Cultural Appropriation’ of the Chopped-Cheese Sandwich.”

<sup>167</sup> Not only does Williamson fail to employ the term “cultural appropriation” correctly in his article, but he makes overtly racist statements about two men who worked at his “local bodega” when he lived in the South Bronx. He writes, “my local place in the Bronx was run by two very rage-y Egyptians who were always screaming at somebody on the phone in Arabic and hence was known as the “Bodega al-Qaeda.”

<sup>168</sup> Kimber, “Liberals Are Freaking Out about a Racist Whole Foods Sandwich.”

articles and blog posts criticized Whole Foods and other purveyors for selling the chopped cheese.

Ed García Conde, a writer for *Welcome 2 The Bronx*, takes a critical stance similar to that of many Twitter users. He writes that the chopped cheese is, “already being sold in Williamsburg, the capital of cultural appropriation and gentrification for \$10 bucks—something that will cost you in a bodega about \$5.”<sup>169</sup> Conde constructs his argument using geographic specificity while mentioning price and bodegas. In his eyes the neighborhood of Williamsburg itself is emblematic of issues of community control. The fact that the chopped cheese is being sold in this space (he’s most likely referring to the Meat Hook’s version) is evidence of appropriation and gentrification. This argument aligns with the previous tweets’ claim of the “hood” versus “hipster” distinction and its relationship with gentrification. Like other contributors, Conde conveys his doubts about the use of the term “gentrification” in relation to food earlier in the article, “but what happens when even your favorite ‘poor man’s’ food gets appropriated and ‘gentrified’? Is it even possible for food to be gentrified? It’s a complex issue yet there are plenty of examples of this happening with many foods that were once the staples of various ethnicities.” Conde concludes that many ethnic staples have succumb to these forces.

Other writers made similarly opinionated claims. Noah Hurowitz writes, “New Yorkers have spoken loud and clear that if you're paying \$8 for a chopped cheese sandwich, you're a sucker at best and a culture-appropriating Columbus wannabe at worst.”<sup>170</sup> By using the term “Columbus wannabe,” Hurowitz mirrors Almonte’s “Columbus syndrome” statement. Furthermore, his statement also brings into play the question of motive. “At best,” someone who buys the \$8.00 sandwich is woefully ignorant, and at worst, no better than a colonizer. Clearly,

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<sup>169</sup> Conde, “Watch: When Food Gets Gentrified.”

<sup>170</sup> DNAInfo, “Where's the Best Chopped Cheese in New York City?”

Hurowitz is referring to the people who sold the sandwich from Whole Foods. The two white team leaders of the 1492 cart sold the sandwich as a “homage to a lot of our team members who are from the Bronx.”<sup>171</sup> They had heard of the sandwich from Anthony Bourdain’s show “Parts Unknown,” which aired a Bronx special in 2014, before the controversy, and included a segment featuring the chopped cheese. This source reports “the Christopher Columbus theme[d cart] was just a coincidence,” due to the store’s Columbus Circle location and Van Hook did not intend “the food cart be appropriative.”<sup>172</sup>

Some critics care little for supposed benign intentions, such as Harlem resident Angela Helm. She’s the same woman who wrote “On Whole Foods, Gentrification and the Erasure of Black Harlem,” which I discussed in my second chapter. Discussing the Whole Foods chopped cheese, she said, “It’s the disregard for the people who have already lived here and established a very vibrant historical community, you can’t discover something that was already there.”<sup>173</sup> It is the tone of ‘discovery,’ that expresses the oversight and unawareness of a rooted cultural artifact that is off putting to Helm. She continues, “this has a long history in this country—of something that has existed and started in black or Hispanic communities that has been Columbus-ed, appropriated, taken and put a little spin on it, and then it’s cool. We do the ‘cool’ things first, but we don’t get any of the benefits.”<sup>174</sup> Her use of the language suggests that using the word colonization is not hyperbolic, Whole Foods really did sell the chopped cheese behind a cart laden with vivid imagery of the colonizer Columbus. However, it also reveals how these images,

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<sup>171</sup> Harlem World Magazine, “Whole Foods Christopher Columbus Food Cart Discovers Uptown’s Chopped Cheese Sandwiches.”

<sup>172</sup> Wilson, “Manhattan Whole Foods Now Selling Chopped Cheese Sandwiches.”

<sup>173</sup> Khan, “The Story Behind New York’s Most Controversial Sandwich.”

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

even when used accidentally, signify a blatant unawareness on the part of white employees about the cultural significance of the chopped cheese.

One Harlem resident with a powerful voice in the discourse was not surprised at all by Whole Foods' chopped cheese. Jeffrey Almonte told Mic that he, "saw it from a mile away...It's no surprise especially since they plan on opening a Whole Foods in Harlem after the closing of an affordable supermarket like Pathmark, this sandwich will soon lose its underground identity."<sup>175</sup> Almonte, who popularized the term "Columbus syndrome" months before Whole Foods sold it from the 1492 cart, was not shocked. His quote emphasizes what he views as two blows to community control dealt by Whole Foods. The first, the loss of the Pathmark, a physical resource. The second, the loss of the chopped cheese's identity, a cultural resource.

The language of community control—appropriation, gentrification, and colonization—is a central theme that ran through the discourse of controversy. Contributors to this controversy use the linguistic devices of geographic specificity, references to bodegas, price, and race and ethnicity in conjunction with discussions of community control to express why they believe their control of the sandwich is being challenged. Furthermore, the controversy reveals how the complementary discourse and actions of culinary legitimizers exists in tension with those that voiced their opinion in the controversy. As culinary legitimizers coopt the chopped cheese and sell it outside of bodegas, frequently at an elevated price and with 'higher quality' ingredients, they are met with criticisms that label these activities appropriation, gentrification, and colonization. This language expresses the latent issue that lies within the controversy itself, that of community control.

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<sup>175</sup> Rodriguez, "Whole Foods' \$8 Chopped Cheese Sandwich Is Peak "Columbusing.""

It is not always clear *what* community the chopped cheese belongs to, however, the use of linguistic devices in conjunction with the discourse of community control in the controversy sheds light on this issue. These devices infuse spatial, socioeconomic, and racial or ethnic associations with the sandwich and are used both to affirm notions of ownership and reveal threats to community control. The bodegas, which are located in New York City's low income neighborhoods and staffed by Hispanic or Arabic workers, that sell the sandwich for \$5.00 or less become the owners of the chopped cheese, while upscale restaurants, located in New York City's affluent, white neighborhoods that sell the sandwich for \$8.00 or more become the appropriators, gentrifiers, and colonizers of the chopped cheese. In reality, this binary distinction is not always so neat, but the discourse of the controversy reaffirms that the chopped cheese belongs to communities like East Harlem and the controversy itself serves as a medium by which communities struggle to maintain control of the commercial and cultural production of the chopped cheese.

These findings parallel similar research conducted by scholars in Brooklyn's Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood. Sharon Zukin writes "traditional urban 'black' folks are experiencing a symbolic eviction," in response to the changing face of food purveyors in Bedford Stuyvesant due to gentrification.<sup>176</sup> The discourse of community control can be understood as direct struggles to combat this symbolic eviction mired in a salient context of literal eviction and displacement that affects the neighborhoods where the chopped cheese is sold. Discourse in the controversy is not merely a body of complaints, rather a demonstration of how the chopped cheese's cultural identity is maintained.

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<sup>176</sup> Zukin, "Restaurants as 'Post Racial' Spaces." 137.



