

Canadian Food Studies

La Revue canadienne des  
études sur l'alimentation

Editorial

## Voices and visuals from the Canadian foodscape

Ellen Desjardins

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Canadian Food Studies/La Revue canadienne des études sur l'alimentation*, the open-access, online journal of the Canadian Association for Food Studies/l'Association canadienne des études sur l'alimentation (CAFS/ACÉA). Our journal arrives on the scene in the context of a well-established organization that has, for the past decade, promoted multidisciplinary interaction, debate, and research about food in Canada. The prolific and diverse nature of this food-related research was hailed earlier by Power & Koç (2008) in a guest-edited collection of articles by Canadian scholars to celebrate the founding of CAFS. Indeed, every year since 2006, the CAFS meeting at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences has served as a communal table, laden with a smorgasbord of collaborative and transformational ideas. The feast continues, not just among academic faculty and students, but shared with health professionals, artists, teachers, farmers, fishers, environmentalists, chefs, and colleagues from NGOs, food networks and policy councils. Collectively, these actors form the voices and visuals of the Canadian foodscape. The purpose of our journal is to offer a professional, academic forum for the astonishing breadth and depth of material that they can produce.

Our first issue exemplifies the range of categories in which authors can submit to the journal. This, we hope, will encourage writers and researchers to use the voice that most comfortably expresses the essence of their work. A mix of 'languages', whether using first person narrative style, conventional academic voice, or audio/visual expression, allows—and encourages—boundaries to be challenged. In the world of food studies, diversity is key. Stories must be told, geographical areas compared, injustices exposed, and successes lauded. Meanings and insights derive from robust analysis, constructive critique, and context that includes historical, philosophical, social, political, economic, and cultural perspectives.

The contributions in this issue are an affirmation of the variety of topics and styles used by prominent researchers in the field. Harriet Friedmann, who has written extensively on transformations in food systems and food regimes, invites us in her commentary to travel with her as she examines food production in China, farmer-chef entrepreneurship in Brazil, and demographic shifts in the Greenbelt area of Toronto. Her recent focus on the concept of 'foodsheds' crosses scalar boundaries of food systems, as she links urban and rural programs,

policies, and social movements to global dynamics. In another geographical comparison, Erin Pratley and Belinda Dodson take us to farmers' markets in Belo Horizonte (Brazil) and Toronto, to hear the voices of farmers and retailers and to learn how their spaces can differ radically depending on physical contact with customers, space, economic influences, and political power relationships. Recognizing the underlying issues and realities in these case studies helps us to understand the complexity of local food systems and social justice issues.

We also have, in this issue, a focus on maintaining traditions in food preparation, gardening, farming, and fishing—a reminder that in many places across the country, these skills do not always have to be reinvented but can be perpetuated. Kristen Lowitt's digital work and Jennifer Braun and Mary Beckie's article both show how rural people—in spite of dramatic changes to their livelihoods and food supply—often still value the traditional food practices that strengthen their sense of place and, to some degree, their self-sufficiency. Braun and Beckie have delved into the food practices among women in a rural Albertan town, including the rationale they give for continuing to cook, preserve, garden, and share skills with the next generation. In Lowitt's audio-documentary, the voices and sounds of Bonne Bay lend a vibrant realism to place and time. The author reflects that the process of creating this work influenced her plan to make her dissertation relevant to both academia and the broader community.

In a similar vein, the multiple authors who contributed to the article by Andree et al. offer valuable insights into a key—and complex—element of successful, community-campus research: building effective partnerships. The methodological gems that emerged from their four nationwide case studies can inform the process for other projects that aim to improve outcomes of food-related civil society organizations. Some of the partnership-building approaches they describe are not necessarily intuitive, such as interrogating the meaning of community and identifying differences in power; negotiating a shared project direction (when often a project is driven by a dominant partner); and cultivating, among players who might normally take a back seat, the capacity to engage on their own terms. The extra time, coordination, fluidity, and respect involved in nurturing partnerships are transformational characteristics—a hallmark of projects that aim to re-democratize aspects of the food system.

