



## Editorial

## Critical perspectives on food guidance

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Critical food guidance began as an inspiration, blossomed into a concept and then became a focal point for thinking about food system change. It will continue to evolve as we grapple with the complexities of the industrial food system and work toward alternative approaches.

As a step in the evolution of a multi-dimensional approach to food, this themed section asks three basic questions: critical guidance for what, for whom, and by whom? While engaging with these questions, the authors have put forward critical concepts, proposed mindful decision-making, provided contexts for transformation, and presented innovative applications—all with the purpose of spurring broader thinking about food choices that can benefit both food system sustainability and human health.

In terms of critical concepts for reframing and transforming food guidance, Koberinski, Vivero-Pol, and LeBlanc reframe food as a commons, while challenging the role of the dominant narrative of food-as-commodity in shaping how we approach food systems policy. They call for a normative shift, proposing that valuing and governing food as a commons would unlock unexplored policy goals, and provide current examples of food as a commons within Indigenous communities. Reframing and transformation also feature in Soma's article that challenges the food waste recovery hierarchy approach. Instead, she puts forward findings from the Food System Lab to demonstrate that Indigenous principles based on "All My Relations" and practices known in Europe as "Bricolage" may serve as useful tools to address the issue of food waste.

When thinking about mindful decision-making regarding food choices, Weis and Ellis lead with the concept of de-meatification, an urgent environmental and social priority that must be part of any project providing critical food guidance. They propose three primary possibilities for change—conscientious omnivory, vegetarianism, and veganism—while emphasizing consideration of the end point of de-meatification. Tourangeau and Scott concur, arguing that

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eating fewer animal-based foods is not enough guidance. For these authors, it is important to also consider the numerous socially and historically embedded norms, discourses, behaviours, and ideas that make the question of meat particularly messy. Mindful decision-making also features in Fader, Mesmain, and Desjardins' article on critical food guidance in the Slow Food movement. Using the Slow Food Relationship Barometer as a form of critical food guidance, they remind us that slow food is all about relationships and illustrate how the barometer can facilitate food awareness and food choice.

This themed section also sets out contexts for transformation. Focusing on the urban context, Stahlbrand and Roberts discuss the Toronto Food Policy Council and the food-city nexus. They propose that the Milan Pact of 2015, which warned that the planetary crisis of unsustainable environments would surely affect the task of feeding cities, signaled a shift among progressive food analysts away from the formal model of food policy and toward a model of critical food guidance. Within the rural context, Cole, Needham, and Markowitz examine alternative food practice in Grey-Bruce counties in Ontario. In particular, they discuss the Grey-Bruce Food Charter as a tool for critical food guidance, based on its categories of health, social justice, culture, education, sustainable economic development and environment. A final context for transformation is religion, presented in an article by Desjardins. He reviews the main components of contemporary religious food guidance across religious traditions and around the world, concluding with reflections on how religious food guidance intersects with both the growth and decline of religion that we are currently experiencing.

The themed section also includes innovative applications of critical food guidance, beginning with Tait Neufeld and Xavier's article on the evolution of Haudenosaunee food guidance. Their article describes the implementation and outcomes of a Haudenosaunee community-based program in southern Ontario, *Our Sustenance*, which is reflective of impacts beyond individualized health, with an emphasis on collective well-being. The next application of critical food guidance comes from Brazil, as Moubarac, Polsky, Nardocci, and Cannon describe how the official Brazilian *Dietary Guidelines* (MHB, 2014) used the NOVA food classification scheme to lay bare the problem of ultra-processed food. They then map this onto *Canada's Food Guide* and provide recommendations for all Canadians based on the Brazilian experience. Another innovative application of critical food guidance concerns Manganelli and Esteron's article on FoodShare Toronto, with a focus on its history and its "Good Healthy Food for All" approach. As part of the food justice movement, FoodShare prioritizes community development, listens to diverse communities and balances their needs alongside environmental sustainability and health.

Collectively, these articles offer an integrated approach to critical food guidance, generating a synergy of transformative thinking and acting. They represent an initial attempt at weaving together multiple disparate strands of this fledgling sub-field, forming a strong foundation for further critical work.

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## References

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