## Conclusion

I have examined the chopped cheese through various lenses, starting with a macro level perspective, then circling inward into East Harlem and then further into the online controversy. The controversy of the chopped cheese is substantially informative in its own right, but the sandwich also serves as a window into wider frames of reference, such as the topics I covered in my first and second chapters. These in turn provide a broader context that deepen our understanding of the controversy itself. Throughout all of my chapters, I have returned to the subject of community control and its relationship to food. Here, I return briefly to each of my chapters with community control in mind, to recall how the chopped cheese is informed by, and informs this subject.

My first chapter frames the chopped cheese through both a materialistic and a cultural lens. From a materialistic point of view, I argue that the sandwich is derived from mainstream ingredients that have been made widely available through the American food system thanks to the popularity of the hamburger. However, bodega chefs, utilizing some of the most accessible ingredients they could acquire, constructed a new sandwich based on the foundational building blocks provided by the industrial food system. As bodega chefs chop up beef patties on their grills, they simultaneously deconstruct these ingredients and imbue within them a new cultural significance that references the spaces bodegas inhabit and the people who define these spaces. Through this process of reinterpretation, the chopped cheese also becomes a culinary other, despite being composed of mundane ingredients. As I have highlighted with the historical cases of the fajita and the lobster, this presents crucial implications for how the chopped is transformed once it exits the context of the bodega, the sandwich's home. Mainstream and upscale tastes vastly alter how the chopped cheese is commercially and culturally constructed. This poses

inherent threats to how the communities that first produced the chopped cheese control the sandwich.

In my second chapter, I focus on the history of food retailing in East Harlem, the neighborhood that pioneered the chopped cheese, to further understand the specific historical and cultural contexts that the chopped cheese came to symbolize. In East Harlem, bodegas came to represent attempts made from within the community to take control of food retailing in a neighborhood that was neglected by corporate retailers. In the face of adversity, residents created culturally relevant spaces that provided food for their communities. Although these efforts could not fully rectify food accessibility issues, they provided empowering pathways for immigrant entrepreneurs, some of whom went on to open full-fledged supermarkets, like Mariano Diaz.<sup>177</sup> When a chain supermarket finally did open a location in East Harlem, it was due to the hard fought victory of two community organizations: The Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle and the Abyssinian Development Corporation. The Pathmark alleviated the pressing issue of food insecurity, however signified the first step in what some perceived, including bodega owners, as an abdication of the community's control of the neighborhood to corporate interests. The Whole Foods embodied the fears of East Harlem's residents as the supermarket not only failed to ameliorate the gap Pathmark's closure left in the neighborhood but posed the salient threats of displacement indicative of gentrification. The history of food retailing in East Harlem is encapsulated in the community's various struggles and victories to control and amend accessibility to food in the neighborhood. Bodegas were the first businesses that took this battle seriously. The chopped cheese, born out of an East Harlem bodega, is symbolically mired in these histories and, as my third chapter discusses, in ongoing debates.

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<sup>177</sup> Boss, "Big Business Springs from Bodegas."

My final chapter turns to the controversy itself, as well as discourse surrounding the chopped cheese in upscale circles. In the first half, I focus on the discourse of culinary legitimizers to understand how the chopped cheese is discussed outside of the context of the bodega. Culinary legitimizers attempt to distinguish their versions of the chopped cheese by highlighting their authenticity. However, they also disparage the bodega chopped cheeses in their attempts to elevate their own versions, labeling the ingredients as “tainted,” or referring to their own takes as “guilt free.” These remarks follow trends Peterson and Kern predicted, who introduced the theory of omnivorousness. Culinary legitimizers, “define popular culture as brutish and something to be suppressed or avoided,” as they, “gentrify elements of popular culture and incorporate them into the dominant status-group culture.”<sup>178</sup> This dual process of rejection and cooption was addressed directly by contributors in subsequent controversy. The controversy, that fixated largely on Whole Foods, revealed that appropriation, gentrification, and colonization were central threads in the discourse. These themes, I argue, are encapsulated by the theme of community control. Contributors used linguistic devices—geographic specificity, references to bodegas, price, and references to race and ethnicity—in conjunction with their discourse about community control to express notions of ownership pertaining to the chopped cheese. This controversy reveals that as culinary legitimizers remove the chopped cheese from bodegas, raise its price, and sell it at upscale locations in affluent, white neighborhoods, contributors to the controversy staunchly oppose and criticize these actions. Taken as a whole, the controversy itself became a medium where struggles for community control unfolded.

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<sup>178</sup> Peterson and Kern, “Changing Highbrow Taste,” 906.

The chopped cheese is both symbolic of and embroiled within the struggle for community control. Despite the sandwich's embeddedness within New York City, the case should not be viewed as an isolated occurrence. Peterson and Kern write,

geographic migration and social class mobility have mixed people holding different tastes. And the increasingly ubiquitous mass media have introduced the aesthetic tastes of different segments of the population to each other. Thus the diverse folkways of the rest of the world's population are ever more difficult to exclude, and at the same time, they are increasingly available for appropriation by elite tastemakers.<sup>179</sup>

As the tastes of “elite tastemakers,” or culinary legitimizers begin to “democratize,” the dishes of the culinary other are “increasingly available,” to be coopted and reinterpreted in upscale settings. The chopped cheese is only one case that foreshadows an impending trend of culinary cooption. Other strikingly similar examples already exist, such as D.C.’s mumbo sauce. The sauce was popularized in Chinese take-out stores in African American communities throughout D.C., but like the chopped cheese, has recently appeared on the menus of some of the city’s upscale restaurants. In response, the Washington Post released an article titled, “Mumbo Sauce Gets Gentrified.”<sup>180</sup> The history of the sauce is just as nuanced to the history of the chopped cheese. However, both highlight a similar trend: discourse of community control.

The discussion of community control as it pertains to food begs a fundamental question. Can food be owned, and who has the right to own it, produce it, or consume it? It is difficult to make food exclusive, and as Peterson and Kern mentioned above, it has become increasingly challenging to exclude cultures and their cuisines from anyone else. However, as the chopped cheese demonstrates, communities have crafted dishes that are

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<sup>179</sup> Peterson and Kern, “Changing Highbrow Taste,” 905.

<sup>180</sup> Judkis, “Mumbo Sauce Gets Gentrified.”

symbolic of places, spaces, and people that matter deeply to those who consume them. As these foods are removed from their original contexts, the dishes themselves begin to change, and the communities that initially controlled the commercial and cultural production of dishes begin to lose agency over these processes.

However, the protests that arose in response to the cooption of the chopped cheese should not be viewed reductively as disgruntled annoyances voiced by community members opposed to change in and of itself. Nathaniel DeLa Rosa, an East Harlem-born rapper known as Bodega Bamz said, discussing the chopped cheese, “I would love to see it in a motherfucking restaurant in Kentucky. That’s fire ‘cause you got a piece of Spanish Harlem in Kentucky. You know what I’m saying, that’s important.”<sup>181</sup> DeLa Rosa believes that the dispersal of the chopped cheese helps spread East Harlem’s culture outside of the neighborhood, in other words, the spread of the sandwich is not viewed inherently as cooption.<sup>182</sup> When discourse in the controversy focused on the chopped cheese’s removal from bodegas, it did so because of the way purveyors handled selling the sandwich in this new context, not solely because the dish had been served somewhere else. The controversy embodied a struggle for a community’s control over the commercial and cultural production of a sandwich that had symbolic associations with that same community’s struggle for control over their food security and their resistance to gentrification.

