Agyeman, Julian, Caitlin Matthews, and Hannah Sobel, eds.
Food Trucks, Cultural Identity, and Social Justice: From Loncheras to Lobsta Love
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Social justice, migrant history, and identity are the themes of this book that looks at food history and business history in the context of food trucks in the United States and Canada. The authors of the fifteen essays in this collection consider the effects of race, class, and power on entrepreneurialism and criminalization in the mobile food vending industry. Several of the essays do so by examining the context of the conflicts between Latinx owners of *loncheras* (taco trucks) and middle-class white owners of hipster food trucks—a conflict characterized as that of "hucksters" versus "trucksters."

The editors' purpose in commissioning these essays was to evaluate food trucks as potentially positive contributors to both cultural identity and social justice. The editors "argue that cultural identity formation and CED [community economic development] are two possible frameworks through which we can identify and ultimately foreground social justice in policy and practice" (5). While acknowledging that their contributors define social justice (and food trucks) in a variety of ways, they themselves laud the guiding principles of Winnipeg's Neechi Foods as a model of community economic development (7).

Many of the authors, particularly those taking a more historical approach, do not limit their definition of the food truck industry to its more modern incarnations. For example, Ginette Wessel, in her synopsis of U.S. mobile food vending policies, includes the "pushcart, produce, *paletero* (ice cream), taco truck (loncheras), and tamale vendors" (26). Mark Vallianatos, in his chapter on the criminalization of food trucks in Los Angeles, outlines the "mobile architecture" (81) of food vending from late-nineteenth-century tamale wagons through to contemporary "twitter trucks." In doing so, the reader is able to see the historical continuity behind what the editors term the "uniquely postmodern phenomenon" of food trucks (8).

The fifteen essays in this book are collected into two sections: "Democratic vs. Regulatory Practices" and "Spatial-Cultural Practices."

The first section, "Democratic vs. Regulatory Practices," includes essays that focus either on conflict between vendors and city officials, or on conflict between immigrant vendors and gentrified hipsters – or both. New York City has two immigrant street vendor associations (the Street Vendor Project and VAMOS Unidos) as well the New York Food Truck Association (which caters primarily to "gourmet" food trucks that tend to be white-owned). New Orleans tried to regulate their unique "second lines" (of celebrants and informal mobile food vendors) that accompany parades organized by Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs (neighbourhood-based community organizations that primarily exist to support underserved African American populations in the city). Vancouver struggled with "hippie" vending in the 1970s and "hipster" vending in the 2000s; Amy Hanser reminds readers that though regulations were relaxed for hipsters, the result was not "opening the streets to formerly marginalized populations and economic practices" (130). Two informative case studies in this section are of Patty's Tacos and CLiCK. Patty's Tacos was a mother-and-son food truck operation that was at the heart of New York City's successful and damaging campaign to remove food trucks from metered parking spaces. CLiCK is a shared-used non-profit commercial kitchen that addresses the requirement in Connecticut that mobile food vendors be linked to a commercial kitchen or commissary—a requirement that is a particular challenge for racial minorities and those with low income.

The second section, "Spatial-Cultural Practices," uses "semiotic frameworks for discussing the spatial and cultural effects of how, where, and what food is served" (13)—including cultural geography, spatial practices, and performance studies. Particularly strong essays in this section include Robert Lemon's case study in Columbus, Ohio, which uncovers the inequities that explain the relative immobility of loncheras versus the constantly changing (and tweeted) locations of gourmet food trucks. Lemon reminds us that "gourmet food trucks cannot

create cultural diversity where the only diversity is in the cuisine" (185). As well, the essay by Lenore Newman and Katherine Newman is a useful contribution to the literature on gentrification, with its examination of Vancouver's semiotic use of food trucks to brand itself as a city of entrepreneurial creatives.

There is some overlap of content between the two sections. And it is not always clear how individual essayists have interpreted the term "social justice." The authors, however, would no doubt agree with the editors' conclusion that changes in regulatory policy alone are insufficient for achieving social justice. Rather, there is a need to examine "wider intersectionalities of regulation, enforcement, political agency, power, and cultural identities" (315)—as many of the essayists in this book have chosen to do.

Part of The MIT Press series on Food, Health, and the Environment, this is a useful (and highly readable) book for scholars and students in food history, business history, and political studies.

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