Cod are outdated. Cumbler also adds a much-needed look at how a recreation economy has created unequal access to the Cape and a retiree-dominated populous that pushes out families and one-time “locals.”

Cumbler draws mostly from secondary literature, with the exception of many twentieth-century planning documents. Lacking primary source material, Cape Cod sometimes reads as another romantic take on the Cape’s old white clammers. His short shrifting of natives does little to belie that notion; Cumbler spends just seven pages on pre-European inhabitants of Cape Cod and four of those are through the lens of Samuel de Champlain’s travelogues. Cape Cod also might have benefitted from a deeper analysis of how the Cape’s fast-moving geological processes influenced the region’s ecology and human settlement patterns.

Despite these small quibbles, Cumbler’s Cape Cod is the most comprehensive and nuanced book on the peninsula in over fifty years. While Cape Cod contains no surprising new history, it is a wonderful place-based synthesis that the layperson or student of environmental history would certainly enjoy. Additionally, Cumbler’s policy recommendations could prove useful to planners in any tourism-based economy. Cumbler assembles Cape Cod scholarship gracefully in a book full of interesting anecdotes and beautiful prose. Beach reading, anyone?

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It is commonplace today to open a newspaper or magazine and find journalists lamenting how divorced Americans are from their food sources, how children believe that food originates in supermarkets rather than on farms, and how social inequalities are increasingly mirrored in food inequalities. These seem like very modern problems tied mostly to recent developments in industrial agriculture, but Cindy R. Lobel’s Urban Appetites finds similar patterns in nineteenth-century New York City. Even journalists of the mid-nineteenth century similarly expressed nostalgia for bygone days when New Yorkers had face-to-face contact with their food providers.

Implicit in these cries against modern food culture is the idea that a golden age of food once existed. Lobel helps debunk this myth, or, at least, she pushes
that golden age back a bit and qualifies it. The government-regulated public markets of early nineteenth-century New York that drew from the surrounding region and involved direct relationships between consumers and producers are possibly the closest to deserving our nostalgia. Rich and poor shopped at the same locations, though Lobel is careful to note that the poor could not buy the same food as the rich and often purchased the discounted, lower-quality food available at the end of the day. As the public markets transformed into wholesale locations and individuals bought their foods at private shops, the food disparities only increased.

_Urban Appetites_ traces two overarching trends across the nineteenth century. In each chapter Lobel depicts the increasing inequalities and growth of what we might now understand as “food deserts” for the poor as market access diminished, the city government lost control of food quality, and the city became more socially segregated. Simultaneously, there were several positive changes, such as the growing cornucopia of food available in the city as canals and railroads opened up a continent of farms to New York, the increasing number of restaurants and food shops opening through the city, and the blossoming of bourgeois food culture both inside and outside the home. Lobel argues that New York became a center for gastronomic culture, influencing the food patterns in American, as well as European, cities. Yet, even as upper-crust New Yorkers came to celebrate their cosmopolitan city and all the cuisines it had to offer, there was a simultaneous disdain for the immigrant foods and their proprietors that helped to make the city truly cosmopolitan. The contrasting patterns and deep social divisions of the city are an ever-present and significant juxtaposition throughout the book.

Lobel mines a rich set of sources, from personal diaries, letters, and account books, to household manuals, newspapers, advertisements, and cookbooks in order to fully depict the urban food culture in homes, restaurants, and markets. Her stories brilliantly illustrate the food of the city, whether she is describing a high-end meal at Delmonico’s, a low-price stop at an oyster house, or a home-cooked meal in a dining room. While some of the complexities of New York politics are missing and there are some textual errors, such as a reference to an article in _Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper_ before the newspaper was in print, this is a wonderful book that brings the food and culture of a nineteenth-century city to life.

Catherine McNeur

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