

■ “An Accidental Porn Star”: David Mas Masumoto, Food Pornography, and the Politics of the Food Movement*

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Abstract

In this essay, I examine how Masumoto’s distress over his possible food-porn writing sheds light on a food movement that, while entertaining a sensuous approach to food and eating through visual and verbal exploitation of images of food, intricately blends gustatory pleasure with ethical and political eating and defines the flavors of food through white, elitist conceptions of health and sustainability. His attempt to claim authority over the (organic) food infrastructure through first-person, nonfictional narratives, or documentary film of “real lives and real stories,” unravels a cultural milieu in which the appeals of the cultures and ecologies of farming have lost ground to that of food in the U.S. because of the unprecedented growth of the urban population in the second half of the twentieth century. In this so-called “food” movement, the geographical and ethical-political distances between urban consumers and the sources of their food, established by the capitalist food industry, conspire with both the desire for, and the fear of, the cultivation of intimate personal or bodily relations with the immanence of food and agricultural production. And, for Masumoto, this estrangement and disconnection from the “real” and

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Keywords: food pornography, David Mas Masumoto, food movement, organic farming, food justice

In the year 1995, third-generation Japanese American farmer David Mas Masumoto published *Epitaph for a Peach: Four Seasons on My Family Farm*, nature writing that captures his family legacy growing organic peaches and nectarines on a small family farm in Del Rey, California. An immediate hit that soon went through four hardcover and 21 paperback reprints, the book was followed by its sequels *Harvest Son* (1998), *Four Seasons in Five Senses* (2003), *Letters to the Valley* (2004), *Heirlooms* (2007), *Wisdom of the Last Farmer* (2009), *The Perfect Peach* (2013; co-authored with wife Marcy Masumoto and daughter Nikiko Masumoto), and *Changing Season* (2016; co-authored with Nikiko Masumoto). Two decades after his literary debut, David Mas Masumoto continues to fascinate foodies and the food community with what the founder and editor-in-chief of *Civil Eats*, Naomi Starkman, calls “a love story of duty and honor to both family and the land.” Whether it is *The Perfect Peach*, a lusciously narrated and photographed cookbook, or *Changing Season*, an intricately embroidered montage of father-daughter soliloquies, Masumoto’s latest narratives again showcase the savory moments of his quest for self-identity as an organic farmer amidst the global corporate food regime.

Masumoto’s recent journeys of spiritual growth, interestingly, diverge from previous aspirations when he incessantly reiterates concerns over allegations levelled against his staging and promotion of “food porn” (*Changing* ix), or more specifically, “peach porn” (*Perfect* 116, 117). A veteran farmer who becomes a food connoisseur and the soul behind his family’s peach-themed cookbook, his habitual retreat to the small family farm economy and traditional ecological knowledge when pondering the role of an organic farmer in *The Perfect Peach* and *Changing Season* persists to evoke what many would consider a romantic nostalgia for an unspoiled, lost origin. *The Perfect Peach*, however, witnesses his deliberate break from being an invisible, voiceless farmer in the background of the American food movement to the forefront to claim a farmer’s agency and identity in the global capitalist and alternative food provisioning networks. This blunt self-assertion of voice and space discloses not so much a farmer’s wounded pride over unwarranted charges of pornography writing as Masumoto’s anxiety over how celebratory accounts of his “real” (2, 3, 18, 31, 116, 117, 155) and “authentic” (3, 116, 117, 155) “everyday” events, farming and eating organic peaches, have become fiascos of viscerality and eroticism (116).

In this essay, I examine how Masumoto’s distress over his possible food-porn writing sheds light on a food movement that, while entertaining a sensuous approach to food and eating through visual and verbal exploitation of images of food, intricately blends gustatory pleasure with ethical and political eating and defines the flavors of food through white, elitist conceptions of health and sustainability. His attempt to claim authority over the (organic) food infrastructure

