

THE SOCIAL COSTS OF COOKING FROM SCRATCH:  
APPROACHING MY MOTHER'S BROWNIE RECIPE

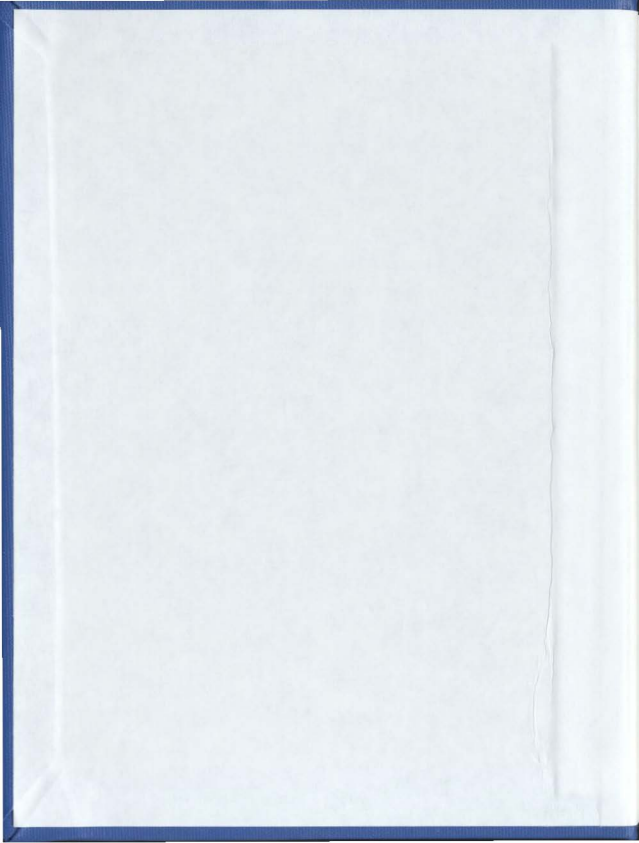
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THE SOCIAL COSTS OF COOKING FROM SCRATCH:  
APPROACHING MY MOTHER'S BROWNIE RECIPE

by

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A thesis submitted to the  
School of Graduate Studies  
in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
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**In Memory of**  
**Roberta Jean Grant**  
**1950-1994**

## **Abstract**

This thesis is a contextual analysis of my mother's brownie recipe. Following the recipe through the microcosmic to the macrocosmic, I illuminate its biography in each context. To this end, I have structured my thesis under the overarching umbrella of Marxist cultural theory, on the relationship between basic global modes of production and superstructural social institutions. Within the microcosm, I employ performance analysis, comparative historical and feminist critiques. To understand how the brownie and its recipe communicate within the macrocosm, I deconstruct the recipe, analyzing the historic nature of the ingredients and how those natures become symbols of oppression and exploitation. After examining the utilization of the brownie recipe within the superstructure and exploring the repercussions of the ingredients' production modes within the base, I appraise the normalizing, hegemonic forces that interplay between the base and the superstructure—the forces that make the brownie so seemingly benign and mundane.

## Acknowledgements

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## Chapter One - Introduction:

# Food! Glorious Food!

One of the beginning images of the 1968 film production of the musical *Oliver!* is of little, skeletal boys dressed in tattered prison-like garb parading into the orphanage's mess hall with military-like precision, singing a song about, "Food! Glorious food" (Romulus 1968)! Even as they queue up for the infamous sloppy mush, the boys continue to sing of imagined feasts, ogling hungrily the sumptuous abundance of food being supplied to their overseers. In an indelible scene, young Oliver, upon pulling the long straw, audaciously steps forward toward Mr. Bumble to make his query.

"Please sir, I want some more," he meekly inquires.

"What?!" Mr. Bumble yells incredulously.

"Please sir, I want some more?" Oliver tentatively repeats, losing some of his previous audacity.

"More?!" Mr. Bumble bellows from deep within his substantial form, grabbing Oliver's ear in the process, ultimately, dragging him all the way to town to be sold because of his apparently dangerous impertinence.