The case of the chopped cheese is indicative of a larger trend of struggles for community control in response to perceived cooption. The symbol of the bodega itself is

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<sup>181</sup> First We Feast, “Hometown Hero.”

<sup>182</sup> Just a few miles south from Kentucky, a restaurant in Nashville, Tennessee now sells the chopped cheese. See The 5 Spot, “Menu.”

being coopted in mediums that extend beyond food. There's a Bodega clothing line, a Bodega art gallery, a Bushwick wine bar named Bodega, and Bodega Pale Ale, a craft beer.<sup>183</sup> There's Bodega 88, a sports bar, Bodega Magazine, and Bodega, "a content creation studio based in New York and San Francisco."<sup>184</sup> In 2017, a tech startup named their line of upscale vending machines "Bodega," and adopted the logo of a cat. One twitter user mocked the tech company noting that its machines couldn't make a chopped cheese.<sup>185</sup> Despite bodegas' entrenched significance in New York City's low-income communities, they are becoming gimmicky symbols of authenticity, even when companies share little or nothing in common with the stores whose names they coopt. However, as the virulent discourse in the controversy of the chopped cheese showcased, many New Yorkers take this cooption seriously, and fight to maintain control over the symbols that are important to them. Joel Martinez (The Kid Mero) says,

To me, the future is dressing up 'hood food. You know what I mean? Like making an artisanal bacon, egg, and cheese. Like, leave 'hood shit in the 'hood. Let us have the bacon, egg, and cheeses. Let us have the chopped cheeses. Know what I'm sayin'? Let us have all the ethnic food that people take and try to sprinkle some extra shit on... Like, "Oh, it's jerk chicken with nori flakes!" I want my chicken from the dude in the truck with the fucking smoke barrel. You know what I mean? It's like a little Jamaican carriage.<sup>186</sup>

Martinez, like so many others, is fed up with the cooption of dishes that are common fare in New York's "'hoods." He is tired with the mutation and the elevation of foods that "artisans" take and rebrand as something new. Although the cooption of these "'hood"

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<sup>183</sup>Kadet, "The 'Bodega'" Goes Beyond the Corner Grocery Store."

<sup>184</sup> Bodega 88, "Welcome: Bodega 88 Kitchen & Sports.," Bodega Magazine, "Bodega: Your Literary Corner Store.," Bodega Studios, "About."

<sup>185</sup> Salam, "Can a Vending Machine Replace a Bodega? A Start-Up's Plans Draw Fire."

<sup>186</sup> Rbinson, "Bodega Boys on Chopped Cheese."

and “ethnic” foods irks Martinez, he believes that this process will not stop any time soon.

Elites are increasingly exposed to the dishes and cultural productions of communities once disregarded by highbrow taste through mass media and physical proximity. However, these elites pose a dual affront to communities’ control of their neighborhoods and their cultural resources, through gentrification and cooption. Online discourse voiced by community members serves as a viable platform in which community members can resist cooption and successfully thwart culinary legitimizers from redefining significant cultural productions. Discourse regarding community control should not be ignored or written off simply as exaggerated grievances, rather, this discourse exhibits legitimate resistance to forces that dislodge community’s control of their commercial and cultural resources.

### **Appendix One: Menus**

In my third chapter, I make reference to many restaurants that sell the chopped cheese. Here, I provide the menus of restaurants that offered digital files available for download of their menus. Although I base my research in textual analysis, these images provide a modicum of visual context for understanding how restaurants sell the chopped cheese. I accessed all of these images prior to May of 2018, so all of the menu items listed here are subject to change. In some cases, prices or descriptions presented in these images are inconsistent with prices or descriptions I provided in the body of the text. These inconsistencies reflect on the real ambiguities I encountered online while doing research. Menu items sometimes appeared one way on a restaurant's website, and another once I viewed the digital file. In my project, I did not directly mention all of the menus that I present here, however my analysis of the discourse was informed by viewing menus included here, and those that I directly cite in the body of my project. I present the menus in alphabetical order.





***SANDWICHES!***

***The Cuban Reuben \$8***  
*Pastrami, Kraut, Cuban Style Pork,  
 Cheese, Mustard, Pickles*

***The ChopCheez \$5***  
*NYC Original, Chopped Beef & Onion  
 Cheese, Special Sauce, Lettuce, Tomato,  
 on a 6" HERO, -\*The Queen of Drinkin' Foods\**

***Caprese Smash \$6***  
*Fresh Basil Pesto, Tomato & Cheese  
 Smashed on Garlic Bread*

***The Choripan \$6***  
*Argentine-Style Chorizo smoked over Oak Wood  
 on a 6" Toasty Baguette  
 with Bam Bam's Chimichurri Sauce. Add Cheese \$1*

*Place Order With Bartender  
 Take a Number  
 Pick up Order Out Back*

The 5 Spot. The 5 Spot Menu. Photograph. The 5 Spot. Accessed April 30, 2018.  
<http://www.the5spot.club/menu/>.

## BAGELS

PLAIN, POPPY, RYE, SALT, MULTIGRAIN, SESAME, MULTIGRAIN EVERYTHING, EVERYTHING, BAGEL ROLLS

1 BAGEL 1.5  
1/2 DOZEN 9  
BAKER'S DOZEN 18

## SPREADS

BY THE 8 OZ

PLAIN - \$6  
TOFU - \$6  
VEGGIE - \$7  
HORSERADISH - \$7  
HERB TOFU - \$7  
LOX AND DILL - \$18  
TOBIKO - \$18  
JAM - \$6  
BUTTER - \$6  
HONEY BUTTER - \$6  
ALMOND BUTTER - \$6

## SLICED CHEESE

PROVOLONE, SWISS, GRUYERE, MUENSTER, WHITE CHEDDAR, MOZZARELLA (\$2 EACH)

## SLICED FISH

BY THE 1/2 POUND

DOUBLE SMOKED SALMON 28  
HOUSE CURED BEET LOX 36  
SMOKED SABLE 36

## VEGGIES

RED ONION, CAPERS, WATERMELON RADISH, CUCUMBER, HERBS, PICKLES, PEPPERONCINI, BLACK OLIVES, SAUTEED ONIONS, APPLE (+.5 EACH)

TOMATO, SPROUTS, ARUGULA, BUTTER LETTUCE (-1 EACH)

AVOCADO (+2.5)

## DELI

EGG SALAD 5.5  
TUNA SALAD 4.5  
SMOKED WHITEFISH SALAD 6.5  
CHICKEN SALAD 3.75  
SMOKED TURKEY 7  
MAPLE BACON 5.5  
SALAMI 4  
HAM 4

# BLACK SEED

# MENU

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(646) 484-5718

   @BLACKSEEDBAGELS

## CLASSICS

	SMOKED SALMON Cream Cheese, Red Onion, Tomato, Capers 12.5
	LOX SCHMEAR Lox & Dill Cream Cheese, Radish, Sprouts 7.5
	SABLE Lox & Dill Cream Cheese, Butter Lettuce, Onion 15.5
	SMOKED TROUT Hard Boiled Egg, Arugula, Dijon Mustard 12.5
	LARRY DAVID Whitefish Salad, Cream Cheese, Sweet Cucumber 11
	EGG SALAD Butter Lettuce, Red Onion, Cracked Pepper 6.5
	AB&J Homemade Almond Butter, Raspberry Jam 3.75
	GRILLED CHEESE Swiss, Muenster, Cheddar, Tomato 7
	MAPLE BLT Maple Bacon, Lettuce, Tomato, Spicy Mayo 9.5
	TUNA MELT Tuna Salad & Swiss 8
	SMOKED TURKEY Lettuce, Tomato, Onion, Honey Mustard 11
	CHICKEN SALAD Maple Bacon, Lettuce, Tomato 12.75

