

80. The respiratory ratio expresses the relationship of carbonic acid output and oxygen intake. In cases of pure carbohydrate metabolism both quantities correspond, giving a respiratory ratio (RR) = 1. A fat-rich diet raises oxygen consumption, yielding a RR of about 0.7. In terms of maximum efficiency of oxygen consumption a higher value is better than a lower. In activities (such as industrial work) that are not limited by the input of oxygen and continue for prolonged periods, the absolute level of the RR is less important than the consumption of a balanced combination of carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals and trace elements. See Atzler/Gunther Lehmann, *Anatomie und Physiologie der Arbeit* (1930) Halle a.S., p. 259ff.
81. For these calculations see Howard W. Haggard/Leon A. Greenberg, *Diet and Physical Efficiency* (1935) New Haven.
82. Jung (1943) p. 26.
83. Miltward (1977) p. 255.
84. For calculation factors, see Atzler/Lehmann (1930) p. 250.
85. *Die schweizerische Kriegswirtschaft* (1950) p. 422.
86. Report by A. Muggli on 15.12.1941, SBA E 7390/2, No. 11, p. 1.
87. *Die schweizerische Kriegswirtschaft* (1950) p. 442.
88. Walter Kull, "Erhebungen über Haushaltsrechnungen in den Vereinigten Staaten und der Schweiz," in: SZVS 1945, p. 73.
89. Fleisch (1947) p. 302.
90. For the inadequate diet of poorly paid sections of the population in the 1930s, see *L'alimentation des travailleurs et la politique sociale* (1936) Bureau Internationale du Travail, Geneva, p. 181.
91. Fleisch (1947) p. 302.
92. For the results, see Fleisch (1947) p. 410.
93. EKKE minutes, 4 September 1942, p. 16; SBA E 7390 (F), No. 36.
94. EKKE minutes, 24 September 1946, p. 10; SBA E 7390 (F), No. 36.
95. Fleisch (1947) pp. 439-440.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 440.
97. *Die schweizerische Kriegswirtschaft* (1950) p. 178 (author: Erika Rickli).
98. *Ibid.*
99. Fleisch (1947) p. 425.
100. Erika Rickli (1943) p. 47f.
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114. *Die schweizerische Kriegswirtschaft* (1950) p. 457.
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## 10. PLURALITY OF TASTE: FOOD AND CONSUMPTION IN WEST GERMANY DURING THE 1950S

Michael Wildt

"Regarding the desires that should be fulfilled after the war, first of all people want to thoroughly enjoy all the wished-for things they cannot buy nowadays. One wants to smoke a lot, another dreams of butter and fat cheese, women long for coffee, etc."

In this opinion poll which the GfK, the "Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung" (Institute for Consumer Research), took in Germany during 1941, the third year of World War II, food did not hold first place among the wishes people would have after the war. They desired more clothing, shoes, china, and not necessarily more to eat. But if they talked about food, they would spontaneously say:

"I long for something special to eat."—"Sometimes it would be enough," one of the correspondents wrote, "to have a really satisfying meal with rare, delicious things like cream-puffs or something like that—just once. Writing this I can't keep my mouth from watering."<sup>1</sup>

The remembrance of all the former delicacies as expresses here reminds us, that the consumer experience in postwar Germany cannot be separated from the time prior to the war. On the contrary, for a long time following the Second World War people used their memories of the 1930s to measure their consumption in postwar Germany. In the 1950s the "consumer society" had not yet fully developed. However, the necessary practices



that supported the "consumer society" can be observed as existing in embryo during this period.

In the following I plan to focus on changes in the practice of consumption in postwar Germany. In the years following the war people who had to rigidly economize their household budgets were by the end of the 1950s able to afford new articles; however, this also involved learning a lot of new skills. Consequently in regarding the development of consumption during the postwar years it is necessary to look at the multifaceted changes in everyday practice. Consumption, in this sense, does not only mean the quantifiable consumption of food or the possession of goods but moreover the "production" of consumption—consumption widely understood as "senuous human activity, practice" (Karl Marx, *Thesen ad Feuerbach*), as human agency. Analyzing the practice of consumption therefore does not only mean chronicling the quantitative consumption patterns of working-class families but also illuminating the buying of food, the cooking, the technical changes in the cuisine, and the embedded "production" of cultural meanings, the fabrication of signs and meanings connected with food and consumption.

To begin I will describe the consumer experiences of pre-1950s Germany focusing especially on the war and the late 1940s up to the currency reform in 1948 which marked a deep caesura, both in the history of experience and in the history of consumption in West Germany. Secondly I plan to quantitatively analyze the development of consumption based on empirical household budgets of working-class families kept from 1949 until 1963. The third section deals with the changes in cooking and the appearance of technical equipment in the kitchen, following which I will focus on the new languages which became visible in the rhetoric of the recipes published by the customer magazine "Die Kluge Hausfrau" (The Clever Housewife). The new semiotic codes of consumption developed during the 1950s enabled a fundamental change in the selling and buying of food, namely the introduction of "self service". Instead of the personal relations between merchant and customer that had dominated this area and mediated the buying and selling of articles now the goods spoke directly to the customers from the supermarket shelf where they struggled with their "rivals" for space and attention. This fundamental shift as semiotic dimension of consumption symbolizes the new role that consumers had to learn in West Germany during the 1950s. These new practices of consumption in their turn created a new "consumer subject" who perhaps did not become aware of itself at the end of the 1950s, but who gained a powerful social role during the next decades.