Although the remaining film fades from recollection, snippets of those opening scenes have been embroiled upon my memory since I first saw this movie years ago. I often hum the opening song while cooking, only singing aloud, "Food! Glorious food!" since I cannot remember any of the other lyrics. I have been known on occasion to mimic, mustering up my best British accent, Mr. Bumble's bellowing "More?!" when someone has asked for seconds at the dinner table. And, as I came to reflect on how one

is to begin a thesis on food, the image of pathetic, little, malnourished Oliver standing before the mammoth, well-fed bulk of Mr. Bumble inevitably sprang to mind. The binary opposition is archetypal. High versus Low. Old versus Young. Master versus Slave. Fat versus Thin. Have versus Have-not. Rich versus Poor. Gluttony versus Hunger. Bourgeois versus Proletariat. And all these antithetical juxtapositions and power struggles are played out in one quintessential scene of a little boy asking for more food—a scene which centres around food and its inextricable entanglings in the web of powerfully complex polarities which comprise human existence. Life is played out in food as food is played out in life. Oliver asking for more gruel is a testament to this theatre of life in which food is a primal player.

### **Digesting Importance**

Ranging from the biological to the spiritual, the symbolic to the political, food's versatility as a prevailing player in life remains constant. Anthropologist Sidney Mintz contends that "nothing defines our nature as living creatures more dramatically than our ingestion" (*Tasting* 4). And yet, he goes on to comment that this "basic biological need becomes something else because we humans transform it symbolically into a system of meaning for much more than itself" (6). Anthropologist, Margaret Visser asserts that "[f]ood shapes us and expresses us even more definitively than our furniture or houses or utensils do" (12). Foodways scholar Judith Goode remarks that food "is both physically manipulated to feed us and intellectually manipulated to refer metaphorically to important aspects of existence" (233). Elaborating on this symbolically-endowed notion regarding food, noted folklorist Michael Owen Jones queries, "What else in our daily lives speaks so eloquently of symbolism, aesthetic sensibilities, communication, social propriety, community, performance, and celebration as do our foodways" (244)? In writing on the recipe book compiled by starving women in the Nazi ghetto of

Theresienstadt, Cara de Silva comments on “the power of food to sustain us, not just physically but spiritually” (xxvi). She writes:

Food is who we are in the deepest sense, and not because it is transformed into blood and bone. Our personal gastronomic traditions—what we eat, the foods and foodways we associate with the rituals of childhood, marriage, and parenthood, moments around the table, celebrations—are critical components of our identities. To recall them in desperate circumstances is to reinforce a sense of self and to assist us in our struggle to preserve it. (xxvi)

Ultimately, food is a profoundly poignant “medium of communication” (M.O. Jones 244) speaking volumes regarding the physical, the psychological, the emotional, the metaphorical, the phantasmagorical and the spiritual nourishment of humankind.

Yet, while food “speaks” to us on various levels, there is underlying any foodways event the concept upon which it is predicated—the recipe. Cara de Silva continues to comment on the power of food as evidenced within the recipe, on the strength and courage of culinary weaponry:

While written recipes might not feed the hungers of the body, they might temporarily quell the hungers of the soul.... ‘My mother [Mina Pächter] was already in her seventies at this time,’ said Anny [Stern], ‘yet this book shows that even in adversity her spirit fought on.’ And so, too, did the spirits of her friends. Among their weapons were *Heu und Stroh*, fried noodles topped with raisins, cinnamon, and vanilla cream; *Leberknödel*, liver dumplings with a touch of ginger; *Kletzenbrot*, a rich fruit bread; and *Zenichovy Dort*, or Groom’s Cake. There were *Erdäpfel Dalken*, or potato doughnuts; and *Badener Caramell Bonbons*, caramels from Baden Baden—about eighty recipes in all. (xxxii-ii & xxvi)

Indeed, “[r]ecipes are the established currency of cooking” (Camp American Foodways 98) and the syntax of food. They “are important. To families, they represent shared memories and repeated pleasures. To society, they’re historical documents of fashion, taste, and nuance” (Younghusband 1998). My thesis is an examination of one recipe within the repertoire of my mother, Roberta Grant—her brownies.