through first-person, nonfictional narratives or a documentary film of “real lives and real stories” unravels a cultural milieu in which the appeals of the cultures and ecologies of farming have lost ground to that of food in the U.S. because of the unprecedented growth of the urban population in the second half of the twentieth century (*Changing x*).¹ As environmental philosopher Paul B. Thompson explains, “food becomes embroiled in ethical quandaries” because “urban populations simply lacked a kind of personal experience with food production that had been virtually ubiquitous a century earlier” (5). In this so-called “food” movement, the geographical and ethical-political distances between urban consumers and the sources of their food established by the capitalist food industry conspire with both the desire for, and the fear of, the cultivation of intimate personal or bodily relations with the immanence of food and agricultural production. And, for Masumoto, this estrangement and disconnection from the “real,” the “everyday,” and the immanent has propelled the reading of his intimate and visceral approach to food and farming as pornographic—that is, as sexually seductive and culturally expensive and extravagant.

To toy with the accusation of his gastronomic pornographicity, Masumoto topped his customary stories about the corporeality of organic farm work and the palatal experience of eating fresh farm-picked fruits with sexually suggestive language and full-color graphic and sensuous images in *The Perfect Peach* and *Changing Season*. Fiddling unapologetically with foodies’ appetite for eroticism and difference, he incites an illicit voyeuristic pleasure—of creeping into the “real” private pleasure and everyday bodily experiences of a “real” farmer growing and tasting “real” nature and organic food. Through first-person, nonfiction accounts, he, on the one hand, capitalizes on this romantic fancy for authenticity and, hence, transparency to confront industrial agriculture’s unjust exploitation of farmers and farmland in its reduction of food from a culturally and materially complex entity to what journalist Michael Pollan famously calls “edible foodlike substances” (*Defense* 1). On the other hand, he entertains a notion of food wherein the immanence of organic food becomes analogous to its savoriness and where tastiness is conflated with ideas of healthy and sustainable eating. Yet, what he downplays is how much of the taste of his organic peach is also a reality on display—one in which he also entertains and trades on the heightened differences of his ethnic American foodways and farming and culinary practice. In this process of self-creation and self-reflection,

¹ In April 2016, PBS featured a documentary on the Masumotos’ family farm directed by Jim Choi called *Changing Season: On the Masumoto Family Farm*. Broadcasted nationwide, the documentary is a “cinéma vérité,” a filmmaking method that, as Masumoto likes to say, “record[s] real events and actual persons without directorial control” (*Changing x*). It laid the foundation for Masumoto and Nikiko’s 2016 nature writing *Changing Season: A Father, a Daughter, a Family Farm*.

he also gives way to capitalist market's stereotyping of Asian Americans as "food experts"—though more a "farmer" than a traditional "chef," and at times perpetuates what Julie Guthman contends is the food movement's white ideology and its "color-blindness" to the racialization of organic market space ("If They Only Know" 387). Entrusted as a necessary evil, the representation and capitalization of food through visual and verbal images of its sensuality have created, for Masumoto, a disconnection from the "real" and the "everyday" materiality of food and farming necessary for his successful promotion of organic peaches and small family farming livelihood in the (organic) food market. These are, however, also processes that challenge foodies and the food community to reconsider not only the role and nature of a sensuous approach to life in generating a healthy, sustainable food system but the rhetoric through which one fosters and grasps positive, celebratory relations with the nonhuman without vulgarizing and trivializing the environment.

"Food Porn from the Masumoto Family Farm": A Voice from the Field

In his introduction to *The Perfect Peach: Recipes and Stories from the Masumoto Family Farm*, a specialty cookbook that features Marcy and Nikiko Masumoto's collection of peach recipes, David Mas Masumoto writes of his haptic, olfactory, and gustatory pleasures eating a peach:

The art of eating the perfect peach: first raise to the mouth and the aroma enchants, anticipation is stirred. Insert in mouth and bite. Juices splash and squirt and you involuntarily lean over as the syrup drips down your cheeks and dangles on your chin. Flavors explode and the nectar dances across the taste buds. You slowly swallow and the aftertaste lingers and stays. Smack your lips and suck slightly on your tongue and a different wave of flavor delights. Memory is created. You lick your lips and pause before another bite, savoring the moment—slowly. (1)

Carefully binding a highly-ritualized mode of eating with gustatory pleasure, his decision to begin his book on food preparation with the "art of eating" seems legitimate enough. In this narrative "long take," his detailed tutorial demonstrates the sensual and emotional rewards derived from good eating and good farming; his first-hand account eating organic peaches as an aesthetic and ceremonial performative act gives primacy to his family's recipes and culinary tips that follow.