### SCARCITY, RATIONING AND THE BLACK MARKET: CONSUMERS' EXPERIENCES PRIOR TO THE 1950S

Consumption in West Germany after World War II cannot be fully understood without considering the period prior to the war and the rationing of food between 1939 and 1948. The experience of consumption in Germany following World War I was dominated to a large extent by scarcity, and even hunger in everyday life. The insufficient food supply (older people in Germany remember well the so-called "Steckritbenwinter" (turnip winter) of 1916, when turnips were almost the only food available) did not improve in 1919 with the end of the war, but persisted into the early 1920s.<sup>2</sup> 1923, the year of the enormous inflation, forced many households, especially those of workers, to make every effort to feed their families. The Great Depression meant unemployment and distress once more. The brief periods of economic stability between 1924 and 1929 and in the mid 1930s never lasted long enough for people to really lose the feeling of uncertainty and discontinuity.<sup>3</sup>

In September 1939 food was rationed, but for the first months this date did not signify a definitive turning point. The practice of the struggle to survive, the laborious house keeping, the economizing with a small budget were so habitual that the rationing of food did not necessarily mean sudden deprivation. In the years before the war people had been forced to live with scarcity, and now everyone simply tried it again.<sup>4</sup> During the first years of military victories the Nazi regime was able to exploit the occupied countries and so to satisfy the needs of their own "Aryan" people. But once the war had reached the turning point, following the German defeat at Stalingrad in 1943, the conditions of food supply worsened. At the end of the war the rationing system was shattered. The former Reich had been divided into four occupation zones which did not have trade relations with each other. Seeds and artificial fertilizer needed urgently by the farmers were beyond their means. Germans were entirely reliant on imports of wheat from Canada and the United States. The official daily rations were small, and on some days, especially during the winter months, intake declined to less than 1,000 calories per day.<sup>5</sup>

People could only survive if they were able to make use of every possible way to obtain food. Consequently alongside the governmental ration system a second economy grew up: the black market.<sup>6</sup> This illegal market existed everywhere: in the streets and squares, where people bought and sold goods, and in the factories, where most products were exchanged



directly to obtain raw materials and to procure additional food for the workers. People who lived in towns travelled out into the country hoping to get some butter, bacon or potatoes in exchange for cigarettes, jewellery and household goods. Last, but not least, the charitable help of British, American or Canadian organizations like CARE provided an indispensable part of the food supply in West Germany during years directly following the war.

The gap between a governmental rationing system, which was unable to feed its people, and the black market economy, which was illegal but offered everything to everyone if they could pay, shaped the important experience that everybody had to rely on himself. This experience taught that a socialistic economy was unable to supply practically everything which was urgently needed, and that the market instead is a hard, but efficient alternative. According to Lutz Niehammer the postwar years were a "school of the market" for the West German people.<sup>7</sup>

As a consequence, the currency reform in June 1948 meant a deep caesura, both in the history of experience and in the history of consumption in West Germany. From one day to the next the shops offered all the goods which had been unobtainable for years before. In the public opinion surveys taken by the US authorities in their occupied zone people claimed that their greatest worries were focused on food, clothing and missing relatives. At the moment of the currency reform, however, all their worries focused on one thing: money.<sup>8</sup> Now that money had had its value restored, after the times of scarcity and hunger, "normality" should return to the households. After the years of the monotony of rations people could now afford long-missed tibbits like butter, cream, coffee or white flour.

One of the women I interviewed, Mrs. O., born in 1928 and raised in a working-class neighbourhood in Hamburg, realized at once a long cherished wish:

"1948, after the currency reform, I was not married and worked at my father's office. The first money I got... Nearby the Lastropsweg in Eimsbüttel, there was a confectionary's shop. And there I had purchased a huge heap of biscuits. I remember well the cream-tarts, and we had gorged—awfully, but I loved it."<sup>9</sup>

Immediately after the currency reform the demand for rolls made of wheat meal grew so rapidly that the bakeries had difficulties producing enough bread of normal quality. In autumn 1948 the director of the Food Office of the British and American Occupation Zone, Hans Schlange-Schöningen, warned of the inevitable foreign impression that "the West Germans would

have goods in plenty and live on the fat of the land." He urged the people not to eat now "the easter cake and the easter meat" of the next year. Finer qualities vegetables like cauliflower sold much faster than the everyday cabbage. Because of low demand the prices of fish and canned food crashed, whilst meat could be sold with a supplement of 50% to 100%.<sup>10</sup>

### CHANGES IN THE FOOD CONSUMPTION OF WORKING-CLASS FAMILIES AFTER 1949

The following years were usually described by terms like "Wirtschaftswunder" or a succession of consumption waves like the "Freißwelle" (food-wave) or the "Kleidungswelle" (clothing-wave) or the "Draubswelle" (travel-wave). Hans Peter Schwarz, among other sociologists and historians, considered the 1950s in West Germany to be a "period of exciting modernization" par excellence,<sup>11</sup> and even for critics like Rolf Siefertle, West Germany displayed "the 'modern' structure in purest form".<sup>12</sup> According to Hans Jürgen Teuteberg there had been a "revolution in nourishment" between 1949 und 1965, which had caused the "last breakthrough to the actual mass prosperity".<sup>13</sup> However, all of these arguments remain locked into a perspective "from above",<sup>14</sup> and what I want to sharpen is the difference, which consumers experienced. Use of the term "Modernization of consumption", as stated by Teuteberg, cannot be understood aside from these everyday practices. Therefore, rather than examine society from above I intend to use a micrological examination on the specific development of mass consumption in everyday life.<sup>15</sup>

