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Elements of Food Infrastructure

Daily bread: Throughout recorded history, food has been one of the most enduring limitations shaping the templates and tenor of humankind’s daily life. Civilization is virtually defined by finding it, securing it, and ensuring its future potential. “The countryside lived off its harvest and cities off the surplus,” Braudel writes, and so it was that the geography of civilization’s expanse had been marked by the security of sustenance close at hand. As food has industrialized, it has changed, along with our bodies and our economies. **Matthew Hockenberry** charts elements of the conceptual connections amongst the articles in this issue.

1650s-1680s

A Taste for Luxury →

The first coffeehouses spread from the Muslim world to major centers of European and Neo-European trade. Tea is introduced to England through the marriage of Charles II to the Portuguese princess Catherine of Braganza.
Taste • Transport • Consumer culture



1803

← The Cold Chain

Maryland farmer Thomas Moore first introduces the term refrigerator in an 1803 patent to describe the site of artificial cooling, new techniques for keeping things cold begin to infiltrate in the meatpacking and brewing industries over the course of the century.
Transport • Perishability • Architecture.

1809

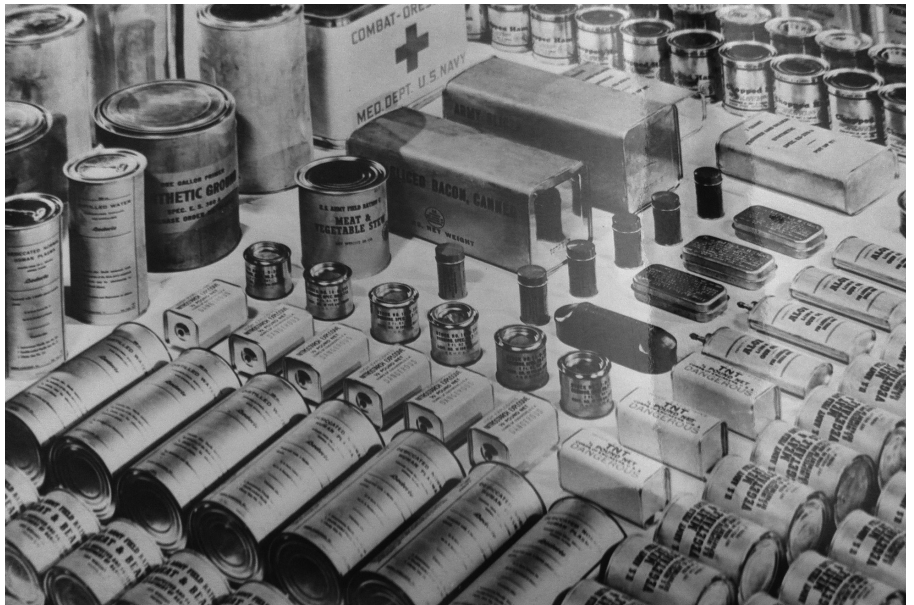
↓ Tin Can Archaeologies

Nicholas Appert collected a 12,000 franc prize from Napoleon in 1809 for developing a means of keeping foods fresh without relying on foraging. Across the channel the British merchant Peter Durand set sail with boiled meats and soups sealed in his tin coated iron canisters, the Royal Navy was stocked with the future fuel of expansion, conflict, and colonization.
Storage • Transport • Perishability
Cochoy p20, Faber-Cullen p39

1871

Crimes Against Butter ↓

New York based United States Dairy Company begins controversial production of oleomargarine as a kind of "artificial butter" in 1871. By 1902 over thirty states had passed outright bans on the sale of colored oleomargarine and scores of violators had seen the inside of federal penitentiaries for unauthorized production.
Regulation • Health • Labeling
Jauho p36, Frohlich p42, Penders/Flipse p54



1906

Pigs' Lips and Assholes ↓

When Upton Sinclair's publication of *The Jungle* in 1906 brought not, as he had hoped, empathy with the plight of the immigrant worker, but public furor over the unsanitary conditions of food production, it opened a century of constant investigation into the composition of food.
 Safety • Regulation
 Freidberg p24, Yates-Doerr p32



265 Splitting backbones and final inspection — hogs ready for cooler. Swift & Co., Chicago, 1934. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/12070000000/12070000000/>