Though Masumoto's gastronomic advice here eventually paves the way for Marcy and Nikiko's subsequent culinary lessons, the fact that a cookbook, as a spectacle and display of cooking ingredients, techniques, and taste, is given economic, political, or what he later calls "story capital" (*Changing* 150) through stories of

an “artisan farmer” and his everyday livelihood, brings to the fore the intricate and complex relations between farming, food, and foodies celebrated by the food movement (*Perfect 2*). His rise to prominence as an artisan-farmer who intervenes in the imagining of food consumption (e.g., the preparation and eating of food) evinces a new mode of food production-consumption relationship, one in which farmers actively engage in the definition of the food market and a civic society of food rather than assuming their passive roles as vehicles for food supply. Juxtaposed to a full-spread, close-up color photo of a peach held gently in a pair of callused and soiled hands like a gift of affection, the “art of eating the perfect peach” epitomizes his attempts to bring to life what he calls the experience of “[d]ating a [p]each” (*Perfect 1*). As an attentive reader would later recognize, this vividly presented guide, together with food photographer Staci Valentine’s peach image that accompanies it on the opposite page, anticipates the numerous gourmet recipes, reminiscences, and sixty or so high resolution photos that instruct on what Nikiko describes as “peach love” (4). These verbally and visually sensuous images on topics ranging from the technicalities of how to cook, eat, and store a peach to the specifics of identifying heirloom peach varieties (16-20), the anatomy of a peach (8-9), and mistakes to avoid growing peaches (20-21) provide professional field lessons on how to cultivate an emotional and visceral “relationship” with a peach (2-3). Whether documented in narratives or photos, the real and immanent experience of farming and eating a peach, for Masumoto, encourages a fancy for the “perfect peach” as the embodiment of “the principles of organic and sustainable farming: socially just, environmentally responsible, and economically viable” or “[t]he triple bottom line: people, planet, profits” (2). A farmer’s stories of his or her romantic affinity with, or visceral enjoyment of, a peach, in other words, make him or her “transparent” and visible, adding “value” to those peaches otherwise sold in supermarkets as commodities and restoring the identities of “anonymous” farmers and farms (*Perfect 3*).

Treading the fine line between his roles as an artisan and a business farmer, Masumoto romances his way to foodies’ hearts and builds an intimate and hence ethical connection with them by utilizing consumer culture’s fetishization of not just the body and food, but a voyeuristic pleasure into a “real” and “authentic” display of the body and food. In *The Perfect Peach*, Masumoto participates meticulously in the reconfiguration of “a world rich in details and authentic emotions” by adopting the first-person, nonfiction form as he has always done before when designating oral history (e.g., *Country Voices*), travel writing (e.g., *A Sense of Yosemite*), *cinéma vérité* (e.g., *Changing Season: On the Masumoto Family Farm*), and the epistolary (e.g., *Letters to the Valley*) and nature writing forms (155). He writes, “[a]s a farmer, I feel responsible for what people put into their bodies. As a writer, I hope to share authentic farm stories. During my grandparents’

generation, the majority of Americans still lived in rural communities and understood where food came from" (*Perfect* 117). Confident that first-person, non-fiction narratives are faithful representations of the "real," he upholds that the sense of proximity and trust transmitted through his stories is pivotal to achieving genuine solidarity between himself and his foodie readers and consumers.

Masumoto's remark on his engagement with storytelling quoted here also alludes to Michael Pollan's most attractive and influential proposition for the food movement: namely, start every purchase and every meal with an initiative inquiry that asks, "What *am* I eating? And where in the world did it come from?" (*Omnivore's* 17). Like Pollan and others in the food movement who celebrate local food, he sanctions an immediate relation to food based on personal knowledge of the food source, if not a direct friendship with the farmer. A complete distrust of the contemporary food regime and the federal government, which obviously have a hand in patents, monopolies, and tax breaks (*Omnivore's* 41), they insist that shortened food mileage that cuts out "processors, middlemen, and retailers" consolidate the farmer-consumer bond (*Omnivore's* 242), allowing consumers direct access to the authentic flavors of "real" foods (Masumoto, *Perfect* 2). In *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (2006), Pollan questions this labyrinthic production process that has transformed food into artificial objects and created the demand for nutritionists, who help translate the meanings of ingredients and nutrients on food labels and the implications of the brand names (1), and journalists and "ecological detectives," who investigate agribusinesses' synthetization and genetic modification of food for the market (239, 451). He writes,