The development of private consumption in West Germany in the 1950s can be explored by analyzing the daily household budgets of working-class families, who kept records of their income and expenses in order to report to the Federal Statistic Board. From 1949 until now, about 200 working-class households noted their incomes, expenses und consumption every day in a simple, grey exercise book. These books had to be given to the regional Statistic Board. The regional Board then calculated the results and sent the data to the Federal Statistic Board in Wiesbaden. There the statisticians calculated the average consumption of a working household composed of parents and two children, the so-called "4-Personen-Arbeitsmerthaushalt".<sup>16</sup> I do not intend to stress the representativeness of the selection in what follows—although this type of household accounted for almost 15% of the West German population.<sup>17</sup>

The average income of these households increased from 343 DM monthly in 1950 to 975 DM in 1963 with the greatest increase coming in



the early fifties. In general workers' incomes increased exceptionally in the 1950s in comparison to former periods. Supported by the economic boom of the reconstruction and especially by the Korean War, the average worker's income between 1950 and 1954 increased by 40%—a rate that was never again reached in the following years. After subtracting taxes and insurance, the amount of each household's disposable income rose from 305 DM in 1950 to 847 DM in 1963.

Among the total living costs, expenses for food still held the dominant position. In 1950 these households spent 133 DM each month for food, amounting to a proportion of 46%. By 1963 these expenses in absolute figures had risen to 193 DM, and they still made up the largest item in the family budget, accounting for 35% (absolute figures are based on constant prices of 1950 to avoid distortions depending on inflation). The families spent an increasing amount, both in absolute and in relative figures, on so-called "luxury articles" such as coffee, beer and cigarettes. In 1950 the expenditure on "luxury" items amounted to a proportion of 6%, in 1960 10%.

In 1963 these working-class families bought only half of the quantity of flour they had done at the beginning of the fifties. By contrast, the consumption of cakes and biscuits, canned food, honey, sweets and tea had doubled. Tropical fruit, ham and chocolate were eaten quantitatively four times more in 1963 than in 1950, and the consumption of poultry and coffee had also considerably increased. However the record for the highest increase was established by condensed milk: in 1950 the working-class households consumed 205 g a month, as compared to nearly 2,000 g in 1963.

Margarine still continued to be the dominant means of fat intake, however a turning point is discernable in 1956/57, when the consumption rates of margarine declined and those of butter increased. The West German trade company "Edeka", which represented nearly 20% of the total turnover made by the food retail business, analyzed this development in 1957:

"There is a certain trend to be seen to buy quality food, and the consumers bought more and more butter. Simultaneously the demand for fine qualities of margarine grew in a similar way, whilst the lower qualities remained behind."<sup>18</sup>

The remarkable significance of butter even at a time, when scarcity had definitely ended, was shown by a opinion poll taken in autumn 1953. When asked, which article of food one wanted to eat more of, if the prices were not so high, 74% of the inquired workers (a level that stood 12 percentage

points higher than the average!) answered that they would buy more butter.<sup>19</sup> The desire for "good butter" aimed not only at high nutrition value but also at "good taste". Butter was an unmistakable sign of a satisfying, tasteful and pretentious cuisine. In another poll of 1962 butter had been valued as the healthiest fat. It would be much more digestible than even diet margarine.<sup>20</sup>

Connected to the international agro-market and first of all to the European Common Market, West Germany became the most important European importer of fruit and vegetables. Especially fine qualities were imported from the Netherlands, Italy, Spain and other Mediterranean countries, while the domestic farmers concentrated in cultivating cabbages and other lower qualities of produce. The consumption of tomatoes increased at the highest rate of all vegetables consumed during the fifties: in 1950 the working-class households had only eaten 900 g tomatoes a month and in 1963 they consumed nearly 1,300 g. Because of the European Agromarket tomatoes could be sold and consumed all year, and their red color, fresh look and firmness made them perfectly suitable for food decorations, the aesthetic dimension of consumption. The West German "Margarine Union", a subsidiary company of Unilever, made commercials for its product "Sanella" with the slogan: "Modelfarbe Tomatenrot auch für unsere Tische!" ("Dress your table with a fashion color like tomato red"). Since 1958 there was an evident increase in the consumption of fruit, to a large extent of tropical fruit which increased by 20% reaching an amount of more than 5,000 g a month. Oranges and bananas, which had been available as a Christmas treat, were now available during the whole year and became part of the everyday diet.

In the early 1950s meat was not served every day. 1955 the famous "Institut für Demoskopie, Allensbach" explored that 70% of the West German people ate meat three times a week, but only 27% were accustomed to eat meat every day.<sup>21</sup> If you look more closely at the statistics of the working-class households a specific differentiation can be discerned. The consumption of beef increased by only a little but the consumption of pork rose by 41%. In 1963 a single working-class household of four persons consumed 1,476 g of beef and 1,552 g of pork per month. However, the consumption of poultry increased the most, increasing sevenfold between 1950 and 1963. Chicken could be kept frozen since the late fifties in new deep-freezers. In 1955 there were only 2,500 deep-freezers in West German shops, two years later the total increased to 10,000, and by 1964 there were more than 100,000.<sup>22</sup> Chicken accounted for 39% of the turnover made by the frozen food industry, followed by spinach and ice cream. The high demand for chicken could only be satisfied by imports



from other European countries and the United States. It may be that besides rock'n roll, American chicken provided one of the lasting elements of the "Americanization" of West German popular culture.<sup>23</sup>

As mentioned above, the expenditure on coffee, tea, beer, liquors and tobacco amounted to a proportion of 6% by 1950, in 1960 10% of the working-class household budget. Among these expenses, preferences changed: In the early fifties households spent most of the money on tobacco, but from 1954 on, beer and liquor made up the largest proportion of the "luxury" items. Coffee remained in the 1950s as a Sunday drink. In 1950 the average coffee consumption per month was 91 g in contrast to 372 g coffee substitute like cichorium or grain coffee consumed. For the first time in 1955 the working-class households drank more coffee than coffee substitute of any sort, but it was not until 1960 that these families consumed more than 500 g coffee a month.

