

BURT WOLF: TRAVELS & TRADITIONS



WHAT ARE THEY EATING IN THE PHOTOGRAPH

When it comes to eating and drinking there are two great truths: If you don't eat and drink you will soon depart for the great beyond, and no matter how much you eat and drink at any one time you will soon be hungry. As a result, eating and drinking are at the center of all life, and packed with significance way beyond the idea of nutrition. And anything that important is a fit subject for an artist.

The earliest drawings that we know about are in the Lascaux caves of France. They date back over 30,000 years and illustrate hunters going out for meat.



"Where's the beef" has always been an important question. The ancient Egyptians covered the walls of their tombs with pictures of things to eat and drink in the afterlife. The art of the middle ages was packed with scenes of cooking and eating. Leonardo Di Vinci's "Last Supper" shows you what people were eating and drinking during the Renaissance. The subject matter of Cezanne's still life paintings came right out of his local market. And since the middle of the 1800s, things to eat and drink have been in photographs.

This program looks at some of the great food-related photographs. And explains why the photographs are important from an artistic viewpoint. It also tells the story behind the foods that are in the pictures.

I gathered a group of great chefs to demonstrate their favorite recipes for the foods that are in the photographs.

I also called in some photography experts to help us understand the images. Jeff Rosenheim is a curator in the Department of Photographs at The Metropolitan

Museum of Art in New York City, and a leading figure in the world of photography. Andy Smith is the editor of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America*, and the author of more than 300 articles on the subject of eating and drinking. Kathryn Howard has a degree in Fine Art from New York University. Her dissertation at Sotheby's Institute of Art dealt with the use of food as a medium for contemporary art. And I came along for the hamburger and because I promised to pick up the check.

PHILIPPE HALSMAN (1952)

MARILYN MONROE

One of the great pictures that we have in the history of American photography is this Philippe Halsman study of Marilyn Monroe at the beginning of her career. It was made somewhere outside of Los Angeles for a *Life* magazine picture story. And it's among the most popular pictures online today.

No one minds a good picture of someone eating a hamburger, but when it's Marilyn Monroe in this soft top convertible, at the drive-in, it just tells us about the many pleasures of American culture.



Halsman was born in Latvia, came to the States in 1940, and he was beloved by art directors everywhere, because of his bold style and his understanding of the psychological moment. He was on the cover of *Life* and *Look* and *Esquire* and *Saturday Evening Post* many, many times. And he seemed to be able to communicate with his subjects.

And he understood how to make a picture that sells eroticism and desire.

Looking at that photograph you can't help but think about the history of the automobile, and people

traveling and eating. Until the 1920s, when Ford started the mass produced cars, people did not eat on the road. But as soon as the cars came out, somebody in the government figured out how to put together Route 66.

This is a wonderful photograph with a number of different culinary symbols in it. At the center of it, you have the hamburger. And the hamburger of course starts off as a street food. And as the automobiles began to clog the inner city streets, the street had to move onto the sidewalk. The hamburger vendors needed to move to more permanent facilities, and one of the places they moved to was the drive-in. They created the drive-in in the 1920s to help feed people who were traveling from city to city on Route 66.



It's a picture that's trying to sell a budding star. And that's Marilyn Monroe. She'd done "Asphalt Jungle" and she's about to do "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes." And this is a picture that is going to be used to market a new star in the firmament of the country.

It's about the gaze. And it's a very sexual photograph. And it's very appealing to men. The gaze is fascinating. Normally when you eat, you look at the food that you're eating. She's not looking at her food at all. She's looking right at the camera.

She's sitting in the driver's seat, which puts her in a position of power, or at least more power than if she were not driving the car herself.

To get a better understanding of what they are eating in the photographs, I asked a number of leading chefs to demonstrate their favorite recipe for the food that's in the picture.

Michael Lomonaco is the chef and owner of Porterhouse New York. He took one look at the Halsman photo of Marilyn and headed for his prime beef room.

MICHAEL LOMONACO
PORTER HOUSE NEW YORK

I use real Prime Rib. In other words it's actually grated Prime. Most steaks that people call Prime Rib are not Prime. It's not required by the government. But this is Prime Beef, it's a Rib of beef and it's dry aged. So what we do is take the end of the steak that we can't use, trim it, and it goes into the Chef's private reserve. Our private stash. We grind some of this for our burger.