1912

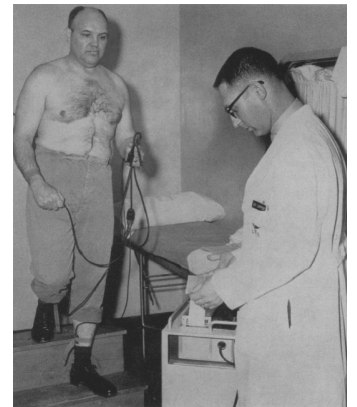
↑ Grocers in the Country Village, Grocers in the Great Town

The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (A&P) had begun as a mail order tea business in the middle of the nineteenth century. When it moved to systematic grocery distribution in 1912, its "economy store" brought standardization—and scale—through vertical integration over the distribution chain.
 Safety • Taste • Consumer culture
 Cochoy p20, Powell p50

1913

The Lipid Hypothesis →

When Nikolay Anichkov produced atherosclerosis in rabbits by feeding them cholesterol in 1913, the first intuitions of peril began to trickle into the work of scientists and doctors exploring the role of nutrition in human health.
 Health • Consumer culture
 Jauho p36, Hendrickx p14



1920s

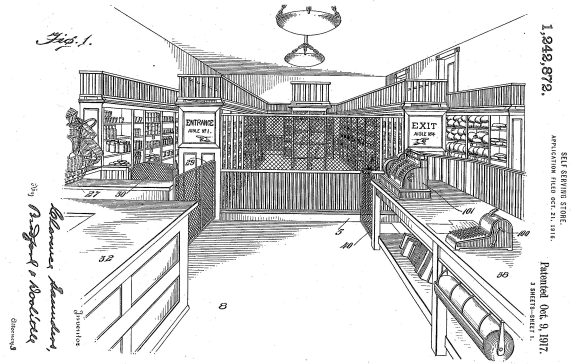
Monoculture →

In the early 1920s bananas had become the first exotic fruit commonly available to Americans leading to a near complete reconfiguration of places like Honduras by emergent multinationals like United Fruit.
 Taste • Consumer culture
 Paxson p28, Faber-Cullen p39, Schleifer-Fairbrother p17

1930

The Center Store →

Michael Cullen pioneers developments like grocery carts to encourage bulk purchasing and a "center store," loaded with aisle after aisle of packaged national brands.
 Architecture • Consumer culture
 Powell p50, Cochoy p20



1938

The Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act

lays the foundation for information about food in the United States by requiring that standards safeguard consumer value.
 Information • Labeling • Safety
 Frohlich p42, Penders/Flipse p54



1974

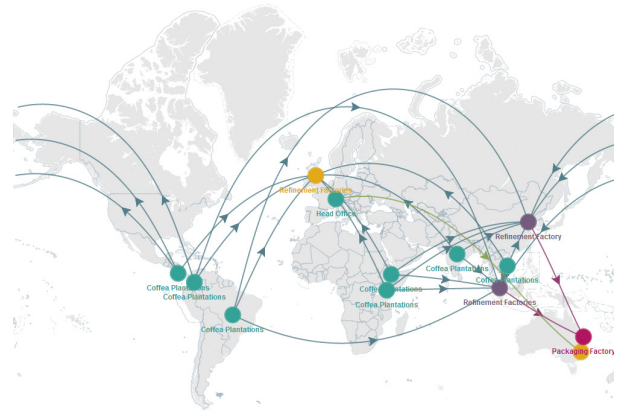
← Beep

The first bar code scanner is installed in a Marsh supermarket in Ohio
 Information • Consumer culture
 Powell p50.

1980

Food Networks →

Food conglomerates and industry groups retain A.D. Little to report on implementations of Electronic Data Interchange in the grocery industry—the foundational mechanisms for the supplier and distribution network of the modern chain grocery.
 Information • Transport • Architecture
 Dubuisson-Quellier p11, Powell p50, Freidberg p24



1990

The Nutrition Fact

The Nutrition Labeling and Education Act universalizes implementation of a nutrition label for all packaged foods, giving consumers the information to take responsibility for nutrition decisions.
 Information • Labeling • Health
 Frohlich p42, Penders/Flipse p54

1990

The Cradle to the Grave

At the first SETAC (Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry) sponsored international workshop in 1990, the term "life cycle assessment" (LCA) is coined.
 Safety • Transport
 Freidberg p24, Lappé p58, Schleifer-Fairbrother p17



The Future

While the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had been defined by an increasing distance from the production of food, the twenty-first strives to reintegrate it. Hybrid categorizations of food production, composition, and consumption seems sure to proliferate with uncertain meanings, even as these meanings move to the forefront of consumptive choice and consumer concern.

[For the complete timeline by Matthew Hockenberry, see <http://limn.it/>]