To sum up, the monthly budget of these working-class households obviously remained tight and frugal until the late 1950s. In opposition to commonplace characterizations of the period as "affluent society", these working-class families lived quite modestly, at least during the first half of the decade. In 1962 the trade union institute cautioned against terms such as "Wirtschaftswunder":

"What was thought to be different consumption waves in West Germany such as the food-wave, or the clothing-wave, the household goods- or the travel-wave was nothing but the expression of a backlog of demand, which could be satisfied successively, in a society which had been deeply shattered and impoverished by the war."<sup>24</sup>

However, the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s present a distinct hiatus. For instance, from 1956 on the consumption of butter rose continuously, the consumption of poultry increased, and by the late 1950s there was a striking abundance of cold meat and ham in the working-class households. Their consumption of tropical fruit rose remarkably, and the everyday supply of fruit offered a variety that was unknown before— independent of regional and seasonal limitations. Ready-made articles such as canned food became more and more part of daily meals.

Summarizing, West German consumption in the 1950s consists of two different phases: during the first half of the decade, the working-class households tried to satisfy their basic needs, spending a large amount of their incomes on food and to replace things lost or destroyed during the war. By the late 1950s, as incomes rose, people were able to afford new articles. Of course these working-class families still had to economize and

follow a budget, but they no longer exhibited a "taste for necessities" (Bourdieu) as was in case in the early postwar years. As Ernest Zahn put it: consumers no longer longed for "scarce goods but for desired ones" (in German this comes across as a play on the words "entbehr" (missed) and "begehr" (desired)).

### THE TRANSFORMATION OF FOOD PREPARATION PRACTICES

Consumption consists not only of the quantifiable consumption of food but also includes "production." Food had to be supplied, prepared, cooked or fried, and last but not least served. "The inquiry of consumption makes sense only if cooking, eating and suffering hunger will be analyzed as a form of social practice."<sup>25</sup> Therefore I suggest widening the horizon of inquiry to include the cooking, the buying of food, and the "production" of cultural meanings, the fabrication of signs connected with food and consumption. For example, the quantitative consumption of potatoes certainly fell during this decade (as it did in the years since the turn of the century), but at the same time ready-made articles like dehydrated potato-dumplings or potato-pancakes took their place in everyday cuisine, and after the sixties the consumption of pommes frites and potato chips noticeably increased. Or to use another example, although the quantitative figures remained the same, the preparation of rice altered, because it was more and more served with warm meals thus replacing potatoes or cereals, as opposed to being eaten as rice pudding or sweet soup.

A third example: as mentioned above, the working-class households consumed less and less flour but bought more and more biscuits and cookies. Obviously these households did not bake cakes at home as they had done in the years before. This trend was confirmed by the leading West German producer of baking-powder. The marketing board of the Oetker Company stated, that its product "Backin" had experienced continuously declining sales during the 1950s. "The joy of home bakery trickled away", as the sales manager complained.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the home bakery declined during the 1950s, but it did not vanish. What—presumably male—managers described as "joy" was hard work: one can easily understand that the housewives desired to abandon kneading dough and to prefer buying cakes at the bakery. But they did not give up all home bakery. When in 1950 putting "Tortenguß" (glaze) on the market the Oetker Company was surprised by the success of the new product. "Tortenguß", which was needed for baking fruit cakes, indicated the transformation: instead of old-fashioned



stirring cake, the new fruit cakes were the hit of the 1950s. Fruit cakes could be prepared easily and fast, they had a fruity and fresh taste, which was valued as healthy and light. Fruit cakes also gave housewives the assurance that they did not need not to buy all of the family's food in the shops but were still skilled enough to bake on their own.

This opposition between the facilitation of work on the one hand and the competence of cooking on the other also determined the use of electric appliances. The kitchen appeared as the place furnished first with the new durable goods. At the beginning of the 1960s more than 10% of all four-member households in West Germany had an electric kitchen machine. The most sought-after item during the 1950s was the refrigerator. In an opinion poll taken in 1955 only 10% of all households owned a refrigerator, but nearly 50% dreamed of buying one. Even in 1958 the refrigerator still remained at the top of the list of desired goods.<sup>27</sup> The ownership of refrigerators rose between 1958 and 1961 from 19% to 39%, and two years later more than 51% of all West German private households had a refrigerator.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless there was a difference between the ownership of such machines and the use of them. Jakob Tanner cited the report of a Swiss housewife about their new electric kitchen machine:

"Crushing food with a rapidity like a flash seems brutal and atrocious to me. I see hard nuts, apples, lemon peels cut to pieces, being transformed into a irreognizable bulk. Only a few moments later cabbage and carrots, onions and potatoes, bacon and fish could no longer be differentiated. Something inside me rebels against this bringing food into line. (...) I disappointed my husband by my reserve. He has expected me to be heartily delighted over his present because I usually agree with all innovations promising to make the work of housewives easier. Well, he need not wait too long: after some tests I changed my hostility to an honest admiration."<sup>29</sup>

This little story catches our attention. Of course, most of the housewives appreciated any technical innovation that eased their daily work. During the 1950s the working-hours of a housewife in a household of four to six persons amounted to more than 72 hours a week.<sup>30</sup> With good reason they were proud of their new electric kitchen machines. In several opinion polls taken during the fifties these women said that their work was easier with kitchen machines which would save time and energy. And owning the new machines proved housewives to be modern. Yet on the other hand these answers, as well as the little episode cited above, pointed out that the use of kitchen machines was not at all a matter of course. It was not enough to

read the operating instructions, as the new appliances and their corresponding techniques transformed the way of preparing food fundamentally.