[b]uilding processed food out of a commodity like corn doesn't completely cushion you from the vicissitudes of nature, but it comes close. The more complex your food system, the more you can practice "substitutionism" without altering the taste or appearance of the product [However,] "[t]he further a product's identity moves from a specific raw material—that is, the more processing steps involved—the less vulnerable is its processor" to the variability of nature. (95)

For both Masumoto and Pollan, the shortened food mileage impetus, in addition to its aspiration for carbon footprint reduction, reflects the urgency to establish a transparent and closely knit production-consumption relation where urban consumers could comfortably exercise their ideas of food, "right eating," and sustainable farming and society.

As David Goodman maintains in "Place and Space in Alternative Food Networks," "[t]he imaginary of resistance against 'placeless and faceless' food is closely allied to narratives of cultural identity"—to "the defence and conservation of local agro-food networks, historical landscapes and *terroirs*, tacit knowledges and craft skills, and regionalized culinary networks" (193). The food movement's

motto “from farm to table” and slogans “what should we have for dinner?” and “where will this dinner come from and how?” are indeed expressions of a market turn from food quantity to food quality. For Masumoto, however, this alternative agro-food relation nonetheless remains insubstantial and impotent because it has lost touch with the realities of agricultural production that make the real taste, smell, touch, and look of a peach possible. Like Pollan and others of the food movement, Masumoto is desperate to gain access to knowledge and undertake the dissemination and commodification processes of his organic produce. He yearns for what Susie O’Brien asserts is an unmediated “Agricultural Truth” based on an immanent reality rather than a reality comprised of contested ideas and multiple ongoing influences (240). Unlike Pollan and others who espouse interpersonal relations as a means to an end, his person-to-person relations are the end themselves (240):

we insist that passion becomes part of the essence of our fruits . . . [I]t’s the nature of caring and engaging that has become the mantra of our farm. This is all about peaches from a farmer’s point of view, a perspective that necessarily includes the farm family and its intimate relationship with the land. People. Planet. Profits. Public. Passion. And in the end, we hope that the perfect peach is one that is shared. (Masumoto, *Perfect* 3)

Farming, as a constitutive part of eating, is a practice of community generosity and support, one in which farmers, farmworkers, and urban consumers all come together in an authentic relationship with the land where the taste and the value of the “perfect peach” are both exchanged, transacted, and “shared” (*Perfect* 3).

Masumoto once recalls when his family’s “Flavor Crest [peach] was served at one of the nation’s best restaurants in New York” as one of his most fulfilling farming moments (*Perfect* 18). A similar sense of pride and marvel occurs when he introduces to Nikiko how “a small quantity of the best of the best [are packed and shipped] to some of the finest restaurants in the state” as a dessert dish: “[a] single peach was placed, stem side down, in the center of a white plate. Just before serving, the pastry chef would add a quick drizzle of color, like a raspberry swirl. Nikiko’s peach stood alone, the single focus of this dessert. Uncomplicated. Elegant. Amazing” (*Perfect* 89). Even more generic than the cookbook, the peach dessert epitomizes, for Masumoto, his visceral approach to food, and is a beautiful embodiment of the best of the two modes of production-consumption relations that he has struggled to balance and reconcile as an “artisan farmer”: one, represented by the “the art of eating the perfect peach,” is an intimate farmer-foodie linkage that acts as a performative utterance of art itself, and the other is based on monetary transaction but entrenched in a market system that rewards the farmer.

