

Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository

6-25-2014 12:00 AM

Man Versus Food: An Analysis of 'Dude Food' Television and Public Health

Amy R. Eisner-Levine
The University of Western Ontario

Supervisor
Daniel Robinson
The University of Western Ontario

Graduate Program in Media Studies

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts

© Amy R. Eisner-Levine 2014

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd>



Part of the [Public Health Commons](#), and the [Television Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Eisner-Levine, Amy R., "Man Versus Food: An Analysis of 'Dude Food' Television and Public Health" (2014).
Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository. 2124.
<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/2124>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact wlsadmin@uwo.ca.

MAN VERSUS FOOD: AN ANALYSIS OF 'DUDE FOOD' TELEVISION AND
PUBLIC HEALTH

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

«Amy Eisner-Levine»

Graduate Program in Media Studies

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

© Amy Eisner-Levine 2014

Abstract

Contemporary food television has moved away from an instructional and cooking-centered model, to an entertainment and eating-focused one. However, public health researchers have not considered these shows in the wake of rising obesity rates. This thesis is concerned with the kinds of messages food television conveys about food and eating and is guided by three research questions: How are food and eating represented on the shows? How is health addressed? How do these shows work to create and promote a more acceptable popular discourse around unhealthy eating habits? Through an analysis of *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*, *You Gotta Eat Here!* and *Man vs. Food Nation*, I argue that these food shows downplay or reject entirely health concerns and provide conflicting information about food and health. Finally, by framing these shows within current public health debates on obesity, I discuss possible ways to better inform viewers about the health merits of foods featured on these shows.

Keywords

Food television, public health, carnivalesque, obesity, excess, masculinity, restaurants

Acknowledgments

First, I'd like to thank my supervisor, Daniel Robinson, for (whether knowingly or not) pushing me to work my hardest at every step in this process. I am grateful for how much I have learned from working with him throughout my graduate career and am especially thankful for the time he has spent answering my questions, staving my uncertainties or just having someone to discuss this project with (who actually knew what the heck I was talking about). As well, a special thank you to my second reader, Keir Keightley, for providing me with insightful feedback and helping me to think about my thesis in new ways.

I am also indebted to Tim Blackmore who taught our writing course. His patience and dedication helped me with the hardest and most important step in writing my thesis: starting.

I would also like to thank my unbelievable support system in both Montreal and London; your unwavering support has gotten me through my many moments of self-doubt.

And finally, I'd like to thank my mom. I am forever grateful for her patience and encouragement. As my personal sounding board, cheerleader, editor and complaint's department, I am blessed for her allowing me to drag her along for the ride and surely would not have been able to complete this project without her.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables.....	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
List of Appendices.....	viii
Introduction.....	1
1 History and Background.....	15
1.1 Introduction.....	15
1.2 The Evolution of Food Television.....	16
1.3 Eating Contests and Competitions.....	23
1.4 Restaurants.....	26
2 Analysis.....	39
2.1 Introduction.....	39
2.2 Representations of Gender.....	40
2.3 Excess.....	47
2.4 Restaurants and Nostalgia.....	57
3 Food Television and Health.....	72
3.1 Introduction.....	72
Part I.....	73
3.2 Salt, Sugar, Butter & Bacon.....	73
3.3 Calorie Distortion.....	79
3.4 Rejection of Health Concerns.....	88
Part II.....	94

3.5 Public Health.....	95
Conclusion	103
Bibliography	108
Appendices.....	120
Curriculum Vitae	124

List of Tables

Table 1: Summary of Sample Characteristics.....	10
Table 2: Recommended servings compared to actual meal size.....	83

List of Figures

Figure 1: Example of oversized milkshake.....	48
Figure 2: Example of manners.....	49
Figure 3: Lauren Takow, as Rosie the Riveter.	53
Figure 4: Example of oversized portions.....	82
Figure 5: The Farm Burger, part of the Unforgiven eating challenge	87
Figure 6: Host Adam Richman's weight loss, before and after.	94

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Complete List of Episodes, <i>You Gotta Eat Here!</i>	121
Appendix 2: Complete List of Episodes, <i>Man vs. Food Nation</i>	122
Appendix 3: Complete List of Episodes, <i>Diners, Drive-Ins & Dives</i>	123

Introduction

Sandwiches as big as a human head. Nine-pound hamburgers topped with 45 strips of bacon. A two-foot-long burrito weighing six pounds stuffed with six fried eggs, six slices of Swiss cheese, garlic fried rice and three pounds of braised chicken. No, these are not blue ribbon winners at a county fair or part of a carnival freak show; these are some of the mega-dishes that can be found on food television shows. Rather than just watch a chef prepare a meal and learn a new recipe, audiences are entertained by watching people try to unhinge their jaws to fit a giant sandwich into their mouths, revel over a bite of rich pasta, see the bliss on their face as they eat a forkful of decadent chocolate cake or watch as a man attempts to finish a six-pound burrito in forty-five minutes. The more indulgent, extreme and outlandish the food, the better. On these new shows, the actual preparation of food becomes secondary; eating, rather than cooking, becomes the main spectacle.

While the cooking show has been part of regular television programming since the advent of the medium, the current incarnations differ significantly from their predecessors. A major factor that has contributed to this shift in programming was the launch in 1993 of the Food Network, the first specialty cable network dedicated solely to food and cooking. The move away from traditional instructional cooking shows could especially be seen starting around the early 2000s, and since then, has only intensified. Programs such as *The Best Thing I Ever Ate* (2009) highlight the move away from cooking instruction to a focus on eating; celebrity chefs sit and describe some of the best restaurant items they have ever eaten and are shown indulging in their favourite selections. The introduction of the travel and adventure sub-genre of food television helped to promote this shift, as the purpose is for the host to travel to either local or exotic locations to sample the best or strangest foods. On a number of these shows, like on *World's Weirdest Restaurants* (2012), the goal is to find the most unique and indulgent foods, or *Eat St* (2011), which is about the search for the best food trucks.

In recent years, the popularity of eating-centered shows has expanded on the Internet to include new and more extreme examples. Launched in 2010, *Epic Meal Time*, a web series started by a group of young men from Montreal, attracts millions of viewers

on YouTube. The series centers on the hosts creating excessive and unhealthy dishes, and usually ends with them digging in to the final product (literally digging in, as hands are favoured over forks). The “All Bacon Burger” episode attracted over a million YouTube views and shows the young male hosts making a 21-pound beef patty wrapped in 25 pounds of bacon, with bacon-wrapped cheese and bacon-wrapped onion rings, totaling a whopping 63,098 calories and 5,162 grams of fat. The over-the-top nature of the food is what drives the show and an onscreen calorie and fat counter keeps tabs of the monstrous creations. *Epic Meal Time* has over 6 million subscribers and has had over 690 million views since 2010. The web series is set this year to make its debut as a regular half-hour television show on the FYI network¹ (Cohen 2014).

The trend is not confined to North America. A new phenomenon has appeared in South Korea where subscribers to the online social networking site Afreeca TV can sit and watch people consume large amounts of food. One of the most popular stars is a young woman, nicknamed The Diva, who sits for hours eating anything from four large pizzas to six pounds of beef in one sitting. The site is interactive and the Diva can live chat with her viewers. The rise in this phenomenon has been attributed to the increase in single-person households and the current trend of excessive dieting in Korea. Media Studies scholar Sung-hee Park argues that this online phenomenon stems from Koreans feeling uncomfortable dining alone; for Koreans, eating is a social and communal activity, so viewers may be driven by loneliness (Cha 2014).

Previous research on food television focuses primarily on programs that resemble the original instructional cooking shows; there is still some form of food preparation and the chef’s skill and expertise at cooking is central (Adema 2000; Hollows 2003; Phillipov 2013). Other research has included providing the history of cooking shows (Brost 2000; Collins 2009), competition-style cooking shows (Gallagher 2004; Veri 2013), the rise of the celebrity chef (Hansen 2008; Rousseau 2012) and the representation of gender on cooking shows (Swenson 2009; Cruz 2013). However, there is a significant gap in the

¹ The FYI network, formerly called Bio, is owned by A+E and is being re-launched in July 2014 (Cohen 2014).

literature about the contemporary, eating-focused television programs. In an effort to fill this gap, I have conducted a textual analysis of three eating-centered shows: *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*, *You Gotta Eat Here!* and *Man vs. Food Nation*.² The basic premise of each of these programs is to find the best tasting food, regardless of any potential negative health effects on the consumer. The larger, the fattier, the sweeter and the greasier, the more the food is deemed desirable. Not only do these shows purposely seek out unhealthy foods, the act of consuming them in large amounts is celebrated. The popularity of such shows comes at a time when there is a considerable amount of evidence to suggest that diet plays a direct role in the population-wide increase in overweight and obesity (French 2005, 102). In the United States, more than one third of the adult population is obese (Centers 2012). In Canada, the numbers are just as alarming, as one out of four adults is obese (Public Health 2011). One major development in obesity prevention policy has been a call for mandatory menu labeling in chain restaurants. In 2008, New York City was the first to implement menu labeling legislation; calorie information must be posted on menu boards next to each item (Bollinger 2011, 91). A similar legislation has been proposed in Ontario (Grant 2014). Moreover, the United States federal government passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in March 2010, which includes a nutrition-labeling requirement for chain restaurants with more than twenty locations (FDA 2013). Other initiatives focus on regulations that involve environmental and community actions, like zoning changes to keep fast food restaurants away from schools and increasing access to healthy foods (Yale Rudd Center 2013). Researchers, however, have only just begun to consider the connection between popular media and the rise in obesity, focusing mainly on the influence of television food advertising, especially towards children (Desrochers & Holt 2007; Harris & Bargh 2009; Botterill & Kline 2012; Kline 2011; Cheyne et al. 2013; Harris & Graff 2011; Beales & Kulick). The link between food television programming and obesity has largely been ignored. This thesis attempts to fill this gap in the literature and tries to bring food television into current obesity policy debates.

² The shortened version of the name of the shows will often be used and are as follows: *Diners, Eat Here* and *MVF*.

Although the cooking show has gone through significant changes, it has been a part of regular programming since the first days of television. Despite the genre's popularity with television producers and viewers, scholars have only recently begun to treat cooking shows as a viable research topic (Brost 2000, 1). This, in part, accounts for the limited scholarly research on the three shows I will be analyzing. However, there is scholarly research pertaining to cooking shows in general, or that analyzes a specific show as a case study.

Lori Brost (2000) provides an in-depth analysis of cooking shows. In her dissertation, she analyzes approximately seventy different cooking shows in order to define the genre, along with examining representations of gender, class and ethnicity. The author concludes that cooking shows are a 'feel good' genre, representing food and cooking as a celebration (Brost 2000, 166). This genre analysis produces three different categories of cooking shows, the relevant one being identified as 'Travelers' shows. The shows that I will be analyzing fall into this category, and therefore Brost's analysis can provide some foundation for my own research. However, the programs that were analyzed may be dated, as they were broadcast between 1987-1998. Brost's study cannot take into consideration the changes the cooking show genre has undergone during the past decade.

Kathleen Collins (2009) provides a comprehensive history of cooking shows from its radio days to current programming and offers predictions for the future; her book provides a good historical context for the evolution of cooking shows. Focusing on the interaction of food, cooking, television and consumer culture, the book underscores how cooking shows have reflected and shaped significant changes in American culture (Collins 2009, 9). The most pertinent section is the final one that discusses the modern period of television cooking programming, which began in 1993 with the introduction of The Food Network (Collins 2009, 7). According to Collins, the Food Network changed the nature of television cooking shows. While striving for a profitable cable network, executives realized an entertainment format would attract more viewers and so changed the direction of programming. A small two-page section addresses the "travel/adventure/food sub-genre" (Collins 2009, 195) and mentions *Diners*, *Drive-Ins*

and Dives. My research will expand upon this category of cooking show that Collins only briefly touches upon.

Naccarato and LeBesco (2012) provide an analysis of four food shows that are broadcast on the Travel Channel, one of which is *Man vs. Food*. This is the first academic work that provides a more extensive analysis of travel food shows in general, and *Man vs. Food* in particular. The authors argue that these Travel Channel food shows rely on and reinforce class-based assumptions and stereotypes, and ultimately this programming “circulates stratifying ideologies of class” (Naccarato 2012, 243). Their analysis of *Man vs. Food* is framed through the themes of nostalgia and excess and appeals to a kind of middle-class fantasy; the show allows middle-class audiences to vicariously experience the pleasures of excessive eating and temporary escape from the expectations of middle-class restraint and control. However, the authors argue that in representing this middle-class liberation with supposedly working-class values, the network depicts the working class in ways that reinforce negative and simplistic presumptions about it (Naccarato 2012, 255-56). While the theme of excess is brought up in their analysis, there is no consideration or concern for the kinds of messages that are being conveyed to audiences about food and eating and the possible implications on health. Moreover, their research does not include any mention of the recent adaptation of the show, where regular people—instead of the host Adam Richman—compete in the eating challenge segment. My research pays specific attention to the significance of this eating competition in the show.

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, there was an increase in academic writing on cooking shows. Research during this time focused on the reasons why audiences were drawn to food shows. Adema (2000) and Hansen (2008) discuss how cooking shows create consumers—of food television in particular or for the related celebrity-branded commodities—suggesting that the act of watching people prepare and talk about food creates an insatiable hunger in the viewer. Both authors argue that the celebrity chef secures an audience that always comes back for more, thus perpetuating the popularity of the genre. Adema (2000) goes further by arguing that food television involves the vicarious pleasures of watching someone else cook and eat. Moreover, she contends that food television is a way to consume food without consequence in a society

that values control over excess, bodily health and ideals of physical beauty (Adema 2000, 119).

Although Michael Pollan's book *Cooked* (2013) is not about food television *per se*; he describes what he calls the Cooking Paradox: "How is it that at the precise historical moment when Americans were abandoning the kitchen, handing over the preparation of most of our meals to the food industry, we began spending so much of our time thinking about food and watching other people cook it on television?" (Pollan 2013, 3). Pollan (2013, 3) explains that Americans cook less and buy more prepared meals every year and the time spent preparing meals in American households has fallen by half since the mid-sixties. He proposes that the reason why watching cooking on television has gained considerable popularity is because there is something missed about the act of cooking; he goes so far as to say that some theorists argue that cooking is not just a defining human activity, but *the* defining human activity — it is central to human identity, biology and culture. While theories as to why people watch food television will only help to inform my analysis, this thesis is less concerned as to *why* people watch food shows, than with the kinds of messages that are conveyed about food and eating.

Ketchum (2005) argues that Food Network programs offer viewers the pleasure of vicarious intimacy, anticipation and sensual experience through consumption. She notes that the destinations on food travel shows can become sites for escape, where viewers can then visit these real locations and consume accordingly (Ketchum 2005, 228). Chan (2003) compares cooking shows to pornography, arguing that they appeal to Americans' perverse side. By analyzing several popular cooking shows and their hosts, he concludes that these shows tap into primal needs and forbidden pleasures. Viewers are able to fantasize, vicariously act out and observe the forbidden pleasures associated with food. From the safety of their couch, the viewer can watch people eating food that is normally off-limits; whether it is exotic foods in dangerous locations or dishes that include taboo ingredients like butter, cream and bacon.

The topic of food television and food in general has also been analyzed through the lens of gender.³ Swenson (2009) discusses the representations of gender on the Food Network and considers how the programming works to ultimately maintain, in relation to food and cooking, the traditional roles of masculinity and femininity. She analyzes food travel shows that are hosted by a woman or by a man, and discovers that the shows take on a much different tone depending on the gender of the host; female hosts are ‘thrifty homemakers’ while male hosts are adventurers looking to fulfill ‘manly’ appetites (Swenson 2009, 49). Veri (2013) analyzes the competition cooking show *Tailgate Warriors*. The show focuses on the American custom of tailgating before football games. Contestants compete outside NFL stadiums around the United States to make the best tailgating grub. The author concludes that the show works to help reinforce social constructions of gender around food preparation and consumption along with perpetuating images of hegemonic masculinity. These works are pertinent to my analysis as the shows that I analyze take place outside of a studio kitchen and involve travelling on the open road and adventure, activities typically associated with men (Veri 2013, 48). While instructional cooking shows are associated with the female domestic sphere, (Swenson 2009, 39) and viewers of early instructional cooking shows were almost exclusively female (Veri 2013, 3), many contemporary food shows deviate from this more instructional format and so deserve closer scrutiny.

Although there is limited academic research on the relationship between food television and obesity,⁴ there is a growing amount of scholarly research that considers cooking shows and health. For instance, Malene (2011) examines the viability of food programs as outlets to disseminate advice on healthy eating. She surveys viewers of these shows and discovers that most participants were willing to accept their favorite chef’s

³ For more on food television and gender see Hollows (2003) and Cruz (2013). On the subject of food and gender more broadly, see Voskin Avakian and Haber (2005); Counihan and Kaplan (1997). On the subject of meat and masculinity see Heinz (1998); Julier (2005); Rogers (2008); Buerkle (2009).

⁴ See Bodenlos and Wormuth (2013) or Shimizu and Wansink (2011) for studies concerning watching food-related television and eating behaviour.

health-related messages. Although her sample could not be expanded to the general population, she concludes that food shows could be a possible method to deliver information on healthy eating. Rousseau (2012) also explores the celebrity chef's role in addressing health issues and providing advice. In her search for "who is responsible for our health and well-being" she examines how information about health and obesity prevention provided by celebrity chefs and the media could cause more harm than good; her standpoint is much more critical and questions the validity of celebrity chefs as public health activists.

Phillipov (2013a) provides the first scholarly article that specifically analyzes a television cooking show in relation to public health concerns. The author begins by discussing the flurry of criticism by Australian health care practitioners in the media regarding the competition cooking show *MasterChef Australia*. The largest complaint came from the Heart Foundation that targeted the show's excessive use of butter. The author then analyzes the use of butter on *MasterChef Australia*, and concludes that when the series started, butter was associated with sexiness and love, but as the series has progressed, the use of butter has been downplayed and rather than being a 'naughty' pleasure, has become just an ordinary ingredient (Phillipov 2013, 511). While the shows I analyze overtly dismiss and even mock health issues, Phillipov argues that *MasterChef Australia* does not explicitly reject popular nutrition discourses. She concludes that, ultimately, the public health practitioners' criticisms did not impact the popularity of *MasterChef Australia*, but rather reveals the limitations and restrictions of current public health strategies.⁵ Another work by Phillipov (2013b) explores the media response to two "fat" burgers sold in Australia in 2008 and 2011. She considers 'fat' burgers as a site for resistance to public health efforts and representative of a broader "turn to the extreme" and desire for limit-experiences, defined as: "experiences that lie at the limit or extreme of the physical body" and can include activities such as extreme sports (Phillipov 2013b,

⁵ While I acknowledge that there is considerable debate around the effectiveness of public health efforts, as well as the contested nature of the term 'epidemic' to describe the current obesity problem, this project does not focus on these questions. Rather, I consider that obesity is understood to be a widespread problem in contemporary American and Canadian society.

385). Additionally, Phillipov's analysis of the advertisements for these 'fat' burgers provides insight into the strategies used to attract male consumers. However, in both instances, her analysis focuses on the negative responses to these foods and the shortcomings of public health efforts. In contrast, my research looks at when 'extreme' food is praised and promoted and what public health officials can do to counteract these encouraging messages.

I have found two science-based studies that look at the impact of watching food-related programming and food intake. Both were published in *Appetite*, a research journal in behavioural nutrition. Shimizu and Wansink (2011) had 180 undergraduate students watch two half-hour episodes of *SpongeBob SquarePants*; one episode contained food-related content and the other did not. Students were then given candy to eat while watching the program. The authors concluded that restrained eaters ate more while watching the food-related episode than while watching the non-food related episode. Bodenlos and Wormuth (2013) examined what kinds of foods were eaten when people watched a cooking versus a nature television show. A sample of 80 college students were shown a food program or a nature program and then given carrots, cheese curls and chocolate-covered candies to snack on. The authors found that individuals consumed significantly more chocolate-covered candies after watching the cooking program. However, these studies present a number of limitations; they do not take into account repeated and pervasive exposure to cooking shows, or look at the kinds of food messages being conveyed on the shows. As well, Shimizu and Wansink (2011) use an animated series—where the main character is selling chocolate bars—and not an actual food show.

I have chosen to analyze *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*, *You Gotta Eat Here!* and *Man vs. Food Nation* based on a number of criteria. First, all three shows deviate from the instructional cooking show format and have generally not been addressed in existing scholarly work. Second, the three shows all follow a similar premise, indicating that these kinds of shows are becoming an emerging genre in food programming. Finally, each show has the common theme of disregarding health concerns, and remain popular with audiences despite the current increase in obesity. My research focused on the 2011-2012 broadcasting seasons. This period marks the only time the original episodes of all three

shows were on television at the same time. For the purpose of this research, I watched the entire first season of *You Gotta Eat Here!*, the entire fourth season of *Man vs. Food Nation*, and seasons thirteen and fourteen of *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*, as this show's seasons are half as long as the others. This allowed for approximately the same number of episodes for each show to be watched, for a total of 79 episodes or approximately 40 hours of program viewing (see Table 1). On *Diners*, the host and Food Network personality, Guy Fieri, tours the United States and Canada in his red convertible to uncover top diners, drive-ins and 'dives.' *Eat Here!* features comedian John Catucci searching out the best comfort food Canada has to offer. On *MVF*, food enthusiast and actor Adam Richman visits a new city each episode to search out the best 'pig-out' spots and competes in food challenges. In the first three seasons of *MVF*, each episode featured the host competing in the restaurant's food challenge. However, in the 2011 season, the host acts as a coach for members of the public who want to participate in the eating challenges.

Table 1: Summary of Sample Characteristics

Name of Show:	Originally On Air:	Selected Season:	Number of Episodes:
Diners, Drive-Ins & Dives	2006-present	Seasons 13 & 14	26
Man Vs. Food Nation	2008-2011	Season 4	27
You Gotta Eat Here!	2011- present	Season 1	26

My research is guided by three different, but ultimately interconnected research questions: How are food and eating represented on these shows? How is health addressed? And how do these shows work to create and promote a more acceptable popular discourse around unhealthy eating habits? To address these questions, I take a qualitative approach to my research. During my viewing of the shows, I took in-depth notes and used a colour-coded system to highlight pertinent and reoccurring themes. As this process yielded a large amount of data, I worked from this set of notes to identify and synthesize common themes and their frequency across each series. My notes were mainly concerned with content, editing and dialogue between the hosts with the chefs, patrons and with the viewers at home. By grouping common content, categories began to emerge that spanned across each series. For instance, I would identify recurring themes such as the use of sports on the shows, the construction of ‘community’ around a restaurant or specific instances where health was addressed or rejected. I then divided these categories into two main documents, one that was concerned with the multiple overarching themes in the shows and the other that specifically targeted the theme of health. I then worked on each document separately to further pull out and synthesize common themes, but only those that occurred frequently made it to the final stage of my analysis. The final stage was to analyze the recurring themes based on my knowledge of the pertinent literature and my theoretical framework.

Merrigan et al (2012) state that with critical studies, theory and method are highly interconnected; theory both drives the research claims and the analytical techniques used to examine evidence. Drawing on Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin’s theories, I use the carnivalesque and grotesque body as a theoretical framework for the analysis of the three selected food shows. By examining the rituals of the Medieval carnival, Bakhtin, in *Rabelais and his World* (1968), develops his theory of the carnivalesque. Bakhtin argued that the carnival was a time when people were freed from restrictive social norms. The carnivalesque embodies this instance of carnival freedom, where social hierarchies are rejected, the high becomes degraded and the normal order of life is turned upside down (Bakhtin 1998, 251). The carnivalesque emphasizes laughter, parody and excess, especially excesses of the body or what Bakhtin calls the grotesque body, which is concerned with protruding bellies, bodily fluids and bodily functions, and is the opposite

of the ‘classical body’ as a complete, beautiful and perfect thing (Dentith 1995, 67). Contemporary adaptations of Bakhtin’s work have, however, somewhat rejected his initial utopian conception of the carnival, and argue that the carnivalesque is in fact a “licensed release” and exists within and ultimately can reinforce existing power relations (Stallybrass & White 1986, 18). In my analysis of the three shows I look for this theme of excess and the social inversions and ambiguities characteristic of the carnivalesque.

Before presenting my analysis of the three shows, I will provide historical and contextual information in Chapter 1. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first recounts the evolution of the cooking show on television, beginning in the early 1950s up until the current era. The purpose is to present the changing nature of the cooking show from an instructional and educational model to one that is entertainment-based. While there have been many different cooking shows, this historical account attempts to focus on pertinent examples that contributed to the evolution of the genre. This section addresses some of the key figures and shows that pioneered the genre, like Julia Child and Emeril Lagasse and their subsequent shows. It also discusses a pivotal moment in the history of the cooking show; the development of the first twenty-four hour food channel, the Food Network. The contemporary period of the cooking show and current programming reflects the need to appeal to a wider demographic to attract advertisers and viewers alike. This first section also takes into account the changing representations of gender throughout the evolution of the cooking show genre. A number of current food programs differentiate themselves from earlier instructional cooking shows by reinforcing masculine stereotypes through the use of themes such as meat, grilling, sports, rock and roll and beer; the three shows that I analyze also make use of these stereotypes. The second section provides a history of eating competitions and particularly the rise of professional competitive eating in the United States. Additionally, it addresses some of the relevant theories on why people watch and participate in these competitions. This information is pertinent to the analysis of the eating challenge portion of *Man vs. Food Nation* found in Chapter 2. Finally, the third section focuses on the history of the American diner. By tracing the social changes that gave rise to the diner, considering changes in its design, and exploring the kinds of customers that were drawn to these establishments, a picture of the diner as an important American institution is drawn.

In Chapter 2, I provide a textual analysis of the three selected food television shows. Based on viewing 79 episodes and corresponding detailed note taking, I identify and analyze the recurring themes and patterns of the shows. The historical and contextual backdrop that was provided in Chapter 1 informs my analysis, and supporting examples are drawn directly from the shows' dialogue, mise en scene and camerawork. The chapter is divided into three sections that reflect the major overarching themes present on all three shows. The first section addresses the construction of a more "masculine," adventure-seeking narrative. The use of adventurous language, outdoor or professional kitchen settings, slang, sports, and rock and roll all contribute to distancing these shows from the traditional instructional cooking show associated with the domestic sphere. The second section concerns the theme of excess and indulgence and focuses more closely on the eating competition portion *on Man vs. Food Nation*. I analyze the shows through a carnivalesque lens, as excess and bodily enjoyment, far from being rejected as gluttony, are rather praised and celebrated. Moreover, the challenge portion can be seen as reinforcing the stereotype that masculinity is linked to the consumption of large amounts of food, along with representing the American Dream. The third section analyzes the restaurants featured on these shows as sites of nostalgia by considering these restaurants in the context of the current food landscape. Through the use of themes such as community, family, and "homemade" food, the shows conjure up a nostalgic feeling for a past that can be vicariously revisited by watching these shows, or by visiting these actual restaurants. Further, the restaurants are distanced from the drudgery and impersonal nature of typical fast food chains by not only promoting the fresh, handmade and homemade food served at these establishments, but also by tapping into the mythology of the American diner.

Chapter 3 considers the kinds of messages the three shows convey about food and health. I first look at how unhealthy food and ingredients are used and talked about by the hosts, chefs, and patrons that are interviewed. I use online resources from government health agencies like Health Canada, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC), to compare the food on the shows to current recommendations for a healthy diet. I then focus on how the large portions of food are praised, and use current research on calorie distortion—where the ability to estimate

calories decreases as portion sizes increase— to demonstrate how viewers may not fully understand the unhealthy nature of what is being featured on these shows. To further demonstrate the excessive nature of many of the food items, I used available calorie information from online sources, apps and the Center for the Science in the Public Interest⁶ to estimate the calories of a number of the dishes on the show. I also tie in the themes from Chapter 2 to reinforce the notion that these shows provide conflicting messages about food, eating and health. Finally, I frame my analysis through the lens of public health and look to obesity prevention policies and regulations to propose potential ways to regulate food television.

As demonstrated, the role of food television has been largely ignored in the current debates about obesity prevention. Additionally, little scholarly attention has focused on the evolution of the cooking show into an eating-centered spectacle. This thesis takes up these topics and provides an analysis of three examples of the eating-centered food show, with the purpose of revealing the kinds of messages these shows convey about food and health. In the coming chapters, I examine how these shows provide conflicting messages to viewers by combining the many positive cultural and social aspects of this “food group” with frequent adulation of overconsumption and unhealthy eating habits. As such, I hope to initiate discussion on how public health efforts related to obesity might benefit from incorporating aspects of food television into corresponding policy debates.

⁶ From the ‘Mission’ section on their website: “The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) is a consumer advocacy organization whose twin missions are to conduct innovative research and advocacy programs in health and nutrition, and to provide consumers with current, useful information about their health and well-being.”