Don't over handle the meat, because you want it to be just packed so that it holds together. And when you over work it as people tend to do or when they put seasonings in it, all of those things leach out the flavor of the beef. If you've got good beef just leave it

alone.

I just add a little salt and pepper, then the burgers goes on a hot grill along side the prime beef steak. A great burger should really remind you of what it is— fresh beef, great steak. The buns are toasted and the burgers go on with some sliced onion, tomato and lettuce.

A great steak is one thing, but a great burger should be as satisfying as a great steak.

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON
PICNIC ON THE MARNE (1938)

This is a photograph of a picnic on the banks of the Marnes. It was made in 1938 by Cartier-Bresson, the father of street photography and photo-journalism. And it's a picture of leisure and pleasure.



We really feel like we're pouring the wine that the gentleman is pouring. We're looking over the shoulder of the figures, and we're practically there, and yet they don't know it. I don't feel like we're intruding. We're joining in.

It's a very interesting point of view from a photographic standpoint to take photos from behind. Because usually within portraiture or documentary style photography, the expression of the face is more important. But here it's kind of more about the scene. So it's somewhat reminiscent even of landscape photography.

It's also a fascinating culinary picture. Because you have a number of different culinary images.

You've got what most likely is chicken. It's a perfect picnic food. It can be eaten hot or cold. It's great. They've got a bottle of wine. They're enjoying themselves thoroughly. You've got knives and forks and plates. And they are relatively heavy set Frenchmen.

What Are They Eating in the Photograph



It is also possible that the picture was made by Cartier-Bresson after the popular front gave the right to most French workers to have 15 days of paid holiday, and this could be one of those early pictures in 1938.

A Picnic illustrates our desire to bring together two opposites in our lives. We like the idea of getting out of our structured home environment, and traveling into the untamed wilderness. "The Picnic" gives us a sense that we are free and adventurous. We love the idea of being close to nature, but not too close.

The moment we get out there, the first thing we do is we try to separate ourselves from it. We mark off our territory with a picnic cloth. We even hold down the edges with boundary stones. We cover the cloth with foods we cooked at home. But what we're actually doing is trading the discomfort of our formerly enclosed dining rooms and restaurants for the joys of prickly grass, pointed stones, flying insects, and unpredictable weather. To me, it proves the old saying, "A change of aggravation is like a holiday."

Marc Murphy is the executive chef and owner of a number of New York City restaurants including Landmark Tribeca and Ditch Plains. I asked him for a favorite picnic menu.

MARC MURPHY LANDMARC RESTAURANTS

I imagine a photographer takes photographs of things they enjoy looking at. And it's the same thing, a restaurant and a chef wants to create food that he or she wants to eat.



So we're going to cook a roasted chicken, very simply, with some leeks vinaigrette.

And I've got a pizza dough over here. The lardon is pressed into the pizza dough. Lardon is simply large chunks of bacon. Gruyere cheese is sprinkled on top. A little sea salt and olive oil. Then it's off to the oven for 15 minutes.

The next thing we're gonna do is get the leeks ready.

We're making a little leeks vinaigrette. The most important thing about leeks you see is that you have to make sure they are separated. To make sure you get all of the dirt out.

When you're washing spinach or leeks or anything like that, don't dump everything out. That's wrong. You have to take the leeks and scoop them off the top. The dirt is heavier than the leeks. So the dirt's going to go to the bottom and not on the leeks. Very important.

The leeks then go into boiling water and cook until tender, about 4 minutes. So now they're nice and tender. We dump them out. And you want to shock them with a little bit of ice. It helps keep that nice color. Or else just run them under some cold water for a little bit. Then the leeks are tossed with salt and vinaigrette dressing.

The chicken is prepared by seasoning with salt and pepper. The cavity is filled with garlic, onion, lemon and thyme. Butter is placed under the skin and the chicken is ready to be tied up. Take your twine, do a figure eight, put it right behind the legs, get the wings, flip it over, and most important you make a figure 8 and a double knot, then you don't have to ask someone to put their finger in the center of the knot.

The chicken is placed on a baking pan, glazed with olive oil, salt and pepper, and roasted at 350 degrees for about an hour. When the chicken is cooked cut it into hand sized chunks for easy eating at the picnic.