Masumoto’s “art of eating” evokes multiple layers of “relationships” (2, 3, 27,

116) and “peach love,” placing value on intimacy in connection with the geographical and ethical-political problems produced by the global industrial food regime. The currency of the “peach love” raises questions about a food movement and an alternative food economy where the affective and the corporeal desire for food have both been stimulated and manipulated as overt forms of publicity and marketing not only to boost sales but to disseminate the idea of organic agriculture. It must be mentioned here that when I try to tackle Masumoto’s investment in food pornography, I am not at all claiming that the immanence of his peaches and his everyday affection for organic farming ought not to be undertaken. Neither do I intend to deny small family organic farmers’ and the alternative food movement and market’s possibility for sustainability and social justice. Indeed, as a farmer and “business[person],” he is not only well aware of the ecologies and the “economic viabil[ity]” of farming but also recognizes that “profits” together with “people” and “plant” form the golden triad of organic farming. But, to the extent that Masumoto fully embraces not only the cultural but also the economic capital of his organic peaches, the turn to food pornography, of which his visceral and intimate approach to food is part, is intellectually insightful (*Perfect* 2). When investigating contemporary Indian cookbooks as reflections of a cosmopolitanizing process in which regional and ethnic cuisines become subscribed into a totalizing national culinary discourse, cultural critic Arjun Appadurai argues, “[i]nsofar as cookbooks reflect the kind of technical and cultural elaboration we grace with the term *cuisine*, they are likely . . . to be representations not only of structures of production and distribution and of social and cosmological schemes, but of class and hierarchy” (3). Masumoto’s “food porn” illuminates that, while adding cultural capital to food as a vital mode of political resistance against both capitalist and organic food regime’s structural marginalization of small family farmers, he has unavoidably and indelibly assisted a “culture of celebrity and privileged excess” that gentrifies and exoticizes organic food and organic agricultural production (Goodman 190). In this consumerist culture, Masumoto’s organic peaches are sold as more than everyday necessities and valorized beyond their immanent taste and texture by the status and political stance of Masumoto as a best-selling author and well-educated, landed farmer, who wisely and creatively argues for a new cultural and critical food production method that is also marketable for a white, elitist metropolitan audience. Though his investment in the subjugated racial and economic positions of farmworkers is brief, his food porn re-envisioning the food movement’s production-consumption linkage by shifting attention from consumer interests in health and sustainability through the sensuality of food to the ethical and political problematics at the production end of both food and food pornography.

“A Newly Fashioned Peach Pimp”: A Defense of Food Porn

Committed to cultivating various forms of relations, Masumoto's sensuous “peach love” as well as his promotion and commodification of peach-art as ventures into the realities of farming intersect with multiple categories of what one calls “food porn.” In the chapter “Peach Porn,” Masumoto laments, “[m]y writing has been accused of being syrupy and sentimental. Some critics claim my stories too often connect food fantasies with everyday eating: I romanticize the relationship between a farmer and a luscious, juicy peach. I never thought of the farm as an accidental porn star” (*Perfect* 116). In this brief but emotion-loaded passage, he evokes what literary critic Richard M. Magee calls a rhetoric of food in which “the barriers between sexual and gustatory pleasures” are broken down through “obvious metaphoric similarities between certain foods and sexual organs (bananas and figs, for example), to the more obscure symbolic connections between the pleasures of eating and the pleasures of sex” (Magee). Portraying peaches as “luscious” and “juicy” and recognizing his relationship to them as a romantic fancy, Masumoto's use of highly playful language and sexual overtone exhibits a sensuous approach to food and eating popular in the media. Aside from the fact that peaches have readily been erotically associated with the female behind through images of a woman, stretching and posturing in a passive position into a shape that resembles a peach ready for the gaze of others, the analogy between eating and sex we see implied in this passage through images of the body is made explicit through chapter titles such as “Dating a Peach,” “Thirst and Sweat,” and “Losing Your Peach Virginity” and in the “art of eating the perfect peach” (*Perfect* 1, 23, 89).

