The world's fare: food and culture at American World Fairs from 1893-1939

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Abstract
Why is the American culinary tradition as conflicted as it is? How is it that processed foods, foreign cuisine and home cooking can all be lauded as American ways of eating? This paper highlights the conflict between top-down government and corporate prescriptions on how we should eat and the reality of what was consumed by using American World Fairs as snapshots of particular points in time. Utilizing guidebooks, cookbooks, magazine articles and advertisements, this paper aims to show that these trends, rather than suddenly appearing, were already beginning to develop in part due to ideas presented at these fairs intentionally or otherwise. First covering the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, it highlights the growing rift between home cooks and secular and commercial reformers so that by the 1939 World's Fair, a visible schism between commercial ideas on how to eat and the ideas of gourmands and regular cooks had developed. At the same time, it highlights how neither message was negated by the counterarguments, resulting in a society that eats both hot dogs and lauds local, cooked cuisine. In other words, rather than change national paradigms, the new ideas presented at the fairs simply built on preexisting ones while giving reinforcement to others on why the old ones should continue to exist.

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The 1939–40 New York World’s Fair, which covered the 1,216 acres (492 ha) of Flushing Meadows–Corona Park (also the location of the 1964–1965 New York World’s Fair), was the second most expensive American world’s fair of all time, exceeded only by St. Louis's Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904. Many countries around the world participated in it, and over 44 million people attended its exhibits in two seasons. It was the first exposition to be based on the future, with an opening slogan of “Dawn of At the Chicago World's Fair, Americans competed with Europeans to show off the power of American's industry and the American way. As England and other European countries had always looked down on Americans' domestic way of life, Americans wanted to prove them wrong. *America at the World Fairs, 1851-1893.* The American Historical Review 55, no. 4 (1950): 833-856. *Eiffel Tower.* Every passing decade, the culture of human beings as a whole has been significantly affected by technology and science. Whether it’s something small, like the invention of automatic doors, or something enormously important, like the invention of the telegraph or the discovery of DNA, technology and science change the way we