

Cocinar y Comer en Argentina Hoy

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Book review: Cooking and eating in the Argentina of today

Reseña: Cocinar y comer en Argentina hoy

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This book by Aguirre, Díaz Córdoba and Polischer represents a huge contribution, with a novel approach to socio-cultural issues concerning eating, food and its preparation, as well as its relation to nutrition. As a contribution, it will benefit the professional knowledge and practice of those interested in nutritional anthropology and the context of a healthy diet.

These three authors graduated in Anthropology

from the Universidad de Buenos Aires, and made a successful and distinguished career in the field of nutritional anthropology, through teaching and academic research, and in public management, and also through several publications with full recognition by their peers.

The book is organized in two big parts: the first part refers to the contextual situation of food and cooking today, which is analyzed based on data collected from national and international secondary sources and the second part is the result of a qualitative research study made by these authors in 2010, with public funding from Essen Foundation (*Fundación EsSEN*).

The first part deals with nutritional global problems and its effects in Argentina. The chapter about food consumption written by Díaz Córdoba is particularly interesting, as it discusses food issues in a manner which is rarely seen in our field by using primary information collected from the National Survey on Household Consume (ENGHo) [*Encuesta Nacional de Gastos de los Hogares*] and the Permanent Household Survey (EPH) [*Encuesta Permanente de Hogares*], both conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) [*Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos*].

The second part is the richest part of the book, given that it presents the analysis and interpretation of original and unpublished data collected by the authors from interviews made to women and to a few males from different regions of the country, with diverse income levels and a varied age range, on planning, purchase, preparation, consumption and disposal of food, cuisine style and cooking. Simultaneously, this section becomes valuable in itself, as it

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allows the reader to make a sort of triangulation with the considerations shown in the first part, thus allowing readers to look deeper into their own conclusions and inquiries concerning their interests in cooking and eating. In this part, the authors address the spaces, devices and forms involved in the act of cooking, cookery as a model and as a device, cookery elements, particularly foods, as categories of use, the representations and consumption of foods as influenced by traditions, the regional possibilities, and the influence of advertising over new processed foods, which are pervaded by concepts of merchandise and profits.

Cultural and commercial globalization, urbanization and associated social changes, the universalization of capitalism, and the new expertise in food technology have produced a greater presence of processed and ultra-processed foods at the expense of the flavors and senses in the traditional cuisine. There is abundant evidence on the health-related damage on account of these changes.⁽¹⁾ The authors discuss the topic of processed and ultra-processed foods and these are mentioned more than a hundred times in the text, which shows the importance they have in the Argentine diet.

As we all may know, all texts are necessarily a slice of reality. In this case, reality is in turn sliced by the point of view, opinions and feelings of the population interviewed and, from the perspective of population, foods are those items you lay on the table, leaving out human breast milk and its substitutes (infant formulas). It is important to note this peculiarity given that the replacement of breast milk for infant formulas that are highly processed is the effect of misleading advertising, which threatens food sovereignty and influences subsequent dietary practices and the consumption of other processed products.

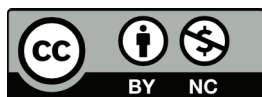
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