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## **Book Review: Home Cooking in the Global Village: Caribbean Food from Buccaneers to Ecotourists**

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As a whole, this book represents a good introductory text. The clarity of its discussion and the links between chapters make it a useful resource for undergraduate students. It is a book to be recommended as a basic introduction and to be accompanied on reading lists with more advanced texts for the more able/eager student to develop their understanding. The three chapters highlighted above as excellent do represent a fine blend of clearly introduced key theories and a more sophisticated discussion of the complexities of the issues to which those theories can be applied – and I would not hesitate to describe any of these chapters as ‘core’ readings. The rest I would describe as accessible but supplementary reading. This book sets out to be a clear and concise introduction to influential theories of consumption and it is exactly that.

**Richard Wilk, *Home Cooking in the Global Village: Caribbean Food from Buccaneers to Ecotourists*. New York: Berg, 2006. 288 pp. ISBN 1-8452-0360-7(pbk)**

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In *Home Cooking in the Global Village*, Rick Wilk weaves a cultural historical narrative of great range and sensitivity. His account links Belize’s patterns of food consumption to the history of globalization. More importantly, Wilk’s book is a detailed account of how market-driven movements of resources and people on a global scale create distinct local cultural articulations; that is, how they produce cultural boundaries and distinctions rather than destroying them. And it shows how globalization has a historical periodicity that assumes distinctive forms over historical time. Belize is a useful microcosmic context for this exercise in that its history reflects globalization processes that have affected the entire circum-Caribbean region. Yet its small size enables the author, no less than the reader, to keep track simultaneously of what is really determining about globalization. That is, the interconnections between global and local levels of analysis over the roughly 300-year period during which the global market economy has incorporated and re-incorporated the Caribbean into its orbit.

Wilk unfolds his themes historically via a periodization of Caribbean globalization epochs he labels as pirate, slave, high colonial, late colonial and cultural. Thus, in Chapter 3, we learn about the occluded importance of the global system of production and distribution of seamen’s rations in the

18th-century period of pirate globalization, their role in enshrining a system whereby raw materials transit by way of the metropolitan countries before returning to the colonies as value-added consumer goods, and in institutionalizing a regime of taste in which the metropolitan is superior to the indigenous and local.

The dark period of slave globalization was an economic high point for Belize because of the world market value of its mahogany exports. The specificities of Belize's slave economy led to the entrenchment of the seamen's ration economy, discouragement of indigenous agriculture due to the success of the mahogany extraction economy and the diffusion of the preference for metropolitan luxuries from free to slave classes.

In his discussion of high colonization, we learn about the sorting of persons into 'fixed' ethnic categories and the use of food as a primary sorting device (a process mirrored elsewhere in the British Empire, it may be worth pointing out). In this system, Wilk maintains that consuming metropolitan became not a symbol of civilization, but the behavioral manifestation of civilization itself with ongoing negative consequences for Belizean agriculture.

In discussing late colonial globalization, Wilk elaborates a genetic relationship between cooking and cuisine. Here he shows that creolized cooking like creolization itself are not automatic processes that just happen but something that people progressively do, and that this work is productive of culture. So creolized cooking becomes a metonym for cultural creolization, and the processes he outlines – blending, submersion, substitution, wrapping and stuffing, compression, alternation and promotion – account for the creolized culture that emerged in Belize.

Drawing on personal experience, Wilk skillfully shows how the historical myopia of development practitioners, Belize's extractive economy and world system dynamics generate perceived development problems, proposed development solutions, as well as repeated experience of program failure. He explains the historical inability of Belize to feed itself not as colonial and post-colonial administrators and developers have done as social failure. Instead, perched on the traditions of successive extractive economies, Wilk shows it has now become an all but inevitable consequence of Belize's place in the global economy. Coming to the fore today is the massive global consumer goods exporting apparatus and Belizeans' long tradition of over-valuing foreign imports relative to locally grown foods. However, Wilk does not neglect local class dynamics and ideology, in particular the influence of Belizean import-export marketing firms on government policy and consumer taste.

The current period is one of cultural globalization as formulations such as McDonalidization suggest (Ritzer, 2004; Watson, 1997). Wilk once again cuts through facile notions about globalization, in this case that tourism destroys local cultural authenticity. Instead, he shows that global tourism is generative of local cultural differentiation *and* a quest for Belizean cultural authenticity. Global movements of Belizean migrants and tourists are fuelling 'culidiversity' (culinary diversity) in Belize. He suggests how creolized home cooking may be a vehicle for Belizean self-identity and economic home-grown economic development via the development (finally!) of local marketing channels to provision emergent Belizean cuisines. Culidiversity, the home cooking in which culidiversity is grounded, food quality and biodiversity go hand in hand, Wilk argues, and if global consumer demand calls for the first, the latter may follow.

Two critiques may be made. This is an omniscient narrative, and living Belizeans appear rarely and only to support the author's narrative. How do Belizeans in Los Angeles or Orange Walk experience contemporary globalization? We don't learn much about that. Second, I would have loved to have seen him weave some public health-related information into his tale. Surely his obviously fruitful archival research might have spoken to the nutritional ailments and folk medicinal practices in which the diets of the buccaneers, Baymen, colonists, slaves, Maya, Miskito, Creoles, and others were implicated. This would have added an additional fascinating theme to this many-themed and captivating volume.

## References

- Ritzer, George (2004) *The McDonalidization of Society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Watson, James L. (ed.) (1997) *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.