In the beginning of the sixties the "Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung" discovered that housewives used their electric kitchen machines quite differently from the recommendations of the producers.<sup>31</sup> Exerting work, like mixing dough or beating eggs, was willingly dealt with by using machines, but scouring vegetables or peeling potatoes women preferred to do by hand. "Potatoes have to be peeled plainly", one of the interviewers quoted. "Peeling potatoes by the kitchen machine lacks accuracy. Therefore most of the housewives I have spoken to still peeled potatoes by hand."<sup>32</sup>

Kitchen machines and ready-made food lowered the level of knowledge previously acquired through experience; personal skills became less important. On the other hand the machines heightened a formalized understanding of weights, quantities, time and the right handling of machines. However, such a complex and differentiated practice like the daily "production" of meals cannot be transformed into a purely technical process. Contrary to the industrial law of efficiency it was still necessary to "waste" time or energy to improve taste or to discover new ones.

Similarly this ambiguity can be discovered in the simultaneousness of the use of "modern" industrial products like canned food and traditional skills such as preserving food and vegetables. In 1953, 76% of all private households in West Germany canned fruit on their own; households in the country more so than in towns, households with several members more frequently than those with only one or two people. Younger housewives were slightly less used to preserving a little less than elder housewives.<sup>33</sup> The reason for canning food at home was unequivocal—the women wanted to save money. In the early 1950s home-made cans were much cheaper than industrialized canned food. Noticeably more than half of the housewives canned food although they did not have a garden of their own! The second reason for preferring home-made canned food was the unmistakably good taste. Taste would remain the most important attribute of homemade canned food, particularly when the rising incomes allowed consumers to buy more expensive industrial canned food more frequently.

Especially from the mid-fifties onwards the working-class households consumed more and more canned food. A consideration of the opinion polls taken by the Allensbach institute reveals the reasons for this increasing consumption.<sup>34</sup> More than half of the housewives asked estimated canned food to be comfortable because they were able to prepare a quick meal at any time. A third of the housewives believed canned food to taste better and another third held the view that canned food looks fresh and delicious. Most of the housewives had bought canned food primarily



because the vegetables they wanted to eat were unavailable at this time of the year. Buying canned food obviously meant the attempt to overcome seasonal dependencies. Mainly those women who were employed and also had to do housework, used canned food as it saved time. Yet there was a difference in the consumption of canned fruit. Pineapple slices and tangerines were needed to distinguish dishes on Sunday or feast days. No doubt, canned fruit was a sign of an extraordinary meal.

Above all one tin held the top of the list: condensed milk. The consumption of evaporated milk rose ten times from 1950 until 1963! The market was dominated by four trade marks: "Glückslee", "Libby's", "Nestlé" and "Bärenmarke" that were run by two Swiss and two US companies.<sup>35</sup> By order of the West German Libby's company the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach carefully analyzed the consumer behavior during the 1950s.<sup>36</sup> Nearly all consumers used tinned milk for coffee, a third needed it to prepare salad, sauces, puddings or mashed potatoes. When asked which attributes of condensed milk they preferred most of them answered that first of all, evaporated milk tastes creamy, secondly, it goes best of all with coffee, and thirdly, condensed milk is able to colour the coffee in a beautiful way. The traditional advantage of condensed milk—being fresh for a long time—was less and less noted.

This shift of argument from practical reasons to aesthetic ones could also be recognized in the advertisements. In 1950 evaporated milk was praised for its various applications:

"Libby's milk... the creamy one, makes the cake light and tasty, makes the coffee aromatic and the cacao flavoured. It improves the taste of sweet dishes, soups, and many meals. Because Libby's is concentrated milk it contains all of the nutritive aspects that make fresh milk so valuable."

It is notable that besides the indications of taste and aesthetic attributes this advertisement did not lack mentioning the high nutritive content of condensed milk. One year later the praising of variety stood back in comparison to the connection of condensed milk and coffee:

"Libby's milk... the creamy one! makes the coffee aromatic, flavoured, and full of delight."

The indication of nutritiousness was apparent in the sentence:

"Libby's milk is concentrated full-cream milk".

The rhetoric shift from the nutritive aspects to aesthetic aspects can be clearly seen. Finally, in 1952, the aesthetic argument dominated:

"What do you need for the coffee?  
Libby's milk... the creamy one!  
Even the best coffee would be yet more aromatic and flavoured by adding Libby's milk. Only a few drops color it an appetizing brown colour."

This little sequence shows how "intrinsic value" became detached from nutritive value. The sales argument that evaporated milk not only substitutes full-cream milk but is even healthier, stayed in the background. In its place was the continuous, subliminal reference to another desired food: cream. Tying together condensed milk and coffee made it possible to initiate an aesthetic discourse about tinned milk. Now the talk was all about the "golden colour of the coffee" and the "creamy flow".

### CHANGING DISCOURSES ON FOOD AND THE SPREAD OF "SELF-SERVICE" SHOPS

This shift to semiotic codes and the increasing meaning of signs is one of the most important changes in consumption during the 1950s, and particularly since the late fifties. The new semiotic "languages" consumers had to learn became visible in the rhetoric of the recipes published by the customer magazine "Die Kluge Hausfrau".<sup>37</sup> Instead of the anticipated redundancy and recurring standardization, the rhetoric of "Die Kluge Hausfrau" was exceptionally multifaceted. During the first years after the currency reform in 1948, the recipes the "Kluge Hausfrau" published were rather simple and frugal. For example, there was a macaroni pudding made of minced meat and mushrooms, and beef or butter were seldomly mentioned. Worth noting were not only the pecuniary limits but the lack of international flair or extravagance. The recipes were obviously dominated by the domestic cuisine as it could be found in the former limits of the German Reich. Dishes from Hamburg, Silesia or East Prussia could be found as often as recipes like "the cheap pumpkin" which recommended an economic use of the household budget.

