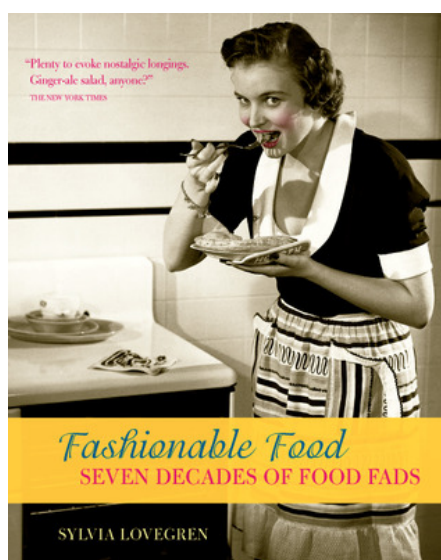




Fashionable Food: Seven Decades of Food Fads

Sylvia Lovegren

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Though the Roaring Twenties call to mind images of flappers dancing the Charleston and gangsters dispensing moonshine in back rooms, Sylvia Lovegren here playfully reminds us what these characters ate for dinner: Banana and Popcorn Salad. Like fashions and fads, food—even bad food—has a history, and Lovegren's *Fashionable Food* is quite literally a cookbook of the American past.

Well researched and delightfully illustrated, this collection of faddish recipes from the 1920s to the 1990s is a decade-by-decade tour of a hungry American century. From the Three P's Salad—that's peas, pickles, and peanuts—of the post-World War I era to the Fruit Cocktail and Spam Buffet Party loaf—all the rage in the ultra-modern 1950s, when cooking from a can epitomized culinary sophistication—*Fashionable Food* details the origins of these curious delicacies. In two chapters devoted to "exotic foods of the East," for example, Lovegren explores the long American love affair with Chinese food and the social status conferred upon anyone chic enough to eat pu-pu platters from Polynesia. Throughout, Lovegren supplements recipes—some mouth-watering, some appalling—from classic cookbooks and family magazines, with humorous anecdotes that chronicle how society and kitchen technology influenced the way we lived and how we ate.

Equal parts American and culinary history, *Fashionable Food* examines our collective past from the kitchen counter. Even if it's been a while since you last had Tang Pie and your fondue set is collecting dust in the back of the cupboard, *Fashionable Food* will inspire, entertain, and inform.

Fashionable Food: Seven Decades of Food Fads Details

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Sarra says

Interesting, especially if you like this sort of reading (I do). Focuses almost exclusively on the foods consumed by middle- and upper-class white people; aside from a few paragraphs on the popularity of soul food in the 1960s, there's no discussion of what poorer families and people of color were eating. I found that a major failing.

Also: she mentions Paul Prudhomme's size not once, but twice. I don't recall her doing that with any other chef in the book (perhaps she mentioned Julia Child's height?). I don't think that being fat is bad, obviously, but his size is irrelevant to the impact his cooking had. And when you make a point of "PAUL PRUDHOMME WAS SOOOO FAT" while mentioning the physique of no other chef in the book, you look like a sizeist jerk.

Bach says

Fashionable Food is a really rich read on the history of fads in America, everything from Americanized Chinese to more jello molds than you ever possibly wanted to know about. It's funny, thoughtful material that really highlights eccentricities of popular culture and the incredibly fast-changing attitudes on food in our America. Well worth a read, I really enjoyed it.

Jessica says

YES. This book is amazing. I loved sharing some of the ridiculous recipes with my friends while reading it. Recipes are sprinkled throughout Lovegren's well-researched (albeit brief) history of each decade's food trends. She covers the 1920s to the 1980s. There is a very small chapter on the 1990s, but it isn't nearly as informative as the others. (Keep in mind that she first wrote this in 1995). Highly enjoyable and entertaining.

Fishface says

This is not only a fascinating read, but it's a perfect gift for almost anyone. It's full of crazy, horrid and often delicious recipes, documenting all the food fads in America from the 1920s into the 1980s. The reminder of the food-in-flames-and-served-on-a-bed-of-ice fad from the Sixties brought a tear of nostalgia to my eye...Also full of recipes, both delicious and horrifying.

Sara says

Unfortunately, my copy was not "delightfully illustrated".

I love food books. I love history of food books. I really love history of American food books.

This book is a quick read, mainly because so much of the book is recipes. I enjoyed Sylvia Lovegren's sense of humor - who can't resist poking fun at Spam and gelatin salads? Poke fun she does. It's a pretty quick history through the decades. Some of this stuff I knew, some I didn't know. I did like that she quoted from quite a few cookbooks that I actually own.

There were a few downsides for me.

