

ASA 2016--Appalachian Studies Association Conference

Lucy M. Long, PhD

Director, Center for Food and Culture

550 West Wooster St.

Bowling Green, OH 43402

Paper proposal

Food Images in Traditional Appalachian Music: Inventing and Homogenizing a Regional Cuisine

Old-time Appalachian tune titles and song lyrics frequently reference food and drink. These include specific dishes (for example, cornbread, biscuits, gravy, moonshine), ingredients (corn, cabbage, squirrels, chickens, sack of meal), and cooking implements (skillet, frying pan), as well as ways of obtaining food (hunting, farming, hoeing corn) and cooking it (frying, boiling). These references give descriptions of typical foods of the region, but they also offer an homogenized impression of what constitutes Appalachian foodways. While there are basic ingredients common throughout the area, there is a great deal of diversity in Appalachian foodways that reflects the diverse ethnicities, social classes, religious affiliations, education levels, and geographies that exist there. These other foods are usually not mentioned in the music.

This paper examines the range and categories of food references in traditional Appalachian music. Assuming that most of these references really are about food (although some could also be metaphors for sex), these references define a unified Appalachian cuisine that would have been unintentionally promoted in the public consciousness through music.