

poration of working mothers' own voices. Though not accessible to a general audience, I would recommend this book for upper year undergraduate and graduate students in Sociology, Policy Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, and Social Work departments.

## **What's Cooking, Mom? Narratives about Food and Family**

Tanya M. Cassidy and Florence Pasche Guignard, eds.  
Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2015

REVIEWED BY ALISON QUAGGIN HARKIN

Reading the delightful *What's Cooking, Mom? Narratives about Food and Family*—"a series of contributions in the memoir tradition, together with autoethnographic, reflexive, and personal discussions" (1)—made me feel part of a community of moms sharing their multiple viewpoints, joys, challenges, frustrations, and sorrows about the feeding and nurturing of children (and communities). The volume fulfills the co-editors' aim of providing "a comfortable potluck or buffet-style get-together with friends and family... [which permits] readers to pick and choose, depending on their own tastes and expectations" (2).

Although most of the authors are academics, the co-editors, Tanya M. Cassidy and Florence Pasche Guignard, stress that they hoped to present "authentic and often silenced maternal voices" (1) while making the book "accessible to non-specialist readers interested in issues related to mothers, family, food, and nutrition" (2). A particular strength of the collection is that the editors have permitted a variety of voices to emerge in the chapters, without standardizing or homogenizing approaches and tone. As they point out in their introduction, "[s]ome chapters are grounded in theory while others are more emotionally spontaneous and take on a narrative turn to share and reflect on some personal elements of the authors' own lives" (1-2).

For example, while Sarah N. Gatson's chapter, "Revisiting and Reconstructing Maternal Sustenance: An Autoethnographic Account of Academic Motherhood," provides deeply evocative descriptions of the author's childhood and family of origin, she also takes "an intersectional/black feminist approach... to make explicit the ways in which everyday simultaneity is transformed into culturally distinct roles and statuses that, although housed in the same body, are then pitted against one another across the terrain of public

discourse and policy” (34). Gatson includes several scholarly references to support her persuasive arguments.

Other authors, such as Kari O’Driscoll (“When Feeding Your Family Is a Full-time Job”) and Dominique O’Neill (“My Mother Did Not Cook”), contribute memoir pieces unaccompanied by references—although these and all the others in the collection go beyond the purely personal to provide reflections on the meaning of food preparation, nurturing, eating, intergenerational relationships among family members, and societal issues such as agribusiness and food insecurity.

Of particular interest to me were two essays by non-Japanese mothers who live in Japan: Wendy Jones Nakanishi’s “*Wa* and *Wa-shoku*: Mothering and Food as an American in Japan” and Meredith Stephens’s “The Rebellious Bento Box: Slapdash Mothering in Perfectionist Japan.” Both contributors, one of American and one of Australian origin, express their appreciation for the culinary beauty and healthfulness of the Japanese diet, while interrogating the demands placed on mothers who are expected to prepare the meals.

Other essays focus on the multiple meanings of other topics related to the provision or preparation of food. These topics include, among others, breastfeeding and its significance for women and society at large; feeding and nurturing children with health issues such as celiac disease; balancing healthful food preparation with different important aspects of mothering and personal experience; the importance of sharing traditional foods with our children; and ethical challenges such as the creation of non-vegan meals for children when one is vegan oneself.

Although I would have liked to see some essays by contributors who must feed their families while living on a low income, my criticism is a minor one—and one that Cassidy and Pasche Guignard address explicitly in their introduction. They explain that the absence of such essays was “not a deliberate choice from our part as co-editors but simply reflects the contents of the proposals generated through our widely circulated call for contributions” (p. 8). In addition, many contributors acknowledge that they are writing from a position of privilege and remind us of the existence of different life experiences and narratives that need to be shared and valued.

Finally, the co-editors indicate that two more volumes with a similar theme to that of *What’s Cooking, Mom?* are to be published. While I don’t wish more work on the co-editors, who have done a marvelous job of bringing together this collection of essays and are working on two others, I would be delighted to see an ongoing “What’s Cooking?” series in which a growing variety of maternal stories could be presented.