Cooking isn't all that difficult, you just have to think a little bit. This is why I started doing this for a living, I didn't want to think too much, just a little bit.

BERENICE ABBOTT HORN & HARDART (1936)

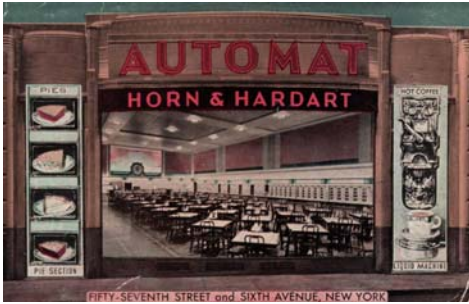
We've got a great picture of the inside of an automat in New York City. It was made just blocks from right where we're sitting.



It's a picture made during a project by Berenice Abbott, who was most well known for her studies of the fabric of New York City during the depression. It was made for the Federal Art Project. And we're looking at the inside of a restaurant where there are no waiters.

There are no menus per se, but there is often great food and coffee.

You walked up to these people, and you gave them your dollars, and they gave you nickels. And you took your fistful of nickels and you put it in this machine. And then



the food came out. You had no idea of who cooked it, and then you left. And if you had the nickels, you didn't even have to

talk to the lady who made change.

But there were some really great things about automat. Not just the food was good, in addition to that, you didn't have to pay a tip. You didn't have to talk to people. You could go in, get your food, you could just have it by yourself, and then walk out again, and you don't have to have this huge affair. It's like the Internet of gastronomy.

It's the precursor to the digital era, in a post-industrialized society. But another thing that's important though is that they found that people who eat together generally tend to be thinner. Eating alone in isolation has led to this obesity crisis, and hiding food, and eating in secret. Not having to deal with people allows people to eat more because they're not being judged by the people around them.

This interior of the automat focuses on the section of pies and cakes. Pies were the main purpose you went into an automat. They were really good. You might have gotten a sandwich or something like that. But the pies, you go in there for a quick bite, and they were really, really good.

This is a perfect reflection of food in the Depression. Where people didn't have any money, and it was very impersonal. This is the most impersonal way of eating. So you just deal with a machine, you don't have to deal with any human being at all.

Yet people have a very strong fondness for the automat. Coffee was a nickel. Then at one point it was 10 cents. Most of the things I bought were under 50 cents.

But as soon as the Depression was over, and World War II was over, they began to decline, and by the '60s and '70s most of them had gone out of business. And in the end they were sold to Burger King.

When you're talking pies the place to go is Sarabeth's Bakery. Sarabeth Levine wrote the book on baking.



SARABETH LEVINE
SARABETH'S BAKERY

Tender Pie Dough

Yield Two 9-inch single-crust pies, one double-crust pie, or six individual deep-dish pies. *Time* 20 minutes, plus 30 minutes to 1 hour of chilling

Ingredients

- 14 tablespoons (1 3/4 sticks) unsalted butter, at cool room temperature, cut into tablespoons
- 1/3 cup whole milk
- 2 1/2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon and 1 teaspoon superfine sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt

1. Beat the butter in the bowl of a heavy-duty stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment at high speed until the butter is smooth, about two minutes. With the mixer running, slowly dribble in the milk, occasionally stopping the mixer and scraping down the sides of the bowl with a silicone spatula. The butter mixture should be fluffy, smooth, and shiny, like a butter cream frosting.
2. Mix the flour, sugar, and salt together in a small bowl. With the mixer speed on low, gradually add the flour mixture and incorporate just until the dough forms a mass on the paddle and the sides of the bowl are clean. Turn out the dough onto a lightly floured surface. Knead a few times until it is smooth and supple. Divide the dough in half. Shape each portion into a disk, about one-inch thick. Wrap each disk in plastic wrap.
3. Refrigerate until chilled but not hard, 30 minutes to an hour. (The dough can be refrigerated up to one day, but it will be very hard, and should stand at room temperature for about 30 minutes before rolling out. The dough can also be frozen, double wrapped in plastic, for up to two weeks. Defrost in the refrigerator overnight.