In 1951 the "Kluge Hausfrau" widened its horizons. For a Sunday meal it proposed a pork cutlet prepared à la Milano. Looking at the following recipes which all used the sign "Milano" there was not a uniform way of preparing the food but various ways that only share their connection to the referents cheese and tomatoes. From the mid-fifties the recipes became



increasingly international. In 1954 mutton was offered as "Caucasian spit", "Italian mutton", "Mutton cutlets, provençale" or "Viking style". Cabbage was no longer cabbage, but "Swiss cabbage", "Scottish" or "Norman cabbage", even "Cabbage à la Strasbourg". In 1958 the "Kluge Hausfrau" invited its readers to a "culinary journey round the world": "Italy: Fish Milanese", "Portugal: Portuguese spinach roll", "France: Omelette parisienne", "Netherlands: Soup hollandaise"—and "Africa: Banana salad"! It is obvious how strong the Eurocentric mentality was internally fixed. In comparison to the other national states Africa was defined as only one country, and it was moreover presented with a meal of bananas—exactly the white prejudice about what black people in Africa ate. This caricature makes it sharply clear that the international connotations were plain artefacts, fabrications. Just like the "Milano style" had little to do with the authentic cuisine of Northern Italy, all the different international recipes did not represent authentic foreign ways of cooking but the wish for an international reputation, to become a common member of the family of nations again. The rhetoric of the recipes came to symbolize cuisine less as a practice of preparation than a factory of dreams.

In the famous West German periodical "Magnum" Klaus Harpprecht characterized this postwar mentality:

"The Germans long to be part of the 'family of nations'. They get sick of standing apart, being alone, whether in a brilliant or in a miserable condition. (...) The wish of being assimilated to the international standard of taste, desires and needs seized their architecture as well as their menus (no architect would dare to build up an office-block in a different style than his colleagues in Louisville, Nagasaki or Lyon. No urban restaurant would relinquish serving Steak à la Hawaii or Nasi Goreng.). The Germans want indeed to have luck with themselves, and the world wants to have finally luck with the Germans. So we are resolved to be happy and mediocre."<sup>38</sup>

Long before West Germans went on their first trip into southern Europe they could taste Mediterranean atmosphere by eating "lamb cutlets à la Murillo", they could prove modernity and an "American life-style" by serving light, low-calorie meals. The early fifties with their frugal recipes, full of references to shortages and the economic use of money, were followed by timid excursions into little peculiarities of everyday cuisine, first attempts to open the rhetoric to little luxury menus or international dishes, the multitude of little snacks, the miniaturization of meals, and finally the new conscience eating healthy and light. The development of this rhetoric showed that these recipes did not stand apart from social reality in

West Germany, but can be read as a text that discloses the development of West German mentality.

Parallel to the discourse in medical magazines the "Kluge Hausfrau" also talked about "healthy nutrition" in a more and more scientific way. In the early fifties the term "healthy nutrition" was connected with an anti-modern way of thinking about and criticizing the "sick-making" civilisation. During these years the "Kluge Hausfrau" recommended wholegrain bread and sports, obviously well acquainted with former concepts of "Völkergesundheit" (völkisch health). In the late fifties the "Kluge Hausfrau" had to take notice of the changing living conditions and became increasingly more realistic. Consequently, the discourse about "healthy nutrition" twisted—now the focus was either on fitness at work, especially for the husbands and the children at school, or on the "slim line". This connection of nutrition to socially-defined standards such as fitness at work or a male dominated, specific imagination of the female body signaled an important change in the discourse about eating during the fifties. The "modern housewife", as "Die Kluge Hausfrau" sketched her, knew all about calories, vitamins and other essentials of healthy nutrition, she was busy in rationalizing her household, used gadgets extensively and saved therefore enough time to make herself pretty—the "modern" woman was not only housewife and mother but a clever engineer and an attractive wife, too.

This shift to the increasing importance of semiotic codes was strongly fostered by a new form of selling goods via the self-service store that brought a fundamental change in the way people purchased food. From the 19th century up until the 1950s it was an everyday experience to buy in shops where the shopkeeper stood behind a counter, asked what you wanted, fetched the articles from behind the counter, weighed them or drew them up, wrapped them, added the prices and took the cash. Self-service stores began to spread only from the mid-1950s onwards. Starting with just a few, the numbers then grew rapidly. In 1951 there were still only 39 self-service stores in West Germany, but in 1955 the number had climbed to 203, and only five years later, in 1960, to 17,132. By 1965 West Germany had more than 53,000 self-service stores.<sup>39</sup>

The rupture in experience could hardly have been greater. Not only did the counter disappear, the whole shop was reshaped with respect to the self-service principle. Now all goods were freely available, ready to grasp right at the level of eyes and hands, the arrangement of the articles, colours, light... all was brought into line with the presentation of goods. People who entered a self-service store for the first time were overwhelmed by the wealth of goods on offer. In the grocer's shop there had always been an opportunity to talk with neighbours, to hear local gossip,



to "waste" time. The new self-service stores instead represented the modern discourse of the efficient use of time. Time-saving was the argument housewives quoted most if asked about the advantages of self-service.<sup>40</sup>

The second important experience was the freedom of choice. After their first confusion, most housewives had the feeling of being able to select goods autonomously and without outside influence. For the customers, the mise-en-scène of a store as a glittering world of goods meant the feeling of individual freedom.<sup>41</sup> Paradoxically, as options increased and as the choice of goods became more and more complicated, the desire of the customers for advice did not increase concomitantly. Instead, the attraction of 'self-service' was being able to choose and purchase individually. In place of the personal relationship between shopkeeper and customer, the goods now spoke directly to the customers and had to compete with their "rivals" on the shelves. This shift from the communicative work of sales clerks (often sales girls) to the semiotic power of goods and their outside appearances amounted to a decisive change in consumption in West Germany from the end of the fifties.