1 History and Background

1.1 Introduction

The three shows that will be analyzed in this thesis— *Diners, Drives-Ins & Dives*, *You Gotta Eat Here!* and *Man vs. Food Nation*— are a far cry from the original instructional cooking show. In each of these three shows, the goal is to find the most unique, comforting and fatty foods in North American neighbourhood restaurants and diners that have made a mark in their communities. The purpose is threefold: find the food, eat it, and promote it to viewers so they, too, can share the enjoyment. They are perfect examples of the shift towards a focus on eating rather than cooking. Furthermore, in order to appeal to a wider demographic, these travel-oriented shows move away from the more “feminine” domestic sphere of the home kitchen, which is a characteristic of the traditional instructional cooking show. The hosts are all male and like in other travel food programs hosted by men, are depicted as adventurers, journeying to satisfy their “manly appetites” (Swenson 49). *Man vs. Food Nation* has the added component of featuring an eating contest at the end of each episode, thus furthering the emphasis on consumption.

This chapter provides an historical and cultural background for these shows, and traces the history of cooking shows, eating competitions and the American diner. The first section of this chapter provides the evolution of the television cooking show from its early days as an instructional and educational program to the current entertainment based formats. The advent of the Food Network in the early 1990s and its efforts to broaden the appeal of the traditionally female-targeted cooking show to wider audiences impacted the content and format of food programming; the shows that I analyze fall into the new category of food show that is more about entertaining and eating than cooking. The second section looks at the history of professional eating competitions and some of the relevant theories as to why this over-the-top spectacle has become increasingly popular in recent decades. The third and final section looks at the history of the American diner and its evolution from a male, working-class establishment to the family friendly diner that most are familiar with today. The ability for the diner to adapt to the changing restaurant scene— while all the while staying the same by offering homemade food at a decent

price to all those looking for a good meal— has contributed to the diner’s status as a democratic space and American icon.

1.2 The Evolution of Food Television

The cooking show has gone through significant changes over its almost 100-year history. Cooking instruction became part of radio programming in the early 1920s; the genre was later adapted for television, in part, because it was inexpensive to produce (Brost 2000, 70). Radio programs for homemakers provided recipes and cooking instruction, and included *Crisco Cooking Talks*, *Our Daily Food* and *The Mystery Chef*. *Our Daily Food* discussed recipes and menus, with special segments on how to make hot chocolate or start a school lunch program; *The Mystery Chef* premiered in 1930, and concentrated on teaching women how to save money on meals (Getz Rouse 1979, 323).

Produced by local stations, and similar to those broadcast on radio, early television cooking shows were instructional in nature, hosted by home economists and “food was treated as it had been for decades on the radio: as the dominion of practical housewives whose main interest was swapping family-pleasing recipes and time-saving techniques” (Stern 1991, 98). However, amongst these purely instructional offerings there were television programs that included an entertainment aspect. The only example during this early time period would be the fifteen-minute segment during a variety and talk show, called *Elsie Presents James Beard in “I Love to Eat,”* that began in 1946 (Stern 1991, 101). The show is worth mentioning because it foreshadows the future of food programming; it was the first intimation of the potential of a cooking show to go beyond just education. As Collins (2009, 28) remarks, “The title of the show alone—*I Love to Eat*—went against the grain of the contemporaneous conventional wisdom of eating to live versus living to eat.” Other, more entertaining and locally produced, options began to appear in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1949 in Los Angeles, locals could enjoy *Chef Milani* or *Cook’s Corner* and in 1950, a Philadelphia station offered *Deadline for Dinner* and *Cooking with the Bontempi’s*. These shows, stressing entertainment value, “can be seen as the predecessors to the phenomenon we see today, but in many ways they were a different specimen altogether” (Collins 2009, 43).

One of the most notable chefs of this early period in television was Dione Lucas, who hosted *The Dione Lucas Show*⁷ that aired from 1947-1956. Though James Beard's cooking segment had aired the previous year, Lucas provided the first real food-centered teaching on television and was the most visible figure on the 1950s food scene (Fitch 1997, 271, 295). Collins (2012, 4) regards her as significant because in contrast to other hosts of the time, she rejected the convenience foods of the 1950s for more elaborate, French-leaning recipes. Moreover, she stressed cooking as an art form and rather than promote timesaving techniques that were common of the era, she would present labourious and complex recipes to viewers (Brost 2000, 79). While viewers still seemed to enjoy Lucas's show— although she presented cooking in a scientific, yet enjoyable way— the complexity of the recipes were inaccessible to many homemakers. Levenstein (1993, 143) describes Lucas's style, noting: "Dione Lucas, with her proper British accent, made much of her Cordon Bleu links and techniques, giving the impression that French cuisine was complex cooking for sophisticates."

Dione Lucas might have helped viewers become accustomed to watching someone cook complex cuisine on television, but the potential of the cooking show to not only educate— but entertain— national audiences is marked by the introduction of Julia Child. The pilot episode of *The French Chef* aired in 1962 on Boston's public station, introducing the six-foot-two Cordon Bleu trained chef. The show then began to air regularly in 1963 (Stewart 1999, 131-32). Julia Child influenced the history and development of cooking shows in a number of ways. First, she achieved an important balance between learning and entertainment; her program was, in essence, educational, but she managed to be entertaining and captivate viewers as well (Stewart 1999, 132). While other chefs like James Beard and Dione Lucas gained considerable popularity, Child was the first major television-created personality in the cooking world (Fitch 1997, 301). Second, Julia Child influenced how Americans ate, in part, by normalizing French cooking, and making it accessible to middle-class American women (Ray 2007, 53). Even before Child appeared on television she had already brought the art of French

⁷ Originally called *To the Queen's Taste* (Stern 1991, 103).

cuisine to American homes; in 1961, she published *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Her cookbook would become a classic and one third of the recipes for her televised program came from *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (Fitch 1997, 270, 291). However, it was Child's approach to television cooking instruction that was notable; she eased some of the elitist and exclusionary associations of French (read: haute) cuisine. She was definitely the first of her kind in this sense, and Collins describes this democratizing influence:

Taking the initiative to learn the elite art of gastronomy and then ultimately share it with a mass audience via the non-elite medium of television may not be an act worthy of a peace prize, but it was a benign form of Robin Hoodism and democracy in action. Whereas her predecessors simply set out to teach people how to prepare meals and did so with a more teacherly and sometimes pedantic attitude, Child set out to popularize. (Collins 2009, 79)

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a number of cooking programs gained considerable popularity, and they more closely resemble *The French Chef* than any other earlier programming. The programs of this time period reflected a realization that entertaining audiences— along with providing instruction that didn't patronize or exclude viewers— was a successful formula. For instance, *The Galloping Gourmet* featuring Graham Kerr began airing in 1969. The show purposely exploited the entertainment potential of the medium and cooking show genre and “became a great popularizer, reassuring viewers that good eating and skillful food preparation did not require laborious technique or diligent study” (Stern 1991, 110). Additionally, airing on public television in 1971, Justin Wilson educated viewers on Cajun cooking. Collins (2009, 145) explains that Wilson's popularity was likely a result of his opposition to exclusionary culinary trends that were emerging at the time: “It was an antidote to the overly serious and often haughty attitude taken on by many chefs and diners alike under the new foodie-ism.” Some more well-known cooking show options included Jacques Pepin's *Everyday Cooking* (1982) and Jeff Smith's *The Frugal Gourmet* (1983), the latter being one of the most widely watched cooking shows of all time (Collins 2009, 146).

The television cooking show would go through significant changes with the creation in 1993 of the Television Food Network (now called The Food Network).

Developed in part by CNN creator Reese Schonfield, The Food Network became the first network dedicated entirely to food and cooking (Johnston 2010, 48). However, its current format is significantly different from its first few years on the air and the first cooking shows. Early programming consisted of traditional instructional shows and older re-runs like Julia Child's *The French Chef*. The early days of the network featured "serious chefs, notable restaurants and luminaries of the food establishment" (Collins 2009, 162). The new network was sticking to what it already knew about cooking shows and, "For the most part, ideas emerged from a 1980s mindset, reflecting the notion that interest in food equates with haute cuisine and dining out" (Collins 2009, 162). The instructional nature of the programming did not seem to provide favourable ratings for the network. However, the network's fortunes rose around 1996 when the then-new CEO Erica Gruen began to promote the importance of providing entertainment while cooking (Johnston 2010, 48). Collins (2009, 163) explains of early programming: "Most of the shows' sets were crude and relatively bare, embellished with frilly and classical music. They were excessively talky and noticeably lacking action." The shift away from the traditional model of cooking show— making way for the current food show incarnations— is seen in 1997 with the start of *Emeril Live!* and hosted by Emeril Lagasse.

Emeril Lagasse was the Food Network's first big star; he was the first television chef to sign a seven-figure contract with the network, and most viewers "thought Food [Network] was the Emeril Network" (Salkin 2013, 2). *Emeril Live!* drew in viewers with its live studio audience, live band and Emeril's showmanship; he has even been referred to as a "cooking Elvis" (Adema 2001, 115-16). Emeril's persona was much different from previous television chefs and the format of the show embodied an entertainment model. Moreover, his popularity lay in his unpretentious demeanor, "He [Emeril] was, essentially, the anti-Martha Stewart, challenging calm decorum, careful rules for cooking, and advice from nutritionists" (Ketchum 2005, 226). His Massachusetts working-class accent, use of informal language and the relaxed way he interacted with audience members made him accessible to all viewers (Adema 2001, 116). More importantly, this accessible personality and "blue-collar masculinity," appealed not only to female, but male viewers as well, opening up the Food Network to new potential audiences (Veri 2013, 4).

The shift in audience demographics is important to note here, since drawing in a male, and overall larger, viewership has played a part in the transformation of the cooking show. The content and sponsorship information of the first cooking shows in the 1940s and 1950s was geared toward a specific target demographic: the housewife (Collins 2012, 6). The first instructional cooking shows took place in a studio that looked like a home kitchen. This seemed like the obvious choice, as cooking in general, and cooking for the family in particular, has long been considered women's work, and the home kitchen as "a feminized space and female domain" (Swenson 2009, 39). Even when the Food Network began in 1993, it purposely targeted female viewers (Nathanson 2009, 314). The domestic female audience remained the coveted demographic up until the late-1990s when the Food Network began to target younger and male viewers (Miller 2007, 136). The move away from traditional instructional cooking to the new entertainment format of *Emeril Live!* is an example of this shift in target demographics; at one point, the largest demographic for *Emeril Live!* was men over 30 (Veri 2013, 4).

From early on male chefs were popular on food shows, but with the advent of the Food Network, their role as a chef has become markedly different from that of their female counterparts. As Swenson (2009, 50) notes: "cooking discourse no longer warns men that the kitchen is not their lair; yet, to protect the concept of masculinity, men enter the kitchen as scientists, chefs, athletes, and entertainers." Similarly, if the home kitchen and daily cooking is reserved for women, then the male chef must "cook in professional spaces or for special meals or unique social occasions" (Veri 2013, 13). On the first cooking shows, if the host was male, they were professional chefs like James Beard, but still provided cooking instruction in a studio kitchen. It was only later when the Food Network began to produce new content and tried to expand their audiences that the format of cooking shows changed. Male chefs were no longer just providing instruction; in order to protect (either theirs or the potential viewer's) masculinity the shows began to only represent men who cook in certain ways, especially during prime time hours. *Emeril Live!* presented Emeril as chef-entertainer and thus opened up his popularity to men by rejecting traditional associations of cooking instruction with domestic female labour.

Another example of this shift in the representation of male chefs can be seen with Guy Fieri's first cooking show that premiered in 2006. It was an instructional format, but the studio kitchen was set up like a recreation room, or 'man cave' with a full bar, a stage with drums and guitars, a racecar-themed fridge and a pinball machine (Swenson 2009 46). It is no wonder then that the Food Network's head of marketing, Susie Fogelson, would explain: "I haven't seen anyone connect to this range of people since Emeril," (Moskin 2010). The network ultimately reinforces that men are chefs who cook professionally or recreationally, while women continue to be cooks who nourish loved ones. Adema highlights this role of televised food shows:

Despite the emergence of male celebrity chefs encouraging cooking among men, the domestic kitchen remains fundamentally a feminine sphere and the association between kitchen and women remains intact. It is ironic that men continue to outnumber women as professional chefs in commercial kitchens. This is part of food television's ambiguity: It sends mixed messages, blurring gender and spatial boundaries while simultaneously reinforcing traditional roles and expectations. (Adema 2000, 119)

The shift in programming would continue into the 2000s as Poniewozik (2001) noted in *Time* magazine: "As the network focused on attracting non-cooks and stoking its chefs' celebrity, it became harder and harder to find actual cooking on the network". Moreover, because the instructional model of cooking shows did not provide adequate ratings for the Food Network, since the late 1990s, these new kinds of food programs have become widespread. In creating new programming, the network decided to expand "its target audience to include men and people from lower classes" (Ketchum 2005, 219). Throughout this period, other cable networks were finding food programming to be successful with audiences: Fox's *Hell's Kitchen* (2005), Travel Channel's *No Reservations* (2005) and Bravo's *Top Chef* (2006). The Food Network now also had to compete for viewers.

Rogers (2010) explains that food television increasingly includes three kinds of shows: domestic ones in the morning, sports-style competition in the evening, and travel shows. In 2000, another example of the network's attempt to appeal to a young, male demographic premiered on the Food Network; Jamie Oliver's *The Naked Chef* featured the young Brit cooking among friends and riding around town on his scooter (Hollow

2003, 230). *The Naked Chef* falls into the category of ‘domestic’ food television, and is an example of the remnants of older instructional cooking shows. Yet it can also be seen as an example of Adema’s observation of the blurring of public and private spaces in contemporary cooking shows, referenced above. The former is seen when Jamie Oliver weaves through London on his scooter, and the latter when he provides cooking instruction in his apartment.

The sports style competition show also gained popularity during this time. The Japanese competition show *Iron Chef* brought in younger, male viewers to the network (Thompson 2002). Other popular competition shows have included the Bravo network’s *Top Chef* (2006) and the Food Network’s *Chopped* (2009), where chefs compete in creating culinary creations under a strict set of rules and a time limit. *ThrowDown with Bobby Flay* (2006) pits an unknown chef with a particular food specialty against celebrity chef Bobby Flay in a cook-off; a panel of judges then crowns a winner (Swenson 2009 49). The competition-style and reality television hybrid *The Next Food Network Star* (2005) has chefs from diverse backgrounds compete in challenges to stave off elimination and become the network’s next big star and win their own television show (Cruz 2013, 324). These shows, however, still can provide viewers with some form of instruction—although arguably more so with *The Naked Chef* than *Iron Chef*— and still focus on the art or skill of cooking.

The final category, the travel show, falls into the newest genre of food shows that no longer require the host or viewer to necessarily have any skill or knowledge of cooking, but rather, the focus is on the act of eating. For instance, *A Cook’s Tour* that premiered on the Food Network in 2002 follows chef and “bad boy” Anthony Bourdain to exotic locations. Viewers watch as Bourdain consumes exotic and sometimes dangerous foods across the globe, illustrating how many Food Network programs “now move beyond kitchen instructional” (Thompson 2002). The Travel Channel has also capitalized on the growing popularity of the food and travel format and provides a number of food-related travel programs (Naccarato 2012, 241). Some of the Travel Channel’s offerings include *Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern* (2006), *Best Daym Takeout* (2013), and two shows hosted by Anthony Bourdain; *No Reservations* (2005)

and *The Layover* (2011). The three shows that I will be analyzing, *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*, *You Gotta Eat Here!* and *Man vs. Food Nation* are also examples of these kinds of food and travel shows. It should be noted that the Food Network does provide food travel shows with female hosts like Giada De Laurentiis in *Weekend Getaways* and Rachel Ray's *\$40 a Day*, *Rachel's Tasty Travels* and *Rachel's Vacation*. While these shows still search out great food, the emphasis is on the female hosts providing trip-planning or budgeting services for viewers presenting the theme of "feminine thrifty homemaker" rather than a "manly" adventure (Swenson 2009, 48).

The new kinds of shows that represent the Food Network's attempt to gain audiences beyond 'foodies', and the launch of the "Way More Than Cooking" campaign in 2005 points to this turn away from just cooking (Stilson 2006). The contemporary food show format has simply crystallized and intensified the characteristics that made the first iterations of cooking shows popular, but have eliminated the actual cooking instruction; they follow a deliberate entertainment format, are host-driven and appeal to a wider audience by presenting food in a democratic way, rather than perpetuate haute cuisine as an elitist and exclusionary art form.

1.3 Eating Contests and Competitions

The rise of professional competitive eating has coincided with a time when overeating has become a cause for national concern. However, the origins of eating competitions suggest a longstanding history of individual gorging in a communal setting, as well as enjoyment in watching others partake in said gorging. Ryan Nerz (2006, 55) begins his "not-so-brief history of competitive eating" by professing that eating to excess, as a pastime, has existed since ancient Rome. He discusses the appearance of feasts in *Satyricon*, a Roman satire dating back to the first century, as well as using the example of banquets thrown by Richard II in the fourteenth century (Nerz 2006, 55). Fagone (2006, 16) found that speed and volume competitions appear in ancient Greek and Scandinavian myths, and eating contests were common at Native American potlatch feasts. However, the format of eating competition that is familiar to most today originate in America. For instance, the pie eating contest became commonplace at fairs by the beginning of the twentieth century (Nerz 2006, 56). Additionally, from 1880 to 1930, historical evidence

suggests that eating contests between African Americans were arranged and viewed by white Americans. These competitions provided entertainment during “club meetings, civil organization forums, and professional conferences” and items to consume included watermelon, pies, crackers or rice (Vardi 2010).

However, as Rubin (2008, 249) points out, eating contests differ from competitive eating, and the more recent phenomenon of “professional competitive eating”. The eating contest is classified by its informal nature, opponents are connected through family or community ties, the food is generally part of the local diet and participants are ordinary citizens (Rubin 2008, 249). Competitive eating, by comparison, is a contest of skill, and there is some form of remuneration, “which may or may not be monetary and includes, but is not limited to money, material objects, visibility and fame,” and stems from the Nathan’s Famous Fourth of July hot dog eating contest that began in 1916 on Coney Island (Rubin 2008, 250). Professional competitive eating implies skill or expertise and participants operate within specific guidelines. The inception of the International Federation of Competitive Eaters (IFOCE) serves to legitimize professional competitive eating as a sport and is the governing body of a number of major competitive eating contests (Congalton 2009, 177). Brothers George and Rich Shea, who owned the Shea Communications Group, created the IFOCE in late 1997. George Shea, earlier that year, had suggested that Nathan’s Famous sponsor qualifying contests leading up to their Fourth of July hot dog eating contest; this would be the forerunner to the modern American competitive-eating circuit (Nerz 2006, 16). However, it wasn’t until 2001, when a 131-pound Japanese man named Takeru Kobayashi consumed fifty hot dogs at the Nathan’s Fourth of July contest that competitive eating really took off. Nerz (2006, 18) explains, “Within twenty-four hours, Kobayashi became the face of competitive eating and the platform for the launch of a new sport”. The IFOCE holds approximately 80 events a year. Their website boasts that the Nathan’s hot dog eating contest broadcast on ESPN on the fourth of July has generated a higher rating than any Major League Baseball game broadcast on the same day. These examples are a testament to the “sport’s” growing popularity (MLE 2014).

Different theories abound as to why eating competitions have gained in popularity. The creator of the IFOCE, Rich Shea, believes eating competitions are just an outgrowth of publicity: “In an era when Joe Schmoes become stars on well-received reality TV shows and Paris Hilton becomes a megastar for doing nothing in particular, public relations no longer nips at the heels of entertainment. It *is* entertainment. And it’s addictive, as proven by the popularity of shameless gossip glossies like *Us Weekly* and *People*” (Nerz 2006, 21). Rubin (2008, 253) also postulates that competitive eating stems from the democratization of professional competitive sports and provides many with the ability to achieve their fifteen minutes of fame. Vardi (2010) accounts for its popularity by arguing: “This messy pastime probably appealed to many Americans because it seems to embody several building-blocks of their dominant culture: individual-based competition, the challenging of limits, the imperative of "saving time," and the unrefined, bountiful consumption of food.”

Both Halloran (2004) and Rubin (2008) argue that watching eating competitions are cathartic for viewers. Rubin (2008, 257) argues that professional competitive eating provides audiences with a sense of control over what he terms “our national eating disorder” and provides the catharsis that was once provided by the liberating rites of reversal like the carnival. The competitions can also be seen as a link or return to ritual feasting that has, for the most part, disappeared within society: “Professional competitive eating, or sanctioned high-speed feasting, although an ostensibly banal, if not perverse, popular culture phenomenon, may represent an attempt to reintegrate feasting into culture, and culture into history” (Rubin 2008, 258). Halloran has also indicated that the rise of eating competitions may stem from an unhealthy relationship to food:

The constant barrage of contradictory information and research reported on the topics of nutrition, weight-loss, and proper dietary habits has prompted popular culture to embrace the spectacle of extreme eating as a form of entertainment. The rebellious disregard of manners, propriety, and moderation involved in the consumption of large amounts of food speaks to the social anxiety and guilt regarding what we actually eat versus the diets we think we should be following [...] As long as the general public is confused and concerned about its weight and eating practices, it seems, eating events will continue to amuse and entertain the masses. (Halloran 2004, 27-8)

These theories of potential fame and catharsis provide a framework through which to view the eating competition portion of *Man vs. Food Nation*, and can also be considered when theorizing the growth of food shows that focus on people consuming food, and large amounts of it.

1.4 Restaurants

The habit of eating meals outside of the home and dining in a restaurant has become part of everyday life for most North Americans. However, this has not always been the case. Going out to restaurants as an enjoyable leisure activity and a pleasurable event in and of itself is a relatively recent development (Pillsbury 1990, 13). There have long been establishments that served food to patrons, like taverns, inns or brothels, but food service was secondary to their primary businesses, whether that was serving alcohol or providing travelers with shelter. Restaurants, or “stores specializing solely in the selling of food for on-the-premises consumption” first appeared in the late eighteenth century. The origin of the restaurant can be traced back to Paris, France in the 1760s, but the term only came into general use in the United States during the nineteenth century (Pillsbury 1990, 22-3). The first American restaurants emulated the French model by serving French food cooked by French chefs, and catered to the upper classes for most of the nineteenth century and into the first decades of the twentieth. These French restaurants were expensive and exclusionary; they discriminated against those who did not read French and ultimately could not afford lavish multi-course meals and large tips (Haley 2011, 2). In the United States, well into the twentieth century, there was no real middle ground between the high-end restaurants and the greasy spoons⁸ that served the masses (A. Hurley 2001, 32). The diner would eventually help to close that gap and ultimately led the way for family-style chain and fast-food restaurants. The following section charts this

⁸ Barbas (2002, 47) explains that throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century, ‘greasy spoon’ was “an all-too-common appellation for almost any restaurant.” The term appears to be a colloquial name for inexpensive working-class restaurants that serve fried foods, as opposed to the fancy French restaurants that became popular around the same time. Early diners would then fall under the broader category of “greasy spoon,” but attempted to shed this image after World War II to appeal to middle-class consumers (Hurley 1997).

transition from a working- to a middle- class establishment, and includes the decline and revival of this American icon.

The diner is an American invention. The mere mention of a ‘diner’ conjures up a particular image in the minds of most Americans (and arguably this concept has been extended to other countries familiar with American culture). As Manzo explains, the diner that has become familiar to most has very different origins:

The classic diner of popular image, which first appeared in the mid-1940s did not spring full blown from the head of some restaurant entrepreneur. Rather, it was the result of an evolutionary process of design, distribution and name changes that began in the industrial cities of New England in the late 19th century.” (Manzo 1990, 13)

The invention of the diner in the late nineteenth century fed a new demand that arose from the Industrial Revolution and the growth of the factory system (Pillsbury 1990, 35). Late night factory workers had difficulty finding a good meal, as restaurants at that time closed at 8 p.m. and street vendors were the only other option. As more people began to work in factories further away from where they lived, returning home for meals became more difficult and the lack of proper refrigeration limited the types of food taken to work, the need for options outside of the home flourished (Pillsbury 1990, 24-23, 26). A man named Walter Scott would capitalize on this need and become the first lunch cart operator, which would later become the diner. In Providence, Rhode Island in 1872, Walter Scott started serving sandwiches, boiled eggs, pies and coffee out of a horse drawn wagon (Gutman 1979, 2). The food was inexpensive, and Scott provided only homemade items; he baked his own bread and pies until he retired in 1917 (Gutman 1979, 2). Competitors soon appeared as others quickly adopted the concept in Providence and southern New England (Pillsbury 1990, 37).

The first lunch carts only accommodated the operator, and customers had to eat standing outside, regardless of the weather. In 1887, Samuel Messer Jones revealed his new lunch cart design at the New England Fair in Worcester, Massachusetts. The new model of lunch cart was the first one big enough to allow customers to enter inside to eat. The cart was also equipped with a complete kitchen, stools and stained glass windows

(Gutman 1979, 4). The innovation became an immediate success and Jones expanded his business to different locations around Worcester, but eventually he sold all but one wagon to Charles H. Palmer. In 1891, Palmer received the first patent for a lunch wagon design. The front half consisted of a ‘dining- room space’ and a counter separated this area from the kitchen. There was a window to the rear of the wagon for customers on the street, and a window on the opposite side where carriages could drive up and place an order. Palmer’s design became the standard model for about the next two decades (Gutman 1979, 5). However, by the late 1890s, lunch carts began to garner a bad reputation. During this time, electric streetcars were replacing traditional horse drawn trolleys, creating a surplus of trolleys that could be bought for a low price and transformed into immobile lunch wagons. Despite a new coat of paint, the old trolleys were rundown and shoddy looking and a stigma began to be attached to the lunch wagon. Previously, lunch carts had been deemed perfectly respectable places and were frequented by all types of people (Gutman 1979, 16). The association between diners and seedy, late-night activities is one that many diner owners struggled with for decades (Gutman 1979, 16).

The period from 1900 until the late 1920s was transformative for diners. During this time “the greatest change in the history of the business” occurred; lunch carts began to find permanent locations, turning the “wandering” horse drawn wagon into a stationary, but still portable diner (Gutman 1979, 12). The move towards finding a permanent location was the result of lunch cart operators trying to evade new laws that required them to be off the streets by 10 a.m. Since the wagons were parked, they no longer had limited operating hours and many stayed open twenty-four hours (Gutman 1979, 12). A side effect of these extended operating hours was, “A unique feeling of camaraderie developed in many diners, something not seen in any other sector of the restaurant business” (Gutman 1979, 30). The feeling of camaraderie developed amongst the male patrons, as the rough image of the diner kept women clear of these establishments (Gutman 1979, 28). The diner during this time was distinctly male-oriented and working-class, where ‘regulars’ discussed sports, politics and work (A. Hurley 2001, 36). While most diner operators believed their establishments were not for the opposite sex, some did decide to open up their customer base to women. By the late

1920s, small changes could be seen to appeal to women, like adding lighter food items to the menu and flowerboxes to soften the exterior. The increase in female customers incited one major change in design; manufacturers began to provide diners with tables and booths, as women said they did not feel comfortable sitting on stools (Gutman 1979, 28).

The diner familiar to most people came into being around World War II. The 1930s brought with it a new futuristic, forward-looking and streamlined style. The box design of the twenties was replaced by more rounded and sleek surfaces, and new materials such as Formica and stainless steel were used in diner manufacturing. For the next twenty-five years, diners would follow this streamlined design (Gutman 1979, 40). The diners built just before and right after World War II are considered the classic diners of the ‘Golden Age of the Diner.’ They typically conjured up images of the railroad: “A long, low, sleek structure with an unbroken strip of windows, sheathed in glistening stainless steel or porcelain enamel” (Gutman 1979, 44). By this time, ninety percent of these new diners had tables or booths, along with the customary counter. Despite keeping up with the newest design trends, even into the 1940s, middle-class consumers often avoided diners. Diners were still considered in the “hash house”⁹ category and on the other side of the dining spectrum from upscale restaurants that catered to a leisure trade (A. Hurley 2001, 33).