Food pornography, however, is not all about eroticism. Rather, as Roland Barthes reminds us in *Mythologies* (1957), it cautions against an indulgence in the “ornamentation” and surface appearance of food and eating in contemporary bourgeois society (79). He writes, ornamental cookery is “an openly dream-like cookery . . . which never shows the dishes except from a high angle, as objects at once near and inaccessible, whose consumption can perfectly well be accomplished simply by looking. It is, in the fullest meaning of the word, a cuisine of advertisement, totally magical” (79). Barthes' remark on ornamentation as a well-marketed fantasy anticipates Michael Jacobson's coinage of the term “food porn” in 1979 and his observation that (re)presentations of food become “pornographic” when a food is “so sensationally out of bounds of what a food should be” (qtd. in McBride 38). The idea of disconnection, if not distortion, is similarly expressed in “Food Porn” when food critic Molly O'Neill defines food pornography as “prose and recipes so removed from real life that they cannot be used except as vicarious experience,” and warns food writers of the danger of “walk[ing] the dangerous lines

between journalism, art, and their role as handmaiden to advertising” (39). Like those deliberate erotic visual and verbal images that he develops, the over-flowing sentimentality and nostalgia in Masumoto’s cookbook, as a form of ornamentation that produces a romanticized surface appearance for the indulgence of foodies and urban consumers, appears to ascribe him to the category of food porn authors.

Emphasizing the accidentality and the blind chance of his farm’s pornographic performance (e.g., “I never thought of the farm as an accidental porn star”), Masumoto’s self-ridicule reveals his anxiety over the reduction of his emotional attachment to the Masumoto family farm, no matter how sincere, to merely a sugar-coating tactic or a gastronomic entertainment in the eyes of foodies (*Perfect* 116). Calling himself a “peach pimp” (*Perfect* 116), or, at times a “sexy farmer” (*Changing* 121-25), whose “farm” has become “an accidental porn star,” Masumoto mocks this consumerist food culture that has distorted and manufactured his genuine affections and celebratory account of real, everyday farm life into fantasy. In her forthcoming book, *Gardenland: Nature, Fantasy, and Everyday Practice* (2018), ecocritic Jennifer Atkinson states, “gardening allows us to inhabit modes of thought and practice that may otherwise be suspended in daily life. As such, gardens have an uncanny ability to throw light on the broader structure of failure and frustration characterizing everyday experience.” Her remark on American gardening writing accentuates food production as a fantasy that highlights shortcomings of a socio-economic infrastructure that gives rise to “the complex affective and sensory structure of traditional food cultures and production practices.” In the case of Masumoto, it prompts the examination of not only the utopianism embedded within the idea of real taste and real organic farm work but the politics embedded within this fantasy for a sensuous mode of life as a reflection of economic inequalities and social injustice within the food movement.

Though conflicting and somewhat vague in their registration of food pornography, each of Masumoto’s verbal and visual images of food is shown to capitalize on the bodily through manipulations of a visceral approach to food or confluences of gastronomic and sexual pleasures. Masumoto is well aware that the effectiveness of his affective or sensuous approach to food as a mode of organic food promotion is facilitated by the market’s interest in what chef Will Goldfarb describes as anything that “mention[s] sex” (42), or what Roland Barthes states as “ornamental cookery”—a “genteel cookery” that glazes and smooths “the primary nature of the foodstuffs” (78). The investments in the sensuality of organic food production and consumption, whether for mere exchange value or for the sake of disseminating sustainable farming, are both contingent upon the disconnection of food from the “real.” This is, however, a reality of the urban white elites where

the experience of eating is abstracted away from that of their everyday gastronomy, and reconfigured and re-conceptualized as a universal everyday practice.

In her study of how food and eating in Asian American literature operates as signs of ethnic identity that assumes ethnically specific meanings, literary critic Sau-ling Cynthia Wong notes,

The terms *Necessity* and *Extravagance* signify two contrasting modes of existence and operation, one contained, survival-driven and conservation-minded, the other attracted to freedom, excess, emotional expressiveness, and autotelism *Necessity* usually appears with words like *force*, *demand*, or *constraint*; *Extravagance* with words like *urge*, *impulse*, or *desire*. (13)