1 - It was written in the mid-90's so there is still 20 more years of food history to cover! I'm missing the advent of the internet, of the Food Network, of America's Test Kitchens. She mentions that Tibetan food never caught on in this country. I can think of a few Tibetan restaurants but it could be my location or they could be more recent than this book. She would mention trends that have passed and I'd think - isn't that really IN right now? Maybe I'm wrong, or maybe certain foods have cycled in and out. 20 years is a long time. And with some trends that are decidedly passe (according to the author), I'm just now becoming aware of them. Maybe I'm out of touch?

2 - The first few decades focus on home-cooking and the last few decades focused on eating out. Admittedly, we started eating out more and more as the decades progressed. But I found the last few decades lacking as far as what was really happening in middle class households. I did not run in the circles that ate haute cuisine or nouveau cuisine and although she would mention how some high end fads made their way into home kitchens, I felt it wasn't truly representative of how I ate or how the people I knew ate. We learned about nachos in the early 80's at sporting events. There was Isadora and her avocado plant in the 1970's. There's a lot of little things on how I perceive food that wasn't touched on in this book.

3 - And what's with the hatred of the Baby Boomers? Is Sylvia Lovegren a different generation? I'm not sure. After her statement that the last of the Baby Boomers passed their 30 year milestone by 1980, I think she is a bit off in her dates. The last Boomers hit the big 3-OH about the time she was writing this book! And maybe the selfish, narcissistic, me-first Boomers did strongly influence the food from 1970 on, but the constant haranguing she gave those people was a little tiresome.

Anyway, the book was fun (generally) but it left me wanting so much more. She barely, barely mentioned that women had to go into the work force and food changed because of that. She didn't mention the advent of home freezers and the development of frozen foods, although she does mention frozen foods in her recipes. But I realize she had a lot to cover and she does say she has to skim over a few things.

Stewart Tame says

This was a fun book. It's equal parts cookbook and history lesson. Lovegren goes decade by decade through the 20th century--okay, she starts in the 20's and ends in the 90's; close enough--giving recipes and information about America's favorite food fads. I lost count of how many of these dishes provoked a shock of recognition as I saw familiar dishes from my childhood and even adulthood and realized how old my grandma or mom or aunt or whoever must have been when they learned that particular recipe. Some of these I want to try making myself. If you've ever wondered why we eat some of the things we eat, or even despaired of the latest food craze, this book will help put it all in perspective. The prose gets a little stodgy in spots, but it's still a rewarding read.

Colleen Criswell says

Really neat book with some very interesting recipes from bygone eras. would have loved photos of these foods, but sadly there weren't any.

PennsyLady (Bev) says

hardcover

When I wanted to be entertained and learn a bit about American culinary history, Fashionable Food: Seven Decades of Food Fads (1995) was suggested

Beginning in the 1920s, the reader observes the food experience post WWI (the average man to upper crust). It proceeds on, including domestic innovations that would allow the continual evolution of what Americans put on the dinner place.

Chapters cover decades (the twenties to the nineties) with an occasional exotic interlude chapter.

I found the book to be a culinary journey that is both lively and informative.

Lilah says

Lots of fun historical info and recipes, but blanded out by a superficial writing style prone to repetition - author has maxed out her lifetime allotment of using the words "dainty" and "goofy."

MargaretDH says

This book was a wonderful and detailed chronicle of 60 years of American food. Roughly two thirds text to recipes, the book traces the rise and fall of foods like marshmallows, fondue and granola. I appreciated the detail and the author's willingness to test almost every recipe (I'm happy to give her a pass on the one that calls for a live possum).

Lovegren looks mostly at middle class cooking here. Of course everyone has to eat, but she's focusing on the kinds of food people ate when they could afford to be choosy at the grocery store, and also had to cook it themselves. It also looks at the kind of food that people were eating at restaurants.

Though the book was complete as it was, I wish Lovegren had moved beyond simply chronicling the food fads into deeper historical argument and analysis. Here and there, she does offer some suggestions about why certain food was popular, but I wanted more. In the section about soul food, for example, she discusses the peak popularity of a certain kind of southern food, historically associated African Americans. There was a great deal she could have said about the intersection of race and class, and an analysis of why these foods began to appeal to groups that had formerly looked down on them. In addition, much of the food in the first half of the book is gendered, and while she touches on things like ladies menus and the masculine art of grilling, I wish she had gone deeper into what food can tell us about gender performance.

My only real critique is that Lovegren goes much easier on the green peppercorns of the 1980s than the party loaves of the 1950s. Given that the book was originally published in 1994, I suppose it makes sense. From

the vantage point of 2015, the chapter on the 1980s highlights the ways in which food and the subjective way we conceptualize good taste (both flavour and discernment) are deeply coloured by the world around us and the culture that we are steeped in.