However, from the diner’s foundation, it would change the way many Americans ate and become a regular meeting place for people from different backgrounds. Diners often became centers of social life, where businessmen could get together and talk and young people congregated after school. As Gutman (1979, 30) explains: “Most diners [...] have a spirit quite different from that of the ordinary lunch room, a “clubby”

⁹ The term “hash house” is another colloquial term for inexpensive working-class restaurants. Mariani (1994, 191) explains that ‘hash’ comes from the French word meaning ‘to chop’ and is a form of shepherd’s pie or other mix of meat and vegetable. By the mid-nineteenth century, hash became associated with cheap restaurants called ‘hash houses’ or ‘hasheries’ and workers were called ‘hash slingers.’ Early diners were categorized as ‘hash houses’ as they used short-order cooks and provided inexpensive food to working-class men.

atmosphere of friendly and informal good fellowship.” Additionally, as Viveiros highlights:

Diners exemplify many of the best American qualities: free enterprise and entrepreneurship, mobility, a love of gadgets and machines, the emphasis on convenience and democracy. The diner is everyone’s kitchen. In an age of cookie-cutter uniformity, diners are stubbornly individualistic. Though mass-produced in a factory, each diner is a customized original with its own distinct blend of design, colors, equipment, features and layout. Almost everything could vary. Time and the owner’s personality enhance the differences until no two are alike. (Viveiros 2000, 218)

The unique and democratic nature of the diner has given it the staying power to remain an important institution in the hearts and minds of many Americans. The diner is a unique eating establishment in this way, and “It was to become one of the most democratic gathering centers in the country” (Viveiros 2000, 1).

Although the diner would embody a democratic space where class lines became blurred, it remained segregated across racial lines; many proprietors refused to serve African American customers for fear of losing patronage from white customers (A. Hurley 2001, 83-86). During the civil rights movements in the early 1960s, lunch counter sit-ins became an act of protest in the movement for full citizenship rights and equality for African Americans; it became a symbolic action for not just securing a place to eat at a lunch counter, but occupying space in public life in general (Jou 2014, 232). However, diners were largely not involved with such protests due to a number of reasons. First, early civil rights activists tended to target restaurants that would gain maximum exposure and publicity, and so chose restaurants in downtown locations, department stores or national chain stores. Second, targeting diners in white residential neighbourhoods in order to promote inter-racial integration would have been less advantageous to African American patrons; sit-ins were strategically located at restaurants in downtown areas where African Americans were more likely to live and work. Finally, restaurants associated with national chains, like Woolworth’s, were more susceptible to consumer boycotts in other, more progressive, parts of the country; boycotts of Woolworth’s in northern states played a role in the company’s eventual capitulation to sit-in protesters in the South (A. Hurley 2001, 90).

The 1950s brought more changes to the diner sector as both industries and families moved out of urban centers and into the suburbs (Gutman 1979, 54). In order to continue to prosper, diners had to “play host to everyone” and expand its market away from working-class men. The diner operators tried to appeal to high school kids, young couples and especially middle-income families. In order to find a new clientele, diners also moved to new locations, “suburban shopping centers, well-heeled residential neighbourhoods, seaside resorts, and small college towns” (A. Hurley 2001, 43). Diners also tried to take advantage of the burgeoning car culture and relocated along major highways, attempting to draw in vacationers, truckers and commuters (A. Hurley 2001, 54).

Historian Andrew Hurley highlights one important transformation of the diner during this time; its domestication:

If the prewar diner had functioned as a scrappy adjunct to the factory, the postwar variant would cultivate its identity as a tidy and inviting extension of the happy suburban home, at the same time obscuring its blue-collar roots. The postwar diner promised to transform America’s poor, tired, and hungry into its affluent, relaxed, and stuffed.” (A. Hurley 2001, 25)

Diner proprietors set out to make their establishments a more respectable place that would attract working- and middle-class families that had moved to the suburbs. The first obstacle that proprietors met was to convince families to leave their homes at dinnertime; dining out served a more utilitarian purpose than a recreational one during this time (A. Hurley 2001, 59). However, rather than marketing the diner experience as a luxury associated with leisurely dining out, proprietors presented it as a sensible alternative to eating at home. Diners drew in families in a number of ways, including serving food that was rarely served on a regular basis at home and provided promotions involving inexpensive family meals (A. Hurley 2001, 60). The diner operators also had to quell fears that eating outside of the home would damage family ties and advertised that eating a meal in a diner would strengthen the family bond and were perfect places to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries and holidays (A. Hurley 2001, 61). Eating at a diner was also advertised as a way to give women a break from the kitchen and as a way for men to express their love for their wives by granting them this break (A. Hurley 2001, 64).

Further, operators transformed their diners into a kid-friendly place, to both encourage parents to bring their children and for children to bring back their parents.

The design of diners in the 1950s also had to adapt to accommodate these changes in clientele. The kitchen was now behind closed doors and out of sight and dining rooms expanded to accommodate more families and included more tables and booths (Gutman 1979, 54). The larger dining rooms also introduced the need for servers. Diner operators looked to hire waitresses to further contribute to the homey atmosphere: “Female servers acted as surrogate mothers and wives” (A. Hurley 2001, 70). The interiors of diners during this time were adjusted to appeal to and accommodate middle-class families. The traditional ‘bare bones, utilitarian look’ was replaced with a softer and homier look. Some changes included adding large windows to let in light, large ‘family sized’ booths, window drapes and decorating with pastel colors and materials that were becoming standard in middle and upper income suburban homes (A. Hurley 2001, 65-9).

The 1960s ushered in a new era for the diner, one replete with design changes and new competition from the growing chain and fast food restaurant business. Urban renewal projects at the time began to regulate the appearance of buildings, and diners were not excluded; the new regulations often banned stainless steel buildings and even the word ‘diner’ on signage. The “Colonial-style” diner would replace the older flashier ones; the former were covered with a brick exterior and bay windows and had interiors filled with plastic-laminate wood-grain paneling. The diner began to look less like a diner, and more like a restaurant (Gutman 1979, 62). The design changes during this time that included a shift towards the aesthetics of the restaurant, was a response to both changing architectural trends and regulations, and the rise of family-style and fast-food chain restaurants:

By the 1960s, a plethora of restaurant chains and independent family-style restaurants descended on the middle-majority market, from the West coast to the East coast, each operating under the same basic formula: casual atmosphere, reasonable prices, and wholesome domesticity. Most followed the example of the diner in offering customers a choice of counter seating, booth seating, and table service. Drive-ins complemented their carhop service with indoor seating. Formal full-service restaurants abandoned rigid formalities and turned casual. Whether one ate lunch at Howard Johnson’s, Denny’s, Steak ‘n’ Shake, or the Chuck

Wagon Diner, the dining experience was comparable in terms of menus, prices and décor.” (A. Hurley 2001, 93)

The rise of this stepped up competition would ultimately lead to a decline in the diner sector from the late 1950s to the early 1980s; during its heyday in the 1950s there was an estimated 6,000 diners operating in the United States — by the 1990s the number fell to around 2,000 (Cultrera 1999, 6). The chain restaurants emphasized speed, low prices, informality and catered to the needs of families; all qualities that began in the diner. Additionally, diners bridged the gap between blue-collar and white-collar dining establishments and ultimately paved the way for the success of the national chains. Ironically, “By introducing a large segment of the market to this very type of consumer experience after the war, diner owners and builders sowed the seeds of their own demise twenty years later” (A. Hurley 2001, 102-3). The individual diner owners could not compete with the expanding franchising system that allowed for widespread consistency and reliability, along with hefty budgets for national advertising. Those diners that did advertise could only afford highway billboards, fliers or newspaper advertisements; chain restaurants had enough resources from an advertising fee levied on each franchise, so they could saturate local and national media with advertisements (A. Hurley 2001, 99). Moreover, by this time, road travel grew as an industry in itself, and Americans were taking vacations across the country by car. The franchised chains imposed uniformity on their architecture, menus, recipes and prices, so consumers knew exactly what they were going to get before even going inside. As opposed to an independently owned diner that differed from state to state, the standardization of the chain restaurant helped ease some of the confusion customers felt when visiting a new city for the first time (Witzel 1999, 120).

The rise of chain restaurants and the fast food industry not only deeply impacted the diner, but also changed the way most Americans ate. The concept of chain restaurants dates back to the 1920s and 1930s, and while many were more likely to be single-city chains, by the late 1930s national chains began to appear (Pillsbury 1990, 56-7). The most notable was the Howard Johnson franchise that provided a predictable, homey and affordable meal to those traveling on the highways (Belasco 2004, 503). The rise of the Howard Johnson system helped highway travelers become accustomed to the consistency

provided by a chain. While there were other successful fast food restaurants appearing in 1954, like Kentucky Fried Chicken and InstaBurger King (now just Burger King), McDonald's is arguably the fast food chain to have the greatest impact on the American dining experience (Pillsbury 1990, 93-5). Richard and Maurice McDonald had been in the drive-in restaurant business since the 1930s, but they would revolutionize the fast food industry when they decided to improve their restaurant in San Bernardino, California. The brothers decided to reshape the drive-in formula to one that functioned on speed, efficiency and self-service. They called their new format the "Speedy Service System," where they reduced the menu to nine items, had a walk-up self serve counter instead of car hops and replaced dinnerware with paper and plastic; they began to promote the assembly-line concept of producing and selling food (Witzel 1999, 116-17). The limited menu items and the use of the self-serve counter allowed more people to be served at a faster rate. The system also allowed for a skilled chef to be replaced by unskilled workers who were tasked with one specific job, for one specific item dubbed "grill men," "fry men" and "dressers" (Ritzer 2011, 37). As well, by replacing fresh foods with frozen hamburger patties and French fries, it also eliminated the need for a real chef. As opposed to the efforts of diner operators to provide a homey atmosphere, fast food restaurants attempted to make the eating space austere and unappealing to encourage customers to get through their meals quickly (Viveiros 2000, 151).

The expansion of the McDonald's system is credited to Ray Kroc; beginning in the mid-1950s he set out to open franchises across America. By 1959 there were approximately 100 McDonald's restaurants around the country (Witzel 1999, 118). The way Kroc franchised the restaurants was also an innovation. By granting franchises one at a time, rather than having one franchisee operate a number of restaurants in a given region, he was able to maximize central control, and ultimately the uniformity of the system (Ritzer 2011, 38). The appeal of the fast food chain lay, in part, to this predictability; customers knew in advance what they would order and that no matter where they were in the country, it would be exactly the same as the last time they had it (Gutman 1993, 172). Many other fast food restaurants would then adopt the McDonald's system. The fast, low priced and consistent food would become the hallmark of the fast food industry. The first national advertisement for McDonald's appeared in *Life*

Magazine in 1962 and soon after became a nationally recognizable brand (Gutman 1993, 172). When McDonald's opened its 25,000th restaurant in 1999, the chain reached a milestone that no other business in the world had ever achieved (Viveiros 2000, 146). The rise of McDonald's is just one example of the growth of the fast-food industry starting in the late 1950s. As Eric Schlosser (2001, 3) argues, "Over the last three decades, fast food has infiltrated every nook and cranny of American society." Diner operators during this time could not compete with the speed and uniformity of fast food competition, and consequently this sector suffered.

Diners, however, started to experience a revival beginning in the late 1970s. The resurgence was arguably a response to the dominance of the fast food system; diners began to be reminiscent of a pre-fast food era and the qualities that had made the diner such a success in its earlier years—and which ironically led to its demise—began to be a welcome alternative to the standardized and impersonal dining experience provided by fast food chains. As Everett explains:

When fast food and even faster highways bypassed these American icons, their future looked bleak and many disappeared into the scrap heap. After decades, there was a resurgence in the glow of the 1950s good life. The appeal of tasteless, pre-formed 'burgers n' fries at the interstate off-ramp lost its excitement. Travelers, locals, and families alike rediscovered honest flavorful food, coupled with good service and a homey atmosphere, at the corner diner. (Everett 2002, 4)

The lure of freshly made food and a cozy and welcoming atmosphere appealed to what was missing from the fast food era and aided in the diner revival. The classic diner became a symbol of nostalgia for a better time, where "the 1950's became imbued with the "golden glow of yester-year," for despite their Cold War, atomic bomb, mass conformity dimensions, they were an era "when we lived in blissful ignorance; we just didn't know any better...." (Hirschman 2006, 608).

The renewed interest in the diner can also be seen not only in its prominence in popular culture beginning in the late 1970s, but also with the refurbishing of old diners, their inauguration as protected historical landmarks and the incorporation of diner-style service into existing chain restaurants. Richard Gutman and photographer Elliott Kaufman's work is often attributed with sparking an interest in the diner with their

seminal book, *American Diner*, published in 1979. In 1982, the film *Diner*, by Barry Levinson further reignited an interest in these establishments. Witzel (1999, 130) notes: “By the mid-1980s, a definite resurgence in diners swept the nation.” In 1984, restaurateurs decided that investing in a diner would be a good business venture; Philip Adelman took over a classic 1954 diner and moved it to Cincinnati, Ohio while Richard Melman of Lettuce Entertain You Enterprises opened an “upscale” diner in California (Witzel 1999, 131). The renewed interest, and importance of diners in American culture can also be seen when at the end of the 1970s, certain classic diners were being placed on the National Register of Historic Places; normally a building needs to be at least fifty years old for this designation, but historians feared for their disappearance (Gutman 1993, 208-9). The opening of the 1950s diner-style fast food restaurant Johnny Rockets in 1986 is another example of the popularity of the diner concept. In the 1990s, the Denny’s chain restaurant decided to construct a number of its restaurants in the image of the diner. Moreover, the real influence of the diner could be seen when in the early 1990s, the McDonald’s Corporation started to experiment with diner-style restaurants like the Golden Arch Café in Hartsville, Tennessee (Witzel 1999, 128-29). And in 2001, the company experimented with a restaurant concept called McDonald’s with a Diner Inside that would offer their regular hamburgers with diner-style offerings like meatloaf and chicken entrees (Sachdev 2001). Ultimately these concepts did not succeed, but it is revealing that the fast food giant would attempt to capture the spirit of the diner.

Viveiros provides a compelling analysis and hypothesis of the allure and longevity of the diner:

The concept of diners, for some, is as much myth as reality. A diner is often more a symbol of a way of life, like motorcycles, cowboys, and fast cars, than a place to dine. Although diners are threatened, they are as eternal as a bottomless cup of coffee. They provide a sanctuary for those who need a brief escape from the hectic pace of modern life. We can go to the diner alone and sit at the counter, or we can go with friends and relax in a booth while enjoying food and conversation. This democratic, homey place is always inviting and we always feel welcomed. Diners provide a sense of belonging and casual comfort. The railroad car design of booth seating combined with the friendliness of counter seating make for a casual, sociable environment. Maybe that is why the institution has such staying power. (Viveiros 2000, 215)

The diner has gone through significant changes since Walter Scott first started selling sandwiches out of the side of a wagon in Providence, Rhode Island in 1872. The mass-produced and prefabricated nature of the diner is an extension of industrialization and the factory system, the conditions in which the need for the diner also arose. Diners also grew and adapted in response to a number of social changes like advancing industrialization and the factory system. Later, suburbanization and the growth of car culture contributed to further changes. The diner also adapted and ultimately capitalized on revamping its image to shed its working class origins and appeal to the growing middle class. There are, however, some aspects of the diner that have remained the same and have characterized the diner from the beginning. Even to this day, “A diner has always been and continues to be a pre-fabricated restaurant with counter service, built in sections in a factory and transported to a distant site” (Gutman 1979, 62).¹⁰ The ability for the diner to adapt to so many changes throughout the years, but to ultimately stay the same and conserve its best attributes of home cooked food, a democratic space and community spirit has elevated the diner to an iconic status in America and beyond. The shows that are analyzed in Chapter 2 are both a testament and continuation of this revival of old diner structures and the diner ethos adopted by many contemporary restaurants.

This chapter provides historical context and analysis for my later analysis in Chapter 2. As there is limited scholarly research on the travel/adventure/food sub-genre of cooking shows in general, and these three shows in particular, I had to bring together a number of different sources in order to provide some context for my analysis. *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*, *You Gotta Eat Here!* and *Man vs. Food Nation* embody changes seen in food television, the competitive eating world and the restaurant landscape. These three shows are examples of contemporary food television that follow an entertainment rather than an educational format and no longer focus on cooking instruction, but rather

¹⁰ Witzel (1999, 9) explains that diner aficionados and purists say a ‘real’ diner must be a “specific arrangement of roadside architecture— a sanctified, hallowed, commercial institution that has validity only if it boasts a prefabricated lineage born of a factory.” While the ‘opposing camp of diner devotees’ are more open-minded to using the term ‘diner’ even if “the building it refers to isn’t a structure planned, prescribed, and prefabricated in a factory.”

on eating. The reappearance of eating contests and the growing interest in competitive eating competitions provides context for the eating challenge portion of *MVF* and the overall fascination with watching others eat large sums of food. The history of the diner as an American institution reveals that it has become representative of a time before the rise of fast food chain restaurants. The shows embody a rejection of this chained foodscape and instead, promote the diner “ideal,” where these unique eating establishments fostered a sense of community, democracy and homey atmosphere.

2 Analysis

2.1 Introduction

Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives, *You Gotta Eat Here!* and *Man vs. Food Nation* embody a new genre of food television that shifts the focus from “people who like to cook to people who love to eat” (Collins 2009, 167). The three shows that were analyzed move away from the domestic setting of the kitchen and into the more “masculine” arena of the professional restaurant kitchen. The first section of this chapter will address the representations of gender throughout the shows. First, I consider the travel narrative as contributing to the overall tone of the shows as an adventure, and the male host as signifying the “masculine food adventurer” rather than the domestic female cook. I will then discuss the use of masculine signifiers like slang, rock and roll, beer and sports. The second section will consider how these shows associate masculinity with the consumption of meat and large amounts of food. I will also focus attention on the eating competition portion of *Man vs. Food Nation*, analyzing it as a carnivalesque spectacle. The discussion of gender will also be tied in with a discussion of class, as these kinds of shows represent the democratization of the cooking show for a mass appeal.

The third and final section will examine the restaurants featured on these shows. These restaurants are represented as fostering community spirit, where people from all walks of life come to eat. Rather than featuring high-end restaurants, the shows focus on small businesses, often family-run, where unique food is made from scratch. By using the themes of community, family and homemade/handmade food, the shows create nostalgia for an idealized past. Viewers can vicariously enjoy the comfort of a home cooked meal by watching others eat in these restaurants. Moreover, viewers can actually visit these restaurants; Ketchum (2005, 228) notes regarding the locations of travel food shows, these places become “important sites for escape to real locations” enabling people to fuse televised viewing spectacle with first-hand dining experience.

2.2 Representations of Gender

The format of the three shows fall under the “travel/adventure/food sub-genre” (Collins 2009, 195). The opening scene of each episode of each show places the host outdoors and on the open road. The viewer then follows them as they travel to different cities in search of the best local restaurants to sample signature dishes. There is a tone of adventure and exploration immediately constructed in the introduction; to distance itself from the “domestic” studio kitchen, the scene begins in an outdoor setting, using dynamic, travel and adventure-related language.

The opening scene of *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives* is always the same, establishing the fact that the host Guy Fieri is on a cross-country road trip. He is shown driving down the street, or even on the highway, in his red convertible. Addressing the camera as he drives, he shouts: “I’m Guy Fieri and we’re rolling out, looking for America’s best diners, drive-ins and dives.” His road trip has begun; a preview for what is coming up in the episode shows that a new adventure is in store for the viewer. The red convertible with its top down creates a carefree feeling on the open road. As well, Guy Fieri sets the tone for his “bad boy” persona by performing the seemingly risky task of taking his eyes off the road to talk to the camera. After the opening credits, he steps out of his parked convertible to introduce the new location, beginning with “this trip” and using adventurous and dynamic language to suggest that the upcoming journey will be exciting. For example, in the “Serious Sandwiches” episode, he opens with: “This trip, we’re on the hunt for the best thing between sliced bread” (*Diners* 1409). Similarly, in the introduction to “Unexpected Eats,” Fieri begins by yelling to the camera: “This trip, we got the pedal to the medal, and taking the turn for unexpected eats” (*Diners* 1406). Finally, in “All Vegas, All the Time” he draws on the perception of Las Vegas as a wild city, saying: “This trip, it’s Vegas Baby, off the strip and out of control” (*Diners* 1408).

The same dynamic language is used in the opening credits for *Man vs. Food Nation*, and it is immediately established that this show is not located in a studio kitchen. During the opening credits, a voiceover explains: “I’m Adam Richman. For years, I was one man on a quest to discover the country’s greatest chow-down joints.” The opening scene begins with a montage of quickly edited shots of landscape or urban settings. The

montage may consist of beautiful blue water and beaches in the Florida Keys or shots of the streets of Charleston, South Carolina. The location is quickly established before we see Richman again, walking on the sand of a beach or on the sidewalk of a bustling town or city. Richman then introduces the location, using language that indicates he is on an exciting journey, where the sole purpose is to consume: “My eating exploration has brought me to Nashville, Tennessee” (*MVF* 403) and “My country-wide chow-down quest has brought me to beautiful Mobile, Alabama” (*MVF* 406). Similarly, John Catucci on *You Gotta Eat Here!* always delivers his opening monologue outside of the featured restaurant. He is shown walking down the street, alleyways or in the parking lot of the restaurants and talks directly to the camera to introduce the location. As an exciting twist, he has even been filmed walking on the side of a highway. The opening scene will also show some of the restaurant’s surroundings, like the street where it is located or some of the city’s landscape. For instance, while visiting the Coastal Waters restaurant in Ingonish, Nova Scotia, Catucci’s voiceover describes the beautiful blue waters onscreen: “Cape Breton’s captain trail, 185 miles of beautiful scenery.” He is then shown in a parking lot and continues, “and I might add, one awesome restaurant. John Cabot discovered Cape Breton and John Catucci discovers The Coastal, you gotta eat here” (*Eat Here*, 123). The comparison between Catucci and a great explorer furthers the theme of the host as an adventurer.

In all three introductions, the host begins outdoors and enters the kitchen from the outside; the restaurant is just another landmark on their great food adventure. The host temporarily drops into the kitchen, not so much to participate, but to indulge in the fruits of someone else’s labour. Even though the host does spend a segment of time in the kitchen, they are there merely as facilitators and teachers for those watching at home. The restaurant and its kitchen are represented through a series of rapid jump cuts; food being flipped and grilled, flames ablaze on gas stoves, plates being pushed out the kitchen window with a ding of a bell; the chaos of the busy restaurant kitchen is constructed as antithetical to the quiet and domesticated studio kitchen.

The male hosts play an important role in making these shows attractive to a wider demographic. As Swenson (2009, 48) notes, “male hosts of touring series are portrayed

as down-to-earth, “everyman” food critics who want to satisfy their “manly appetites” with “real” American food.” The three hosts are widely relatable because they embody this “everyman” persona, and are appealing to those who are not especially familiar with cooking and the kitchen in general. Each host’s cooking abilities and knowledge of food varies. For instance, host John Catucci explains in the opening credits, “Hey, I’m no professional chef, but I know when something’s good when I eat it.” It also becomes evident that Catucci is not only ‘no professional,’ but really has very limited cooking skills altogether. His lack of knowledge in the kitchen becomes the butt of numerous jokes, but it is also a way for him to educate audiences without sounding condescending. While making lobster at Catch 22 in Moncton, New Brunswick, the following exchange occurs between Catucci and the restaurant’s chef:

Chef: Next, we’re going to get our textile ready for our stuffing.

John Catucci: And a textile is?

Chef: A textile is a mushroom, onion, shallot, white wine reduction, finished with cream and tarragon. (*Eat Here* 111)

In this way, the instructional, or educational aspect of the show becomes subtle. By answering Catucci’s question, the chef is not talking down to viewers who may have little or no knowledge of cooking. The language Catucci uses to critique food is purposefully informal, and combines more professional terminology with common vernacular or slang. For instance, a commentary may begin with a more formal description of how certain flavours blend together nicely and have a good texture, and end with the exclamation: “Holy shit, those were good” (*Eat Here* 114). Moreover, Catucci fumbling around in the kitchen is relatable to those viewers who have no cooking skills. The widespread appeal of the show lies in the fact that having any previous knowledge of cooking and food is not necessary to watch or enjoy the program; everyone can eat and enjoy food, just like John Catucci.

Guy Fieri of *Diners, Drive-ins and Dives* is the only host in the sample who is actually a professional chef. As the 2006 winner of the reality competition *The Next Food Network Star*, he quickly became the Food Network’s newest celebrity-chef (Veri 2013, 5). As a self-proclaimed “kulatory gangsta” (Veri 2013, 5), his bad boy, rock star persona resonated with men, and his shows “attract more male viewers than any others on the

network” (Moskin 2010). Fieri, despite his bleached blond hair, is branded as an all-American guy’s guy. He is very open about his personal interests, and his status as a celebrity-chef has helped him gain a large fan base. For instance, he owns ten sports cars, all American-made except for his Lamborghini, and he loves beer and rock and roll (Moskin 2010). These masculine signifiers are then used in his shows to further distance *Diners* from the more ‘feminine,’ domestic style cooking shows that the network has to offer.

Other signifiers—aside from the unique beginning of Fieri in his red 1967 Camaro—is the use of rock and roll as a reoccurring theme throughout the show. Not only is the soundtrack rock and roll inspired, Guy Fieri incorporates a rocker look, from his spiky hair, tattoos and backward sunglasses, to cargo shorts and bowling shirts. He openly expresses his love for rock and roll when he discovers a restaurant in Charleston, South Carolina named after a Beatles album: “I think that everyone in flavortown knows that I’m a rocker. I’m talking about rock and roll, the greats” (*Diners* 1311). His rocker edge is further demonstrated on a special edition of the show, where rock singer Kid Rock brings Fieri on a tour of his hometown near Detroit, Michigan. Kid Rock shares Fieri’s love of rock music and food, and is also known for his bad-boy persona, gaining considerable fame as a rock and country singer. During the episode, they visit Kid Rock’s brewery, where a black pickup truck with a giant logo on the side, that says ‘Badass Beer’ advertises his beer company. This segment of the episode is important because it attempts to address social issues in America. Detroit as a working-class city strongly depended on factory work (Ryan 2012, 96). The city suffered greatly as a result of the 2008 recession (Harris 2009).¹¹ Moreover, the loss of jobs in the United States due to the outsourcing of factory work has been a sore spot for many Americans. The following dialogue between Fieri and Kid Rock at his brewery is meant to demonstrate an all-American patriotism and the need to revive the American labour force:

¹¹ While Detroit’s economic issues are a longstanding issue (Herron 2007), for the purpose of this thesis the 2008 financial crash is addressed here, as this historical moment happened much closer to the airing of these shows.

Kid Rock: Tough economic times. So I said, man I'm going to start an American beer company, we create some jobs in this town.

Fieri: You make some impact in this greater Detroit area.

Kid Rock: I believe in taking care of your neighbour first.

Fieri: This is a real nice refreshing crisp beer.

Kid Rock: That's how we went in to it, I said I want beer that I see people drinking in the parking lots before the concerts, you know when they're out there tailgating.

Fieri: Fantastic. Building the jobs, brewing the beer, all-American, keeping it in Michigan. (*Diners* 1303)

This interaction can be read in two ways. Firstly, the show is being used as a platform to promote Kid Rock's beer to a demographic that will drink inexpensive American beer. Secondly, by using the idea of "keeping it Michigan," or all-American, this conversation is speaking to a segment of the audience that belongs to the lower- or working-class, a demographic once alienated from instructional cooking shows. Despite both the financial success of Kid Rock and Guy Fieri, they appear to be rooting for the working class. Fieri's appeal to a mass audience differentiates him from previous exclusionary instructional cooking shows and chefs that catered more to an upper class demographic. The viewer need not be well versed in haute cuisine or fine dining to be able to appreciate the show. In August 2010, the *New York Times* covered a cooking demonstration given by Guy Fieri at Caesars Atlantic City. The article describes Fieri's widespread appeal and an interview with an audience member, Ami Wilson, confirms that she appreciates his simple and relaxed style, saying: "You feel like he has that same background just like you do, never pretentious, nothing fancy" (Moskin 2010).

Guy Fieri's use of slang and informal language to critique the food he samples on *Diners* further exemplifies his mass appeal. It may be Fieri's Californian upbringing that has contributed to his use of the word "dude" to address other chefs and as a general expression of approval, but it contributes to Fieri's down-to-earth and friendly personality. At the cooking demonstration in Atlantic City, audience member Kathleen McCormick told the *New York Times*: "He's the only one who never talks down to anybody. (She said that other cooking shows were "too preachy" for them)" (Moskin 2010). The extent to which Guy Fieri uses slang is enhanced by the use of his made-up 'dude' language and that he also creates his own words to describe food or people. Instead of needing to familiarize themselves with professional cooking terminology,

these audiences are learning new terms like ‘beefanator’ and ‘pignacious.’ Fans of his, and the show, become familiar with his made-up terminology such as “flavortown” and “bomb.com.” In this way, *Diners* is not like ‘preachy’ cooking shows and so does not alienate viewers who may have little knowledge of food and cooking. These viewers can feel as if they belong through this ‘special language’ and a kind of community is created, as they become members of ‘flavortown.’