### EGG 'N' CHEESE

	PLAIN JANE Egg & Cheese 5.75
	CLASSIC B.E.C Bacon, Egg, Cheese 10.75
	THE BOCA Avocado, Tomato, Egg, Cheese 8.5
	THE HAMPTON Beef Sausage, Egg, Cheese 10.5
	THE NJ Ham, Egg, Cheese 10.5
	THE MENSCH Turkey, Egg, Cheese 11
	THE LEO Salmon, Egg, Cream Cheese, Sautéed Onions 11

ADD AVOCADO +2.5

### PIZZA BAGELS

MARGHERITA Fresh Mozzarella, Tomato Sauce 6.5
PEPPERONI Pepperoni, Fresh Mozzarella, Tomato Sauce 7.5

## SIGNATURES

	HOUSE BEET LOX Horseradish Cream Cheese, Radish, Herbs 12.75
	TOBIKO Smoked Salmon, Tobiko Cream Cheese, Butter Lettuce 13.5
	MILK & HONEY Ricotta, Apple, Honey 6
	MIAMI VICE Turkey Melt, Sautéed Onions, Pickles, Swiss Cheese, Dijon Mustard 11
	CHOPPED CHEESE Fleishers Seasoned Grass-Fed Beef, Sautéed Onions, Cheddar, Lettuce, Tomato 10.5
	COMBO Ham, Salami, Pepperoni, Provolone Cheese, Tomato, Onions, Pepperoncini Peppers, Sliced Olives, Italian Vinaigrette 12
	VEGAN BUFFALO Buffalo Cauliflower, Herbed Tofu Cream Cheese, Butter Lettuce, Pickles 7.5

### PICK YOUR BAGEL

	PLAIN		SESAME
	POPPY		EVERYTHING
	RYE		MULTIGRAIN
	SALT		NEW BAGEL ROLL!

Sandwiches marked with  are best on a Bagel Roll!

### PICK A SPREAD

PLAIN 1.5	LOX AND DILL 4.5
TOFU 1.5	TOBIKO 4.5
SCALLION 1.75	JAM 1.5
VEGGIE 1.75	BUTTER .75
HORSERADISH 1.75	HONEY BUTTER 1.5
HERB TOFU 1.75	ALMOND BUTTER 1.5

Black Seed Bagels. Black Seed Menu. Photograph. Black Seed Bagels. Accessed April 30, 2018. [http://getbento.imgix.net/accounts/9aed25041da7a0e4f08d06970c0e289d/media/images/98453InStore\\_Menu.jpg?w=1800&fit=max&auto=compress,format&h=1800](http://getbento.imgix.net/accounts/9aed25041da7a0e4f08d06970c0e289d/media/images/98453InStore_Menu.jpg?w=1800&fit=max&auto=compress,format&h=1800).

# egghead

*Golden Jidori Eggs served on freshly baked Kennebec potato brioche*

## THE CLASSIC

\$8.50

Fried Egg, Thick Cut Nueske's Bacon, American Cheese, Tomato, Fried Shallots, Spicy Aioli

## THE BASIC

\$8.50

Scrambled Eggs, Thick Cut Nueske's Bacon, American Cheese

## RANCHERO

\$10.00

Fried Eggs, Chorizo, Chihuahua Cheese, Black Beans, Caramelized Onions, Avocado, Cilantro, Watercress

## THE GREEN & WHITE

\$9.00

Scrambled Egg Whites, Kale, Avocado, Caramelized Onions, Tomato, White American Cheese

## THE NON SANDWICH

\$9.00

Eggs in a Jar, Ham, Young Pecorino Cheese, Kale, Spinach

## EGG SALAD

\$8.00

Chopped Egg + Fried Egg, Tomato, Watercress, Dijonaise

## THE DELI

\$10.00

Fried Eggs, Sausage Patty, Fried Shallots, American Cheese, Tomato, Spicy Aioli

## UPTOWN CHOPPED CHEESE

Steak, Caramelized Onions, Cheese, Lettuce, Tomato, Secret Sauce & Seasonings on a Hero Roll

\$12.00

## Side & Sweet

Potato Hash Brown \$5.00  
Young pecorino cheese

Warm Valrhona Chocolate Chip Cookie \$4.00  
with espresso crumble

## Drinks

Green Juice \$10.00  
Grapefruit Juice \$3.00  
Orange Juice \$3.00  
Sparkling Water \$3.00  
Still Water \$3.00

## Caffeine

Hot Coffee \$3.00  
Blue Bottle Cold Brew \$4.00  
EGGHEAD T-SHIRT \$25.00  
MR. EGGHEAD TOY \$10.00



@egghead

7<sup>th</sup> Ave. between 36<sup>th</sup> and 37<sup>th</sup>



*Which came first,  
the bun  
or the egg?*



ALL DAY MENU

### HAND-MADE BURGERS

Fountain Single [ 3 oz.]	\$4.59	400 cal
Fountain Double [ 6 oz.]	\$6.29	530 cal
Fountain Triple [ 9 oz.]	\$7.89	660 cal
ADD Bacon to any item for	\$2.49	60 cal
ADD Cheese to any item for	\$0.50	90 cal

HOUSE-MADE Veggie Burger	\$5.19	380 cal
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### ON THE GRILL

Grilled or Crispy Chicken Sandwich	\$5.39	320 - 420 cal
Texas Toast Grilled Cheese	\$3.69	400 cal
add Tomato and/or Ham	\$0.49 / \$1.49	15 cal / 70 cal
Chopped Cheese	\$6.49	760 cal
<small>Straight out of NYC! Grilled beef Hoagie with horseradish mayo, Cheddar &amp; American Cheese add jalapeños, mushrooms and/or onions</small>		
Nathan's Hot Dog	\$2.99	410 cal
ADD Bacon to any item for	\$2.49	60 cal
ADD Cheese to any item for	\$0.50	90 cal

Bread made without gluten always available.

2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice, but calorie needs vary. Additional information is available upon request.

Fountain Grill. *Fountain Grill Menu*. Photograph. Fountain Grill. Accessed April 30, 2018. <https://ualbanydining.com/dining-choices/retail/fountain.html>.



BURGERS

<b>KELSO'S BURGER</b> .....	11
<small>BEEF, CHEESE, PICKLES, ONION, KETCHUP</small>	
<b>KELSO DOUBLE</b> .....	15
<small>DOUBLE THE CHEESE, DOUBLE THE MEAT</small>	
<b>CLASSIC</b> .....	12
<small>BEEF, CHEESE, PICKLES, GRILLED ONIONS, LETTUCE, TOMATO, MAYO OR SUBSTITUTE BEEF FOR FRIED PICKLED TOFU</small>	
<b>KELSO'S VEGGIE BURGER</b> .....	11
<small>MUSHY PATTY, CHEESE, PICKLES, ONION, KETCHUP, MAYO</small>	
<b>FRIED PICKLED CHICKEN</b> .....	14
<small>ESCARBECHE PICKLE, COS, TABASCO MAYO</small>	
<b>FISH FINGER BURGER</b> .....	11
<small>FINGERS, CHEDDAR, SHREDDED LETTUCE, KELSO'S TARTARE</small>	