## TOWARDS A NEW CONSUMER

The new quality of consumption at the end of the fifties consisted in much more than a further rise in economic growth, a quantitative increase of consumption and the buying of better durable equipment. It was above all a multiplication of options and a diversification of practices. The new world of goods, which West German customers had to deal with, had not yet been fully unfolded. But at the starting point of this development one can clearly see the diversification of practices. Entering a self-service store, buying industrialized food, taking home frozen food for the weekend because the refrigerator held it fresh for two or three days, preparing some snacks for the T.V. dinner in order not to interrupt the T.V. program for a family meal, cooking "light and healthy" so that the "slim line" would not hurt—all of these new skills had to be learned. Consumers, specifically housewives had to perform a multitude of new practices. They had to spell out new languages to decipher the several semiotic codes and had to find their way in a complex, unstable and entangled new world of goods.

The experience of hunger that had been present in the minds of the elder generation during their lifetime had now vanished. The stores full of goods, the abundant window displays of the butcher's shops—they all proved to be not only the transient dream of prosperity but rather permanent affluence. Of course many households still had to economize their

budgets, of course they had to watch their pennies, but at the end of the 1950s there was no longer the need to be modest. The structural restrictions and the well-known, traditional limitations of an older way of living passed away. Because of the extension of the "universe of goods" and the variety of consumer options the working-class households took leave of their "proletarian way of living".

The "mass consumption society" was in no case a classless society, as the West German sociologist Helmut Schelsky had expected; social disparity still existed, but instead of traditional consumer hierarchies subtle "fine differences" (Bourdieu) now took their place. Heterodoxy and plurality was the signature of the "mass consumption society" that formed West-Germany since the late fifties onwards. Social inequality was no longer defined by profession and the position in production but by the conditions of work and leisure time, by social security, and chances of individual development—nevertheless gender as a criterion of social inequality still remains.<sup>42</sup>

Observers such as Max Horkheimer had stated that the consumption of food in industrialized societies had lost its "contrasts".

"The process of civilisation can be recognized by the culinary taste. Because of the artificial methods of production in agriculture, butchery and cooperate the strengthening dishes, the contrasts were smoothed off—similar to other fields. As asparagus nowadays tastes like peas, the unambiguous, specific taste of ham, sausage, salad or potatoes is vanishing by the same manipulations. Fermentation of wine is to be interrupted and sulphuric acid is to be added in service of a more rapid, rational and extensive production. As a result the sense of taste flattened, and a carrot of former times would nowadays surely confuse the civilized taste like a bourgeois entering one of the garlic-saturated tenements in Lennox Avenue."<sup>43</sup>

In spite of such global pessimistic views, uniformity of taste did not come to pass, but rather taste itself changed fundamentally. As the number of options increased, the offers of food broadened, and the international agro-market offered fruit and vegetables of all kinds during the whole year, the traditional contrasts of everyday food were disappearing at the same time that contrasts between Sunday and daily dishes, between the seasons and the regions diminished. Indeed, a refinement of traditional taste can be observed, as well as an increase in the multitude of new varieties of tastes. The British historian Stephen Mennell defines this process, although focusing on the 19th century, in fitting terms:

"Underneath the many swirling cross-currents, the main trend has been towards diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties in food habits and



culinary taste. One trend, not two: for in spite of the apparent contradiction between diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties, these are both facets of the same process."<sup>44</sup>

By being part of the "consumer society" everyone had, in the words of Pierre Bourdieu, to pay attention "not to differ from the ordinary, but to differ differently."<sup>45</sup> Out of the increasing number of options consumers had to learn choosing and developing their own distinctive style. The previous practice of consumption that for long time meant making much out of little, now transformed into the skill of fabricating individuality out of the multitude.

The practice of consumption that consumers began to get acquainted with since the late 1950s created a "consumer subject" for the future who set a high value on individual freedom of choice. From the point of view of production—the experience of direct, physical work to "produce" food—this subject far removed. The work of preparing food in which a multitude of producers participate, local, regional and international—this relationship can hardly be experienced in a semiotic world of goods. Physical hardship and skill will vanish in the cash nexus. After more than thirty years of living in an "affluent society" furnished with an abundance of goods that no one had dreamt of at the beginning of the fifties, experienced in the usage of signs and semiotic codes, and highly skilled in the freedom of choice this "consumer subject" is nevertheless full of wants because it still mixes up consumption with happiness.

