

Cheap Meat: Flap Food Nations in the Pacific Islands

Deborah Gewertz, Frederick Errington

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Deborah Gewertz, Frederick Errington : Cheap Meat: Flap Food Nations in the Pacific Islands before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cheap Meat: Flap Food Nations in the Pacific Islands:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great quick 'academic' read for those interested in the topic.By BobbyI purchased this book after seeing a BBC story about mutton flaps. If you are interested in sociology/anthropology and the relationship between food, culture and economics this is highly recommended. I feel it

did a nice job of explaining the emerging economies of Some developing Pacific nations - Papua New Guinea in particular. I also thought they dealt fairly with the New Zealand meat processors and traders themselves. Rather than a scathing indictment of their neo-colonial practices, it paints a picture of the realities of their industry. It also doesn't feel paternal to the people and cultures they study. I wouldn't recommend this book for general consumption - Omnivore's Dilemma it is not. However if you are interested in the topics covered - the South Pacific, emerging economies, the food industry, etc. It may be perfect for you as it was for me. It is also a fairly quick read. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Cultural Conflicts About Low-Status Foods By Herbert H. Highstone This is a fascinating book about how cultural attitudes can create food taboos that verge on demonization. The book is about the brisk trade in high-fat cuts of meat that are shipped to Pacific Island nations where they are eagerly consumed and enjoyed. The idea seems to be that because these high-fat meats are unfashionable in Eurocentric nations, the shipping of these meats to brown-skinned nations is somehow "dumping" and should be prohibited. Okay, let's look at the horse meat trade between the USA and Europe. Most people in the USA wouldn't be caught dead eating horse meat. The taboo against eating horses is extremely potent in the United States. However, the USA ships large quantities of horse meat to Europe, where it is eagerly consumed by the citizens with no qualms whatsoever. Does this mean that the USA is somehow dumping inferior horse meat in Europe? Are the Europeans therefore victims of USA exploitation? Just like the people of Tonga and New Guinea are victims of Australian capitalist aggression with their "flap meat"? It's strange that nobody seems to be applying these arguments to McDonalds, which is vigorously promoting its high-fat "fast foods" all over the world. The position seems to be that if white people like a particular food, it must be okay for everybody. But if brown-skinned people like a certain cut of meat that white people reject, then this particular cut of meat must be inferior. This is so close to Eurocentrism and arrogant cultural snobbery that I can't tell the difference. Don't other nations and cultures have the right to decide what they want to eat? How about the huge quantities of Spam and other fatty meats that the USA ships to Hawaii? Is the internal food trafficking of nations also considered to be exploitive "dumping"? Is the Jimmy Dean sausage company guilty of genocidal imperialism against the poor whites of Texas because Jimmy Dean produces fat-laden sausage meat? Science says that eating lots of fat can cause heart disease and pancreatic cancer. I'm not disputing this. But when we make certain kinds of food actually illegal, as has been done with high-fat "flat meat" in certain Pacific nations, then we are telling adult and presumably responsible people what they can eat and what they can't. Healthy eating should be encouraged by education, not compulsion. The real test here is reciprocity, which means that everybody should have to play by the same rules. If the brown-skinned nations must be told what they can eat and what they can't eat, then how about white America and white Germany and white Russia? Where are the laws in America and France and Russia that prohibit the sale of fatty meats? Why don't such laws exist in Eurocentric nations? Are we saying that white people are smarter and more responsible than the brown-skinned citizens of the world? These are important questions that strike at the very heart of democracy and self-determination. If we can't trust certain groups of people to select their own foods, then how can we possibly trust them to elect their own leaders? 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Amazingly informative and interesting read By Zack Porges I had the pleasure of taking Professor Gewertz's class on the Sociology of Food back in college and we had the opportunity to read Cheap Meat. It was a book that helped nudge me into the food world, not because it presents the food industry in a particularly appealing light (in fact, you may seriously reconsider your meat consumption upon completion of this book), however it provides such an eye-opening account of the cheap meat pathways that it peaked my interest in other food pathways that I never would have considered. I definitely recommend checking this book out if you have any interest in food, sociology or just good writing.

Cheap Meat follows the controversial trade in inexpensive fatty cuts of lamb or mutton, called flaps, from the farms of New Zealand and Australia to their primary markets in the Pacific islands of Papua New Guinea, Tonga, and Fiji. Deborah Gewertz and Frederick Errington address the evolution of the meat trade itself along with the changing practices of exchange in Papua New Guinea. They show that flaps which are taken from the animals bellies and are often 50 percent fat are not mere market transactions but evidence of the social nature of nutrition policies, illustrating and reinforcing Pacific Islanders presumed second-class status relative to the white populations of Australia and New Zealand.

Could easily become a food studies classic. . . . A compelling and informative read.