Although Wong here gestures towards how foodways function as indicators of the complex negotiations of “Asia,” “America,” and all that fall in between, her remark on “necessity” and “extravagance” as modes of Asian Americans’ racial and ethnic positioning calls attention to the operation of food and taste as forms of racial, economic, gender, and generational privilege in the food movement. In the context of *The Perfect Peach*, her comment highlights how the aestheticization, if not the exoticization, of the “real” and the “everyday” as cultural capital has in fact transformed Masumoto’s organic peaches from “necessity” and basic nourishment into an extravagant luxury beyond basic survival. Wong’s discussion on “necessity” and “extravagance” complicates the workings of the “real” and “everyday” in the food movement, especially in the sense of food pornography, as a “leisurely technique,” that “heightens the excitement and also the sense of the un-attainable” (Cockburn 125). More specifically, in creating a desire for (or, that performs in the name of) the “real,” Masumoto is found guilty of producing an unattainable extravagance that may be sensationally in touch with the immanent taste, smell, and look of the food but is politically “out of bounds of” the intricacies of food and ethnic, class, and gender privilege at both the food consumption and the production end.²

However, both of these tactics, Masumoto contends, are constituents of the class, gender, and race privilege, operating as a form of “extravagance” we see embedded within not only the global capitalist food regime but also the alternative food movement and market. In *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance*, Wong defines “food pornography” as “making a living by exploiting the ‘exotic’ aspects of one’s ethnic foodways” (55). Alluding to Frank Chin’s critique of Asian American writers’ cultural “sell-out” through the capitalization of their ethnic foreignness, she writes,

² As Michael Jacobson notes, he “coined the term to connote a food that was so sensationally out of bounds of what a food should be that is deserved to be considered pornographic” (qtd. in McBride 38).

In cultural terms it translates to reifying perceived cultural differences and exaggerating one's otherness in order to gain a foothold in a white-dominated social system. Like exchanging sexual services for food, food pornography is also a kind of prostitution, but with an important difference: superficially, food pornography appears to be a promotion, rather than a vitiation or devaluation, of one's ethnic identity. (55)

Wong's words bring attention to Masumoto's ethnic identity and his performance of racial difference as an Asian American "food expert" who grows and sells "exotic" peaches in what appears to be a white food movement. More specifically, the value of his peaches is both enhanced and discounted by his ambivalence towards the exotic Japanese Americanness of his organic peaches. Very often, he is found celebrating a notion of the organic through ethnic difference—through his Japanese American farming heritage, "wisdom" passed down from his grandparents and parents working the land (*Perfect* 150), or Asian-inspired recipes (*Perfect* 70-71, 75). With the exceptions of those few incidences where he reflects on the history of Japanese American dislocation and internment, he appears to fail to engage with the troubled histories of Japanese America and the politics of race in the American food production and consumption networks, including political and historical realities that forced Asian immigrants into farming and the opening of restaurants, the California Alien Land Law of 1913 that prohibited "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from owning land, and the unrecognized contributions of Japanese Americans to farming in the U.S. One could certainly argue that the fact that he is politically simplistic subscribes him to the discourse of model minority where he, like Martin Yan, Ming Tsai, Joyce Chen, and other Asian American celebrity chefs on television, performs as a submissive and spiritually enlightened food expert for the white audience. However, as I have shown, Masumoto's deeply held sensuous approach is grounded in the "nothingness" philosophy of Japanese organic farming guru Masanobu Fukuoka's *The One Straw Revolution* (Chou 157). Though not an idea fully engaged in *The Perfect Peach*, his long history of writing about the viscosity of farming and his application of the Zen Buddhist notion of *wu* to farming convey a self-reflexivity when it comes to sensual and ethnic specificities and the manner through which these undergird his pornography.

Conclusion

In "Whiteness, Space and Alternative Food Practice," Rachel Slocum notes, "[w]hiteness in alternative food efforts rests . . . on inequalities of wealth that serve both to enable different food economies and to separate people by their ability to consume" (520). As a third-generation Japanese American whose parents and

grandparents were once economically and socio-politically deprived immigrant and migrant farmworkers, Masumoto acknowledges his class privilege as a UC Berkeley graduate and a landed farmer whose wife supported the family with her jobs at a hospital and at Fresno State University. Devoting the chapter “Ghosts of Farmworkers” and a page of nine color photos to his farmworkers’ hard work (*Perfect* 30), he writes,