ADD ONS

<b>CHIPS</b> .....	BASKET	7
..... ADD TO ANY BURGER		
<b>ADD ONS</b> .....		
<small>BACON, SALAMI .....</small>		
<small>HAM, PASTRAMI .....</small>		
<small>FRIED EGG .....</small>		
<small>SALADS, PICKLES, JALAPENOS .....</small>		
<small>PICKLED EGG .....</small>		

DRINKS

<b>BREAKFAST SANDWICHES</b> .....	10	
<small>- BACON, TWO EGGS, CHEESE, HOUSE SAUCE, LIGHT SOURDOUGH</small>		
<small>- GARLIC MUSHROOMS, EGG, CHEESE, HOUSE SAUCE, LIGHT SOURDOUGH</small>		
<b>COFFEE BY SUPREME</b> .....	TAKEAWAY	3
..... BOTTOMLESS		
..... ESPRESSO		
..... LONG BLACK		
..... MILK		

HOT SANDWICHES

<b>CHOP CHEESE</b> .....	12
<small>DICED GRASS FED BEEF, AMERICAN CHEDDAR, ONIONS, TOMATO, SHREDDED LETTUCE, JALEPENOS ON A BAGUETTE</small>	
<b>TUNA MELT</b> .....	11
<small>TUNA SALAD, CHEESE &amp; HOUSE PICKLES ON DARK RYE</small>	
<b>GRILLED CHEESE</b> .....	8
<small>MOZZARELLA, TASTY, GRUYERE, PARMESAN BUTTER, CHEDDAR</small>	
<b>BUTTY</b> .....	6
<small>CHIPS, BUTTER, KETCHUP</small>	
<b>ADD ONS</b> .....	
<small>BACON, SALAMI .....</small>	
<small>HAM, PASTRAMI .....</small>	
<small>FRIED EGG .....</small>	
<small>SALADS, PICKLES, JALAPENOS .....</small>	
<small>PICKLED EGG .....</small>	

COLD SANDWICHES

<b>CHICKEN PARADISE</b> .....	12
<small>SMOKED CHICKEN, PINEAPPLE RELISH, KEMPPE CABBAGE SLAW, BAGUETTE</small>	
<b>TUCK SHOP SALAD</b> .....	10
<small>GRATED CARROT &amp; BEET, COS, TASTY CHEESE, ALFALFA, TOMATO, MAYO, PICKLED EGG, BAP ROLL</small>	
<small>ADD HAM: 4.00</small>	
<b>B.L.T.</b> .....	9
<small>YOU KNOW THE DRILL. ON LIGHT SOURDOUGH, RYE OR BAP ROLL. ADD A FRIED EGG. \$2</small>	
<b>HAM</b> .....	10
<small>KRAUT, MUSTARD, RYE</small>	
<b>SMASHED PEA</b> .....	10
<small>MINT, LEMON, FETA, CUCUMBER &amp; ALFALFA, LIGHT SOURDOUGH</small>	
<b>AC/TC</b> .....	10
<small>AVOCADO, COTTAGE CHEESE, TOMATO, CUCUMBER ON RYE</small>	
<b>SHAKES</b> .....	6
<small>VANILLA, MALT, STRAWBERRY, MILK</small>	
<b>BOOZE</b> .....	SEE MENU BOARD

GET IN TOUCH: KELSOSANDWICHES.COM / HELLOKELSOSANDWICHES.COM

Kelso's Sandwich Shoppe. *Kelso's Sandwich Shoppe Menu*. Photograph. Kelso's Sandwiches. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57c53b78440243c9312866f2/t/5a261c65e2c483ba7825a929/1512447078101/Kelsos\\_Menu\\_A0\\_Green\\_v12.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57c53b78440243c9312866f2/t/5a261c65e2c483ba7825a929/1512447078101/Kelsos_Menu_A0_Green_v12.pdf).

## ENTRANTES

**Chili Cheese Fries**  
Patatas fritas con un extrovinagroso topping de chili con queso, queso fundido americano, jalapeños, dados de cebolla morada, huevo frito y cilantro (72) 🍴 (10.5)

**Nogchos**  
Rugidos totopos de maíz amarillo cobiertos con nuestro chili con carne, queso fundido americano, pico de gallo, y guacamole fresco. (79)

**Tequeños**  
Deliciosos paltos de queso envueltos en una fina y delicada capa de masa, fritos hasta fundir el queso y dorados a la perfección, acompañados de una riquísima salsa casera de pimientos rojos. (79)

**Pelucas Fries**  
Deliciosas patatas fritas con ternera mechada combinada con queso edam, pimiento frito y aguacate (85) 🍴 (12.5)

**Jalapeños con Cheddar**  
Rugidos jalapeños verdes rellenos con queso americano, acompañados de salsa tártara. (75)

**Aros de Cebolla**  
Aros de cebolla a la cerveza fritos a la perfección, acompañados de salsa tártara. (7)

**Pulled Pork Fries**  
Deliciosas patatas fritas con un topping de cerdo mechado con nuestra salsa barbacoa, guacamole fresco y pico de gallo (72) 🍴 (10.5)

**Crujientes de Pollo**  
Deliciosas tiras de perchuga de pollo fritas a la perfección, ternas y jugosas acompañadas con una de las salsas de la casa (95)

**ENSALADAS**  
Requisitoc queso fundido (42)

**Casa Tomada**  
Nuestra espectacular ensalada está elaborada con una perfecta selección de lechugas, pollo asado, cubos de queso edam, gajos de huevo cocido, aceitunas negras y una deliciosa vinagreta de miel y mostaza. (10.5)

**César con Pollo**  
La ensalada más popular del mundo con deliciosas tiras de pollo (10.5)

Para 2 personas 🍴 Medio bocadillo 🍴 Bocado entero 🍴 Pan redondo 🍴 Para 4 personas 🍴

## LOS DE TERNERA

**Big Bole**  
Atipicadas salinas con queso provolone y mozzarella gratinadas, aceite de albahaca y nuestra deliciosa salsa napoletana casera. (89) 🍴 (12.7)

**Chop Cheese**  
Salteado de ternera picada con pimiento y cebolla, cubero con queso fundido americano, lechuga, tomate fresco y un toque de nuestra deliciosa salsa barbacoa (74) 🍴 (10.5)

**El Pelmo**  
Ternera mechada combinada con queso edam y pimiento frito. Un homenaje a la comida tradicional venezolana. (81) 🍴 (11.5)

## LOS DE POLLO

**El Granjero Loco**  
Un regalo a los más geniales. Relleno de pollo frito, queso americano y queso edam, bacon, lechuga o alifia, acompañado de nuestra deliciosa salsa tártara (9) 🍴 (12.9)

**Parmigiana de Pollo**  
Relleno de pollo frito, queso parmesano y mozzarella gratinados, acompañado de nuestra deliciosa salsa napoletana casera y aceite de albahaca. (83) 🍴 (12.9)

**Teriyaki de Pollo**  
Perchuga de pollo, salteada con pimientos y cebolla, bañada con salsa teriyaki, sésamo tostado, cilantro y adobo. (86) 🍴 (10.9)

**Pollo Italia**  
Perchuga de pollo, queso mozzarella gratinada, aceite de albahaca, tomate fresco, espinaca, champiñones y orzongo. (9) 🍴 (12.8)

## LOS DE ROAST BEEF

**FcI Roast Beef**  
Roast beef hornado en casa, pasado por la plancha con sal marina, gratinado con queso edam, bacon y cebolla salteada. (9) 🍴 (12.9)

**Classic Roast Beef**  
Roast beef hornado en casa, queso Edam, lechuga, tomate fresco, alifia, cebolla morada y salsa tártara. (9) 🍴 (12.9)

