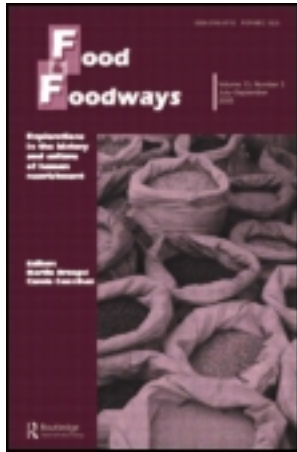


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A Review of "Republic of Barbecue: Stories Beyond the Brisket"

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demonstrates how cozy spaces become a signature trade. Coziness awakens intimate palates, yet it also incites crime. Furthermore, in this same chapter, through narrative digressions that appeal to readers more willing to savor time rather than to quickly kill it, the politics of Slow Food mark their presence. The final chapter, "The Pleasure of Plating Up," addresses the relationship between reading and eating, and reading and cooking. While some literary critics argue the reading is a substitute for eating as both activities ideally nourish a person, Pascual ends her work by affirming that such is not, nor should it be, the case. Female culinary mysteries constituted an incentive to investigate ingredients, explore taste, and develop palates.

Reading Pascual's book leaves one with the sensation of having been invited to a repast of succulent dishes filled with multiple aromas and textures. While engaging in the banquet, those sitting at the table (the readers) found a dish the suited their own palates. Days later, however, due to the richness of the meal, the challenge becomes deciphering the so many theoretical flavors served during the feast.

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REPUBLIC OF BARBECUE: STORIES BEYOND THE BRISKET, by Elizabeth S. D. Engelhardt: University of Texas Press, 2009

There is an inherent fox-guarding-the-henhouse risk in allowing an avowed adherent of mid-South style barbecue to review a book on Texas barbecue. My recent move to North Texas has resolved me of a lifelong folk wisdom handed down to me, namely, that Texas barbecue is the wrong animal. Still, engrained cultural prejudices being what they are, I was delighted to read Elizabeth S. D. Engelhardt's *Republic of Barbecue*, which has shown me beyond a doubt that Texans not only can fix excellent barbecue but they also possess a unique and dynamic barbeculture all their own.

Engelhardt's contribution is a timely addition to a burgeoning food and culture literature dedicated to American barbecue diversity. John Shelton and Dale Volberg Reed's *Holy Smoke: The Big Book of North Carolina Barbecue* (University of North Carolina Press, 2008), Andrew Warnes' *Savage Barbecue: Race, Culture, and the Invention of America's First Food* (University of Georgia Press, 2008), Robert F. Moss's *Barbecue: The History of an American Institution* (University of Alabama Press, 2010), and James R. Veteto and Edward M. Maclin's *The Slow and the Slow Cooked: Culture and Barbecue in the Mid-South* (Vanderbilt University Press 2011) give ample evidence that recent scholarship on barbecue is pushing the theoretical and descriptive boundaries of food studies into deliciously smoked, heretofore under-charted territories.

Reading Engelhardt's text, one immediately encounters an unorthodox, risky, and boundary-pushing methodology. It is an experimental moment in food and culture studies. Upon being contacted by the Central Texas Barbecue Association in 2006 to "help collect, document, and preserve the stories of barbecue around Central Texas" (xxi), Engelhardt decided to focus her graduate class on American foodways at The University of Texas on the task. Eleven of her students became contributing authors on the book. Yet, collaborative multi-vocality goes beyond Engelhardt and her students. Transcribed oral history interviews with the purveyors of diverse Central Texas barbecues stand alone in each section as personal statements on the history, culture, and state of barbecue in Texas. As an anthropologist, I appreciated field methods such as participant observation and in-depth oral history interviewing that are used by the researchers, all of whom are American Studies scholars. The use of ethnography and multi-vocality lends interdisciplinary relevance to the text that should be welcome in the classroom of a diversity of food and culture scholars.

The book is divided into six interrelated and cross-linked sections: Food and Foodways; Ideas of Place; Dreaming of Old Texas and Original Barbecue; Ways of Life; Bright Lights, Barbecue Cities; and Modern Barbecue, Changing Barbecue. In a reflexive moment, Engelhardt informs the reader her team finished collecting the data before the structure of the book was considered and spent many late-night drinking sessions considering how it should all be puzzled together. This process of structuring the book is indicative of the collaborative "potluck" style of Engelhardt's approach, and she encourages readers to peruse the book in any order of their choosing. Indeed, each transcribed interview and scholarly essay either stands on its own or can be read in relation to the other pieces in each section or to the totality of the book's narrative. In the spirit of Engelhardt's endeavor, I will pull out ingredients from the potluck of *Republic of Barbecue* that struck particular chords with me or presented themselves as salient main courses or sidedishes.

The book opens with the transcription of an oral history interview with Joe Sullivan, the proprietor of House Park Bar-B-Que in Austin, Texas. Joe grew up eating House Park Bar-B-Que as a boy, eventually purchased the business some years later, and still smokes his meat in a big brick pit that was built in 1943. Joe is not atypical of a distinguished cast of legendary traditional Central Texas barbecue masters interviewed throughout the text including: Members of the Archie family from the Church of Holy Smoke, New Zion Missionary Baptist Church Barbecue; Ben Wash of Ben's Long Branch Barbecue; members of the Meyer family of Meyer's Elgin Smokehouse; and Bobby Mueller of Louie Mueller Barbecue among many others.