My grandparents and parents were farmworkers, immigrants to a foreign land with a history of exploiting cheap laborers and then casting them aside and importing another source of strong backs and fast hands. Our family lost everything with the brutal uprooting of World War II relocation and the forced removal of all Japanese Americans from the Pacific coast because they looked like the enemy

Because of our history, my father and I often worked side by side with laborers, sharing the sweat yet acutely aware of our class differences. I the farmer, they the farmworkers. Today, those who work the land are more respected, but that doesn’t always translate into higher income and wages. (36-37)

Paying tribute and giving a voice to the farmworkers who cultivated the land beside him, Masumoto’s determination to redeem the power of global capitalist food economy’s racial and economic injustice on his farm is evident. For him, the migrancy and exile of his Latino farmworkers has more to do with global capitalist economy’s production of class inequalities than with institutionalized racism. Rarely does Masumoto consider alternative food networks as articulations of “white ideals of health and nutrition” (Slocum, “Race” 314), the notion of “food choice” as the “privilege” of accessibility and affordability (Guthman, “Bringing” 431), the “association between local organic food and cultural elitism” (Alkon 4), and “ethnic-labor hierarchy”—“white and Asian American U.S. citizen, Latino U.S. citizen or resident, undocumented mestizo Mexican, undocumented indigenous Mexican” in North American farming (Holmes 84). His engagement with farm injustice and inequalities nonetheless remains brief at the level of recognition and commemoration.

Masumoto belongs to a generation of American organic farmers “advised to develop new livelihood opportunities and exploit untapped sources of value added by making a ‘reconnection’ with consumers through new markets for quality local produce” and is one of the few who have access to these new opportunities and the cultural capital open to them (Goodman 194). But as Nikiko rightly argues, her father’s effort is a “courageous, political, and even radical” deed that should not be easily dismissed as political conservatism (*Changing* 12). As a Berkeley-educated farmer, he is steeped in cultural theory. His playfulness and sensuality clearly indicates the tribute he pays to migrant farmworkers and his awareness of class inequalities within the economy of organic food production and consumption. As

an organic farming pioneer who fought for “a better way of living,” he, for Nikiko, anticipated her own return as a lesbian biracial farmer dedicated to “freedom and equality in [her] home communities” (*Changing* 12, 13). Most significantly, his works gesture towards recent scholarship as well as activism of a younger generation of farmers devoted to the operations of race, class, and power in the alternative food movement.³ A celebrity farmer-essayist who celebrates the everyday sensual experience of growing and eating flavorsome organic peaches, Masumoto confesses that “peach porn is better than no porn” (*Perfect* 117). As he ponders how farms become exotic places and when consuming organic heirloom peaches becomes a romantic act in the food movement, he brings into sharp focus “food porn” as a tactic for social justice and community alliance but rooted in cultural otherness and exoticism.

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³ For further information, see Ezra David Romero’s “As California’s Organic Farming Pioneers Age, A Younger Generation Steps In” in *Valley Public Radio*. White Ash Broadcasting, 10 Jan. 2017. Web. 21 Sept. 2017. <<http://kvpr.org/post/californias-organic-farming-pioneers-age-younger-generation-steps>>

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大衛·增本、食物情色與美國食物運動

摘要

本文將檢視大衛·增本苦思的「食物情色」寫作方式如何替糧食運動揭開新頁。這波全新的食物運動充滿娛樂性質且挑逗感官的食物照片與文字，不僅巧妙結合味蕾享受與挑戰道德極限的飲食方式，也透過白人菁英階層的健康與永續概念，重新定義食物的味道。增本嘗試以第一人稱的非虛構敘事、或透過「實在生活與真實故事」的紀錄片主導（有機）食物鏈結構。美國二十世紀後半葉破紀錄的人口湧入都會區，耕種文化與生態保育的吸引力已失去優勢。在這場所謂的食物運動之中，資本主義大規模的糧食生產已讓都會人口與食物產地出現斷裂。人們既渴望、卻又懼怕讓自己與食物及農業生產建立任何情／慾關係。對增本而言，這種疏離與斷裂的現象促使讀者透過情／慾的眼光了解糧食與農耕，並將他的作品視為一種魅惑與奢華。

關鍵字：食物情色、大衛·增本、食物運動、有機農業