## LOS VEGETARIANOS

**Felicitá Sandwich**  
Cajigano felicitá casero, lechuga, ternera fresca, cebolla morada, alifia, salsa de ajo y hojas de menta fresca coronado con pepinillos. (69) 🍴 (9.9)

**Teriyaki de Berenjenas**  
Berenjenas saladas salteadas con pimientos y cebolla, bañada con salsa teriyaki, sésamo tostado, cilantro y adobo. (67) 🍴 (9.5)

**Ber-nigiana**  
Berenjenas, queso mozzarella gratinada acompañado de nuestra deliciosa salsa napoletana casera y aceite de albahaca. (69) 🍴 (9.9)

## LOS MEMORABLES

**Chicken Sandwich**  
Pollo frito, queso edam gratinado, bacon, salsa barbacoa y nuestra deliciosa ensalada. Acompañado con nuestro pan redondo especial. (10.9)

**Miss Piggy**  
Relleno con el mejor pulled pork del mundo, salsa barbacoa, tomate fresco, guacamole casero, bacon y queso americano. Acompañado con nuestro pan redondo especial. (12.9)

**El Cullipan**  
Delicioso panal mechado cocido a baja temperatura, acompañado de queso edam, tomate fresco y nuestra auténtica salsa tripartita. (69) 🍴 (9.9)

## PATATAS PARA COMPARTIR

**Orzongo y Parmesano**  
Patatas fritas con un toque de orzongo, pimiento y queso parmesano. (5)

**Las Rusificas**  
Patatas fritas con un toque de sal, pimiento y orzongo. (4.4)

**Las Saldvijas**  
Patatas fritas con un toque de condimento cilantro. ¡Fícan pero no tanto! (4.4)

**Selchichapas**  
Patatas fritas acompañadas de selchichas y huevo frito. (5)

**Bacon Cheddar Fries**  
Patatas fritas con un topping de queso americano fundido, bacon y cebollino. (6.9)

## MENÚ INFANTIL

**Tenders de Pollo**  
Deliciosas tiras de pollo frito acompañadas con patatas fritas. (6.9)

**Chicken Kidx**  
Ternera mechada con tiras de pollo frito y queso americano acompañado de patatas fritas. (7.2)

**POSTRES**  
Todas nuestras postres son caseros, dulces y tienen un toallo de helado de vainilla Brevino, Nutella / Queso cake con mermelada de fresa casera / Cocolite cake. (6.5)

## SALSAS DE LA CASA

Ajo / Miel / Tártara / Tripartita / Miel y mostaza / Teriyaki (1)

## EXTRAS

Bacon en lonchas (1.5) - Pollo frito / asado (2.5) - Roast Beef (4.5)  
Pulled Pork (3.5) - Alubornigas (2.5) - Carne mechada (4)  
Queso: Americano, Edam, Parmesano, Mozzarella, Provolone (1.5)  
Cebollino (0.3) - Tomate (0.3) - Lechuga (0.5) - Alifia (0.5)  
Aceitunas negras (0.5) - Jalapeños (0.5) - Camarón (1.5)  
Aguacate (1.5) - Cebolla caramelizada (0.5) - Huevo cocido / frito (1)  
Pico de gallo (0.5) - Pimiento verde (0.5) - Pan (1)

## CERVEZAS ARTESANALES

**La Cibeles - (Barril)**  
Ruda. Una cerveza tipo Pils de alta enj feijera y referida que cuando se bebe a fondo, libera a un rostro rojo e diáfono. La vena de la casa. Alc: 4.5% Tercio (3) Pinal (4.50)

**Impenitil** Cerveza tipo IPA, color amarillo anaranjado, sabor amargo que permanece amargo por notas a uvas y vino blanco. La podemos definir como la vena de los aromas. Alc: 7% Tercio (3.60) Pinal (5.40)

**Ipa Dry Hopping** Una explosión de aromas a cítricos y frutas mediana que junto con un amargado amargo y una densa espuma hacen de esta cerveza un placer para los sentidos. Alc: 5.1% Tercio (3.60) Pinal (5.40)

**Mustache**  
Bebida de rigor. Aromatizada con tonillo y cáscara de naranja. Cumplo con el estándar de los mejores tipos de cerveza de mayor calidad de su país y los tres tipos de licor. Alc: 5.5% Tercio (4.50)

**Santo Crisno**  
Pale Ale Refrescante y especiadamente aromática. En ella destacan notas florales y cítricas, donde el lupul hace acto de presencia. Alc: 5.5% (4.60)

**Península**  
Ternera. Una cerveza de tipo Pale Ale Español. La cerveza perfecta para el día a día. Alc: 5% (4.30)

**Puro Topical** Una cerveza de tipo Topical Pale Ale. Finalizada con "Dry Hop" que resalta los aromas cítricos de la pilsa, limón y mandarina. Alc: 5% (4.40)

**Hop Out** Una cerveza de tipo American Pale Ale. Sin lupulos cascadas y orginal a beber. Alc: 5.5% (4.40)

**Fuencillo Rego** Cerveza tipo American Red IPA. Aromatizada con un bombón de limón y una explosión de cebada. Alc: 6.2% (4.40)

## BEBIDAS FRIAS

Coco-Cola / Fanta naranja / Fanta limón / Aquarius (3)  
Lady Pink / Té con limón / Limonada casera / Pipilón con limón / Agua / Agua con gas (2.8)

## BEBIDAS CALIENTES

Café / Té / Infusiones (2)

## VINOS

Bonitas Petit Pinquem / Sospedano (3)  
Blancos Femenales (3)



All of our burgers are made from local, grass-fed Black Angus beef from JJF Farm, East Jewitt, NY.

### Our House Burger

#### THE MAMA'S BOY

Served with lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle (LTOP) and our house sauce  
Single \$4.95 Double \$7.95

### Build Your Own

#### PICK YOUR PATTY

Single/Double (served with LTOP)  
Angus beef \$4.95/\$7.95 | Truffled portobello \$9.95  
Organic ground turkey \$4.95/\$7.95 | Falafel \$7.95

#### CHOOSE A CHEESE

American, Jack, Swiss, cheddar, blue cheese (\$1 each)  
Artisanal cheeses (\$2 each): Jersey Girl colby, spiced gouda, goat milk gouda

#### ADD EXTRAS

Caramelized onions, sautéed mushrooms, guacamole, roasted peppers, fried egg, pico de gallo, bacon, jalapeño bacon (\$1 each)

#### SELECT A SAUCE

House sauce, chipotle mayo, truffle mayo, garlic parmesan, herbed mayo, blue cheese, basil mayo, harissa, harissa yogurt (\$1 each)

## House Favorite Burgers

Served with your choice of french fries, tater tots, or crispy pickle chips

#### DEVIL'S TOMBSTONE

Two beef patties, American cheese, our house sauce, lettuce, tomato, onion, and pickle (LTOP) \$9.95

#### CHOPPED CHEESE

Chopped beef, caramelized onions, American cheese, our special sauce, LTOP, hoagie roll \$10.95

#### JERSEY BOY

Two beef patties, smoked mozzarella, Italian peppers, tomato, fresh basil, basil mayo \$10.95

#### EL NIÑO

Two beef patties, jack cheese, pico de gallo, chipotle mayo, guacamole, jalapeño bacon \$11.95

#### BIG DADDY

Two beef patties, blue cheese, bacon, caramelized onions, our special sauce \$11.95