Immediately following the in-depth familial and cultural history provided by Joe Sullivan, Engelhardt and L. J. Powell follow with an essay "The Central Texan Plate" that explores the diverse origins of what you typically

(and not so typically) find when ordering a plate of central Texas barbecue. They identify brisket as the central feature the central Texas plate and address the most popular mythologies concerning how this came to be the case. Debunking both the popular story that brisket barbecuing is an outgrowth of slave practices on East Texan plantations to tenderize the cheap cuts of meat given to them by plantation masters and the chuckwagon theory that has ethnically diverse cooks tenderizing brisket for the cowboys on cattle drives, the authors settle on a more plausible and ethnographically-informed primary causal factor. In the middle of the twentieth century, restaurants struggling to emerge from the Great Depression and war rationing came up with a way (slow smoking) to tenderize the cheap cut of brisket to make it more palatable for the masses. This does not deny the deep history of barbecue methodologies in the region going back to its origins, which focused on preparing hog meat and a variety of wild game. Engelhardt et al.'s culinary sleuth-work on the socioeconomic history of smoked brisket is indicative of their uncovering of a variety of mysteries/origins surrounding other foodstuffs in the central Texas barbecue tradition throughout the book including sausage making, side dishes, drinks, and desserts. They leave no stone unturned in providing a multitude of well-researched culinary jewels for the food studies scholar/practitioner to ponder.

Of particular interest to scholars in anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, American studies, and related disciplines is the focus on cultural diversity and social processes in the central Texas barbecue tradition. Important human dimensions such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, and socioeconomic status are explored in detail. From the influence of African-American traditions on Texas barbecue to the origins and impact of Mexican-American pit barbacoa on the region's culinary traditions and the subtle effect of the Native American contribution of pinto beans as a side dish; cultural diversity, hybridity, and dynamism are highlighted throughout. Some of the cultural histories were shallow and could have been explored more fully, such as the influence of German culture on Texas barbecue, but in general an appropriate amount of attention is focused on cultural diversity and hybridity, and they emerge as major themes in the book. Not falling into the trap of portraying a static and anachronistic 'traditional' barbeculture, the book also highlights emerging trends such as chain barbecue restaurants; mass-produced electronic and propane smokers; hip all-women barbecue street food carts such as Barbecuties in Austin, Texas and nods to environmentally oriented barbecue operations that are moving toward practices such as using natural meats, massive recycling, zero waste, the use of wood for smoking from sustainably managed forests, and buying from ranchers who maintain sustainable pastures. The emphasis on change and dynamism in the era of globalization with equal attention to the resilience of many Central Texas barbeculture practices will likely satisfy any fears of essentialism, loaded representation, or vanguardism. The authors convinced me that

they accurately captured a snapshot of Central Texas barbecue—if only for a fleeting moment—in all of its culturally constructed, multi-variable complexity amid the influences of power, politics, identity, and multiple knowledges and discourses.

The only significant weaknesses I found in the book were the excessive use of excellent color photographs and highlighted quotations placed throughout the text (on average, about every two pages), the somewhat choppy formatting of the book, and the lack of academic-style in-text citations and appropriate bibliography. These weaknesses, however, also contributed to significant strengths. To many scholars, the excessive use of photographs and large, highlighted quotes and sidebars will perhaps distract from a serious reading of the text. I found that to be moderately the case. It gives the book more the feel of a popular publication than a scholarly work. Yet, the trade-off of having a text thoroughly designed in such a way is worth the effort. As I have argued elsewhere, the topic of barbecue is excellent subject matter to cross-fertilize both academic and popular audiences. It is my view that situating scholarly arguments in popular discourse and informing the public with critical analysis from the academy is a fruitful way forward for meaningful, engaged scholarship. Engelhardt's beautifully designed book is sure to have significant appeal beyond the academy and the scholarship is top notch. If this is like having your barbecue and eating it too, then Engelhardt et al. are pushing boundaries that may provide a useful model and have significance for all of us who are interested in producing scholarship that is relevant to public audiences and discourses. *Republic of Barbecue* is an important landmark in barbecue studies.

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FOOD WILL WIN THE WAR: MINNESOTA CROPS, COOKS, AND CONSERVATION DURING WORLD WAR I, by Rae Katherine Eighmey (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2010)

Food Will Win the War: Minnesota Crops, Cooks, and Conservation during World War I is a wonderful contribution to Minnesota history. It tells the story of Minnesotans' experiences with food conservation during World War I against the backdrop of national food policies and practices. Richly detailed, author Rae Katherine Eighmey has mined a variety of primary sources including letters, journals, government reports, newspaper articles, pamphlets, and other materials designed to create public interest in and compliance with conservation programs. The book also contains reproductions of wonderful wartime posters, and many war-era recipes such as Lumberjack's