## A Brief History of Food and Folklore

In the introduction to her compilation of familial recipes entitled, *My Grandmother's Kitchen*, Jehane Benoit writes: "My grandmother taught me, a long time ago, that our cooking is part of our folklore, and it must therefore be varied. It bears testimony to our past, to our mothers' ingenuity, and to the spirit of our own flesh and blood" (1). To explore the connections between food and folklore, one quickly becomes immersed in "foodways" scholarship. A term coined by anthropologist John J. Honigman and subsequently borrowed by folklorist Don Yoder, foodways, in Yoder's terms, is concerned with "the total cookery complex, including attitudes, taboos, and meal systems—the whole range of cookery and food habits in a society" (325). A scholar in the field of foodways, Charles Camp, defines foodways as being "nothing less than the full consideration of how food and culture intersect—what food says about the people who prepare and consume it and how culture shapes the dietary choices people make" ("Foodways" 1997: 367). He further comments that "[f]oodways provides a vocabulary of experience that demonstrates the presence and power of tradition in everyday life" ("Foodways" 1997: 370-1). Folklorist, Lucy Long observes that "[t]he term 'foodways' suggests that food is a network of activities and systems—physical, social (communicative), cultural, economic, spiritual, and aesthetic" (182). Suffice it to say that anything having to do with food, be it performing religious rites or growing backyard gardens, operating giant agribusinesses or flipping burgers at McDonald's, sharing recipes or watching Jamie Oliver on TV (a hip young chef in Britain with a hit BBC series), is open to foodways research.

This link between food and the academic study of folklore has taken some time to develop. A seminal relationship began in the late nineteenth century, and its aetiology is practically legendary. According to Camp, Lafcadio Hearn—a hard-up, itinerant



journalist with a string of misfortunes, including bankrupt business ventures—had the brainstorm of writing two books on Creole culture to be sold at the Cotton Centennial Exposition, a major tourist event which was to be held in New Orleans in 1884. Hearn wrote two books, one on Creole proverbs, *Gombo Zhebes*, and the other on Creole cooking, *La Cuisine Creole*. Unfortunately, due to printing delays, the books made it into publication in 1885, long after the thousands of tourists had visited the city for the exhibition. Needless to say, they did not sell well. Yet, for folklorists in retrospect, "*La Cuisine Creole* came to represent the tangible, visible part of an otherwise invisible world...[using] food as the expressive 'medium' through which to communicate the cultural 'message' of Creole tradition" (Camp "Foodways" 1996: 300). This said, not only were the public not buying *La Cuisine Creole*, but the discipline of folklore at large, and even Hearn himself, seemed also to not buy into its concepts, largely overlooking the ethnographic potentials of food studies. Half a century would pass before a budding relationship between food and folklore would spring forth.

According to Camp, "'foodways' owes its intellectual identity to 'folklife,'" with its emphasis upon "the ordinary structures of everyday life" ("Foodways" 1996: 300), including many material culture genres such as folk architecture, folk art and folk costume. Camp lauds "[t]he quiet integrity" ("Foodways" 1997: 368) of the scholarship of such folklorists as Don Yoder and Warren Roberts as being instrumental in importing European ethnological models, and thereby, broadening the concept of what constitutes "folklore." He also espouses the work of Margaret Mead at the National Research Council's Committee on Food Habits during the late 1930s through early 1940s as "establish[ing] scholarly precedent for ethnological interest in the social meanings, functions, and values of food, particularly as an accessible marker of cultural community" ("Foodways" 1997: 368). By the late 1970s and early 1980s, folklore

scholarship in general began shifting towards performance theory, with its expansive notion of "context" and its attention to "symbol making." The foodways journal, *Digest*, started at the University of Pennsylvania around this time, represents this intersection of folklife studies and performance theory. It has been this intersecting shift which has truly allowed foodways scholarship to blossom. In fact, Camp contends that foodways has become "the most inclusive and least-disciplined genre" ("Foodways" 1996: 300), a veritable overgrown garden in which everything goes and grows. And yet, he also contends that "foodways is perhaps the most common and least comprehended of traditional expressions" ("Foodways" 1997: 371), and that "[l]ocating significance in this muddy mix of subject, appetite, science, symbol, currency and taste [in this overgrown garden] is a daunting but engaging task" ("Foodways" 1997: 371). And so, I take heart at knowing that there is still much to explore and examine and learn and illuminate. There is still much to say about brownies.