#### HAPPY CAMPER

Organic turkey, rosemary, crispy kale, Swiss cheese, tomato, herb mayo \$9.95

#### FALAFEL BURGER

Falafel, spiced gouda, tomato, cucumber, harissa yogurt sauce \$10.95

## Hot Dogs

#### WHITE HOT

Hofmann's white hot dog, sauerkraut or relish on request \$3.50

#### ALL BEEF

Hofmann's all-beef dog, sauerkraut or relish on request \$3.50

## Sides

French fries \$2.50/\$4.95 | Tater tots \$2.50/\$4.95  
Crispy pickle chips \$2.50/\$4.95

Seasonal vegetable \$4.95 | Onion rings \$3.50/\$5.95

Add any sauce for \$1: House sauce, chipotle mayo, truffle mayo, garlic parmesan, herbed mayo, blue cheese, basil mayo, harissa, harissa yogurt

## Sandwiches

#### TRIPLE GRILLED CHEESE

American, Jack, Swiss, tomato, fresh basil, potato roll \$5.95

#### EGG SANDWICH

Two farm fresh eggs, American cheese, lettuce, tomato, herb mayo, potato roll \$4.95

## Wedge Salads

#### CLASSIC

Tomato, bacon, blue cheese dressing, onion ring \$8.95

#### GREEK

Tomato, feta cheese, kalamata olives, cucumber, onion ring, garlic oregano vinaigrette \$8.95

#### CAESAR

Tomato, croutons, onion ring, garlic parmesan dressing \$8.95

## Drinks

Fountain drinks: regular \$2/large \$2.50

Coke | Diet Coke | Sprite  
Root Beer | Orange Soda | Lemonade

Coffee \$2/\$3 | Iced coffee \$2.50/\$3  
Iced Tea \$2.50/\$3 | Arnold Palmer \$2.50/\$3

## Shakes & Floats

#### SHAKES

regular \$4 large \$4.50 add malt: 50¢

#### FLOATS

regular \$3.50 large \$4.50

Want it made with Jane's? Add \$1 (regular) \$1.50 (large)

## Desserts

CHOCOLATE POLENTA PIE \$5.95

KEY LIME PIE \$5.95

Mama's Boy Burgers. *Burger Menu*. Photograph. Mama's Boy Burgers. Accessed April 30, 2018. <http://www.mamasboycatskills.com/images/burger-menu.pdf>.



served monday through friday - 11:30 a.m to 2:30 p.m.

## appetizers

<b>WARM OLIVES</b> chilis, citrus	8	<b>FRICO GRILLED CHEESE</b> burrata, fennel sausage, pickled peppers, balsamic	14
<b>STEAK TARTARE TOAST</b> salsa verde, mustard aioli, little pickles	15	<b>HUMMUS</b> crispy chickpeas, naan, pita, cucumber, picholine olives	14
<b>GRILLED OCTOPUS SLIDERS</b> orange, black garlic aioli, savoy	22	<b>BUTCHER'S MEATBALLS</b> ricotta, grana padano	13
<b>SEARED YELLOWFIN TUNA*</b> yuzu kosho tahini sauce, cucumber, avocado	17	<b>CRISPY SPICY CHICKPEAS</b>	7
<b>ROASTED SPINACH BLUE CRAB DIP</b> pita chips, naan	21	<b>CRISPY CALAMARI</b> gochujang bbq, furikake	16

## flatbreads

<b>FRESH MOZZARELLA</b> san marzano tomatoes, parmesan, basil	15	<b>CHORIZO</b> smoked mozzarella, fingerlings, roasted tomato, scallion	16
<b>SOPPRESSATA</b> poblano peppers, tomatillo, fresh mozz	16	<b>ROASTED MUSHROOM</b> alpha toman, kale, shallot confit	18

## salads

<b>LITTLE GEM CAESAR</b> watermelon radish, croutons, frico, traditional dressing	14	<b>GREEK SALAD</b> feta, pepperoncini, olives, pickled tomato, cucumber	15
<b>KALE &amp; QUINOA</b> dried apricots, grana padano, almonds, yogurt, preserved lemon vinaigrette	15	<b>CHOPPED SALAD</b> speck, fried chickpeas, provolone, pepperoncini, castelvetrano olives, croutons, creamy italian	15

ADD-ONS : chicken breast 9 | 8oz hanger steak\* 12 | shrimp 12 | salmon 12

## plates

served with your choice of fries or a nice little salad (except market fish)

<b>FRIED CHICKEN SANDWICH</b> bacon butter, pickles, hot sauce	19	<b>GRILLED LAMB SANDWICH*</b> ciabatta, grilled lettuce, harrisa, goat cheese, salsa verde	21
<b>PULLED PORK CONFIT PRETZEL SANDWICH</b> green apple, sweet mustard, mayo, cider vinegar slaw	19	<b>MARKET FISH</b>	MP
<b>SHORT RIB &amp; BRISKET CHOPPED CHEESE SANDWICH</b> ciabatta, black pepper aioli, cherry peppers, duck fat onions, guylère	21	<b>ROASTED CAULIFLOWER SANDWICH</b> curry aioli, pepper jam, jalapeño jack	17
<b>BURGER*</b> 2-year grafton cheddar, caramelized onions, brioche, sour pickle	22	<b>CHEF'S DAILY PANINI</b>	mp

## sides

<b>RAMEN-SPICED SHISHITOS</b> vinegar honey	10	<b>CRISPY BRUSSELS SPROUTS</b> sweet chili, fish sauce	10
<b>HAND CUT FRIES</b>	7	<b>MAC N' CHEESE</b>	12

\*Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish or eggs may increase your risk of food borne illness.

EXECUTIVE CHEF: JEFF HASKELL | CHEF DE CUISINE: ALEX MIXCOATL

rr\_lunch\_FW18



Refinery Rooftop. Refinery Rooftop Lunch Menu. Photograph. Refinery Rooftop-In Good Company. Accessed April 30, 2018.

<https://ingoodcompany.com/refineryrooftop/#menu>.



## Appetizers

**B-Knows "Chicken" Salad** \$5  
Fried soy "chicken", celery, and a special house dressing wrapped in two flour tortillas

**Lemon Crusted "Chicken" Nuggets (4)** \$6.5  
Soy "chicken" nuggets breaded and fried

8 piece \$12

20 piece \$27

Sauces: Jiggy's BBQ or Uptown Tangy

Extra sauce \$0.50

**Pizza Quesadilla** \$5

Marinara & vegan "mozzarella" on a flour tortilla

Extras:

Fresh tomatoes \$1

Mushrooms \$1

Extra "cheese" \$2

Fried or grilled "chicken" \$3

Ground "meat" \$3

**Homemade Hummus** \$7

Carrots and celery with toasted tortilla chips

Sub. flax seed bread for gluten free option \$2

**"Tuna" Roll** \$9

Soy "tuna" wrapped in a nori seaweed roll topped with spicy "mayo"

## Raw Appetizers

**Beet & Cucumber Tapas with Cashew Dip** \$10

Thinly sliced beets and cucumbers with cashew "cheese" dip (Gluten Free)

**Nori Roll** \$10

Almond meat, tomatoes, avocado, onion, and greens wrapped in a nori seaweed roll with side of peanut sauce (Gluten Free)

**Stuffed Avocado** \$10

One avocado sliced, pitted and filled with almond meat and topped with cashew "cheese" and pico de gallo (Seasonal; Gluten Free)