Meg Powers says

One of the most fun books I've read in a long time. An in-depth history of the food trends 20th Century U.S. Citizens subjected themselves to, complete with recipes guaranteed to churn your stomach. The way food trends have illustrated the socio-economical health of our nation is both fascinating and upsetting. Unfortunately, because this was compiled in the early 90s, we get a lot of very dated health warnings and have to wade through a whole section on contemporary (for when it was written) South Western food trends. Check this book out for a fun and fast-paced history of eating for fashion (and, for several decades) not for taste.

Jessica says

I enjoyed this book for the most part. The only thing I took issue with was when the author published the recipe examples that related to the history, in her notes often times she would say, the original recipe called for this, or the original recipe had half a cup of butter but I reduced it so it wasn't so fatty. I would have rather her publish the original recipes as is without her own preferences and tastes butting in. Otherwise I would have rated this a 4 star book

Sheryl Tribble says

I enjoyed this book considerable, but started getting skeptical when she hit the seventies and offered a recipe for "Heavenly Tea Tang" -- it's true that recipe was popular in the seventies, but I never heard of anyone calling it Heavenly anything; it was called Russian Tea in North Carolina and Colorado (the two states I lived in that decade), and also in the midwest states where I visited relatives and had it. Which horrifies any Russian who has ever run across it, granted, but there it is. I also heard it called Friendship Tea or Spiced Tea, but "Heavenly Tea Tang" was completely off my radar in the 1970s.

Still, aside from that title mis-step, she seems to be pretty accurate in terms of trendy foods. Brunch, frittatas, Zucchini bread, pumpkin bread, crepes -- I remember all those being big in the 1970s. Strongly suspect no one ever made Granola Fondue, but she offers that as a pretty far-out example, so whatever.

Reading this book really brought home why so few food history books discuss what people actually ate or what home cooks make -- too hard to document! Popular trends are fairly easy to track, especially when it comes to restaurant food, but what people were eating at home, not so much.

Lize says

Great fun to read and fascinating as well, this well-researched book traces the history of food fads in America from the 20's to the 90's.

A couple of quotes about Prohibition's effect on food during the 1920's:

"When Prohibition went into effect in America on January 16, 1920, it did more than stop the legal sale of alcoholic beverages in our country...[it] increased the production of soft drinks, put hundreds of restaurants and hotels out of business, spurred the growth of tea rooms and cafeterias, and destroyed the last vestiges of fine dining in the United States...Hotels tried to reclaim some of their lost wine and spirit profits by selling candy and soda pop The fruit cocktail cup, often garnished with marshmallows or sprinkled with powdered sugar, took the place of oysters on the half shell with champagne and a dinner party opener....The American wine industry, unable to sell its wines legally, quickly turned its vineyards over to juice grapes. But only a small portion of the juice from the grapes was marketed as juice. Most of it was sold for home-brewed wine. Needless to say, this home brew was not usually a sophisticated viniferous product, but sales of the juice kept many of the vineyards in profits throughout Prohibition. Prohibition also brought about cooking wines and artificially flavored brandy, sherry, and rum extracts. Housewives were advised to omit salt when using cooking wines, as the wines themselves had been salted to make them undrinkable...Some cooks gave up on alcoholic touches, real or faux, altogether...The bad alcohol, the closing of fine restaurants, the sweet foods and drinks that took alcohol's place, the artificial flavors that were used to simulated alcohol, all these things could not help but have a deleterious effect on the American palate."
(p. 29-30)

"Prohibition, with its tremendous impact on the eating habits of the country, also had a great deal to do with the introduction of Italian food to the masses. Mary Grosvenor Ellsworth, in Much Depends upon Dinner, (1939), said this about Prohibition and pasta: "We cooked them [pastas] too much, we desecrated them with further additions of flour, we smothered them in baking dishes and store cheese. Prohibition changed all that. The Italians who opened up speakeasies by the thousand were our main recourse in time of trial. Whole hoards of Americans thus got exposed regularly and often to Italian food and got a taste for it. Now we know from experience that properly treated, the pasta is no insipid potato substitute. The food served in the speakeasies—with Mama doing the cooking and Papa making the wine in the basement—was not quite the same as the food the Italians had eaten in the Old Country. Sicilian cooking was based on austerity...But America was rich, and protein rich country, and the immigrants were happy to add these symbols of wealth to their cooking—and happy that their new American customers liked the result. Meatballs, rich meat sauces, veal cutlets cooked with Parmesan or with lemon, clams ctuffed with buttered herbed crumbs, shrimp with wine and garlic, and mozzarella in huge chunks to be eaten as appetizer were all foods of abundance, developed by Italian-Americans..."
(p. 37-8)

Kerith says

What a treat! I've read this so many times. Lovegren discusses food "fashions" from the 20s to the early 90s (thus missing the enduring coffee shop phenomenon), sharing good "keeper" recipes and scarier ones that didn't last, like some of the 20s weirdo salads and other strange concoctions. It is such fun. A must read for anyone who loves reading about food and food history.