Furthering the potential for change, a novel addition to our journal is the food system *transitions stream*, with Rod MacRae as editor. Articles in this transitions stream will explore a specific pathway towards a more desirable food system—for example, through revised or new policies, programs, or regulations. Since such topics are typically current and controversial, readers are invited to respond to these articles, with the aim of producing a continuous, moderated dialogue or debate. Peer review in this case is transparent, and can become part of the published thread. Transitions streams in other areas may be initiated as well. MacRae has inaugurated the food system transitions stream with an article in which he argues that trade agreements do not necessarily limit the development of local/sustainable food systems in Canada. We encourage you to participate in the discussion.

Reflection on the research process itself is vital, especially in the area of public policy. Lesley Frank's field report is a candid exposé of how interviews with food insecure mothers and program workers in Nova Scotia revealed the disconnect between those mothers' realities and the intent of infant feeding policies. Frank's narrative provides an example of how a field study can be used to reflect on boundary transgressions—in this case, the unexpected consequence of transforming from a researcher into an advocate for change.

We present two 'perspectives' articles that highlight the potential of this journal to feature sensory and experiential aspects of food and farming. Lenore Newman's Nanaimo bar

trail takes us on a well-researched journey from post-war recipe trends, to canonization of the bar as a ‘Canadian’ treat at Expo ’86, to an explosion of varieties in restaurants and bakeries today. Seeing this confection end up with a place-making function in Nanaimo, even without a definite historical connection, we get a taste of the complex path a particular food can take to become a cultural icon. Wayne Roberts achieves a similar goal with his journalistic-style rendering of the story of environmentalist-rancher Bryan Gilvesy. He chronicles the myriad historical, social, and economic pieces of the puzzle required for an entrepreneur to demonstrate—successfully—more sustainable approaches to agriculture. Part two of his perspective is forthcoming.

The first issue of our journal also includes invited reviews of four books that showcase the diversity of Canadian food studies, performed by students and practitioners actively engaged with the topic at hand. Moving forward, the journal will continue to profile thoughtful critiques of books, art, and events that capture the latest in food studies explorations and transgressions.

I conclude with a reflection on the bowl shape that forms part of the visual identity<sup>1</sup> for our journal and for CAFS/ACÉA. It embodies a sense of commonality (a universal cooking and eating vessel), as well as fluidity and openness (the shape is not closed). It symbolizes our journal’s commitment to inclusivity and receptiveness to new ideas and contributors.

Our journal has a tight, creative, and highly-coordinated editorial team. We thank the members of our Advisory Board and Editorial Review Board, as well as the CAFS/ACÉA Board, for their support in the development of our journal. We are grateful to the University of Waterloo for providing the OJS (open journal systems) online platform and library staff support. This journal is for you—the food studies community—and we look forward to your help in shaping future issues of *Canadian Food Studies/La Revue canadienne des études sur l’alimentation*.

#### Editorial Team:

Ellen Desjardins, Editor

University of Waterloo, [edesjardins@canadianfoodstudies.ca](mailto:edesjardins@canadianfoodstudies.ca)

David Szanto, Associate Editor

Concordia University, Montréal, [dszanto@canadianfoodstudies.ca](mailto:dszanto@canadianfoodstudies.ca)

Phil Mount, Associate Editor

Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, [pmount@canadianfoodstudies.ca](mailto:pmount@canadianfoodstudies.ca)

Rod MacRae, Associate Editor, Food System Transitions Stream

York University, Toronto, [rmacrae@yorku.ca](mailto:rmacrae@yorku.ca)

Wesley Tourangeau, Managing Editor

University of Waterloo, [wtourangeau@canadianfoodstudies.ca](mailto:wtourangeau@canadianfoodstudies.ca)

#### Reference

Power, E., & Koç, M. (2008). A double-double and a maple-glazed doughnut. *Food, Culture & Society* 2(3), 264-267.

---

<sup>1</sup> The CAFS/ACÉA graphic design package was developed in 2011 by Catherine Vallières at Concordia University’s Department of Design and Computation Arts, supervised by Dr. Rhona Richman Kenneally and Dr. Nathalie Dumont. David Szanto, PhD candidate in gastronomy at Concordia, facilitated the process with CAFS/RCÉA.