Finally, sports are used to further distance *Diners* from the domestic sphere. For example, at Chop House Burgers in Arlington, Texas, former NFL star Earl Campbell makes a guest appearance to sample the restaurant’s gumbo that uses Earl Campbell’s Sausages. A customer explains to Fieri that “Earl is kind of a local hero here in Texas” (*Diners* 143), and all the while Fieri is somewhat star-struck by Campbell, who is one of his sports heroes. Interestingly, as with Kid Rock’s beer, the show is cross-promotional and uses ties to the local community to create brand awareness on a national level. The sports theme continues when Fieri visits Danny’s all-American Diner and Dairy Bar in Tampa, Florida. The owner tells Fieri: “I like to eat and I’m a sports guy. We try to make everything baseball references here” (*Diners* 132) and he explains that his best-selling hamburger is named after baseball hall-of-famer Nolan Ryan.

However, the strongest association with sports is on the show *Man vs. Food Nation*. Many of the participants on *MVF* are professional athletes, and the eating challenge portion at the end of the show takes on the appearance of a televised sporting event. For the first episode of the season, the eating challenge contestant is professional wrestler Jerry “Nasty” Sags. Some of the other contestants are NASCAR driver Joey Logano, bull rider Travis Briscoe and members of the Harlem Globetrotters.

The format of the show also mimics that of a sporting competition. Adam Richman first ‘trains’ the contestants for the upcoming challenge, with Richman and the contestant physically preparing, much like an athlete would warm up for a big competition. As Richman and the contestant come out for the challenge, the audience cheers and high fives them as they jog to the table to begin. Throughout the eating competition, Richman becomes the coach, encouraging the contestant and pumping up

the crowd. He uses football terminology to encourage the contestants, yelling: “You need to lay onto that gas pedal right now, this is the last push into the end-zone “ (*MVF* 406) and “Now is the time to push for the end-zone” (*MVF* 416). He also plays the role of sports commentator, using sports references to relay information to the audience watching from home. While a contestant rushes to finish an enormous sandwich, Adam comments that “At the 15-minute mark, Nader makes a play of unprecedented brilliance...oh my god, I feel like this is like the on-side kick in a Saints Superbowl. It’s a genius tactic” (*MVF* 416). As well, during Jerry Sags’ hot wings challenge, Adam yells: “Right now, I’m freaking out. He’s going harder in the second half of this challenge, like those pitchers that throw faster in the later innings. Unbelievable!” (*MVF* 401). It is assumed that viewers have prior knowledge of sporting language and protocols and are able to recognize the connection between eating competitions and sporting events. Once the challenge is completed, the participants receive a victory belt that resembles the kind awarded in professional wrestling and reminiscent of the ‘Mustard Belt’ awarded to the winner of the Nathan’s Fourth of July hot dog eating contest. Finally, during the closing of the show, Adam holds a mock press conference, where bystanders ask the competitor questions about their experience.

While gender provides an important lens with which to read these shows, since cooking practices in general and cooking shows in particular have long been a way to reproduce gendered behaviours: “Social institutions and popular culture [...] have made the kitchen a gendered space in which deeply held ideologies about “natural” feminine or masculine behaviors are evident” (Swenson 2009, 38). However, many of these “masculine” traits described above, such as slang and beer can be seen as part of working-class culture. Furthermore, the next section will address the theme of excess on these shows, and once again while gender provides an important analytical lens, the consumption of large amounts of heavy food can also be associated with working-class sensibilities. Ashley (2004, 56) explains, “Moderation progressively became a prized quality, and the form of food eaten, at least for the wealthiest social groups, became increasingly ostentatious or genteel [...] social distinction was expressed not simply through the display of ‘good’ manners, but also through the consumption of ‘good’ food.” Bourdieu’s work on class and food consumption must then be considered here as,

“food practices do not simply ‘express’ a class identity but also produce and reproduce class identities” (Ashley 2004, 67). Therefore, the excesses seen in these shows, of questionable table manners, rich foods and exorbitant portions can also be read as being in opposition to middle-class restraint and propriety.

2.3 Excess

A theme that appears in all three shows is the attention paid to consuming excessive amounts of food. The preoccupation with large servings, particularly meat, along with the eating competition portion in *Man vs. Food Nation*, can be analyzed through a gendered and class-based lens. The shows focus predominantly on meat, and visit places that serve items typically barbequed or smoked, like hot dogs, hamburgers and ribs, further emphasizing the “masculine” appeal. As well, the spectacle of the eating competition can be interpreted both as reinforcing stereotypically masculine behaviour and representing the American dream.

The three shows encourage the consumption of large portions of food; more is always better. When customers were asked, a common reason stated for frequenting the restaurant was that they were guaranteed a large portion of food. This is also illustrated when hamburgers are measured against the size of Adam’s head to indicate just how large they actually are. The customers in the dining rooms are seen struggling to hold and bite into giant sandwiches, and milkshakes are served in comically large tubs (see Figure 1). The grandiose over-indulgence of the food represents the carnivalesque, as what is shown is “[...] to some extent ‘life turned inside out’” (Bahktin 1998, 251); the normal conventions of food and etiquette associated with its consumption are rejected. Much like Bakhtin’s description of the medieval carnival, these shows are “concerned with bodily pleasure in opposition to morality, discipline and social control” (Fiske 2008, 116). Whereas gluttony is considered a sin, these shows embrace and even celebrate excessive eating to the point of near sickness. Moreover, the use of hands instead of forks, eating with mouths full of food and getting sauce all over one’s face become acceptable table manners (see Figure 2).

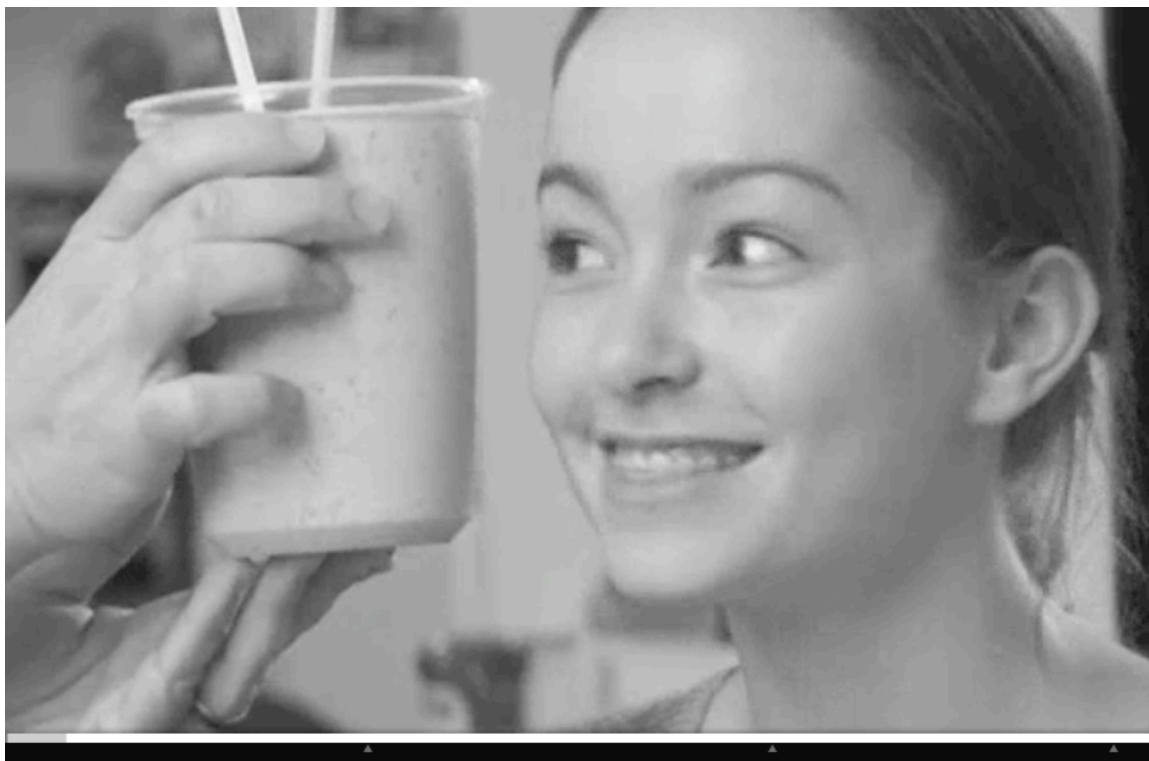


Figure 1: Host John Catucci is seen comparing a strawberry milkshake next to a girl's head, at Blondie's in Winnipeg.

(Source: You Gotta Eat Here!, Season 1, Episode 16)



Figure 2: A close-up (one of many) of Guy Fieri biting into a duck comfit sandwich.

(Source: Diners, Drive-Ins & Dives, Season 13, Episode 6)

The shows encourage overconsumption in ways other than large portion sizes; the act of gorging on food is applauded and seen as an accomplishment for which one can be proud. For instance, John Catucci interviews a teenage boy at the Tomahawk in Vancouver, eating the Yukon breakfast. The meal consists of two eggs, five slices of bacon, hash brown potatoes and two pieces of toast. Catucci asks if the teen will finish his whole plate in one sitting and when he says ‘yes’ Catucci responds with an impressed “wow” (*Eat Here* 104). The attitude that eating a lot of food is an accomplishment to be admired is especially seen on *Man vs. Food Nation*. While visiting The Sputter in Tulsa, Oklahoma to sample their 22-ounce steak, Adam Richman asks one of the customers why it’s named ‘the gusher.’ The man replies, “It’s gushing with flavour but if you do finish the gusher, then it’s something that you gush [about] to your friends” (*MVF* 404). Moreover, at Hank’s Haute Dog in Honolulu, Richman interviews a man who explains that when he visits this restaurant, he’ll eat two to three of their ‘soul dogs.’ The ‘soul dog’ is a hot dog in tempura batter that is wrapped in French fries, and then deep-fried. Richman’s response to this display of overconsumption is to shake the man’s hand saying, “I admire you so much sir” (*MVF* 425).

The eating competition portion of *Man vs. Food Nation* not only encourages overconsumption, but also glorifies it. The participants of the eating challenges are praised and rewarded for eating excessive amounts of food. The contestant’s ability to do so is deemed remarkable, as seen when Adam Richman interviews Conor McQuade, a rugby player who will be taking the Olneyville New York System’s ‘Hot Wiener Challenge.’ Richman is “very impressed” when he finds out that Conor had previously eaten ten sliders in half an hour. His rugby teammates also say that the amount Conor can eat is “amazing,” call him a “human vacuum cleaner” and that he draws a crowd (*MVF* 412). The interviews with his teammates come after Conor is interviewed and he expresses a triumphant attitude, explaining that, “Losing is never in my mindset, no matter what.” His unwillingness to quit is presented as an admirable trait, even though his end goal is overconsumption. As well, the director of strength and conditioning at the University of New Hampshire (UNH), Paul “Chappy” Chapman is described as “revered on campus for pushing countless athletes towards greatness, but he’s also an eating machine” and a “legendary figure on the UNH campus.” When Richman asks one of his

students about a story he heard, that “Chappy” once ate sixty chicken wings on a whim, he replies that Chappy “monstered it” and Richman smiles and laughs, remarking that “it’s like not even human” (*MVF* 409). The man is revered for his coaching abilities, and for how much food he can eat in a single sitting.

The association between meat, consuming large amounts of food and masculinity, has been longstanding in Western culture. As Buerkle explains:

Where it may seem “un-ladylike” to eat much, consuming large quantities of food seems expected from men. In western culture, consuming animal flesh, especially beef, has a long association with traditional masculinity. The image of men as hunters with hearty appetites eating their kill cooked over an open flame haunts our cultural conceptions of gender. (Buerkle 2009, 78)

The three shows being analyzed perpetuate this idea of meat and masculinity. For example, on *Man vs. Food Nation*, Adam lists a meal comprised of meat and calls it ‘a dude food Christmas list’ (*MVF* 420). On *You Gotta Eat Here!* a restaurant’s messy burger is described as “a guy’s burger” and only one female waitress will attempt to eat it. These examples suggest that there is something inherently masculine about eating meat, and play upon already internalized assumptions about food and gender. The fact that many of the destinations are hamburger, hot dog and barbeque joints that have male chefs grilling and barbequing rather than preparing fancier, haute cuisine dishes further takes it out of the feminine realm and domestic nature of previous instructional cooking shows. The use of these signifiers safeguards against any threats to masculinity, since “Cooking has traditionally been considered women’s work, but the grilling craze that started in the 1950s helped define men’s role in the cooking process in a manner that kept away any “taint of femininity” (Veri 2013, 13).

This is not to say that there are no women depicted eating these foods, but those moments are more of an exception than the rule in comparison to the number of men eating meat. A man eating large amounts of food is more socially acceptable, whereas women exhibiting the same behaviour are seen to be transgressing social conventions. Two different studies found that “as meal size increases, women are perceived by others as less feminine, whereas men are seen as just as masculine if not more so. This suggests

that at the very least, men enjoy eating as a value free behavior, whereas women never escape scrutiny” (Buerkle 2009, 80). This is illustrated in the eating competition portion of *Man vs. Food Nation*, where only two out of twenty-seven episodes feature female contestants. In both instances, the women’s appetites are compared to that of a man’s, giving the impression that a woman eating large amounts of food is not the norm. As well, the physical stature of one of the contestants is consistently mentioned; as Richman introduces her, he says: “Cassy reaches just 5 ft tall, but she’s got a king-sized appetite” (*MVF* 407). Cassy then goes on to explain that she had previously beaten a group of frat brothers in a taco-eating contest. However, in the end, she loses to a man who is about triple her size. The second female contestant is a mother and teacher who has also previously won eating challenges. She boasts about beating her husband at an eating challenge that they both competed in together. A voiceover has Adam introduce her: “...can her petite frame defy the laws of physics and contain the 5-lb Moose omelet?” (*MVF* 425). They not only mention her size, but they dress her up in a ‘Rosie the Riveter’ outfit (see Figure 3). While feminists have sometimes adopted this symbol, it can also be seen as women taking over jobs that were traditionally done by men. Again, the carnivalesque aspect of the shows return, as the normal social convention is turned on its head as a space is provided where women seem liberated to eat whatever they want, or “like men.” However, the female contestant’s place can also be seen to only reinforce that excessive eating is really a masculine privilege. As Stallybrass and White (1986, 26) note, “The carnivalesque mediates between a classical/classificatory body and its negations, its Others, what it excludes to create its identity as such.” The two female contestants can be seen as the ‘Others’ that are excluded (or in this case, only included to emphasize their abnormality) to confirm that overconsumption is still a ‘masculine’ behaviour. The carnivalesque nature of the shows play with the binaries of classical/grotesque, restraint/excess, feminine/masculine or even middle-class/working-class, to ultimately reinforce both gender and class stereotypes.



Figure 3: Lauren Takow, one of the two female contestants of the eating challenge on *MVF* in a Rosie the Riveter outfit wielding a fork.

(Source: Man vs. Food Nation, Season 4, Episode 25)

The eating competition portion of *Man vs. Food Nation* takes the theme of excess and consumption to another level. Eating competitions in the United States have existed since the early 20th century, starting at the Coney Island Fair in 1916 at New York's Nathan's Famous Hot Dog stand (Rubin 2008, 250). As noted in Chapter 1, the renewed and growing popularity of this topic in the 21st century is pertinent. Rubin (2008) and Halloran (2004) argue that watching eating competitions is cathartic for viewers. By seeing someone else eat large amounts of food in a limited amount of time, the viewer is able to reconcile their anxieties about food, whether it be the risk of food-borne illnesses in the wake of an industrial food system, or concerns about health from conflicting messages brought about by the expanding field of food sciences.

While these theories provide useful insight into why we watch food competitions, there is an alternative theory that will be explored here first. The eating competition can reflect “the fruits, so to speak, of the democratization of professional competitive sport” (Rubin 2008, 253). Similarly, Ryan Nerz reflects this democratic sentiment in his book chronicling his year on the competitive eating circuit. He explains why competitive eating can be seen as a legitimate sport, and addresses the reluctance of critics to accept eaters who do not look like typical athletes in saying: “In this day of rising salaries for spoiled, steroid addicted pro sports stars, why not have a sport for Everyman?” (Nerz 2006, 145). Furthermore, while professional competitive eaters arguably gain above average skills through vigorous training (Nerz 2006, 140), the ‘ordinariness’ of participants differentiates it from other professional sports. As Jason Fagone (2006, 21) reveals in his book on competitive eating, many of the eaters he encountered had regular jobs, like bankers or worked in construction, noting, “Except for their collective waist size, they were as averagely American as the Americans in campaign commercials.” Only a small segment of the population will ever be able to become a professional athlete good enough to play a professional sport and be featured on television, but with eating competitions, there is a sentiment that anyone can play, and possibly win. Rubin (2008, 254) sums this up while explaining the relationship between the viewer and participant: “Drawn from the ranks of the everyday man (and woman), rather from a rarified farm system that grooms the professional athlete from early life for high stakes and high publicity, it is, [...] ourselves who are up on the stage.” However, that is not to say that

there isn't a hierarchy within the eating competition world. There are still amateurs and professionals, some of whom have gained considerable notoriety, gaining somewhat celebrity status like Takeru Kobayashi (Nerz 2006, 66). On the one hand, eating competitions have allowed participants to attain an elite and celebrity status, and on the other, viewers can witness the 'average Joe' make it big.

On *Man vs. Food Nation*, the significance of the eating competition portion is twofold. First, the show takes the amateur eating contest and frames it within the professional competitive eating world. Since any member of the community can participate, they can experience the ability of eating competitions to potentially pull any ordinary person into the spotlight. As Rubin (2008, 253) notes of eating competitions: "It provides anyone with the opportunity to compete, gain fame—albeit for 15 minutes—and fortune." The participant will be on television, and also, if they succeed in the competition, they will be remembered within the community as a winner. The prize is rarely monetary, but rather a piece of memorabilia like a t-shirt and their picture on the restaurant's wall of fame. The second significant aspect of the eating competition portion is that it is reinforcing the American dream that anyone can make it. A number of the contestants are working-class men. For example, in the Louisville, Kentucky episode, the contestant is Joe Nicholai, an industrial maintenance worker and Navy veteran. Similarly, in the Route 66 episode, contestant Manny Groll is a former US Navy petty officer. When asked why he is participating in the competition, Manny says he is doing it for his son, to show him that anything is possible when you put your mind to it. For both the participant and viewer, the eating competition represents the possibility for upward mobility reflected in the American dream. With a little work and determination, one can achieve anything. Even if the contestant loses, they are awarded a 'Man vs. Food Nation belt' and are praised on their ability to have been able to participate. Finally, the mock press conference at the end of each episode perpetuates an image of success and celebrity. The participant is on television and is treated like a sports hero, someone revered and admired in American culture.

The working-class background of a number of the participants also perpetuates the carnivalesque nature of this spectacle of excess. While Bakhtin argued that there was

no “outside” to the carnival, that all people became participants in the carnival market square, Stallybrass and White (1986, 42) suggest that when carnival activities began to be regulated, a distancing between the carnival observer and participant began to form: “At the fair the subordinate classes became the object of a gaze constituting itself as respectable and superior by substituting observation for participation.” This ‘gaze’ becomes important because it gives the spectator a privileged position, confirming that the participant is in fact not like them at all, the participant, or, “the ‘Other’ is reduced to a frightening or comic spectacle set over against the antithetical ‘normality’ of the spectator” (Stallybrass & White 1986, 41). The eating competition can then trace the line between the middle-class viewer and the ‘other,’ or working-class participant. While a working-class viewer may associate with the contestant, the middle-class viewer can reinforce their class identity through this ‘gaze.’

It should be noted that this show became popular right as the United States was going through a recession and the series was filmed during an economic downturn. This particular season in 2011 was filmed during the time when president Barack Obama was working on bringing the troops home from the Middle East, from a “war” that became more contested and questioned after George Bush left the White House. That the participants are ex-military is not accidental. The show is reinforcing the ideal that the American Dream is still alive and achievable. During a time when the country is going bankrupt due to this “war” and other factors, the idea is perpetuated that if you fight for your country, if you do your patriotic duty, you will be rewarded; because you still live in the “land of the free,” where anyone can make it. Both the participant and viewer are able to experience hope and prosperity during a time when the government and the economic system have let them down. Moreover, Naccarato and LeBesco (2012, 242) explain that the Travel Channel began attracting record audiences after the global financial crisis in 2008 and attribute this new success, in part, to the growth of the channel’s roster of food-related programs. In their analysis of *Man vs. Food*, when the host was the one performing the eating challenges, they explain: “Viewers are invited to imagine themselves casting off middle-class restraint and, perhaps, real concerns about their economic insecurity in the face of the financial crisis in favor of a decidedly working-class form of escapism” (Naccarato and LeBesco 2012, 247). Even more so in *Man vs.*

Food Nation, where members of the public participate in the eating challenge, the cathartic nature of this spectacle of excess can best be summarized in the relationship between the eater and the audience of an eating competition: “the gorger is us, and we are the gorger; he is but a shadowy reflection of our primitive insatiability” (Rubin 2008, 254). While this may seem paradoxical, as the eater can reflect the ‘Other’ who is participating, there is something also inherently human and relatable to their unrestrained eating. In a society with a supposed “national eating disorder,” the eating competition—where one can watch someone consume our most taboo foods— can be a way to rebel or reconcile with anxieties around food and eating (Rubin 2008, 255).¹²

2.4 Restaurants and Nostalgia

The restaurant patrons featured in the shows present a cross section of the population. The customers vary from young adults and men in suits or casual business attire, to men who proclaim (and is also evidenced in their accents and how they speak) that they are part of the working class. Despite the different classes, everyone is seen as getting along and able to enjoy the restaurants. In these food shows, the restaurant becomes the public gathering place where low diner culture clashes with haute cuisine, where people from all walks of life come together in one place and proper social etiquette is rejected. Bakhtin (1998, 251) described the marketplace as the communal gathering place for the medieval carnival where “All things that were once self-enclosed, disunified, distanced from one another by a noncarnavalistic hierarchical worldview are drawn into carnivalesque contacts and combinations. Carnival brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid.” These eateries reflect this carnival spirit and are represented as a space of equality where people from all walks of life can come to dine. However, those who cannot afford to go to a more expensive restaurant have no other options and these spaces then become appropriated as a middle-class or lowbrow establishment.

¹² It may also be possible that viewers watch the eating challenge as a comedy or parody, and respond with the mocking laughter of carnival. A special thank you to Keir Keightley for proposing this point of view.

The restaurants can also become tourist sites where people go to experience local cuisine, or be transported to far away places without having to leave home. As customers are interviewed, they express how a restaurant can be as important a place to visit as a famous landmark. When Adam Richman interviews a woman at Ted Drewes Frozen Custard in St-Louis, Missouri, he finds out that she is on a family vacation. She explains that “we came back today with our kids to do the Arch and all the important St-Louis stuff” (*MVF* 414). The ‘Arch’ refers to the St-Louis landmark, the Gateway Arch, and when Adam asks if Ted Drewes Frozen Custard ranks on the same level as going to the Arch, the woman responds with an emphatic “yes.” As well, the chef at Flapjacks in Caledon, Ontario explains that a couple from Italy comes twice a year to specifically visit her restaurant. Her restaurant becomes a landmark where “People would come from all over the world to experience a traditional Canadian breakfast” (*Eat Here* 122).

Customers also express that restaurants that serve authentic ethnic or international foods allows them to travel without ever leaving the country. At Tres Carnales Taqueria in Edmonton, Alberta, a customer explains of the authentic Mexican restaurant that, “For those of us who can’t get away to Mexico, we come here” (*Eat Here* 124). An older woman expresses the same feeling at the Shish-Kabob Hut in Peterborough, Ontario: “I can get the Greek experience without having to travel” (*Eat Here* 126). Finally, at the Chicago Brauhaus, the live music makes it seem like “Oktoberfest every day” and Guy Fieri explains that “You really feel like you’ve teleported into another country” (*Diners* 1413).

The premise of these shows—which features two to three restaurants per episode—is to find the best local spots. The synopsis of *You Gotta Eat Here!* explains that the host John Catucci is “...on a quest for Canada’s most delicious, mouthwatering, over-the-top comfort food. He’s visiting great joints, greasy spoons, and legendary restaurants to taste the food that made them famous and to meet the colourful characters that made them institutions” (Food Network 2013). When the host arrives at the restaurant, the establishing shot of its exterior shows the viewer what it looks like and gives them a glimpse of the neighborhood.

The particular types of places these shows feature are important. The destinations range from an old school bus-turned-food-truck parked on the beach, to refurbished diners and small, family-run restaurants. The emphasis is on original and unique locations that are relaxed and welcoming. The shows specifically stay away from upscale restaurants, and instead, choose dining rooms filled with wooden chairs and tables, paper napkins, eclectic décor and local art on the walls; all these items are used to identify these restaurants as part of a casual eating experience. Each restaurant has established itself as an important player in its particular community. Many of the restaurants have been around for decades, and have become a local institution or landmark. On *Man vs. Food Nation*, Richman visits a restaurant in New Haven, Connecticut that claims to have invented the hamburger, and explains that the restaurant has been open since 1898; that's 111 years of service. At another destination in Providence, Rhode Island—which also happens to be the birthplace of the American diner—Richman visits an old-style lunch cart that has been in business since 1888. When he asks customers what makes Haven Bros a Providence institution, a woman replies, “It's definitely a classic part of Providence history. I mean just look at it, you can't find this anywhere else, that's for sure” (*MVF* 412).

While not all of the restaurants have a century-old history, in the local community, the featured restaurants have become a social space, much like a local community center. The dining rooms of these restaurants are always busy, filled with families, teenagers and the elderly. The customers are seen talking, eating and joking around with each other and often the owner is up front joining in on the conversation. The atmosphere is friendly and welcoming, which is confirmed by testimonials from the restaurants' clientele. When the hosts talk to the customers, they find out that many are regulars and frequent them anywhere from once, to five times a week. An older gentleman admits that he's been going to the Armview Diner in Halifax, Nova Scotia “once a week for the past 31 years” (*Eat Here* 107). These places become integrated into the community, and evolve into more than just a place to eat. The patrons who are interviewed, say that although it was the food that first attracted them, they keep coming back because of the inviting atmosphere. Catucci interviews customers while they eat at Urban Deli in St-John, New Brunswick. A young girl explains why she loves it there:

“Local, fresh ingredients. You’re always sure to get a nice hot meal. The Urban Deli is just a great community atmosphere” (*Eat Here* 112). The way the restaurant brings people from the community together is again highlighted when a gentleman explains, “The best part is this community table” (*Eat Here* 112) and gestures to a long wooden table with chairs. While Catucci seems skeptical and asks if everybody just sits at the one long table, it is clear the community table has become a regular part of that restaurant’s experience.

The community atmosphere is upheld by the engagement of, and involvement with, the restaurant owners, staff and chefs. The owners and chefs serve as a figure of local celebrity, and their charming personalities become a principal aspect of the restaurant experience. At Joe Squared in Baltimore, Maryland, a woman who is interviewed describes the owner, who is also the chef, as “... just such a leader in the community and really revitalized North Avenue” (*Diners* 1313). The woman not only refers to him as a leader in the community, but she also attributes changes in the neighborhood to the chef. On *Diners*, Guy visits a restaurant that has been in the same location for 48 years. He includes in his introduction that he’s going “To meet a chef that is so recognized, regarded and celebrated, they named a street after him, and a park” (*Diners* 1413). As well, even the serving staff contributes to this welcoming atmosphere. John Catucci interviews a waitress who has worked at Haugen’s BBQ in Port Perry, Ontario since 1976, and she explains, “It’s a special place, it’s not just a restaurant. I’ve been here since people were children and now they bring their children, I’m proud to be a part of that” (*Eat Here* 102).

The work of the staff, owners and chefs is portrayed as being more than just a job; they are living their passion. The use of ‘love’ as a reward, or as their motivation is brought up during their interviews. At The Main in Montreal, Catucci interviews the pastry chef:

Baker: There’s lots of love in these cakes.

John Catucci: I can see why people keep coming back for them when you put so much love into the cake.

Baker: That to me is worth a million dollars, just to know that somebody has enjoyed something that I put a lot of love and care into. (*Eat Here* 121)

A similar conversation occurs between Guy Fieri and Harry Kempf, the owner and chef of Chicago Brauhaus, where Guy asks: “How much of this is a job, and how much is just cause you love it?” and the chef responds, “All of it is cause I love it” (*Diners* 1413). The enthusiasm of the producers for what they do seems to be reflected in the atmosphere of the establishments and the popularity of the food, as many customers discuss how “they can taste the love.”

The restaurant itself then also begins to embody this warm, comfortable, loving feeling. Many of the establishments they visit describe the food they serve as “comfort food,” and the way it is prepared and talked about by the customers, constructs the restaurant as more than just a place to eat. Fieri interviews a gentleman, who says, “It’s phenomenal having a neighbourhood establishment like this that still serves great food and always big laughs behind the counter.” Fieri responds, “This is real deal, this is old school” (*Diners* 1311). The reference to a place with good food and great service being “old school” suggest a level of nostalgia, that there is something particularly special about the way things used to be done, and is rarely found today.