Rustic Apple Streusel Pie

Time About 2 hours

Ingredients

- 1/2 recipe Tender Pie Dough (above)
- 4 pounds Granny Smith apples, peeled, cut



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into 1/4-inch-thick slices and trimmed
2/3 cup superfine sugar
3 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling out the dough
2 teaspoons pure maple syrup, preferably Grade B
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
3/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 large egg, well beaten with a hand blender
Streusel (see RECIPE)

1. Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat to 350°F. Line a half-sheet pan with parchment paper.
2. To make the filling, gently toss the apples, sugar, flour, maple syrup, lemon juice, cinnamon, and vanilla in a medium bowl until well combined.
3. Lightly flour a work surface. Unwrap the dough and rap the entire circumference around its edge on the work surface. Dust the top of the dough with flour. Roll out into a 15-inch round. Transfer the dough to a 9-inch pie pan, centering it in the pan, and let the excess dough hang over the sides. Heap the apples in the crust, mounding them high in the center. Bring up the edges of the dough, pleating the dough as needed around the circumference of the dish — the center of the filling will be visible. Brush the exposed crust with the egg. Place the streusel over the exposed filling to cover it, then sprinkle any remaining streusel over the crust.
4. Place the pie on the half-sheet pan. Bake, rotating the pan halfway through, until the crust is golden brown and any juices that escape are thick, about 1 hour. If the crust is browning too quickly, tent it with parchment paper. Remove from the oven and cool on a wire rack for 1 hour. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Streusel

Time 15 minutes

Ingredients

1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon unbleached all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon superfine sugar
1 tablespoon light brown sugar
1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 1/2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
1/8 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Combine the flour, superfine sugar, brown sugar, and cinnamon in a small bowl. Stir the melted butter and vanilla together in another small bowl. Gradually stir the butter mixture into the flour mixture, just until evenly moistened (you may not need all of the butter). Squeeze the mixture in your hands until thoroughly combined. Crumble the mixture in the bowl to make fine crumbs with some small lumps.

The pie goes in the oven, after a short musical interlude, it's ready to eat. The automat never tasted so good.

CINDY SHERMAN

UNTITLED FILM STILL #10 (1978)

This next photograph is by an artist named Cindy Sherman. It was made in 1978 and it is called "Untitled Film Still #10." This series of "Untitled Film Stills" are all black and white photographs and Sherman has placed



herself within the shot as an anonymous actress. They are reminiscent of foreign films, Hollywood B-Movies, and film noir. Sherman is an important figure in the conceptual photography movement, where the artist is the subject, but the pictures are not considered self-portraits.

Cindy Sherman is wearing a wig, and she is performing for the camera. She may also be wearing a prosthetic nose. She likes the use of prosthetics.

People are creating performances which are then using the documentary value of the camera to record those performances that are different than typical types of documentary street scenes.

And in this case, she's playing with the idea of roles, and the roles that women have been asked to play in film, and in photography. She's challenging notions of what is real.

But this isn't a typical shot. It's not life in the kitchen. It's a very sexually explicit photograph. That's what it's intended to be. It's about the sexual exploitation of women within these B-movies. That people wouldn't see the films if not for the actress within it. She's directly addressing the idea of the male gaze.

But this is not a sexual gaze. I mean if you look at their face alone, that's not a come on. She intentionally had blank faces, and she made sure to be neutral in her



photographs, and not campy, to really kind of reinforce the idea of a B-movie. It's a pregnant moment. You're waiting for something to happen. She's on the floor. She's dropped her groceries. She is almost

asking for help in a way.

She's reaching for the eggs first. That's what anyone would do first, to make sure they aren't cracked. Historically eggs are symbols of fertility, and they'll go back millennia, and they end up in today's society as Easter Eggs, and as eggs in Passover celebrations.

LISL WAGNER-BACHER

THE RESTAURANT BACHER, MAUTERN, AUSTRIA

Our egg recipe comes from the Restaurant Bacher in Austria.

The reason for its outstanding reputation is Lisl Wagner-Bacher who took over the restaurant from her father in the early 80s. She is a self-taught chef who does the shopping and most of the cooking.

Today she is preparing her signature appetizer. An egg is soft boiled for six minutes---peeled---dipped into flour--- dipped into egg wash--- coated



with breadcrumbs and deep fried for about 90 seconds. A little sour cream goes on a dish. A puree of potatoes. The egg. And a heaping tablespoon of caviar.

TO LEARN MORE...

THE OXFORD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF FOOD AND DRINK IN AMERICA

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