## Salads

**Nefertiti Salad** \$9

Baby spinach, carrots, tomatoes and tortilla chips, with our creamy dressing

Sub. flax seed bread for gluten free option \$2

Add fried or grilled "chicken" \$3

**House Salad** \$7

Fresh mixed greens, carrots and tomatoes, with our tasty house vinaigrette

(Raw; Gluten Free)

Add fried or grilled "chicken" \$3

## Burger

**SV Burger** \$12

Ground soy protein, topped with sauteed onions, lettuce, tomato and our special sauce on a flour bun

Fries \$2

"Cheddar" or "Mozarella" \$1.5

Raw Cashew "Cheese" \$2

Avocado \$1

## Wraps

Flour Tortilla

**Burrito** \$7.5

Seasoned rice, black beans, pico de gallo, "cheese", and sour "cream"

Add avocado \$1

Add ground "meat" \$3

**"Chicken Parmesan"** \$8

Breaded soy "chicken" topped with melted "mozzarella" and marinara sauce

**Harlem Chopped "Cheeseburger"** \$9

Our version of the classic Harlem staple: soy protein patty chopped on the grill with greens, tomatoes, and "cheddar"

**Mixed Veggie** \$7

Spinach, carrots, mushrooms, zucchini, mixed greens and our homemade hummus

**Po'Boy** \$8

Your choice of fried soy "shrimp" or fried burdock root "crawfish" with greens, tomatoes and rémoulade sauce

**"Tuna" Melt** \$9

Soy "tuna" with melted "cheddar"

Menu items are organic and 100% vegan

55 St Nicholas Ave, Harlem

Facebook: Seasoned Vegan - IG: @SeasonedVegan - Twitter: @SeasonedVegan

Seasoned Vegan. Dinner Menu. Photograph. Seasoned Vegan. Accessed April 30, 2018.

<http://www.seasonedvegan.com/menu>.



<h2>Food</h2>	<h2>Drinks</h2>
<b>Brunch Menu</b>	
<hr/>	
<b>APPETIZERS</b>	
GUACAMOLE DU JOUR .....	5 DOLLARS
ROASTED BRUSSEL CAULIFLOWER .....	5 DOLLARS
raisins . pecorino . vinegar	
WINGS .....	5 DOLLARS
choice of plain, soy garlic, bbq, sweet chili or garlic parmesan . blue cheese dressing	
<b>BRUNCH</b>	
THE LES FULL ENGLISH BREAKFAST .....	10 DOLLARS
eggs any style . thick slab bacon . spanish morcilla . portobello mushroom . fried tomato . black beans . challah toast	
STREIT'S MATZO BALL SOUP .....	5 DOLLARS
BREAKFAST TACOS .....	10 DOLLARS
scrambled eggs . fries . chorizo . fixings	
TOMATO SOUP & EGGS.....	10 DOLLARS
BUTTERMILK PANCAKES .....	10 DOLLARS
choice of plain, blueberry, banana-walnut and chocolate	
DIVORCED EGGS .....	10 DOLLARS
jumbo lump crabcakes . poached eggs . salsa verde & rojo	
BIG SALAD .....	10 DOLLARS
kale . pecorino cheese . garlic oil . seasoned crumbs	
ADD: Chicken   Shrimp   Strip Steak .....	5 DOLLARS
<b>BURGERS &amp; SANDWICHES</b>	
LOWER EAST SIDE B.A.E. ....	5 DOLLARS
bacon . two eggs . sauteed onion jam . frisee . garlic butter	
JOEY'S CHOPPED CHEESE .....	5 DOLLARS
THANKSGIVING BURGER .....	10 DOLLARS
turkey . thanksgiving stuffing . cranberry salsa . LTO . fries	
SUFFOLK DOUBLE CHEESE .....	10 DOLLARS
Vermont cheddar . house sauce . LTO . fries	
OLD FASHIONED GRILLED FOUR CHEESE .....	10 DOLLARS
cheddar . gruyere . fontina . provolone . country sour dough served with tomato soup	
HUEVOS SUFFOLK .....	10 DOLLARS
<b>SIDES</b>	
SUGARED BLOOD SAUSAGE .....	5 DOLLARS
MAPLE BACON .....	5 DOLLARS
3 EGGS ANY STYLE .....	5 DOLLARS
BLACK BEANS & TORTILLAS .....	5 DOLLARS
SLICED AVOCADO .....	5 DOLLARS
HAND CUT FRIES .....	5 DOLLARS
SPICED WEDGES .....	5 DOLLARS
TATER TOTS .....	5 DOLLARS
SWEET POTATO TOTS & MARSHMALLOW .....	5 DOLLARS
<b>CAFFEINATED</b>	
VODKA NITRO .....	10 DOLLARS
Vodka . Cold Brew . Coffee Liqueur	
STRIPED COFFEE .....	10 DOLLARS
Vodka . Espresso . Maraschino . Milk	
DUKE OF SUFFOLK .....	10 DOLLARS
Gin . English Breakfast & Earl Grey Tea . Cream & Sugar	
CHAPULIN DE ORO .....	10 DOLLARS
Tequila . Fernet . Mint . Espresso . Sugar	
DAYBREAK BOY .....	10 DOLLARS
Spirit of Choice . Espresso . Chocolate . Cream . Peppercorn	
<b>REFRESHING</b>	
SHAKY PETE'S GINGER BREW .....	10 DOLLARS
Gin . Lemon . Ginger . English Ale	
PORNSTAR .....	10 DOLLARS
Vodka . Passionfruit . Vanilla . Lime . Bubbles	
BLACK BELLINI ....	10 DOLLARS
White Peach . Bubbles . Guinness	
PIMM'S CUP .....	10 DOLLARS
Pimm's . Lemonade . Gingerale .Cucumber . Mint . Strawberry . Orange	
ISABELA .....	10 DOLLARS
Grapefruit Vodka . Lemon . Elderflower . Mint . White Peach	
<b>SAVORY</b>	
AMERICAN BULLDOG .....	10 DOLLARS
Bourbon . Tomato Juice . Beef Consomme . Worcestershire . Orange . Salt Pepper . Horseradish . Celery	
PASTRAMI ON BUTTERED RYE .....	10 DOLLARS
Rye Whiskey . Black Pepper . Mustard Seed . Butter . Honey	
GORDON'S BREAKFAST .....	10 DOLLARS
Gin . Cucumber . Worcestershire . Lime . Salt . Pepper .Hot Sauce	
READY FIRE AIM .....	10 DOLLARS
Mezcal . Pineapple . Lime . Honey . Arbol Chile	
STAFF MEAL .....	10 DOLLARS
Gin . Carrot Juice . Worcestershire . Cucumber . Lemon . Pickles .Horseradish	
<b>NON-ALCOHOLIC</b>	
UNLIMITED COFFEE (any style).....	
5 DOLLARS	
TEA POT for TWO .....	
5 DOLLARS	
Earl Grey . Chamomile . English Breakfast	
FRESH JUICE .....	
5 DOLLARS	
Granny Smith . Carrot . Orange . Grapefruit	

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## Appendix Two: Extended Discourse of Controversy

In the second half of my third chapter, I analyze the discourse of controversy. In my project, I cite the sources that I found to be most pertinent and demonstrative of the themes I observed in the discourse. I could not possibly reference all of the material that I examined to form my opinions in the body of the project, so here, I present an extended list of discourse that I deemed to be part of the controversy. This list is not exhaustive however, it does not include the additional tweets and shorter format discourse that was referenced within these articles the ones listed in my bibliography. Nonetheless, these sources were instrumental in forming my arguments about the discourse of community control.

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