The word nostalgia was originally a medical term that referred to a disease or condition of extreme homesickness (Davis 1979, 1). While it would seem that there are different kinds of nostalgia, the general contemporary understanding is that it is not necessarily a longing for home or a specific place, but rather a certain place in time (Wilson 2005, 102). The use of ‘retro’ or turn to the past can be seen in all areas of our culture, including marketing, film, architecture and as seen here, restaurants (Brown 2001; Lowenthal 1989). One theorist who observed this tendency was moved to proclaim that, “Nothing nowadays sells so well as the past” (Lowenthal 1989, 22). Different theories abound as to the causes and conditions which bring about nostalgia and why consumers are so susceptible to images of the past that conjure up this nostalgic feeling. Chase and Shaw (1989, 3) explain that one condition for conjuring nostalgia is dependent on the sentiment that in “some sense that the present is deficient.” Additionally, a nostalgic ethos “is particularly characteristic of societies in turmoil, those experiencing troubles, turbulence and transformation” (Brown 2001, 12). The comfort provided by a turn to the past can then be seen as Aden (1995) explains: “nostalgia indicates

individuals' desire to regain some control over their lives in an uncertain time" (Wilson 2005, 34). Whether involving the breakdown of traditional values around food and cooking, or gender norms, or wider societal uncertainties brought on by the recession or 9/11, the current North American landscape provides an ideal setting for nostalgic longing for a 'simpler time.' Rather than encouraging people to confront the future and possibly engender positive social change, nostalgia conveniently keeps people looking back to an idealized past; it keeps people complacent with the current dominance of fast food and chain restaurants. Why change the current system when you can get your fix for the 'old' way from such "mom and pop" restaurants?

Many of the featured restaurants are refurbished old diners; restaurants with a longstanding history are places that are frozen in time, and allow customers to revisit an idealized past. As Viveiros explains:

The genuineness of the diner is a special component of its appeal. The diner patrons typically constitute an eclectic gathering. We may not be able to drive a '38 Ford or a '55 Chevy, but we can eat in a classic diner. Eating in diners can induce a pleasant melancholia, a dream-like state, evoking memory of what was and might have been. Just as the photograph freezes time and imparts the notion of both time preserved and the passing of time, the vintage diner has the same effect. (Viveiros 215-16)

Newer restaurants also try to create the same atmosphere by branding themselves as old style diners or 1950s-style cafes and try to create a familiar and cozy place through décor and friendly staff to get that 'old school' feeling. These restaurants have to stand out and appear as different, while really staying the same and even drawing from the old and familiar. The shows construct this sense of nostalgia in two ways. The first is for the 1950s-style diners that represent values that are lost in today's restaurants. The second is the longing for a home-cooked meal that taps into the desire for the kind of family meals that have been lost in our industrialized and mass-produced food system.

The renewed popularity of the diner and its 'old school' values surrounding food and atmosphere can be attributed to a recent rejection of fast food chains. These diner-style restaurants become an alternative to the mass-produced and impersonal fast food experience. Criticism against fast food restaurants began to surface around the end of the

twentieth century. Books like Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (2001) and documentaries films like *Super Size Me* (2004), revealed troubling statistics about fast food. Despite being popular among millions of people, the favourable perception of fast food chains declined with this emerging information concerning not only the damage to health caused by fast food, but the social consequences of these fast-paced, mass-produced and corporate-run environments. The high turnover required in fast food restaurants and the speed at which fast food restaurants function creates an environment that is meant to get people in and out of the door quickly. In order to keep food consistent across the franchise and to maintain uniformity, it must be mass-produced by huge machinery in factories and assembled by minimally skilled employees (Ritzer 2011, 154-58). The food shows being analyzed purposefully choose locations that go against the mass-produced, impersonal spaces characteristic of inexpensive eating. Host Guy Fieri is known to have sworn off fast food (Moskin 2010) and promotes trying out small, family-run restaurants that provide what he calls 'real deal' food that is reminiscent of old-style diners that prepare food from scratch, and move away from the mass-produced, standardized nature of fast food establishments.

Many of the restaurants frequented on these shows are what the stereotypical post-World War II diner looked like, or how it is represented in popular culture. The patrons describe or say it's like an old style diner, but they may have never actually experienced what a real old school diner was like. Rather, it is assumed that since the diner existed before fast food restaurants— and so as representative of an earlier way of commercial dining— it must be a better way of eating because it was before the industrialized system became widespread. The idea that fast food restaurants use frozen and prepackaged foods, which people are tired of, makes the idea of a restaurant that provides something handmade and fresh, novel and attractive to those who have grown up on fast food and packaged meals.

The allure of these restaurants is that it creates an experience of visiting a place or time one has only heard about, but has never really experienced. When people are interviewed, they refer to the restaurant as being like an old-fashioned diner, one that they

heard about through their grandparents. In Vancouver, British Columbia, Guy Fieri visits the Save on Meats Diner, originally a butcher shop that opened in 1957 and later became a full-service restaurant. While talking to the diner's owner, Fieri notes, "This is being able to bring kids down here and showing them what the diner was like." The owner replies, "That's it, you see a lot of families in here, a lot of people saying 'my grandmother used to take me here, so I'm bringing my kids here'" (*Diners* 1305). Similarly, in Toronto, a man sitting at a table with his young children explains, "Uncle Betty's is almost like an old style diner to me, it's got great comfort food, and it's kid friendly" (*Eat Here* 107). However, the man in this scene is probably not old enough to have truly experienced an old style diner, and if he had, he would have been quite young. Regardless, the man is drawn to the diner as represented in popular culture as a family-friendly place. The shows promote this kind of "displaced nostalgia," or nostalgia for a time that has not actually been experienced firsthand (Wilson 2005, 32). The emphasis on having a place for parents to bring their children conveys that they are trying to give them something that they think might be missing from the contemporary restaurant scene.

Witzel explains of the diner's growing appeal, that:

Not surprisingly, it's the so-called baby boomers of America who are flocking to the steadily growing number of new diners. Having grown up during what critics hail as the declining years of the diner, maturing boomers are now reaching their peak earning years. With fat wallets and big appetites, they are hungry for everything that reminds them of the way things used to be (Witzel 1999, 128).

By seeing places that are reminiscent of old-style diners, the audience is meant to feel a longing for times past, and that by eating at these restaurants, they can connect, or relive a special moment in time. For instance, at a deli in Montreal, Catucci interviews a woman who explains that, "I've been coming to the Main since I was about twelve. My dad, we'd come together, we'd share the smoked meat sandwich together" (*Eat Here* 121) and then cuts to a man with his son eating together in the restaurant. The woman is describing a personal memory, while it is then demonstrated that others still experience this same thing today. By associating a positive memory with a restaurant experience, the connection is made that the viewer can create their own memories, and relive old ones by visiting these places.

The idea of escaping the present, and going back to a time that was deemed ‘simpler’ or better can also be seen when one woman expresses that she loves Evelyn’s Memory Lane, a 1950’s style café, in High River, Alberta, because it’s like “Just stepping back in time” (*Eat Here* 121). This longing for the past can also be seen when a restaurant is made popular because it has stayed consistent over the years. The restaurant becomes the connection to the past, and every visit provides a comforting feeling of reassurance through the familiarity of a place and time that seems to be better than the present. These restaurants provide the comfort of consistency, as Catucci says while visiting Schwartz’s Deli in Montreal, “As they say, the whole world is changing, but Schwartz’s stays the same” (*Eat Here* 113). The same sentiment is seen when Fieri is interviewing the manager of Lito’s Mexican Food in Santa Barbara, California:

Fieri: You guys have seen a lot of changes but you guys have stayed the same.

Manager: Ya, we have to stay the same, got to be consistent.

Fieri: Got to be consistent, got to have quality, got to be authentic. (*Diners* 135)

These restaurants can also become a link to the past, as customers can feel transported back to their childhood. In New York City at John’s of 12th street Italian Restaurant, a woman explains, “Any one who’s Italian is going to recognize something on the menu and say I used to have that as a kid” (*Diners* 137). This woman is indicating that it is a positive thing to be able to connect with her past through this restaurant. Similarly, as Catucci tries the Thanksgiving burger at Boon Burger in Winnipeg, the chef tells him “In a moment you’re going to have a flood of memories as you bite into this” (*Eat Here* 120). Most people can relate to these instances, since they have some fond memories associated with food. The idea of being able to revisit the past by taking a bite of food from your plate becomes an appealing incentive to visit these restaurants. References to the past also suggest that there was something better, or food was just better back then. At Baffo’s in Bolton, Ontario, Catucci tries the pizza and tells the chef, “This is the pizza from my childhood” and the chef responds, “That’s such a big compliment” (*Eat Here* 124). Furthermore, the restaurant becomes a place where customers can get a taste of back home at any time. For those who have moved away from home, they can still keep in touch with their roots by visiting any of these

restaurants, whether it's being able to get authentic Russian food in Texas from Taste of Europe (*Diners* 1412), or simply being able to enjoy the tastes of home when on the other side of the country. In Harlem, New York at Amy Ruth's, a woman explains, "It definitely reminds me of home. I'm a southern girl so I love soul food, I love anything that reminds me of the South" (*MVF* 415). Even though the restaurant is located on the east coast, the Southern-style restaurant can remind this woman of her roots in the South.

The importance that the food is handmade also differentiates these places from fast food and the industrialized food system. A common theme refers to an era when food was hand crafted and not mass-produced. By spending time in the kitchen and watching the chef make the food, which is often a labour-intensive process, the host emphasizes how spectacular it is that the food is made by hand. In Arlington, Texas at the Russian restaurant Taste of Europe, while in the kitchen with the chef, Fieri explains to the camera, "I like a lot of this food. I like the food that takes time. It's not quick and instantaneous, it's low and slow cooking" (14.12). Similarly, while Catucci visits Hoito Restaurant in Thunder Bay, he observes the chef making one of her popular dishes, a roasted turkey sandwich. They discuss that the restaurant goes through two, twenty-pound turkeys a day and roasts and slices them on site. The following discussion occurs:

Chef: Now we start taking the turkey apart, taking all the meat off (close up of her pulling apart the turkey by hand).

Catucci: You can't just get turkey already sliced and pretend like it's homemade?

Chef: But it's not homemade then.

Catucci: That's a good point, but then you wouldn't have to do this everyday.

Chef: It's home cooking, it's not fast food. (*Eat Here* 103)

Here, fast food is openly rejected and constructed as inferior to food that is produced at a slow rate by skilled hands. The emphasis on the food being fresh and handmade further distances it from the way fast food comes from frozen or processed origins. At Bill's Jumbo Burgers in Tulsa, Oklahoma, while talking to the owner, Richman expresses that "What I love is that there is no box of frozen burgers here" and the owner emphatically responds that "No, absolutely not, it's all fresh, nothing artificial" (*MVF* 404). The point is further emphasized by the interviews with the people eating at a number of the restaurants. Comments such as: "Better than anything with processed

cheese in it" (*Eat Here* 126), "nothing is poured out of a box" (*Eat Here* 107) and "nothing is prepackaged or processed" (*Eat Here* 111) continue to reject food provided by an industrialized system, indicating a discontent with the standard that fast food has set. At Tre Sorelle, an Italian restaurant in Orillia, Ontario, Catucci asks a man why people love to eat there, to which he responds: "It brings it back to a simpler time when someone's still making it by hand, that's what people like" (*Eat Here* 117). However, it should be noted, that most of the foods served in these restaurants are the quintessential fast food item; hamburgers, hot dogs, fried chicken, french fries and pizza. The customers, chefs and hosts are adamant that the food is so different than fast food, but all the while are confirming the dominant status of fast food fare in both North American restaurants, and of course its diet.

The shows being analyzed represent the restaurant as a surrogate home and create a sense of nostalgia for home cooking and the family meal. However, diners were not originally a place to take the family to eat, and were a place not fit for women and children. The first food carts were to provide food for late night factory workers and when they began to incorporate counters where diners could sit and eat, it was an atmosphere for working class men to have an inexpensive meal (Barbas 2002, 47). However, that changed due to a rigorous advertising campaign in the early 1920s that promoted the idea of restaurants providing "home cooking" to draw in middle-class women and families (Barbas 2002, 48). The goal was to capitalize on the changing nature of home cooking in the wake of mass-produced and processed foods at the turn of the century. By promoting handmade, home cooked meals, restaurants in the early 1920s tried to relieve this discontent by "generating nostalgia for an idealized premodern past" (Barbas 2002, 49) where women spent more time in the kitchen creating elaborate meals. During this campaign, "greasy spoons" not only advertised that they provided "home cooking," they also changed their décor and lighting in order to be more welcoming to women and families and to evoke feelings of comfort and the home.

The "home cooking" campaign and later the domestication of the diner may seem like a product of the restaurant industry's attempt to expand their market, but what is more pertinent is how this campaign was a response to changes in both food production

and gender roles. The creation of a sense of home and an emphasis on homemade or ‘scratch made’ food in these three shows mirrors this same effort to fill a void and create a sense of nostalgia that was seen in the early twentieth century. If traditional domesticity was disrupted in the early twentieth century, it has only been further disrupted since restaurant dining became a widespread routine in the daily lives of North Americans. As a continuously increasing amount of women work outside of the home and time spent preparing food has decreased (Pollan 2009), the from scratch, home-cooked meal has been replaced by packaged and fast foods. In the twenty first century, we are eating more meals in restaurants than ever before and are increasingly relying on processed, premade food (Pollan 2009). The changes in our relationship to food preparation in the past hundred years— and amplified over the past fifty— has distanced many from the cooking skills and knowledge that was a requirement in the past.¹³ The need to spend time making a home cooked meal has been replaced by already spiced and roasted birds from the supermarket. Items like loaves of bread bought in a bakery or bagged and sliced white bread from a grocery store, have long replaced home baked bread.

While most have memories of a grandparent making delicious food from scratch, or even parents making a special meal for holidays, most generation Y (and even generations before) did not grow up with homemade bread and pies as a regular occurrence. By watching these shows, one can vicariously experience cooking and revisit a home life that may have not actually been experienced. As one gentleman expresses at Stoney’s Bread Company in Oakville, Ontario “It’s like coming home, that’s probably as important to me as the food is” (*Eat Here* 104). Similarly, a regular at the Armview Diner in Halifax, claims that “I probably eat here more than I do at home. It’s my home-away-from-home really” (*Eat Here* 107). The shows create nostalgia for an idealized past and the comfort of home and family by focusing on places that customers claim are a “second home” and provide “homemade” food. As more people move for work and school and have busy and conflicting schedules, meals at home amongst family members can

¹³ It was only fifty years ago that my mother would wait on the steps of the Kosher butcher in downtown Montreal for her mother to finish de-feathering the chicken that had just been slaughtered. Today, having to see the live chicken before taking it home to cook would be unheard of.

become rare. By creating an atmosphere that feels like home, one can experience the comfort of sitting down to a meal amongst friends, even if eating alone. By providing ‘comfort’ foods, combined with a friendly staff, customers can feel at home.

The importance of the restaurant having a home-like atmosphere and creating a sense of family and belonging is seen during interviews with customers. At Mrs. Riches restaurant in Nanaimo, British Columbia, a woman explains that she loves “The family environment here, and the fact that we know everybody, so we feel like we’re coming home” (*Eat Here* 113). Again, the role of the staff becomes important, and a personalized and amicable experience replaces the impersonal and quick experience characteristic of fast food. Instead of being served by a stranger in a chain restaurant where the owner is a corporation and is never present, these restaurants provide a welcoming alternative, as a young man explains that at That Little Place by the Lights in Huntsville, Ontario, “They know exactly what I want, they welcome you with open arms. It’s a family-run business and I feel like part of the family” (*Eat Here* 116). This aspect of a family-run business is showcased in multiple episodes, showing the different generations of families working in the restaurant together. While in the kitchen at Martino’s in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, host Adam Richman describes who is there: “It really is a family affair. This lovely lady, that’s TJ’s wife, there’s his daughter, there’s his son, TJ’s also in the kitchen” and then turns to the camera to exclaim “These people really are feeding you like family” (*MVF* 411). These restaurants become a place to reconnect with a past where families all sat down at the table together for a meal.

Memories of such a time are further conjured up when discussing the actual food that is served in these restaurants. The customers make a comparison between the restaurant food and the food that a relative had made for them in the past. At Highland Kitchen in Edmonton, Alberta a woman simply says that “It’s the type of food your grandmother would make, you know, Sunday dinner” (*Eat Here* 125). Something like ‘Sunday dinner’ is easily recognized as a time when family comes together to enjoy a good meal; even if most people have not experienced such a thing, this is a well-known custom and so they can relate to such a statement. Likewise, at the Tomahawk Restaurant in Vancouver, a gentleman discusses one of its signature dishes, “Roast beef dinner, it’s

very tender and honestly it reminds me of mum's" (*Diners* 132).¹⁴ Finally, at Two Sisters' Kitchen in Jackson, Mississippi Adam Richman asks a gentleman if what he is eating is "real, real, Mississippi cooking?" to which the man replies "Definitely. Coming here allows me to get a taste of actual soul food outside of my mom's kitchen or grandmother's kitchen" (*MVF* 427). Like the advertising campaign in the early twentieth century, these shows appeal to the emotional aspect of food and the absence of food being prepared in the home. The promise of home and homemade food eases anxieties during a time when we are so disconnected from each other and our food.

If a restaurant can successfully make 'homemade' tasting food and be compared to a mother or grandmother's cooking— someone who is seen to inherently have a skill for cooking comfort food— it sets the restaurant apart and is a compliment of the highest order. For instance, at La Fonda Boricua in New York City, after a man comments on his meal that "Mm, just like grandma," Adam looks to the camera and says "If there's a better compliment to any restaurant's dish, I have not heard it" (*MVF* 415). The ability to provide food that tastes homemade, and that tastes like how food tasted in the past, qualifies the restaurant as being a worthy place to eat. When asked how long she has been going to Bill's Jumbo Burgers in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a woman responds, "...Probably 25 years. It reminds me of when I was growing up and my mother would cook homemade hamburgers." Adam's responds that, "If someone's comparing restaurant cooking to mom's home cooking, then you know that restaurant is doing something very right" (*MVF* 404) and so further promotes that homemade is best. However, it is a contradictory message, since homemade and handmade is meant to seem better, but then encourages viewers to go get that homemade food from a restaurant. As a younger man is interviewed at Blondie's in Winnipeg, Manitoba, he exclaims, "look at this burger man, I can't make it. I love it" (*Eat Here* 116), indicating that if you want good homemade food, you have to go to a restaurant to get it. The recurring message that restaurants can now

¹⁴ A special thank you, again, to Keir Keightley, for pointing out the irony that the food adventurer freely travelling the public sphere seeks out and returns to a simulacrum of 'mum's' domestic space. Ultimately, this point is a reminder that each gender identity is part of a binary opposition and relies on the other for its definition.

provide food that is better than homemade— and makes it seem as though one could not reproduce the quality of food at home— works to accustom viewers to the dominant place of restaurant eating in the lives of North Americans. As long as people believe that they are getting a homemade meal and can't make the same food themselves, they will rely on restaurants to do the cooking for them; it keeps people coming back.

In the end what becomes important, above and beyond the food itself, is that the customers feel some kind of emotion or connection to the place. Whether it is feeling welcomed, at home or being brought back to a happier time, these restaurants become more than just a place to get food. When John asks a woman how she feels when she walks into That Little Place by the Lights in Huntsville, Ontario, her answer can sum up what all these restaurants are looking to make customers feel: “loved” (*Eat Here* 116).

3 Food Television and Health

3.1 Introduction

The prevalence of obesity has been on the rise since the 1970s (Mitchell 2011, 2) and it is estimated that more than one third of Americans (Centers 2012) and one in four Canadians are overweight or obese (Public Health 2011). This increase in obesity has been deemed a public health problem, as being overweight or obese is a major risk factor for developing heart disease, certain types of cancer and Type-II diabetes, which can lead to blindness, limb amputations and kidney failure, as well as other complications (Belasco 2008). In this chapter, divided into two parts, I will consider the three shows that were analyzed in Chapter 2. Part One is comprised of three sections and demonstrates how *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*, *You Gotta Eat Here!* and *Man vs. Food Nation* dismiss health issues related to food and encourage unhealthy eating. First I will look at how the food is prepared and how consuming fat and salt-laden foods, in excessive amounts, is encouraged. Then I will address the likely difficulty of viewers in understanding the sheer unhealthiness of these foods. Finally, I will analyze how the shows reject public health guides for healthy living, while sometimes actually denigrating health concerns. Part Two examines these shows through the lens of relevant public health initiatives. Through a brief overview of current public health measures in obesity prevention I will consider ways to regulate the promotion of unhealthy messages in food television shows.

Government organizations like Health Canada and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provide nutritional information and recommendations on how to maintain a healthy weight and live a healthy lifestyle. These guidelines encourage diets low in saturated fats, sugar and salt, and high in fruits and fresh vegetables (Health Canada 2011a, 6). As well, portion sizes should be within the recommended serving size and follow the recommended daily allowance for the different food groups. Moreover, the number of calories consumed in a day varies from person to person depending on age, sex, and activity level and individuals should be aware of how many calories they need to

consume per day (Health Canada 2011b).¹⁵ However, with regard to these three shows, food is represented in a way that totally disregards, and even violates, these recommendations. What's more, *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives*, *You Gotta Eat Here!* and *Man vs. Food Nation* purposely search out and showcase high-calorie dishes and also exalt the unhealthy aspects of these foods. On the Food Network Canada website, the description of *You Gotta Eat Here!* is very straightforward in what the viewer can expect to see: "Health food? Not on this show, baby. Bring on the cheese, bacon and barbecue!" (Food Network 2013). The hosts and many of the chefs and patrons express positive attitudes towards the food being showcased, and overall, the shows promote poor eating habits that public health efforts aim to combat. The question as to what effect, if any, these shows have on obesity deserves closer scrutiny, and this chapter begins this discussion.

Part I

3.2 Salt, Sugar, Butter & Bacon

The majority of the dishes featured on these shows are made with ingredients that should be consumed in limited quantities. The recipes are full of butter, cream, cheese, bacon, salt and sugar and often deep-fried. In small amounts these ingredients are acceptable, but these shows encourage the use of excessive amounts and promote them as a necessary component to make food taste good. These unhealthy ingredients are included in the recipes to add a rich and satisfying taste to 'comfort foods' so customers keep coming back; the combination of salt, fat and sugar provide a combination of tastes and textures that physiologically affect consumers to crave more (Moss 2013). Moreover, public health advocates recommend ways to keep a healthy diet while dining out; the Center for Disease Control recommends choosing lower-fat and lower calorie foods. For instance, "steamed, broiled, baked, roasted or poached items tend to have a lower fat content than fried foods" and "foods with butter and cream sauce are likely to have more fat than

¹⁵ For example, according to Canada's Food Guide, a 25-year-old female, should consume 2,500 calories per day, which should include 7-8 servings of fruits and vegetables, 6-7 servings of grains, and 2 servings of meat or alternatives and 2 servings of milk or alternatives.

items with a broth or mustard sauce” (CDC 2011, 6). However, the shows promote dishes that most often contain just the opposite.

Concerns about health and nutrition are consistently and continually dismissed as sugar, salt, and fat are all considered prime elements of the foods served in the restaurants. There are never comments about limiting the amount of these ingredients, but rather, the hosts and chefs celebrate their use. For instance, while making a Dutch pastry at Urban Diner in Edmonton, Alberta, the chef explains, “You have to have icing sugar on them,” to which Catucci asks “is that a rule?” The chef then, in a reprimanding tone, answers, “Oh, it is a rule” (*Eat Here*, 118). As well, when visiting Nye’s Polonaise Room in Minneapolis, the chef uses a large amount of salt to make a rub for the meat that will be used for their beef sandwich. As the chef pours the salt onto the meat, Fieri comments “All of that salt? I like you” and gives the chef props, a hand gesture that is similar to a high five, to show his approval for what the chef is doing (*Diners* 1312). The large amount of fat in a given recipe never seems to be a concern, but rather, is praised and considered to play an important part in making the food taste good. At Tubby Dog in Calgary, the chef explains that in the Sumo hot dog, he will be using Japanese mayonnaise because it has a higher fat content and he asks Catucci “and what is fat?” Catucci guesses that fat is delicious, but the chef corrects him in saying that “fat is flavour” and to reaffirm what he has just learned, Catucci repeats this statement to the camera (*Eat Here* 122). Guy Fieri makes this same statement, that “fat is flavour,” while he assists in making “homemade” chili comprised of three whole sticks of butter. The importance of fat for a successful recipe is also highlighted in *Man vs. Food Nation*, but this time it becomes an integral part in preparing meat. The chef at The Brick Pit in Mobile, Alabama explains while making pork butts for pulled pork that, “it has to have that really nice slab of fat across the top of it, just like you’d look for in a good steak.” Adam Richman replies, “Absolutely, it has to have the fat next to that meat, which actually is going to keep it moist” (*MVF* 406). The small bit of instruction included in the shows teaches viewers that good food needs to be made with fat.

Deep-frying, a process that increases the fat content of any meal, is used and encouraged as ‘the’ method to make mundane food taste better. This attitude is seen at

Jelly Modern Donuts in Calgary, when Catucci is discussing the donut he has just tried. The chef describes the taste as a good white bread. Catucci replies: “Good white bread ya, except fried.” The chef then explains, “If something’s good, make it better by frying it. It’s simple.” Catucci thanks him, as if he has been waiting for someone to agree with him on this point, and gives a final emphatic “thank you!” to the camera (*Eat Here* 120). The same sentiment is seen at Bubi’s Awesome Eats in Windsor as the chef explains that they are now going to deep fry the seasoned chicken strips they just made: “Because that’s what you do with good food” (*Eat Here* 109).

The dietary guidelines recommend a diet low in saturated fat and suggest using minimal amounts of butter or to use a soft margarine instead and to consume low-fat dairy products (Health Canada 2012). Instead of using a small amount of cooking oil, many of the restaurants’ recipes use whole sticks of butter or use butter as a garnish. On *Man vs. Food Nation*, the food Adam Richman samples in each city consist of unhealthy options such as giant hamburgers, fried foods and enormous sandwiches made from stacks of deli meats. However, the excessive use of butter is seen when Richman visits The Pancake Pantry in Nashville to sample their sweet and savoury pancakes, the Santa Fe Cornmeal Pancakes. The unique cornmeal pancakes, stuffed with roasted green chilies are topped with bacon, cheddar cheese, hot piquante salsa, sour cream, butter and drowned in warm maple syrup (*MVF* 403). As the dish is being assembled in the kitchen, each ingredient is piled onto the stack of pancakes and topped off with a dollop of butter the size of a soup spoon. No one considers the amount of butter to be excessive; it is just another one of the toppings on the pancakes.

While Richman doesn’t actually say anything about the amount of butter used in this dish, in *You Gotta Eat Here!* both the host and the chefs often share their opinions about butter, supporting and encouraging its use. For instance, the chef at Boneheads BBQ in Halifax, refers to butter as “the cooks best friend” and indicates that it is needed to add “a little something” to his recipe for chicken wings (*Eat Here* 114). The host, John Catucci, also expresses his love for butter when he is making seafood chowder at the Water Prince Corner Shop in Charlottetown, by saying “I think any recipe that starts off with two pounds of butter is good in my books” (*Eat Here* 117). Similarly, when making

fish cakes at Magnolia's Grill in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, the recipe includes two large sticks of butter, heavy cream and then is fried in butter. When the chef places the cakes in the pan with the melted butter, Catucci exclaims, "More butter, I love it!" (*Eat Here* 105). The comments then try and negate that there is anything potentially unhealthy about butter. While making a dish of pork tenderloin wrapped in bacon with peppercorn sauce at the Argo Café in Vancouver, the chef comments "a little bit of butter, nothing wrong with butter" and Catucci replies while looking into the camera "there is absolutely nothing wrong with butter. If you have a problem with butter, there's something wrong with you, that's what it is" (*Eat Here* 105). Similarly, while visiting The Sugarbowl in Edmonton, the sauce for their chicken and waffles dish is maple butter (a mixture of melted butter and maple syrup). As the chef pours on more sauce to the plate, Catucci says "I got maple butter, just a little more, doesn't hurt anybody right?" (*Eat Here* 126). In an earlier episode, Catucci makes a similar comment when visiting D & S Southern BBQ in Carlsbad Springs, Ontario. However, this time it is in reference to the whipped cream on his piece of cake. Even though there is a generous amount, Catucci tells the chef he can put on a little more, saying "it's not going to hurt anybody" (*Eat Here* 109).