#### NOTES

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9. Interview with Mrs. O., 9.2.1990, in Hamburg.
10. Cf. Stüber, Kampf gegen den Hunger, p. 384.
11. Hans-Peter Schwarz, Die Ära Adenauer. Gründungsjahre der Republik 1949–1957, Stuttgart/Wiesbaden, Fortschrittsfindende? Opposition gegen Technik und Industrie von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart, München 1984, p. 226.
12. Hans Jürgen Teuteberg, Zum Problemfeld Urbanisierung und Ernährung im 19. Jahrhundert, in: H. J. Teuteberg (Ed.), Durchbruch zum modernen Massenkonsum, Münster 1987, p. 1–36, cit.: p. 35.
13. Teuteberg explicitly refers to per-caput-data in his analysis of long-time developments; see Hans Jürgen Teuteberg, Der Verzehr von Lebensmitteln in Deutschland pro Kopf und Jahr seit Beginn der Industrialisierung (1850–1975). Versuch einer quantitativen Langzeitanalyse, in: Archiv für Sozialgeschichte 29 (1979), pp. 331–388.
14. The following is based on a larger study of consumption in West Germany during the fifties which was recently published: Michael Wildt, Am Beginn der "Konsumgesellschaft". Studien über Konsum und Essen in Westdeutschland in den fünfziger Jahren, Hamburg 1993.
15. I owe many thanks to Jennifer Jenkins who has improved the English of this essay with patience and sensitivity.
16. Published by Statistisches Bundesamt Wiesbaden, Fachserie Preise, Löhne, Wirtschaftserrechnungen, Reihe 13 Wirtschaftserrechnungen, Wiesbaden 1949ff.
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23. One of the first and famous restaurant chains in West Germany founded in the late fifties was the "Wienervald" which served only roasted chickens in various ways.
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33. Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, Das Einnahmen. Umfrage 1953/54 (Bundesarchiv Koblenz ZSg 132-284 I/II).
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35. Glücksklee was a product of Glücksklee Milchgesellschaft mbH, Hamburg, which was a subsidiary company of Carnation Co., Los Angeles; Libby's was produced by the German department of Libby's; Nestlé was a subsidiary company of the Swiss company in Vevey, and "Bärenmarke" was produced by the Allgäuer Alpenmilch AG in München, which was also owned by a Swiss company; see Max Eli, Die Nachfragekonzentration im Nahrungsmittelhandel, Berlin/München 1968, p. 30-32.
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37. "Die Kluge Hausfrau" was a weekly, free-of-charge consumer magazine of the trade company "Edeka". It was already published before World War II, in 1949 it was put on the market once more, and rose until the end of the fifties to a circulation of more than one million copies. "Die Kluge Hausfrau" was the most widely-read consumer magazine of the food trade and can be compared to famous public magazines like the "Stern", "Quick" or "Constanze".
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## 11. MC KEBAP: DÖNER KEBAP AND THE SOCIAL POSITIONING STRUGGLE OF GERMAN TURKS

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### INTRODUCTION

*Döner kebab* is a fast food introduced and incorporated into the German market by Turkish migrants living in the Federal Republic of Germany (hereafter FRG).<sup>1</sup> Although *döner* (in the form offered in Germany) is itself a new and hybrid product that developed through Turks' migration experience in Germany, it became *the* traditional ethnic food of Turks in the eyes of the Germans. Nothing else is so often quoted as *döner kebab* to refer to the positive effects of Turks' presence in Germany. Indeed it functions as a positive symbol in multiculturalist discourses, more or less like the scarf worn by Turkish girls and women which has become mainly the negative symbol in discourses of the lack of integration of German Turks.

Today around 2 million Turkish migrants live in the FRG. These migrants, recruited within the "guest worker" system designed to serve the labour needs of the host society, came to Germany after the first bilateral agreement signed between Germany and Turkey in 1961. Since then, they have been living there and are economically well integrated into the society. During this 30 year period, these "guest workers" are internally stratified, so that they are now presented in almost all strata of German society. Today German Turks are fully integrated into the German economy. The 35,000 Turkish businesses run by German Turks have an investment figure of 7.2 billion German Marks. Their turnover per annum is around 25 billion German marks (Zentrum für Türkei Studien 1992: 2). As many as 87% of these Turkish businesses are active in food and catering (Sen 1988) and



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## CONTENTS

*Introduction to the Series*

vii

### Introduction

Changing Food Habits: An Introduction  
*Carola Lentz*

1

### 1 In Praise of the Simple Meal:

African and European Food Culture Compared  
*Gerd Spittler*

27

### 2 Cassava, "The Lazy Man's Food"? Indigenous

Agricultural Innovation and Dietary Change  
in Northwestern Zambia (ca. 1650–1970)  
*Achim von Oppen*

43

### 3 The Cook, His Wife, the Madam and Their Dinner:

Cooking, Gender and Class in Zambia  
*Karen Tranberg Hansen*

73

### 4 Changing Patterns of Food Consumption

in Central Kordofan, Sudan  
*Joachim Thijs*

91

### 5 Food Aid in Peru: Refusal and Acceptance

in a Peasant Community of the Central Andes  
*Leticia Delgado*

111

### 6 Tasty Meals and Bitter Gifts: Consumption

and Production in the Ecuadorian Andes  
*M. J. Weismantel*

135

### 7 Alcohol Consumption between Community Ritual

and Political Economy: Case Studies from  
Ecuador and Ghana  
*Carola Lentz*

155

### 8 The Porridge Debate: Grain, Nutrition,

and Forgotten Food Preparation Techniques  
*Elisabeth Meyer-Renschhausen*

181



9	The Rationing System, Food Policy, and Nutritional Science During the Second World War: A Comparative View of Switzerland <i>Jakob Tanner</i>	211
10	Plurality of Taste: Food and Consumption in West Germany During the 1950s <i>Michael Willh</i>	243
11	Mc Kebap: Döner Kebap and the Social Positioning Struggle of German Turks <i>Ayşe S. Çağlar</i>	263
	Index	285

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

*Food in History and Culture* seeks to examine and illuminate the role of food in various cultures and throughout history, in order to provide a greater understanding of civilization and society. Food contributes to the creation of people's lives—socially, economically, politically, morally and nutritionally—in powerful but often subtle ways. This series explores the history of food production, distribution and consumption, as well as the role of food in rituals. In their analyses, the authors included in *Food in History and Culture* are committed to the idea of food as a matter of social, as much as biological, importance.

*Carole Counihan*  
*Steve Kaplan*