While public health advocates encourage consuming leaner cuts of meat, the shows highlight people's love for salty, fried foods. In particular, a recurring theme is a general love of bacon, whether expressed by the hosts, the chefs or the customers. American bacon is made from pork belly, a section of the pig that is quite fatty. Bacon is very high in sodium, and generally unhealthy because it is often preserved with sodium nitrate. In the shows, bacon is no longer just a side to eggs, but is incorporated or used as a topping in many of the recipes. For instance, as a twist, Jelly Modern Donuts in Calgary has made a maple bacon donut, as one customer notes while eating this creation: "Bacon on anything is good, bacon on a donut is better" (*Eat Here* 120). The amount of bacon a recipe uses also becomes a topic of discussion, as while bacon is delicious, it is made to seem like it can be even more so in enormous quantities. At Cane Rosso in Dallas, a customer explains, "I come here because I really agree with Jay's [owner/chef] philosophy, getting the best ingredients, doing the hard work himself and he agrees there's no such thing as too much pork" (*Diners* 145). Similarly, while making a cabbage dish at Bistro Dansk in Winnipeg, John Catucci notices the "huge amount of bacon" that

goes into the dish. As the bacon sizzles in the pan, the chef says “oh ya ...do you smell it?” and as Catucci inhales the scent of the bacon he says to the camera “How could you not love bacon? What’s wrong with you?! Bacon rules!” and then laughs. Catucci comes to the conclusion that, “So really what makes this cabbage delicious is the fact that there’s lots of bacon in it” (*Eat Here* 117). While bacon is just one component of this dish, it is credited with taking cabbage to a whole new level, as though it just wouldn’t be the same without it. Similarly, when Richman interviews a woman at Haven Bros in Providence, Rhode Island, she is eating the triple murder burger, a hamburger consisting of three burger patties, bacon, a fried egg, and sautéed onions and mushrooms. When asked her single favorite element in the burger, she answers “bacon, always bacon” (*MVF* 412). Finally, at the Dixie Supply Bakery and Café, in Charleston, South Carolina, a woman is eating the restaurant’s version of the bacon, lettuce and tomato (BLT) sandwich. Fieri notes: “There is enough bacon on that to sink a tug boat.” The woman can only mumble through her mouthful of food, a sentiment that seems to be shared by many on these shows: “Uh huh, I love bacon” (*Diners* 1413).

Ingredients like cheese and cream are also promoted as important elements of comfort foods, and the ‘more is better’ attitude continues. The recipe for lobster and crab macaroni and cheese at the Harbour Diner in Hamilton, calls for aged cheddar cheese, Monterey Jack cheese, extra-old aged cheddar, Romano cheese and 35% cream. As Catucci helps the chef to make the cheese sauce, he is told to add more and more cheese as the chef explains: “The more flavour the better” (*Eat Here* 103). The pastry chef at Foreign & Domestic in Austin, explains to Guy Fieri as they make a cheese stuffed pastry that she loves cheese and he responds, “You must watch my show.” The pastry chef then instructs Fieri to add more cheese, explaining, “Generous, the more cheese the better” (*Diners* 1411). A similar enthusiasm for copious amounts of cheese is seen when Adam Richman is making the meat and cheese stuffed sopaipilla, a fried bread that is a Native American staple that has become an iconic food of New Mexico. As he sprinkles grated cheese over the sopaipilla, Richman chimes “Some cheddar, make it all better, lots of cheese” (*MVF* 405) and then pours the entire container onto the plate. The celebration of cheese continues as Richman interviews a woman eating tacos at La Super-Rica in Santa Barbara, California:

Richman: Looks like heaven with cheese on it.

Woman: Oh my god, anything with cheese on it is heaven.

Richman: Right? It's pretty much the same thing; it's the most redundant statement ever. (*MVF* 416)

The recurring theme in these shows is that cheese means flavour, it is comfort, it is pleasure and food containing it in large amounts, is always delicious.

The same observation can be made about how cream and butter are talked about in these shows. Customers compare the food they are eating at these restaurants to homemade food and how it reminds them of food from their childhood. As noted in Chapter 2, the restaurants featured on these shows distance themselves from processed and fast foods by making many of their menu items from scratch. Moreover, the customers describe the food as taking them back to when their mother or grandmother would make similar dishes at home. When Fieri is making handmade pierogies at Nye's Polonaise in Minneapolis, he says to the chef, "That much cheese goes in there? No wonder I love them. You're going to hit them with some butter?" and the chef responds, "Oh ya, everything at Nye's has butter." This interaction is juxtaposed with an interview with a woman eating these pierogies who comments: "Lovely and buttery and tastes like my grandma made them" (*Diners* 1312). Similarly, at the Musket in Etobicoke, Ontario, John Catucci says to the chef that he's noticed that cream and butter is a recurring theme in German cooking. The chef replies, "It's just home cooking, it's like what your mother used to do for you" (*Eat Here* 120).

These connections with home cooking becomes problematic because viewers may associate this "homemade" food with being healthy, but studies have shown that food from restaurants have higher levels of salt, fat and calories than home-prepared food (Cohen & Bhatia, 2012). The situation becomes compounded when customers who are interviewed say that they frequent these restaurants anywhere from one to five times a week, or eat there more often than at home. This would indicate they could be consuming high levels of fat, salt and calories on a regular basis, potentially contributing to weight gain and associated conditions like heart disease. By referring to the restaurant food as "homemade" and "handmade" and differentiating the food from fast food, it fosters the view that this type of restaurant food is healthier than fast food. While there may be

fewer preservatives in handmade food, the levels of salt, fat, sodium and calories from deep-frying and using butter, cheese and cream are comparable or worse than what is available at fast food restaurants.

3.3 Calorie Distortion

In the United States, the consumption of commercially prepared food has increased since the late 1980s (Kant & Graubard 2003). Approximately one third of daily calories come from food prepared outside of the home, as opposed to 18% in 1977-78 (CDC 2006, 2, 6). Additionally, since the 1970s, the percentage of the American food budget spent on away-from-home foods has been steadily increasing and now accounts for one half of Americans' food budget (Young & Nestle 2012, 565). In comparison, in 1960, Americans spent approximately 20% of their food budget on away-from-home food (Kant & Graubard 2003, 241). There are two important impacts on health related to this rise in away-from-home eating. First, compared to food made at home, commercially prepared food generally has “higher amounts of salt, fat, and calories and lower amounts of fruit, vegetables, and the individual nutrients iron, calcium and fiber” (Cohen & Bhatia, 2012). This means the food provided in restaurants is most likely less nutritionally beneficial than food prepared at home. Second, and most importantly here, portion sizes have increased in restaurants (CDC 2006, 3). Americans have come to expect large portions when eating out, and restaurants are generally reluctant to reduce the portion sizes due to the possibility of “alienating customers who might feel cheated” (Young & Nestle 2012, 567). Furthermore, it has been reported, “consumers increasingly choose restaurants on the basis of the sizes of food portions” and “food companies now use larger sizes as selling points” (Young & Nestle 2002, 247). The typical portion sizes of packaged foods and what is provided in restaurants far exceed the daily servings recommended by public health institutions (Young & Nestle 2012, 565). Consequently, when people eat one package of food or one plate of restaurant food, they are likely consuming more than one serving of the particular food. The difference between recommended serving sizes and actual portion sizes may make it difficult or confusing for those trying to maintain healthful lifestyles and manage their weight (Young & Nestle 2002, 246). It is interesting to note that people will eat more when served large portions

(Cohen and Bhatia 2012, 3). For instance, one study increased the portion size of a pasta entrée in a cafeteria-style restaurant, but did not raise the price or inform participants of the change in size. The adults who ate the larger portion consumed more of the entrée and of their overall meal. The authors concluded that in a restaurant setting, the outcome of increasing the size of the entrée was that people ate more calories (Diliberti 2004, 562).

Larger portions contain more calories, and while this may seem obvious, this relationship does not seem to be intuitive for many people (Young & Nestle 2012, 566). A number of studies have concluded that as portion sizes increase, the ability to estimate calories of a given meal or item decreases. Wansink and Chandon (2006) explain that most people underestimate calories, but those who are overweight tend to underestimate calories to a higher degree. However, their study concluded that it was not the size of the person that determined the largest underestimation of calories, but the size of the portion. The reason why it seemed like overweight people more often underestimated calories was because overall, they were more likely to choose larger portions (Wansink & Chandon 2006, 326). As well, a study conducted in 2010 discovered that nearly 70% of students in an introductory nutrition class underestimated the calorie difference between an 8-ounce soda and a 64-ounce Double Gulp. Students estimated the calories would increase by a factor of three, rather than eight, explaining, “They did not believe that a soda could contain as many as 800 calories” (Young & Nestle 2012, 566). Moreover, a study found that participants were more likely to underestimate calories, fat, saturated fat and sodium in less-healthy items (Burton 2006, 1674). For example, the 3,010-calorie cheese fries with ranch dressing was, on average, estimated to have only 869 calories (Burton 2006, 1670).

The television shows discussed here reinforce a belief system that the sign of a good restaurant is measured by portion size. It is no surprise then that the food featured on these shows come in oversized proportions (see Figure 4). The plates of food are filled to the point of almost overflowing, sandwiches tower high and even the customers and the hosts express how large the portions are with comments that range from “huge, huge portions” and “not once have I seen something little come out of that kitchen” (*Eat Here* 116) to “look at this, you can feed an army” (*Diners* 1306) and “Is Paul Bunion coming over for lunch? What’s going on here?” (*Diners* 1411). Moreover, while preparing the food in the kitchen, the hosts find out just how big these oversized meals are. For instance, at Norton’s Pastrami & Deli in Santa Barbara, California, Fieri is astonished by how much pastrami goes into one of their sandwiches. The chef responds that on their sandwiches they put a “minimum of 8 oz, and then up to 10” (*Diners* 1310). Similarly, at The Penguin in Charlotte, North Carolina, Adam Richman learns that they “deal with 8 oz burgers exclusively”, and on the Penguin Double Pounder, a burger so unique that it isn’t even listed on the menu, they serve four of these 8 oz hamburgers (*MVF* 426). Canada’s Food Guide lists 2.5 ounces as one serving of beef, meaning an 8 oz hamburger is three times the recommended serving size. Finally, while making a stuffed pizza that can be described more as a pie made with pizza dough, toppings and cheese, John Catucci asks how much cheese is used to make the one pizza. The chef responds with “Just shy of two pounds” of cheese (*Eat Here* 111). A Food Guide serving of cheese is 50 grams, making this one pizza contain eighteen servings of cheese, or between four and six times the daily requirement. By presenting these excessive serving sizes, it further reinforces and normalizes incorrect portion sizes for consumers.



Figure 4: The 'Skookum Chief' hamburger made with a beef patty, lettuce, tomato, pickles, cheese, bacon, a hot dog and a fried egg.

(Source: You Gotta Eat Here!, Season 1, Episode 4)

Viewers may not realize the excess number of calories that one of these restaurant meals provides. The shows, along with the restaurant websites, do not provide calorie information for the food they serve. To illustrate the unhealthiness of consuming this kind of food on a regular basis, I will analyze some individual dishes. The first example is the eggs Benedict with beef tenderloin from the Chuckwagon Café in Turner Valley, Alberta. The Chuckwagon Café serves breakfast all day, and is unique because they raise their own cattle. The local, hormone-free, Alberta-raised beef that comes from their ranch right next door provides the meat for the restaurant. The fresh and local nature of the meat overshadows the potentially unhealthy ways in which it is prepared. The eggs Benedict platter is made with two poached eggs, beef tenderloin, hollandaise sauce and served on a buttery croissant with a side of hash brown potatoes. While making the eggs Benedict, John Catucci comments that there is a lot of meat going on the plate (*Eat Here* 122). The chef responds that there is about 3.5 to 4 oz of beef for the one plate of eggs. According to Canada's Food Guide, this meal exceeds the daily recommendations for meat and alternatives for both women and men (see Table 2).

Table 2: Recommended servings compared to actual meal size.

Chuckwagon Eggs Benedict	What is ONE Food Guide Serving?	Recommended # of Food Guide servings per day of Meat & Alternatives
2 poached eggs	1 serving= 2 eggs	Females aged 14+ (2 servings)
3.5-4 oz of beef	1 serving= 2.5 ounces cooked poultry or lean meat	Males aged 14+ (3 servings)

Moreover, both the hollandaise sauce and the croissant are made with butter and the side of hash brown potatoes is fried. The United State Department of Agriculture's Food-A-Pedia website, an online resource to look up the calorie and nutrition information for over 8,000 foods (USDA) can help provide a rough estimate of the nutritional value of this one dish. Because the amount of meat is provided, there are two poached eggs and one croissant, the Hollandaise sauce was the only ingredient that required estimating nutritional contents. If the dish used a quarter cup of Hollandaise sauce and 3 ounces of beef, the amount of calories added up to approximately 823 and 59 grams of fat. Based on a 2,000 a day calorie diet, this 823-calorie meal accounts for close to half of the daily estimated energy requirements. However, this estimation still may not truly reflect the nutritional value of this dish, and was quite a labour intensive process to calculate. According to data collected by the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), the Classic Eggs Benedict at the chain restaurant Eggspectations, made with two poached eggs, black forest ham, gruyere cheese and hollandaise sauce provides an alarming 1,130 calories and 33 grams of saturated fat (J. Hurley 2009, 14). While the ingredients differ, exchanging ham with beef that is cooked in its own fat and cheese for a buttery croissant, the CSPI data becomes a more likely estimate of calories. At over a thousand calories, this one breakfast dish would provide over half of the recommended daily energy intake for the average adult.

A main item that is featured on all three shows is the hamburger, so much so that host Adam Richman explains, "The burger. In *MVF Nation* this mighty mouth-watering meat is so prevalent, it's practically our currency" (*MVF* 402). The use of language like "fresh," "handmade," and "homemade" serves to distinguish these burgers from their fast food counterparts, which have received a bad reputation from health experts. Many fast food restaurant chains like McDonalds, Wendy's and Burger King now provide nutritional information for their hamburgers on their websites. For instance, McDonald's Double Quarter Pounder with cheese clocks in at 760 calories and 45 grams of fat

(McDonalds Corporation 2014).¹⁶ What is striking to note, is that fast food hamburgers are made with quarter pound (4 ounce) beef patties while the restaurants featured on these shows deal almost exclusively with half-pound (8 ounce) patties. That means that a regular hamburger at these mom and pop restaurants are equivalent to the ‘Double’ size burger from a fast food restaurant. For instance, the bacon cheeseburger with fresh grilled jalapenos from Maple and Motor near Dallas, Texas is made with a 7-8 ounce patty. Moreover, the chef explains to host Guy Fieri that he is using 70-30 ground beef, which is one of the highest fat contents available for ground beef (*Diners* 1402). In the search for the most unique dishes, these shows promote “extreme” hamburgers, pushing the calorie and fat count to exorbitant levels. For instance, the Coronary Burger at Dangerous Dan’s in Toronto is made with two 8-ounce beef patties, four slices of bacon, two slices of cheese and a fried egg on top (*Eat Here* 121). To put it into perspective, the Coronary Burger has 16 ounces, or one pound of hamburger meat, twice the amount of meat in McDonald’s Double Quarter Pounder with cheese. While there is no nutritional information available on the Dangerous Dan’s website, a similar type of hamburger served at Casey’s chain restaurants provides a point of comparison. The Casey’s Burger² made with two, 8-ounce beef patties, cheddar cheese and bacon contains 1,770 calories, 56 grams of saturated fat and 2,530 mg of sodium (Hurley & Liebman 2009, 14). This one hamburger contains almost an entire days’ worth of calories and exceeds the daily recommendations for both saturated fat and sodium. The fried egg atop the Coronary Burger is the only difference in ingredients, making it possible to conclude that the calorie count would be comparable to 1,770 calories. At Bill’s Jumbo Burgers in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the restaurant sells 1/3 pound and 1 ½ pound hamburgers called the Big Daddy and the T-Town, respectively, but the episode focuses on the Double Okie (*MVF* 404). This colossal burger weighs two pounds and is made with four beef patties and six slices of cheese. A similar creation from Burger King called the Quad Stack is made with four beef patties, four slices of cheese, two strips of bacon and topped with barbeque

¹⁶ Other examples include: Burger King’s Double Whopper with cheese: 910 calories and 58 grams of fat (Burger King Corporation 2013); Wendy’s Bacon Deluxe Double: 900 calories and 56 grams of fat (Wendy’s 2013)

sauce, a total of 1,080 calories and 71 grams of fat (Phillipov 2013, 377). The Double Okie, which is made with four patties, would contain roughly 926 calories and 48 grams of fat, plus the two extra slices of cheese may contribute to this number.

The excessive consumption of calories in one sitting is further illustrated in the eating competition segment, as the portion sizes are gargantuan and meant to be finished quickly. While larger portions may be shared or leftovers taken home to eat another time, the purpose here is to consume the meal in its entirety, often in under an hour. The *MVF* Unforgiven Challenge at the Red Rock Saloon in Milwaukee requires the participant to consume over three pounds of food in twenty-three minutes. The contestant must finish the Farm Burger, made with two, half-pound beef patties and a half-pound fried chicken breast, topped with cheese, seven strips of bacon, a fried egg and fried onion strings. The challenge doesn't stop there, as the burger is served with a pound of french fries and six super spicy chicken wings (*MVF* 411) (See Figure 5). Jeremy Wheeler, the contestant on this episode, became the second person ever to complete the Unforgiven Challenge. The nutritional information for the Farm Burger is not available on the restaurant's website, but by comparing some similar items provided by CSPI data, the amount of calories for this three-pound platter can be estimated. The Bacon Cheddar Double from Johnny Rockets, containing two, one-third of a pound beef patties, four slices of cheese and bacon plus sauce, totals 1,770 calories (Hurley 2013 13)¹⁷. The Farm Burger combined with a pound of French fries and six chicken wings would most definitely exceed 2,000 calories, the recommended total daily intake for most people.

¹⁷ Additionally, the Colossal Burger from Ruby Tuesday (which has been removed from their menu), made with two large beef patties, a triple bun and two different kinds of cheese, adds up to 1,940 calories and a whopping 141 grams of fat (Hurley 2007 13).



Figure 5: The Farm Burger is made with two half-pound beef patties, a half-pound fried chicken breast, cheese, seven strips of bacon, a fried egg and onion strings.

(Source: Man vs. Food Nation, Season 4, Episode 11)

Additionally, in another “spice-and-quantity challenge,” Kyle Younger, a Tulsa, Oklahoma firefighter, has to finish a super-spicy, fourteen-inch pizza in under an hour. In addition to the spicy components like sauce and jalapenos, Joe Mamma’s Incinerator Pizza is topped with hot link sausages, pepperoni, salami and ham. To estimate the calories of this entire pizza, I consulted the nutritional information provided on the websites of two chain pizza restaurants: Pizza Hut and Little Caesars.¹⁸ If one slice of Pizza Hut’s 14” Meat Lovers pan pizza contains 310 calories and 12 grams of fat (Pizza Hut 2013), then a whole pizza would have approximately 3,000 calories and 120 grams of fat. The Incinerator Pizza is not meant to be shared, but to be consumed as quickly as possible, taking in a huge amount of calories in one sitting. Finally, participants of the Slap Shot Challenge at JP’s Eatery in Portsmouth, New Hampshire must finish fifteen sliders (miniature hamburgers), half a pound of French fries and a milkshake in half an hour. Although sliders may be small in size, according to CSPI data, they can still provide a large number of calories (J.Hurley 2009). The Original Slider, from the White Castle fast food chain, has 140 calories and 6 grams of fat per sandwich (Calorie King App). If the sliders from JP’s Eatery have calorie-counts anywhere close to White Castle sliders, just the hamburger portion of the challenge would have around 2,000 calories, not including the half-pound of french fries and milkshake.

3.4 Rejection of Health Concerns

Through the use of humour, *Diners*, *Eat Here* and *MVF* openly reject health concerns. The overall message goes against dietary guidelines that public health officials have recommended as a way to maintain a healthy diet. To stay a healthy weight through a balanced diet, the Food Guide suggests that fruits and vegetables compose the majority of one’s daily food intake (Health Canada 2011a, 11). The USDA MyPlate guidelines also suggest to visually divide the dinner plate to keep within suggested serving sizes for the different food groups. The ratio of the plate should be half vegetables, a quarter grain products and a quarter meat or meat alternatives (Choose MyPlate). According to these

¹⁸ One slice from the 14-inch, 3 Meat Treat pizza from Little Caesars has 280 calories and 12.9 grams of fat (Little Caesars).

recommendations, it is evident that vegetables should have precedence in a healthy diet. However, on the shows, vegetables are often degraded and meat— despite evidence of being unhealthy in large quantities— is glorified. For instance, while visiting The Tomahawk in Vancouver, the host of *You Gotta Eat Here!* visits the kitchen to show how its Skookum Chief burger is made. The burger consists of a beef patty, lettuce, tomato, pickles, cheese, bacon, a hot dog and a fried egg. There are three different kinds of meat products in this one dish, far surpassing the recommended serving amount for meat and alternatives. Presumably, patrons will eat this as one meal in one sitting, even though the recommendation for meat for females aged 14 and older is two servings, while for men of the same age it is three. What’s more, when the host interviews a teenage boy eating the Skookum burger, the boy says, “I watch lots and lots of documentaries at school about not eating meat and stuff, but it just doesn’t matter. It’s amazing, I love it” (*Eat Here* 101). The host laughs at the boy’s comment, and after tasting it himself, concludes “that’s a great burger!” (*Eat Here* 104). This is just one instance where taste trumps health. The rejection of the dietary recommendations for fruits and vegetables is also seen when Catuccia is making chili at the Red Top Diner in Winnipeg:

John: How much meat is this?

Chef: This is 20 lbs of hamburger.

John: That’s a lot of beef (as he’s pouring it into the pot), so when do we add the tomatoes?

Chef: Tomatoes? What tomatoes? I told you, I hate vegetables. (*Eat Here* 119)

Interestingly, the “Put it Into Practice” section of *Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide— A Resource for Educators and Communicators*, suggests cutting the amount of meat in chili in half and to substitute it with beans or other legumes (Health Canada 2011a , 4). While this recommendation is attempting to cut down the amounts of meat consumed, the exchange between Catucci and the chef at the Red Top Diner goes completely against what is recommended for a healthful diet.

While the majority of foods presented in these shows are meat dishes such as hamburgers, ribs, hot dogs and deli-meat sandwiches, there was one episode where the Pork Loin Kamatsu Salad was showcased. At the Traffic Jam and Snug restaurant in

Detroit, Michigan, Guy Fieri samples a salad made with lettuce, arugula, onions, watermelon and berries. However, what makes the salad stand out, according to Fieri, is that it is served on top of three large pieces of fried pork tenderloin and garnished with a hot sauce jellybean (*Diners* 1301). Fieri even refers to the fried pork as being a ‘guilty pleasure’ mixed with a healthier component (the salad) to make something creative. A salad seems unable to stand on its own, but has to have another element to make it more desirable, in this case, the meat. Moreover, rather than a leafy green salad, french fries and potato salad are most often the featured side dishes; while potatoes are a vegetable, being fried or tossed in mayonnaise diminishes its health benefits. Additionally, the ratio of meat, grains and vegetables on one plate is often skewed in favour of the meat, which covers half the plate, and the vegetables, if any, covering a quarter. There were also a number of restaurants that served fried chicken and waffles, with no vegetables at all.

The shows not only reject nutritional advice, they mock serious health issues like heart disease, which is the number one cause of death in North America (Hoyert 2012, 4). It has been determined that “being overweight or obese are major risk factors for heart disease and stroke” (Heart and Stroke Foundation 2011). Losing weight or maintaining a healthy body weight can help reduce the chances of developing heart disease and stroke, and can help manage other associated conditions like high blood pressure and high cholesterol (Heart and Stroke Foundation 2011). The shows minimize the seriousness of having a heart attack by poking fun at it. For example, a young man being interviewed while eating at Dangerous Dan’s in Toronto, refers to their ‘Coronary Burger’ as “heart-attack-alicious” (*Eat Here* 121). Other items on the restaurant’s menu include the Quadruple C, the “Colossal Colon Clogger Combo.” Similarly, while at the Harbour Diner in Hamilton, a younger man describes the lobster and crab macaroni and cheese as “really buttery, really heart-attacky all in one,” to which John Catucci laughs and replies “Really? Give me two” (*Eat Here* 103). The references to heart attacks continue as a woman describes a 9-pound hamburger, from Blondie’s in Winnipeg, that is made with 45 pieces of bacon and 30 pieces of cheese, as: “like a heart attack on a plate, but who could say no?” (*Eat Here* 116). At Blondie’s, John Catucci makes similar comments when faced with these giant burgers, such as “that’s ridiculous, my heart hurts” (*Eat Here* 116). Finally, when Guy Fieri visits the Red Wagon Café in Vancouver, and is told that

they are going to deep-fry bacon, his response is, “Do you know no boundaries? What are we going to serve this with, heart paddles? (*Diners* 13.4).

The three shows acknowledge that eating the food from these restaurants can cause weight gain, but treat it like a joke rather than a potential health issue. The shows, in a sense, celebrate being overweight, treating it as an embodied outcome of having good taste in food. Rather than take the opportunity to address the negative effects of overeating, or discuss eating these foods in moderation, the hosts and patrons disregard this problem. For instance, while visiting Pagliacci’s in Victoria, British Columbia, John Catucci is talking to a middle-aged man who is eating a dish called the Hemingway Short Story, which consists of tortellini stuffed with beef and three kinds of cheese and served in a cream sauce with bacon. Catucci asks if this restaurant has the best pasta in town. The man replies, “well I’m not an Italian obviously but...” and Catucci interrupts “...but if you eat enough pasta you could be.” The gentleman responds, “it does change you, but more down here” and points at his stomach, and the two men laugh (*Eat Here* 107). The same acknowledgement about the unhealthy aspect of the food is seen when Adam Richman visits Kuby’s Sausage House in Dallas. As Richman talks to a patron about which sausage he should try, the man points to Richman’s plate and says “I like the smoked brat right in the middle” to which Richman replies “smoked brat right in the middle? That’s exactly where it’s going to go” (*MVF* 4.13) and points to his own stomach; the two men then high five. Finally, while visiting Nye’s Polonaise Room in Minneapolis, a woman expresses that “the pierogies here will change your life, it’s amazing” and Fieri says, “it has changed my waistband too” (*Diners* 1312) and they laugh.

The hosts, who reflect a kind of “everyman” persona, often comment about their own weight. John Catucci is the thinnest of the three hosts, but often jokes that he doesn’t ever exercise. He is often shown struggling to stir or knead for any extended period of time, demonstrating that he is perhaps not in the best of shape. However, in an interview with the *National Post*, Catucci admits to travelling with a jump rope in order to avoid gaining weight while filming the show and explains, “I did gain a little weight while filming. Not much, but a little. I learned that I had to stop feeling sorry for myself [after

those big meals] and get up off the hotel bed” (Tucker 2012). There is only one instance in the first season of *You Gotta Eat Here!* where Catucci actually mentions that exercising after eating a big meal might be a good idea. After sampling the Philly cheese steak sandwiches and meatball subs at Philadelphia Kitchen in Orangeville, Ontario, Catucci asks the owner’s son if he thinks he should do some exercises since he had been eating and cooking all day. The son confirms that Catucci should do some exercises since the sandwiches are quite big. The next scene cuts to outside the restaurant where Catucci is doing jumping jacks (*Eat Here* 108). Although this exchange is meant to be comical, it is the only moment where exercise is brought up as something beneficial and that should be done in conjunction with eating large amounts of food. Otherwise, any concern for offsetting the indulgent eating through exercise is absent.

The two other hosts are overweight and often make comments about their fatness, often attributing their excess weight to their eating habits. While visiting the Boulevard Diner in Dunfolk, Maryland, Guy Fieri asks the chef if they modeled their giant deli meat sandwich after his fat head. Fieri even goes so far as to put his signature sunglasses on the sandwich and hold it up to his face in comparison (*Diners* 1308). As well, at the Counter Café in Austin, Texas, when Fieri is offered more gravy on his biscuit, he answers: “Do I want some gravy? This is body by gravy” (*Diners* 1405). Finally, as the chef at Union Woodshop in Clackston, Michigan explains that “everything is scratch made and a turn back to some of the forgotten techniques, charcuterie, sausage making, curing,” Fieri responds, “all my middle names by the way. That’s how I got this petite dancer’s figure” (*Diners* 1303). On *Man vs. Food Nation*, host Adam Richman makes similar comments about being overweight. While making waffles at Amy Ruth’s in New York the chef explains that adding malt to the batter adds air and fluffiness to the waffles. Richman comments to the camera, “I must be malted too, I’m kind of fluffy” (*MVF* 415). While sampling the signature whiskey steak at the Drover in Omaha, Nebraska, Richman asks a gentleman what makes him “come to the Drover for your steak fix.” The man explains, “I’ve been coming to the Drover for 32 years. One simple thing; I’ve never had a bad steak, and trust me,” as he puts his hands on his belly “I’ve had a lot of steak.” Richman simply laughs at his statement and responds, “I resemble that remark” (*Diners* 421).

When Adam Richman announced his retirement from competitive eating in 2012, it was not clear if this was due to health concerns or problems (Tepper, 2013). Interestingly, since leaving *Man vs. Food Nation* Richman has taken a new outlook on his diet and has lost a considerable amount of weight (see Figure 6). Richman explains that when he saw footage of his new television show and saw his oversized belly, that “It was unflattering. It sent me into a depression,” and realized something had to change (Hamm 2013). Working with a nutritionist, he started a calorie-restricted diet and cut out white flour and starchy food and in ten months, lost 70 pounds (Richman 2013). Since losing the weight, Richman has expressed that along with feeling more confident in the dating world, his mild sleep apnea has also disappeared (Hamm 2013). Onscreen, the hosts reject health concerns and promote indulgent lifestyles that can contribute to weight gain. However, off-screen, it would seem that they at least try to incorporate healthier habits. It would perhaps be more beneficial to all to include more of a balance, and be more forthcoming about the potential harmfulness of the food.



Figure 6: Host Adam Richman on December 14, 2011 (left), and after his weight loss (right) on August 15, 2013.

Source: The Huffington Post (Tepper 2013)

Part II

3.5 Public Health

The issue of weight management in the wake of rising obesity rates has shifted from being a matter of personal responsibility to a public health problem. The initial reaction of governments to the rising obesity levels was to provide information to the public in order for individuals to take responsibility for their own health. This included information on the factors that contribute to weight gain, obesity and its associated health issues, as well as recommendations on how to combat weight gain and maintain a healthy lifestyle (Nestle 2000). The discovery that obesity is linked to a combination of factors, including diet and exercise, has urged policy makers to examine the changing social, environmental and economic conditions associated with weight gain.

In recent years, public health advocates have been looking at the history of tobacco regulation for inspiration in obesity prevention measures (Mercer 2005). The long battle of tobacco control, led by litigation and regulation of the tobacco industry, provides an interesting model for public health advocates and officials. The lawsuits against the tobacco industry revealed years of collusion by the tobacco industry to hide the harmful effects of cigarettes, and helped lead the way for product regulations (Brandt 2007). In 1997, a class action suit against the tobacco industry was filed and brought to trial on behalf of 60 000 flight attendants who suffered from illnesses caused by exposure to second hand smoke; this case marked the first time the industry ever settled a case (Brandt 2007, 401-09). The exposure and public availability of the tobacco industry's internal documents gave individual litigation new weight and led to a number of victories in individual smoker's cases¹⁹ (Brandt 2007, 419).

¹⁹ Successful individual litigation against the tobacco industry include: In 1996, lung cancer victim Grady Carter was awarded \$750 000 in damages from Brown & Williamson. In 1998, a jury awarded Roland Maddox's family \$500 000 in compensatory damages and \$450 000 in punitive damages. And in 2001, lung cancer victim Richard Boeken was awarded \$3 billion dollars, but on appeal was reduced to \$50 million (Brandt 2007, 420).

While litigation against the food industry has proven to be less successful, it has still been explored as an option in the fight against obesity. In 2002, two American teenagers sued McDonalds, claiming the company was responsible for their obesity (Fried 2005, 274). The case was ultimately dismissed, and reflects the current unsuccessful efforts of fast food litigation. However, there was a successful lawsuit in Brazil against Pepsi and Coca-Cola. A public interest attorney sued the companies; the lawsuits were based on Brazilian consumer protection law and resulted in Pepsi having to place warning labels on its soft drinks (the case against Coca-Cola was dismissed) (Fried 2005, 278). While litigation against food companies may not yet be viable, other tobacco regulations like labeling, advertising restrictions and taxes on products seem more promising.

Some policy interventions have included banning vending machines in schools and regulating fast food restaurants, and taxes for unhealthy foods have been proposed (Bollinger 2011, 91). Other propositions have included banning food marketing towards children. Quebec is currently the only province in Canada that has a ban on advertising to children (Raine 2013, 243). However, regulating food is proving to be a complex issue, as Mello points out: "...antiobesity laws encounter strong opposition from some quarters on the grounds that they constitute paternalistic intervention into lifestyle choices and enfeeble the notion of personal responsibility. Such arguments echo those made in the early days of tobacco regulation" (Mello 2006, 2602). As well, there are some significant differences between the tobacco industry, the food industry, and their products. The complicated nature of creating food regulations is that while tobacco had essentially one product, the food industry consists of countless items. As well, cigarettes are recreational, whereas humans need to eat. And finally, where the addictive nature of tobacco has become well-documented, research on food addiction is relative new (Brownell 2009, 261). The fight in obesity prevention is clearly a complex issue, and involves not only battling food industry giants, but grappling with a product that is essential to life, has emotional and cultural significance, and which is often delicious.

Part I of this chapter has highlighted the ways in which these three food television shows promote unhealthy eating habits. While public health messages work to instill

healthy eating behaviours, these shows undermine such counsel and present conflicting information about food. Obesity prevention measures may have to consider the way in which food is represented in the media, especially television and specialty channels like the Food Network that have become an authoritative voice about food for millions of households. While warnings about violence, sex and adult language have become common on various television shows, no such regulations exist for ‘pornographic’ images of food and corresponding eating habits that may be harmful. By looking at relevant obesity prevention legislation and current broadcasting regulations for alcohol, violence and mature content, I will discuss recommendations that could be applied to regulate these shows.

A big step forward for public health has been the enactment of menu labeling laws in chain restaurants in the United States, and a similar bill has been proposed in Ontario. The previous section demonstrated how most people underestimate the number of calories in food. The discrepancy between estimated and actual calories increased as portions sizes grew. Weight management becomes more difficult when people fail to understand that a meal provided in a fast food establishment or chain restaurant may provide half or more of an entire day’s worth of calories. By providing calories on restaurant menus, public health officials hope to help consumers make healthier choices. With the help of nutritional information, consumers can choose a healthier option, replace an item in a combo meal with a lower calorie option or choose to eat somewhere else entirely. While many chain restaurants provide nutritional information online (McDonald’s, Burger King, Tim Horton’s, Boston Pizza, Tony Roma’s), public health advocates have voiced the need for that information to be made available at the point of sale. In the United States, mandatory menu labeling providing nutrition information was first implemented in 2008 in New York City (Bollinger 2011, 91). In March 2010, the federal government signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, “the first large-scale public policy to change the food environment and subsequently obesity” (Elbel 2011, 1). The law will require menu labeling in chain restaurants with over 20 locations, these restaurants are to provide calorie information on menu boards and printed menus. Additionally, other nutritional information such as sodium and fat content must be obtainable in writing upon request (FDA 2013). However, the FDA has still not made

a final ruling for menu labeling laws. On February 24, 2014, Ontario's Minister of Health proposed similar legislation. If passed, the law would make Ontario the first province in Canada to require nutritional menu labeling in restaurants (K. Grant 2014). The legislation would not only force restaurant chains with 20 or more locations to put calorie information on menus, but grocery and convenience store chains would also be subject to the law (K. Grant 2014).²⁰ These regulations stress the importance of consumers having the proper information regarding food, specifically so they can make wiser purchases. As well, having calories posted directly on menus, may be the push needed to change consumer attitudes, behaviours and industry production standards. If fast food chains are nudged into being more accountable for the caloric, sodium and fat contents in their meals, and if consumers begin to demand changes, these eateries could end up changing their menu offerings or portion sizes (Namba et al. 2013).

The current move towards providing nutrition information on restaurant menus provides an important backdrop with which to consider these shows. As was demonstrated in the previous section, it is very difficult to calculate the nutritional information of the food presented on these shows. Furthermore, the messages of "fresh" and "homemade" may confuse viewers, implying that the food has higher nutritional value than in fast food restaurants. Providing nutritional information for the food highlighted on these shows would be complicated, as they specifically focus on independently owned restaurants. It is difficult to enforce menu labeling for non-chain restaurants because the products are not standardized and therefore it is harder to provide definitive nutritional information on menus, which also may frequently change. Moreover, smaller, family-owned restaurants may not have the resources to conduct laboratory testing to provide such nutritional information. However, other health warnings may be used to inform viewers of the unhealthful nature of many of the dishes. For instance, banners at the bottom of the screen can explain that an 8-ounce hamburger patty is over the recommended daily serving size of 2.5 ounces for meat and alternatives.

²⁰ Presumably calorie information would be required for pre-made, ready to eat, take-out food sold at grocery and convenience stores.

With deep-fried foods, a message can be displayed explaining how this method of cooking increases fat and calories. Pop-ups could also indicate that healthier versions of these meals can be found on the show's website and be made at home. Currently, recipes for some of the dishes featured on *You Gotta Eat Here!* can be found on the Food Network Canada website. The recipe for the Turducken Style Club Sandwich from The Early Bird restaurant calls for making smoked duck bacon, smoked turkey breast, breaded chicken and maple mayonnaise. The instructions for the breaded chicken breast advises "Note: Use deep fryer for best results" (Food Network 2013b). Rather than encouraging people to make these unhealthy meals at home, the recipe could present healthier options. Ideally, however, approximate calorie counts would be provided for each featured dish. While posting calories onscreen next to 'extreme' dishes may undermine the indulgent aspects of these shows, the nutritional information should still be available. Again, banners at the bottom of the screen or pop-ups could alert viewers that calorie information is available online and should be consulted before visiting these or similar types of restaurants.

The regulation of consumer products that pose a risk to the user's health can provide a framework with which to consider food television. In order to warn consumers of the negative health effects of alcohol and cigarettes, warning labels have become the norm to inform of their potential dangers and deter their use. In Canada, cigarette packages are covered with health warnings and graphic images of the effects of smoking and warnings of the deadly cancer-causing contents of cigarettes (Health Canada 2012b). The rationale behind cigarette warnings is that consumers have a right to know the potential harms of smoking before deciding to take up the habit. In the United States, to inform consumers about another product's potential harm, warning labels are provided on alcoholic beverage containers. The Alcoholic Beverage Labeling Act of 1988 requires that alcohol produced or imported into the United States must provide the following health warning statement: GOVERNMENT WARNING: (1) According to the Surgeon General, women should not drink alcoholic beverages during pregnancy because of the risk of birth defects. (2) Consumption of alcoholic beverages impairs your ability to drive a car or operate machinery, and may cause health problems (GOP 2014). Additionally, health warnings are included in advertisements for these products and public health

advocates pushed for the regulation of television advertisements as well.

The excessive consumption of alcohol can lead to liver damage and other health problems like cancer, and driving while intoxicated is a danger to the consumer and society at large. Unlike cigarettes, however, alcohol advertisements are still permitted on television, but must comply with certain broadcasting codes. The Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission's Code for Broadcast Advertising of Alcoholic Beverages regulates alcohol advertising at the federal level. The Code is to ensure that "alcoholic beverage advertising does not contribute to the negative health and societal effects relating to excessive or inappropriate alcohol consumption" and "must not be designed to promote the general consumption of alcoholic beverages" (ASC 2011). The Code provides a number of guidelines for these ads, including prohibiting ones targeting underage drinkers, the use of imperative language to urge the purchase or consumption of alcohol and commercials can't imply or depict immoderate consumption (ASC 2011, 4-5). The regulation of alcohol advertising is, however, primarily self-regulated by the alcohol industry and functions by a public complaints system. Additionally, the inclusion of messages of social responsibility, like to 'please consume responsibly' or 'don't drink and drive' are self-imposed by the alcohol industry. These regulations and warnings can provide useful insight in another area where the over use of a product can have negative health effects: food.

One approach to help discourage the overconsumption of unhealthy foods that are featured on these shows is to provide similar warnings as seen with alcohol advertisements. When a plate piled high with french fries and a massive burger is shown close-up on screen, a disclaimer at the bottom could say: "high fat meals should be consumed in moderation" or "this meal is not part of a healthy, balanced diet and should only be consumed on occasion," or "a regular diet high in fat, sugar and sodium has been shown to contribute to obesity, heart disease and diabetes." Because advertising differs from program content— content is protected against censorship by freedom of speech, and so would be more difficult to regulate— warnings would have to be self-imposed such as is seen in alcohol advertisements; broadcasters would have to take responsibility to provide such warnings. The Broadcasting Act, however, plays a part in regulating

viewer advisories seen before television shows that contain violence or content intended for adult audiences. The inclusion of viewer advisories may be a more feasible option for a government intervention to regulate food television.

In Canada, the independent federal authority, the Canadian Radio-Television and Communications Commission (CRTC) is responsible for the regulation and supervision of the broadcast sector (Holznagel 1996, 197). A television broadcaster must obtain a license in order to operate. Through public hearings, the CRTC grants a broadcasting license for a period of seven years. As part of the conditions of obtaining and maintaining a license, the licensee must follow the broadcasting policy set forth in the *Broadcasting Act* (Holznagel 1996, 199). The threat of losing one's license helps licensees adhere to the broadcasting regulations; the CRTC can refuse the renewal of a license or revoke an existing one, although it is more common that a violation results in a fine (Holznagel 1996, 198- 200).

The regulation of the Canadian broadcast system is a combination of government control and industry self-regulation. The Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) creates guidelines for and represents the interests of its members: Canada's private broadcasters. Canadian broadcasters follow a Code of Ethics that is administered by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC), an independent, non-governmental organization created by the CAB. These guidelines or code of ethics are made into law as a condition of licensing by the CRTC. For example, the CAB published in 1987 the Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television Programming, and provided a revised code in 1993. The CRTC required the licensees of privately owned television stations to comply with the provision as a condition of license, beginning on January 1, 1994 (Grant, Keelyside & Racicot 1994, 334). The Code designates that broadcasters will provide a viewer advisory at the beginning of and during programming that contain scenes of violence or sexuality and is intended for an adult audience (Grant, Keelyside & Racicot 1994, 338). These viewer advisories are then a voluntary and pre-emptive act by private broadcasters, but are also reinforced through legislation in the *Broadcasting Act*; the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) oversees adherence to the code and responds to complaints if the code is violated.

Food Network Canada is a member of the CBSC, and as a private broadcaster must adhere to the broadcasting codes. If the content of food television programs can be potentially harmful to viewers, then warnings should come at the start of the shows. For example, the warning can advise viewers that, “The food that is about to be shown is not meant to be consumed on a regular basis. The overconsumption of foods containing large amounts of fat, saturated fat, sugar and sodium may lead to obesity and other related disorders including diabetes, cancer, heart disease and premature death.” While this might be the most extreme version, warnings could be formulated along these lines. Additionally, there are warnings on commercials and some television shows that state viewers should ‘not attempt the following because trained professionals are being used.’ There are no such warnings provided before the eating competition portion of *Man vs. Food Nation*. The competition portion does not feature professional competitive eaters, but the participants may have some previous experience in speed and quantity challenges. The lack of warnings perpetuates the idea that any viewer can attempt these eating challenges should they choose to visit one of the restaurants. A reoccurring message in many of the episodes is that many have tried these eating challenges, but most have failed. That means that there are a number of people who attempt to quickly finish the enormously sized portions of food, and if they fail, may take repeated attempts. The show invites viewers to try their hand at gorging in these restaurants, but without a health warning. If one were provided, people would at least be fore warned that eating contests might pose a risk to one’s health.

This chapter demonstrates that these shows promote unhealthy eating habits and can provide conflicting and confusing messages about food and health. Moreover, the current initiatives in obesity prevention policy, the current television regulations for alcohol and cigarette advertising, and violence and sexuality provide a framework for developing such policies for food television. It also demonstrates that there is an opportunity for public health advocates, private broadcasters and the CRTC to work together to formulate policy to aid in obesity prevention and allow broadcasters to still provide quality programming to their audiences.

Conclusion

The cooking show has gone through significant changes since it was first adapted for television in the early 1950s. The shift away from cooking instruction has made way for programming that focuses on eating. The search for the most unique, indulgent and extravagant foods allows viewers to watch people onscreen consume half-pound pastrami sandwiches, grilled cheese filled with meatloaf and mac and cheese, or fried chicken on top of waffles with maple butter sauce. This thesis has analyzed three eating-centered shows: *Diners, Drives-Ins and Dives*, *You Gotta Eat Here!* and *Man vs. Food Nation*. The popularity of these shows comes at a time when obesity has become a serious public health issue that impacts our society in both medical and economic terms.²¹ Despite this, public health officials and scholars concerned with obesity have largely ignored television shows like these. The nutritional value of the food promoted on these shows is downplayed or disregarded and is instead couched in tropes of “freshness,” “homemade” and “handmade” that can convey conflicting messages about food and health to viewers. This thesis illustrates these conflicting messages and situate these shows within current public health debates about obesity prevention, in the hopes of fostering discussion on possible regulations concerning this category of food television.

The first chapter of this thesis provides historical context and cultural analysis related to these three shows. As there is limited scholarly research on the travel/adventure/food sub-genre of cooking shows in general, and these three shows in particular, I draw on a number of different sources in order to provide some context for my analysis in Chapter 2. By tracing the history and evolution of the cooking show, *Diners*, *Eat Here* and *MVF* can be better situated and understood within the framework of contemporary food programming; the newer incarnations of the cooking show have an entertainment rather than an educational format, and especially in the case of these three

²¹ Obesity increases the risk of many diseases including cardiovascular disease, diabetes and some forms of cancer (Belasco 2008). Additionally, research has found that obesity can be an economic burden and in Canada the estimated cost of obesity was \$4.6 billion in 2008; this is approximately a 20% increase since 2000 (Gotay et al. 2013, 64).

shows, provide little by way of cooking instruction. Moreover, the shows reject traditional conventions associated with the more “feminine” instructional cooking show and use more “masculine” themes to broaden the potential audience. Through the use of adventurous language and the association with the outdoors and the open road, the narrative becomes one of a dynamic eating journey, far removed from the domestic kitchen space of earlier programming. The frequent use of male slang, rock and roll and sports metaphors also work to dissociate cooking as domestic female labour, promoting instead the more typically ‘masculine’ notions of professionalism and leisure activity.

In addition, the three shows all embody a theme of excess and elements of the carnivalesque. The emphasis on full and chewing mouths, food-filled faces, eating with hands and enormous and overflowing amounts of food—which would normally be deemed gluttonous, but here is revered—gives a sense of “the world upside down” (Stallybrass & White 1986, 4) where social norms and etiquette are turned on its head. The praise for excess can be seen both in the promotion of the large servings of food as well as in the eating competition portion on *Man vs. Food Nation*. The history of eating competitions in the United States provides context to the resurgence of this spectacle of excess and explanatory power to this recurring segment in *MVF*. Although eating contests have had a place in American society for generations, the origins of professional competitive eating can be traced back to the Nathan’s Famous hot dog eating contest on Coney Island in 1916. The link between meat, masculinity, and consuming large amounts of food is reinforced through *MVF*, as only two out of twenty seven eating challenge contestants are women. Moreover, the eating contest segment can be read in a number of ways. First, by framing the eating contest as similar to professional competitive eating, contestants can achieve their fifteen minutes of fame. Second, the significance of *MVF* being broadcast during an economic downturn can be construed as reinforcing the American Dream; with a little hard work and determination, anyone can make it. Finally, the eating contest can be interpreted as a cathartic experience, where viewers can vicariously, perhaps even therapeutically, engage with their anxieties about food.

Alongside the food that is served, these television shows highlight certain types of restaurants, represented as quasi-civic spaces where people can interact socially or even

recapture a mythical past centered on family togetherness or community spirit, a time before the coming of McDonald's or strip malls. These restaurants are mostly small, independently owned businesses, the proverbial "mom and pop" operation. The shows openly reject fast food and chain restaurants. The independent restaurants are positioned as antithetical to the impersonal, mass-produced nature of fast food. The food at these restaurants is touted as being homemade and handmade, (the 'real deal') and authentic. Their chefs and owners are heralded as important figures in the community. The shows create a sense of nostalgia for a "Golden Age" before the rise of chain restaurants and for a dining experience that is seemingly lost in our fast food society; the feeling of nostalgia is only enhanced by the fact that many of the destinations are restaurants with longstanding histories or are refurbished diners. The resurgence of the diner comes at a time when most people eat on the go and away from home and are missing the comfort of a good home-cooked meal. The shows use the history of the diner as a democratic space, fostering camaraderie and familial bonding that serves up homemade food to provoke this nostalgia. However, this creates a paradox of promoting homemade and hand-made food, although the way to attain it is by visiting a restaurant.

The third chapter of this thesis is concerned with how health is addressed on these shows. This chapter is divided into two parts, with Part One analyzing the actual food that is presented on these shows and how nutrition standards and health concerns are downplayed or openly rejected. The featured dishes, often deep-fried or made with large amounts of butter, cream, cheese or meat, most often violate public health recommendations for maintaining a healthy diet. The shows promote such ingredients as the requisite components of comfort foods. They not only encourage excessive eating, but reject the notion that these salt- and fat-laden foods pose a risk to one's health. Furthermore, the shows treat serious issues like heart disease, quite literally, as a joke while celebrating binge eating and large waistlines. The conflicting messages about food are only compounded by the oversized portions characteristic of these restaurants. While the huge servings are extolled as a sign of a good restaurant, many viewers are not aware how much they actually exceed recommended serving sizes. Studies have shown that as portion sizes increase, the ability to estimate calories decreases (Wansink & Chandon 2006; Burton 2006; Young & Nestle 2012). Combine this difficulty with the messages of

homemade, handmade and ‘fresh’ foods and the nutritional value of these dishes becomes even more convoluted. Moreover, the oversized portions served at these restaurants become normalized, and viewers may not understand just how unhealthy these items are, and can even be led to believe that these foods are somehow healthier than typical fast food.

Part Two of the third chapter frames these shows within current public health debates about obesity prevention. The obesity debate has been largely influenced by the tobacco control movement and provides a model for public health advocates. Some of the tactics that proved fruitful in the tobacco wars, like litigation, has yet to be successful in obesity prevention efforts. Food television has not been considered in the current debates about obesity prevention. This thesis tries to demonstrate the conflicting messages about food and health that food television can convey. By considering some of the proposed and enacted measures for obesity policy and regulation, this section discusses some of the possible ways these kinds of shows could be regulated. The fact that television broadcasters require a license in order to operate and must follow certain broadcast codes that set conditions for the televised treatment of coarse language, violence and nudity, opens the door to at least considering similar types of regulations for shows celebrating unhealthy eating. The option of providing warnings or viewer advisories is a potential way to help viewers become informed about the unhealthy messages in these shows. As well, the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) might consider such advisories or warnings as part of the conditions of broadcast licensing. Through the combined efforts of public health advocates, private broadcasters and the CRTC, problematic forms of food television could be subjected to comparable regulations governing the broadcasting of alcohol advertising and general portrayals of violence and coarse language.

The influence of food television in shaping attitudes about food and eating has long been overlooked by obesity prevention research. For instance, when in the 1950s, Julia Child used broccoli in a cooking show, the vegetable sold out within 200 miles of the broadcast station. Moreover, Charles Williams, of the kitchen equipment store Williams-Sonoma, remarked in 1995 that when he opened his store in 1956, most of the

baking equipment he carried was unfamiliar to many, but Julia changed all of that, noting “[...] her shows clearly impacted what people bought, even the very next morning” (Fitch 1997, 301). As influential as Julia Child was and remains today, her legacy began in the pre-Food Network era, when food television was not available twenty-four hours a day and was limited to public stations. The Food Network is available in over 100 million households in the United States and averages more than 9.9 million unique web users monthly (News Release 2012). What this indicates to me is that food television presents a promising opportunity to promote healthy food in a positive and compelling way.

In an interview with *The Daily Variety* in 2002, Judy Girard, then-president of the Food Network said of their programming: "It's not an accident...Food affects everybody - there is a way to tap into an emotional connection to everybody on some level with food" (Oei 2002). Why then, must food television tap into an emotional connection with fat- and salt-laden comfort foods? Rather than associate many of the important social and cultural aspects of food and eating— like community, comfort and love, — with unhealthy foods and oversized portions — food television can connect these aspects with healthier options. The potential is there to promote the benefits of small, family-run restaurants that serve local and handmade food. Previous research (Caraher et al. 2000; Clifford et al 2004; Clifford et al 2009; Lai-Yeung and So 2010; Malene 2011) has explored the possibility of cooking programs to disseminate nutritional information; their findings revealed that most people would be receptive to food television offering health information. Celebrity chef Jamie Oliver has used his fame to promote healthy eating habits; the mission of his television specials *Ministry of Food* (2008), *Jamie's School Dinners* (2005) and series *Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution* (2010-2011) is to establish healthy eating as part of daily life and documents his efforts to positively change food environments in schools and communities. The travel/adventure/food subgenre of the cooking show could become a platform or opportunity to showcase restaurants that are unique and independently owned, healthy and delicious. Whether by regulation or by attempting to change the kinds of messages these shows perpetuate, there should be greater importance placed on inserting food television into current debates about obesity prevention.

Bibliography

- Adema, Pauline. 2000. "Vicarious Consumption: Food, Television, and the Ambiguity of Modernity." *Journal of American Culture* 23, no.3: 113-23.
- Aden, Roger C. 1995. "Nostalgic Communication as Temporal Escape: *When it Was a Game's* Re-construction of a Baseball/Work Community." *Western Journal of Communication*, 59: 20-38.
- ASC. 2011. "ASC Alcoholic Beverage Advertising Clearance Guide." Advertising Standards Canada. Accessed May 2014
<http://www.adstandards.com/en/clearance/alcoholicBeverages/ASCAcoholicBeverageAdvertisingClearanceGuide.pdf>
- Ashley, Bob, Joanne Hollows, Steve Jones and Ben Taylor. 2004. *Food and Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1998. "Carnival and the Carnavalesque." In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, edited by John Storey, 2nd ed., 250–59. London: Prentice Hall.
- Barbas, Samantha. 2002. "Just like Home: 'Home Cooking' and the Domestication of the American Restaurant." *Gastronomica* 2, no.4: 43-52.
- Beales, Howard J and Robert Kulick. 2013. "Does Advertising on Television Cause Childhood Obesity? A Longitudinal Analysis." *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* 32, no. 2 (Fall): 185-194.
- Belasco, Warren. 2004. "Towards a Culinary Common Denominator: The Rise of Howard Johnson's, 1925-1940." *Journal of American Culture* 2, no.3: 503-518.
- . 2008. *Food: The Key Concepts*. Oxford: Berg.
- Blumenthal, Howard J. and Oliver R. Goodenough. 2006. *This Business of Television*. 3rd ed. New York: Billboard Books.
- Bodenlos, Jamie S., and Bernadette M. Wormuth. 2013. Watching a Food-Related Television Show and Caloric Intake: A Laboratory Study. *Appetite* 61: 8-12.
- Bollinger, Bryan, Phillip Leslie, and Alan Sorensen. 2011. "Calorie Posting in Chain Restaurants." *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 3, no.1 (February): 91-128.
- Botterill, Jacqueline and Stephen Kline. 2012. "From Counting Calories to Fun Food: Regulating the TV Diet in the Age of Obesity." In *Visual Communication and Culture Images in Action*, edited by Jonathan Fine, 397-408. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.

- Brandt, Allan M. 2007. *The Cigarette Century: The rise, fall, and Deadly Persistence of the Product that Defined America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Brost, Lori A. 2000. *Television Cooking Shows: Defining the Genre*. PhD diss., Indiana University.
- Brown, Stephen. 2001. *Marketing: The Retro Revolution*. London: Sage Publications.
- Brownell, Kelly D, and Kenneth E. Warner. 2009. "The Perils of Ignoring History: Big Tobacco Played Dirty and Millions Died. How Similar Is Big Food?" *Milbank Quarterly* 87, no.1: 259-94.
- Buerkle, C Wesley. 2009. "Metrosexuality Can Stuff It: Beef Consumption as (Heteromasculine) Fortification." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 29, no.1: 77-93.
- Burger King Corporation. 2013. "Nutritional Information." Burger King Canada. Accessed March 2014.
http://www.burgerking.ca/cms/en/ca/cms_out/digital_assets/files/pages/MenuNutritionInformation_October2013_EN.pdf
- Burton, Scot, Elizabeth H Creyer, Jeremy Kees and Kyle Huggins. 2006. "Attacking the Obesity Epidemic: The Potential Health Benefits of Providing Nutritional Information in Restaurants." *American Journal of Public Health* 96, no.9 (September): 1669-75.
- CAB. 2002. "Canadian Association of Broadcasters' Code of Ethics." Canadian Association of Broadcasters (June). Accessed May 16 2014 <http://www.cab-acr.ca/english/social/codes/ethics.shtm#background>
- Calorie King App. "White Castle." Accessed March 2014.
- Caraher, Martin, Tim Lange and Paul Dixon. 2000. "The Influence of TV and Celebrity Chefs on Public Attitudes and Behavior Among the English Public." *Journal for the Study of Food and Society* 4, no.1 (Spring): 27-46.
- CBSC.2014. "Welcome to the CBSC." The Canadian Broadcast Standards Council. Accessed May 16, 2014. <http://www.cbsc.ca/english/index.php>
- CDC. 2006. "Incorporating Away-from-home food into a healthy eating plan." *Research in Practice Series No. 6*. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity. Accessed February 2014.
http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/pdf/r2p_away_from_home_food.pdf

- CDC. 2012. "Overweight and Obesity." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Last modified August 13. Accessed May 9, 2014.
<http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>
- Cha, Frances. 2014. "South Korea's Online Trend: Paying to Watch a Pretty Girl Eat." *CNN World*, February 2. Accessed May 9, 2014
<http://www.cnn.com/2014/01/29/world/asia/korea-eating-room/>
- Chan, Andrew. 2003. "La Grande Bouffe: Cooking Shows as Pornography." *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 3, no.4: 47-53.
- Chase, Malcolm and Christopher Shaw, eds. 1989. "The Dimensions of Nostalgia" in *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Cheyne Andrew D, Lori Dorfman, Eliana Bukofzer and Jennifer L Harris. 2013. "Marketing Sugary Cereals to Children in the Digital Age: A Content Analysis of 17 Child-Targeted Websites." *Journal of Health Communication* 1, (February):1-20.
- Choose MyPlate. 2014. "What Foods are in the Vegetable Group?" United States Department of Agriculture. Accessed February 2014.
<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/vegetables.html>
- Clifford, Dawn and Jennifer Anderson and Garry Auld. 2004. "The Use of Mass Media Channels on a College Campus to Disseminate Nutrition Information." *Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition*. Colorado State University.
- . 2009. "Good Grubbin': Impact of a TV Cooking Show for College Students Living Off Campus." *Journal of Nutrition and Behavior* 41, no.3: 194-200.
- Cohen, Deborah A, and Rajiv Bhatia. 2012. "Nutrition Standards for Away-from-home Foods in the United States." *Obesity Review* 26, no.7 (July): 618-29.
- Cohen, Joshua. 2014. "Epic Meal Time' Gets 16- Episode TV Show Order from A+E's FYI." *Tubefilter*. February 26. Accessed May 9, 2014
<http://www.tubefilter.com/2014/02/26/epic-meal-time-tv-show-fyi/>
- Collins, Kathleen. 2009. *Watching What We Eat: The Evolution of Television Cooking Shows*. New York: Continuum.
- .2012. "A Kitchen of One's Own: The Paradox of Dione Lucas." *Camera Obscura* 27, no.2: 1-23.
- Congalton, Jeanine K. 2009. "Competitive Eating as Sport: A Simple Recipe for Everyone." In *Sporting Rhetoric: Performance, Games & Politics*, edited by Barry Brummett, 175-95. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

- Counihan, Carole and Penny Van Esterik. 1997. "Introduction." In *Food and Cultural Studies: A Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 1-19. New York: Routledge.
- Cruz, Ariane. 2013. "Getting' Down Home with the Neelys: Gastro-Porn and Televisual Performances of Gender, Race and Sexuality." *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, 23 no.3: 323-49.
- CSPI. 2003. "Anyone's Guess: The need for nutrition labeling at fast-food and other chain restaurants." Washington, DC. November. Center for Science in the Public Interest. <http://www.cspinet.org/restaurantreport.pdf>
- Cultrera, Larry. 1999. "Foreword." in *The American Diner*. Michael Karl Witzel. Minneapolis: MBI Publishing Company.
- Davis, Fred. 1979. *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*. New York: The Free Press.
- Dentith, Simon. 1995. *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Desrochers, Debra M and Debra J Holt. 2007. "Exposure to Television Advertising: Implications for Childhood Obesity." *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* 26, no. 2 (Fall): 182-201.
- Diliberti, Nicole, Peter L Bordi, Martha T Conklin, Liane S Roe, and Barbara J Rolls. 2004. "Increased Portion Size Leads to Increased Energy Intake in a Restaurant Meal." *Obesity Research* 12, no.3 (March):562-68.
- Elbel, Brian. 2011. "Consumer Estimation of Recommended and Actual Calories at Fast Food Restaurants." *Obesity (Silver Spring)* 19, no.10 (October): 1971-78.
- Everett, Linda. 2002. *Retro Diner: Comfort Food from the American Roadside*. Portland: Collectors Press Inc.
- Fagone, Jason. 2006. *Horsemen of the Esophagus: Competitive Eating and the big fat American Dream*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Fiske, John. 2008. "The Carnavalesque." *The Popular Tabloid Culture Reader*. edited by Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn, 116-21. New York: Open University Press.
- FDA. 2013. "Menu & Vending Machines Labeling Requirements." US Food and Drug Administration. Last updated March 16 2013. Accessed March 2014. <http://www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/LabelingNutrition/ucm217762.htm>

- . 2011. “Food labeling; Nutrition Labeling of Standard Menu Items in Restaurants and Similar Retail Food Establishments; Proposed Rule.” *Federal Register* vol 76, no. 66 Wednesday April 6, 2011 <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-04-06/html/2011-7940.htm>
- Fitch, Noel Riley. 1997. *Appetite for Life: The Biography of Julia Child*. New York: Doubleday
- Food Network Canada. 2013a. “About the Show: You Gotta Eat Here!” [Foodnetwork.ca](http://www.foodnetwork.ca/ontv/shows/you-gotta-eathere/show.html?titleid=265117&type=specialshow). Accessed December 2013. <http://www.foodnetwork.ca/ontv/shows/you-gotta-eathere/show.html?titleid=265117&type=specialshow>
- . 2013b. “Turducken Style Club Sandwich.” [Foodnetwork.ca](http://www.foodnetwork.ca/recipe/turducken-style-club-sandwich/13558/) Accessed March 2014. <http://www.foodnetwork.ca/recipe/turducken-style-club-sandwich/13558/>
- Fried, Ellen J. 2005. “The Potential for Policy Initiatives to Address the Obesity Epidemic: A Legal Perspective from the United States.” *Obesity Prevention and Public Health*, edited by David Crawford & Robert W. Jeffrey, 265-83. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gallagher, Mark. 2004. “hat’s So Funny About Iron Chef?” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 31, no.4: 176-184.
- Getz Rouse, Morleen. 1979. “Daytime Radio Programming for the Homemaker, 1926-1956.” *Journal of Popular Culture* 12, no. 2: 315-27.
- GOP. 2014. “Title 27: Alcohol, Tobacco Products and Firearms: Part 16—Alcoholic Beverage Health Warning Statement.” Government Printing Office: Electronic Code of Federal Regulations. <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr;sid=33fc0c0194b58b6fe95208945b5c637a;rgn=div5;view=text;node=27%3A1.0.1.1.12;idno=27;cc=ecfr>
- Gotay, Carolyn C, Peter T Katzmarzyk, Ian Janssen, Marliese Y Dawson, Khatereh Aminoltejari and Nicci L Bartley. 2013. “Updating the Canadian Obesity Maps: An Epidemic in Process.” *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 104, no. 1: 64-68.
- Grant, Peter S, Anthony H.A Keelyside and Michel Racicot. 1994. “1994-95 Canadian Broadcast and Cable Regulatory Handbook: Statutes, Regulations, Directions, Orders, Procedures, Codes and Policies relating to the regulation of broadcasting stations and networks, cable television systems and satellite programming services in Canada.” Vancouver: McCarthy Tetrault.

Grant, Kelly. 2014. "Ontario to Require Chain Restaurants to Serve up Calorie Counts." *The Globe and Mail*, February 24. Accessed February 27, 2014. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/ontario-to-move-ahead-with-calorie-counts-on-fast-food-chain-menus/article17063860/>

Gutman, Richard and Elliot Kaufman. 1979. *American Diner*. New York: Harper & Row.

Gutman, Richard. 1993. *American Diner: Then and Now*. New York: HarperCollins Publisher Inc.

Haley, Andrew P. 2011. *Turning the Tables: Restaurants and the Rise of the American Middle Class, 1880-1920*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Halloran, Vivian. 2004. "Biting Reality: Extreme Eating and the Fascination with the Gustatory Abject." *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 4: 27-42.

Hamm, Liza. 2013. "Adam Richman: Man v. Weight Loss." *People Magazine*, September 23. Accessed March 3, 2014. <http://www.people.com/people/archive/article/0,,20734591,00.html>

Hansen, Signe. 2008. "Society of the Appetite: Celebrity Chefs Deliver Consumers." *Food, Culture & Society* 2, no.1 (March): 50-67.

Harris, Paul. 2009. "How Detroit, the Motor City, Turned into a Ghost Town." *The Guardian*, Sunday, November 1. Accessed May 27, 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/01/detroit-michigan-economy-recession-unemployment>

Harris, Jennifer L and John A Bargh. 2009. "Television Viewing and Unhealthy Diet: Implications for Children and Media Interventions." *Health Communication* 24: 660-673.

———. and Samantha K Graff. 2011. "Protecting Children from Harmful Food Marketing: Options for Local Government to Make a Difference." *Preventing Chronic Disease* 8, no. 5 (September): 1-7.

Health Canada. 2011a. "Eating Well With Canada's Food Guide: A Resource for Educators and Communicators." Accessed February 2014. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/alt_formats/hpfb-dgpsa/pdf/pubs/res-educat-eng.pdf

———. 2011b. "Estimated Energy Requirements." Canada's Food Guide. Accessed February 2014. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/basics-base/1_1_1-eng.php

- . 2012a. "Fats: the good the bad and the ugly." Health Canada Healthy Living. Accessed February 2014. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/med/fats-gras-eng.php>
- . 2012b. "Tobacco Products Labelling Regulations (Cigarettes and Little Cigars)." Health Canada Health Concerns. Accessed May 25, 2014 <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/tobac-tabac/legislation/reg/label-etiquette/index-eng.php>
- Heart and Stroke Foundation. 2011. "Being Overweight." Heartandstroke.com. Accessed February 2014. http://www.heartandstroke.com/site/c.ikIQLcMWJtE/b.3484031/k.1E66/Heart_disease__Being_overweight.htm
- Heinz, Betina and Ronald Lee. 1998. "Getting Down to the Meat: The Symbolic Construction of Meat Consumption." *Communication Studies* 49, no.1: 86-99.
- Herron, Jerry. 2007. "Detroit: Disaster Deferred, Disaster in Progress." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106, no. 4 (Fall): 663-682.
- Hirschman, Linda. 2006. "Foodsigns on the Highway of Life: The Semiotics of the Diner." *Advances in Consumer Research* 33: 607-12.
- Hollows, Joanne. 2003. "Oliver's Twist: Leisure, Labour and Domestic Masculinity in the Naked Chef." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6, no. 2: 229-48.
- Holznagel, Bernd. 1996. "Canada." In *Regulating Media: The Licensing and Supervision of Broadcasting in Six Countries*, edited by Wolfgang Hoffman-Riem. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Hoyert, Donna and Jiaquan Xu. 2012. *National Vital Statistic Reports* 61, no.6 (October). Accessed April 2014 http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr61/nvsr61_06.pdf
- Hurley, Andrew. 1997. "From Hash House to Family Restaurant: The Transformation of the Diner and Post-World War II Consumer Culture." *The Journal of American History* 83, no.4: 1282-1308.
- . 2001. *Diners, Bowling Alleys and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in the Postwar Consumer Culture*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hurley, Jayne and Bonnie Liebman. 2007. "X-treme Eating 2007: Increasingly Indulgent menus entice diners to pig out." *Nutrition Action HealthLetter*. March. CSPI. Cspinet.org, <http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/xtremeeating.pdf>
- . 2009. "X-treme Eating 2009: Care for an entrée with your entrée?" *Nutrition Action HealthLetter*. June. http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/x-treme_eating.pdf

- . 2013. “X-treme Eating 2013” Nutrition Action HealthLetter. January/February. http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/extreme_eating_2013.pdf
- Johnston, Josee and Shyon Baumann. 2010. *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape*. New York: Routledge.
- Jou, Chin. 2014. “Neither Welcomed, Nor Refused: Race and Restaurants in Postwar New York City.” *Journal of Urban History* 40, no. 2: 232-51.
- Julier, A and Laura Lindenfeld. 2005. “Mapping Men onto the Menu: Masculinities and Food.” *Food & Foodways* 13, no.1: 1-16.
- Kant, Ashima K and Barry I Graubard. 2003. “Eating Out in America: 1987-200: Trends and Nutritional Correlates.” *Preventative Medicine* 38: 243-249.
- Ketchum, Cheri. 2005. “The Essence of Cooking Shows: How the Food Network Constructs Consumer Fantasies.” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 29, no.3: 217-34.
- Kline, Stephen. 2011. *Globesity, Food Marketing and Family Lifestyles*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lai-Yeung, Theresa Wai Ling and Simon Wing Wah So. 2010. TV as Multimedia Synchronous Communication for Cooking and Eating Activities: Analysis of TV Cooking Shows in Hong Kong. Conference Paper presented at the IEEE International Symposium on Multimedia: 302-307.
- Levenstein, Harvey. 1993. *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Little Caesars. “Nutrition Information.” Little Caesars of Canada. Accessed March 2014. <http://www.littlecaesars.ca/Portals/0/Images/nutrition-ca.pdf>
- Lowenthal, David. 1989. “Nostalgia Tells it Like it Wasn’t” in *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, eds Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Mail Foreign Service. 2012. “Is Nigella Making You Fat? TV Cookery Shows Make us Tuck Into Unhealthy Snacks.” November 14. Accessed May 9 2014 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2232441/Is-Nigella-making-fat-TV-cookery-shows-make-tuck-unhealthy-snacks.html>
- Malene, Devon. 2011. “Accessorizing with Food: Cooking Shows and Cultural Values.” MA Thesis. School of Communication.

- McDonalds. 2014. "Nutrition Centre." Mcdonalds.ca Accessed March 2014.
http://www.mcdonalds.ca/ca/en/food/nutrition_centre.html#/
- McKay, Hollie. 2011. "Do Cooking Shows Make you fat?" *Fox 411*. May 10. Accessed May 9, 2014 <http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2011/05/10/cooking-shows-make-fat/>
- Manzo, Joseph. T. 1990. "From Pushcart to Modular Restaurant: The Diner on the Landscape." *Journal of American Culture* 13, no.3: 13-21.
- Mello, Michelle M, David M Studdert and Troyen A Brennan. 2006. "Obesity—the New Frontier of Public Health Law." *The New England Journal of Medicine* 354, no.24: 2601-10.
- Mercer, Shawna L, Laure Kettel Khan, Lawrence W Green , Abby C. Rosenthal, Rose Nathan, Corinne G.Husten and William H Dietz. 2005. "Drawing Possible Lessons for Obesity Prevention and Control from the Tobacco Control Experience." *Obesity Prevention and Public Health*, edited by David Crawford & Robert W. Jeffrey, 231-63. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Merrigan, Gerianne, Carole L.Houston, and Russell Johnston. 2012. *Communication Research Methods*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Miller, Toby. 2007. *Cultural Citizenship: Cosmopolitanism, Consumerism, and Television in a Neoliberal Age*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Mitchell, Nia, Vicki Catenacci, Holly R Wyatt and James O Hill. 2011. "Obesity: Overview of an Epidemic." *Psychiatric Clinic of North America* 43, no.4 (December): 717-32.
- MLE. 2014. "About." International Federation of Competitive Eating Inc. Accessed March 2014.<http://www.ifoce.com/about.php>
- Moskin, Julia. 2010. "Guy Fieri, Chef-Dude, Is in the House." *The New York Times*, August 10. Accessed December 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/11/dining/11Fieri.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
- Moss, Michael. 2013. *Salt, Sugar, Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us*. New York: Random House.
- Naccarato, Peter and Kathleen LeBesco. 2012. When the Travel Channel eats: Class, Identity, and Eating to Excess in Television Food Shows. *Blue Collar Pop Culture: from Nascar to Jersey Shore Vol. 2: Television and the Culture of Everyday Life*. Ed. M Keith Booker. Santa Barbara: Praeger.

- Namba, Alexa, Amy Auchincloss, Beth L Leonberg and Margo G Wootan. 2013. "Exploratory Analysis of Fast-Food Chain Restaurant Menus Before and After Implementation of Local Calorie-Labeling Policies, 2005-2011." *Preventing Chronic Disease* 10, (June 20): 1-8. Accessed February 4, 2014 <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd10.120224>.
- Nathanson, Elizabeth. 2009. "As Easy as Pie: Cooking Shows, Domestic Efficiency, and Postfeminist Temporality." *Television New Media* 10, no. 4: 311-30.
- Nerz, Ryan. 2006. *Eat this Book: A Year of Gorging and Glory on the Competitive Eating Circuit*. New York: St-Martin's Press.
- Nestle, Marion and Michael F Jacobson. 2000. "Halting the Obesity Epidemic: A Public Health Policy Approach." *Public Health Reports* 115, (January/February): 12-34.
- News Release. 2012. Food Network Drew Record Viewership in 2012. Scripps Network Interactive. December 11. Accessed May 9 2014. <http://www.scrippsnetworksinteractive.com/newsroom/company-news/Food-Network-drew-record-viewership-in-2012/>
- Oei, Lily. 2002. "Food Net Cooks Specials." *Daily Variety*, April 4. *Academic OneFile*. Web. Accessed April 4, 2014.
- Philipov, Michelle. 2013a. "Mastering obesity: MasterChef Australia and the resistance to public health nutrition." *Media Culture Society* 35, no.4: 506-15.
- . 2013b. "Resisting Health: Extreme Food and the Culinary Abject." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 30, no.5 (December): 377-90.
- Pillsbury, Richard. 1990. *From Boarding House to Bistro*. Cambridge: Unwin Hyman Inc..
- Pizza Hut. 2013. "Nutrition." Yum Restaurants International (Canada) Company. Accessed March 2014. <http://www.pizzahut.ca/nutrition/>
- Pollan, Michael. 2009. Out of the Kitchen, Onto the Couch. *The New York Times*. August 2, Accessed 18 April 2013 < <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/02/magazine/02cooking-t.html?pagewanted=all>>
- Poniewozik, James. 2001. "Selling the Sizzle, Not the Steak." *Time* 157, no.2: 121 *Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost*. Accessed March 25 2014
- Public Health Agency of Canada. 2011. "Obesity in Canada." Last modified June 23. Accessed June 4 2013. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/oic-oac/index-eng.php>

- Raine, Kim D, Tim Lobstein, Jane Landon, Monique Potvin Kent, Suzie Pellerin, Timothy Caufield, Diane Finegood, Lyne Mongeau, Neil NEary and John C. Spence. 2013. "Restricting Marketing to Children: Consensus on Policy Interventions to Address Obesity." *Journal of Public Health Policy* 34, no.2: 239-53.
- Ray, Krishnendu. 2007. "Domesticating Cuisine: Food and Aesthetics on American Television." *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 7, no.1: 50-63.
- Richman, Adam. 2013. "Man vs. Flab." *Men's Health*, December 16. Accessed March 3 2014. <http://www.menshealth.com/weight-loss/man-v-flab>
- Ritzer, George. 2011. *The McDonaldization of Society* 6. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.
- Rogers, Thomas. 2010. "How Food Television is Changing America." *Salon*, February 26, http://www.salon.com/2010/02/26/food_network_krishnendu_ray/
- Rousseau, Signe. 2012. *Food Media: Celebrity Chefs and the Politics of Everyday Interference*. London: Berg.
- Rubin, Lawrence C. 2008. "Beyond Bread and Circuses: Professional Competitive Eating." *Food for Thought: Essays on Eating and Culture*, edited by Lawrence C. Rubin, 248-64. North Carolina: McFarland & Company.
- Ryan, Breant D and Daniel Campo. 2012. "Autopia's End: The Decline and Fall of Detroit's Automotive Manufacturing Landscape." *Journal of Planning History* 1 2, no. 2: 95-132.
- Sachdev, Ameet. 2001. "Big Mac and a Side of Meatloaf." *The ChicagoTribune*. March 15. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2001-03-15/business/0103150268_1_golden-arch-cafe-happy-meals-mcdonald
- Salkin, Allen. 2013. *From Scratch: Inside the Food Network*. G.P Putnam's Sons. New York
- Shimizu, Mitsuru and Brian Wansink. 2011. "Watching Food-Related Television Increases Caloric Intake in Restrained Eaters." *Appetite* 57: 661-64.
- Spang, Rebecca. 2003. "Restaurants." *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture vol 2*, edited by Solomon H. Katz and William Woys Weaver 179-86. New York: Scribner.
- Stern, Jane and Michael Stern. 1991. *American Gourmet: Classic Recipes, Deluxe Delights, Falmboyant Favorites, and Swank "Company" Food from the '50s and '60s*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

- Stewart, David. 1999. *The PBS Companion: A History of Public Television*. New York: TV Books.
- Stilson, Janet. 2006. "Michael Smith: Food Network" *Advertising Age*. April 10. Accessed April 4, 2014 <http://adage.com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/article/special-report-cable-tv/michael-smith/108379/>
- Swenson, Rebecca. 2009. "Domestic Divo? Televised Treatments of Masculinity, Femininity and Food." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 26, no.1: 36-53.
- Tepper, Rachel. 2013. "Adam Richman's Weight Loss Following 'Man v. Food' Departure is Totally Amazing." *The Huffington Post*, September 20. Accessed March 3 2014. Healthy Living Section. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/20/adam-richman-weight-loss_n_3963159.html
- Thompson, Stephanie. 2002. "The Biz: Extreme Cuisine at The Food Network." *Advertising Age*, February 4. Accessed April 4 2014 <http://adage.com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/article/datacenter-salary-surveys/biz-extreme-cuisine-food-network/52858/>
- Tucker, Rebecca. 2012. "Take it Greasy: John Catucci Hits the Road for Canada's Tastiest Comfort Food." *The National Post*, January 5. Accessed March 1 2014. <http://life.nationalpost.com/2012/01/05/take-it-greasy-john-catucci-hits-the-road-to-sample-some-of-canadas-tastiest-comfort-food/>
- USDA. "SuperTracker: Food-A-Pedia." United States Department of Agriculture Accessed March 2014. <https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/foodapedia.aspx>
- Vardi, Itai. 2010. "Feeding Race: Eating Contests, the Black Body, and the Social Production of Group Boundaries Through Amusement in Turn of the Twentieth Century America." *Food, Culture & Society* 13, no. 3: 371. Accessed April 9, 2014. <http://dx.doi.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/10.2752/175174410X12699432700944>
- Veri, Maria J and Rita Liberti. 2013. "Tailgate Warriors: Exploring Constructions of Masculinity, Food and Football." *Journal of Sports and Social Issues* 20, no.10:1-18
- Viveiros, Daniel R. 2000. "The Rise and Fall of the American Diner, 1920-1960." PhD diss, Salve Regina University.
- Voski Avakian, Arlene and Barbare Haber, eds. 2005. *From Betty Crocket to Feminist Food Studies: Critical Perspectives on Women and Food*. Boston: University of Massachusetts Press.

- Wansink, Brian and Pierre Chandon. 2006. "Meal Size, Not Body Size, Explains Errors in Estimating The Calorie Content of Meals." *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 145, no.5 (September 5): 326-33.
- Wendy's. 2013. "Nutritional Facts." Wendy's International. Accessed March 2014.
<http://www.wendys.ca/food/Nutrition.jsp>
- Wilson, Janelle L. 2005. *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press.
- Witzel, Michael Karl. 1999. *The American Diner*. Minneapolis: MBI Publishing Company
- Yale Rudd Center. 2013. "Accessed to Healthy Food." Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity. Accessed May 18, 2014
http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/what_we_do.aspx?id=145
- Young, Lisa R. and Marion Nestle. 2002. "The Contribution of Expanding Portion Sizes to the US Obesity Epidemic." *American Journal of Public Health* 92, no.2 (February): 246-49.
- . 2012. "Reducing Portion Sizes to Prevent Obesity: A Call to Action." *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* 43, no.4: 565-68.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Complete List of Episodes, *You Gotta Eat Here!*

S, Ep	Episode: Restaurants
101	Boomers Gourmet Fries, Relish Burgers, John's Place
102	Pizzeria Napoletana, Floyd's Diner, Haugen's Chicken & Ribs
103	Salvatore's Pizzaiolo Trattoria, The Harbour Diner, Hoito
104	Stoney's Bread Company, Rock Cod Cafe, The Tomahawk
105	Busters BBQ, Argo Cafe, Magnolia's Grill
106	Charlene's Bayside Restaurant, Tide and Boar Gastropub, Prince Albert's Diner
107	Uncle Betty's Diner, The Armview Diner, Pagliacci's
108	Saint John Alehouse, Philadelphia Kitchen, Fraser Park Restaurant
109	D & S Southern BBQ, Deja-Bu, Bubi's Awesome Eats
110	Stoneface Dolly's, Hadley's, Rick's Fish and Chips and Seafood House
111	Catch 22 Lobster Bar, Chicago Style Pizza, Topanga Cafe
112	Urban Deli, Ches's Fish and Chips, Reggie's Hot Grill
113	Elgin Street Diner, Schwartz's Deli, Mrs. Riches Restaurant
114	Bonehead's, Dam Pub, Landmark Cafe
115	Tallest Poppy, Cardinal Rule, Jr's
116	Blondie's, Little Place by the Lights, Neighbours
117	Tre Sorelle, Bistro Dansk, Water Prince
118	Urban Diner, Fat City, Phil's BBQ
119	Red Tip, Diner Deluxe, Cafe Polonez
120	Boon Burger, Jelly Modern Donuts, The Musket
121	Evelyn's Memory, The Main Dangerous Dan's
122	Chuckwagon Grill, Tubby Dog, Flapjack's
123	Coastal Waters, Tunnel BBQ, Chez Claudette
124	Baffo's Pizza, Tres Carnales, New Glasgow
125	Highland Kitchen, Pfanntastic, Joe Feta's
126	Sugarbowl, The Grilled Cheese, Shish Kabob Hut

Appendix 2: Complete list of episodes, *Man vs. Food Nation*

S, Ep	Episode	Challenge
401	Tampa, Florida	Davey Jones Hot Wings
402	New Haven, Connecticut	Cheese truck challenge (grilled cheese)
403	Nashville, Tennessee	Big Roost 72 oz steak challenge
404	Tulsa, Oklahoma	The incinerator challenge (pizza)
405	Albuquerque, New Mexico	Travis on a silver platter challenge
406	Mobile, Alabama	Wintzell's oyster challenge
407	Florida Keys, Florida	Conch fritter eating contest
408	Gulf Coast	Muffuletta Challenge
409	Portsmouth, New Hampshire	Slapshot challenge (sliders)
410	Louisville, Kentucky	Comfy Cow Challenge (ice cream)
411	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	The Unforgiven Challenge
412	Providence, Rhode Island	olneyville new york system hot wiener challenge.
413	Dallas, Texas	Super Pho challenge
414	Route 66	Puffy taco challenge
415	Harlem, New York City	Squealer challenge- 2 lb spicy pulled pork sandwich
416	Pacific Coast Highway, California	Brama Bull steak sandwich challenge
417	Street Eats special	White rabbit burrito challenge
418	St-Paul, Minnesota	Lucy challenge (hamburger)
419	Cincinnati, Ohio	5.5 lb Reuben showdown
420	Rochester, New York (NASCAR)	The Atomic Bomb challenge (burger with pulled pork)
421	Omaha, Nebraska	Pig Wing challenge
422	Green Bay, Wisconsin	Unable to Locate.
423	Savannah, Georgia	Voodoo Juice challenge (pulled pork)
424	Feast Special	
425	Oahu, Hawaii	Moose omelet challenge
426	Charlotte, North Carolina	The big eats challenge – 25 pulled pork sliders
427	Jackson, Mississippi	Stacked whammy challenge (hamburger)

Appendix 3: Complete List of Episodes, *Diners, Drive-Ins & Dives*.

S, Ep	Episode
1301	Seafood & Sammies
1302	Coast to Coast Classics
1303	Kid Rock's Detroit Tour
1304	Southern Staples
1305	Scratch Made Classics
1306	Meat Madness
1307	Global Traditions
1308	Multitaskers
1309	Family Matters
1310	Old Faves, New Craves
1311	Long Standing Legacies
1312	Time Tested Treasures
1313	Outside the Box
1401	Triple D All Stars
1402	Streamlined Sammies
1403	Crankin' Up the Classics
1404	Passin' the Baton
1405	Big Time Flavor
1406	Unexpected Eats
1407	BBQ Road Show
1408	All Vegas, All the Time
1409	Serious Sandwiches
1410	International Eats
1411	Belly Up
1412	Dynamic Dishes
1413	Coast to Coast Chow

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Amy Eisner-Levine

Post-secondary Education and Degrees: Dawson College
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
2006-2008, D.E.C

Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
2008-2011, B.A.

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2012-2014, M.A.

Honours and Awards: Western Graduate Research Scholarship
2013

Related Work Experience Teaching Assistant
The University of Western Ontario
2012-2014

Teaching Assistant
Concordia University
Winter 2011