### **Brownie Boundaries**

To begin with, I suppose that one must at least attempt to "vocalize a brownie" (Smith 31) by defining it. In North America, "brownies are small, rich chewy squares of chocolate cake, containing nuts" (Ayto 39). By contrast, in Australia and New Zealand, a brownie is "a sweet bread made with brown sugar and currants" (*OED* 594). The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that in 1897 the *Sears, Roebuck Catalogue* was selling brownies by the pound. Yet, a year prior to the catalogue appearance of brownies, "the first recipe for brownies appeared in the 1896 edition of the *Fannie Farmer Cookbook*" (Fuller 106). Despite the fact that there is an 1896 book containing a recipe for brownies, "nobody seems to know the origin of this American confection" (E. Jones 340). However unsubstantiated, "folklore has it that brownies evolved around the 1920s as a mistake" (Fuller 26). Yet another theory states that "brownies began around 1914" (Fuller 36) and

that “they owe their origin to ‘Brownie’ Schrumpf, an octogenarian food authority from Bangor, Maine” (Fuller 36). Whatever the case, it is relatively safe to conclude that brownies are a rather recent recipe, having been around, at the very most, for about a century. It is also very safe to conclude that since the brownie “is very American in character” (E. Jones 340) in its use of chocolate, it is a “delectable yet uniquely American baked chocolate item” (Albright 138).

Although one can trace the history of the brownie, however convoluted, that still does not really define what a brownie is. The definitions may state “a small rich square, usually chocolate, cake containing nuts” (OED 594), but a brownie is different from a cake. Initially, I thought that the main difference between a cake and a brownie was the leavening agent. I had always understood that cakes have baking soda or baking powder to make them rise, while brownies do not use any such leavening ingredients. I was wrong. It seems that in the eighteenth century when “eggs finally took over from yeast as the main raising agent, [it] defin[ed] the nature of the modern cake” (Ayto 45). Besides learning that cakes are determined by eggs and do not have to contain some kind of leavening agent other than eggs, I also found brownie recipes containing baking powder. It seems that “the critical evaluation in brownie-making is texture—which is affected by ratios of ingredients” (Fuller 26). As such, one can have blonde brownies and butterscotch brownies, Kahlua brownies and cheesecake brownies, because it is not the chocolate or the leavening agents that make the brownie; it is the texture (For these brownie recipes among others, see Appendix 1). Although brownies may “vary from one region to another, sometimes characterized by an almost fudgelike consistency” (E. Jones 340), the important factor is that they “should be slightly moist and chewy and never dry” (E. Jones 340). And that is what makes a brownie a brownie.

## Recipe for a Thesis

In terms of what makes my mother's moist and chewy (but not too chocolatey) brownies, her recipe, as has been scribbled on various pieces of scrap paper throughout the years, is as follows:

1 1/2 cups butter, melted	1 1/2 cups + 6 Tbsp flour
1/4 cup cocoa	1/2 tsp salt
6 eggs	1 cup nuts
3 cups sugar	3 tsp vanilla

Mix together. Pour into greased and floured roaster pan (11x18-inch).  
Bake at 350°F for 25 minutes.

Recognizing that "as consumers, we are entangled in all sorts of commodity geographies, and we need to think through and beyond those, emphasising each commodity's biography as it moves through these geographies" (Bell and Valentine 199-200), my study of my mother's brownie recipe is essentially a contextual one. Folklorist Richard Bauman contends that "[w]hat remains essential [to] a basic conception of folklore" is that it is "*situated in a web of interrelationships*, [in] a frame of reference which may allow for the pursuit of specific connections and patterns" ("Field" 362, emphasis in original). As I examine this brownie recipe, I place it in these different "commodity geographies" and "frame[s] of reference," ultimately enmeshing it in this complex "web of interrelationships." I follow it through the microcosmic to the macrocosmic, illuminating its biography at each stage as I make connections between the recipe and its surrounding environment, be it familial or global. To this end, I have structured my thesis under the overarching umbrella of Marxist cultural theory, on the relationship between basic global modes of production and superstructural social institutions (Williams 75-82). Within the familial setting, I employ performance analysis, as well as, comparative historical and feminist critiques. In an attempt to understand how the brownie and its recipe communicate within a larger, societal context, I then deconstruct

the recipe, analyzing the historic nature of the ingredients and how those natures become symbols of oppression and exploitation. Finally, after examining the utilization of the brownie recipe within the superstructure and exploring the repercussions of the modes of productions of ingredients in the base, I begin to appraise the normalizing, hegemonic forces that interplay between the base and the superstructure—the forces that make the brownie so seemingly benign and mundane.

Thus structuring my analysis in this tripartite way, Chapter Two, entitled “Nasal Memories,” explores the importance of a good brownie recipe to its maker. Because “[f]ood represents a particularly strong form of anchorage in the past, its strength deriving in part from the familial relationships in which the serving and preparing of foods are located....[f]ood, then, serves as one of the links between historical time, individual time and household time” (Morgan 166). This section explores how “[p]assing on recipes and particular cooking techniques from one generation to another (usually from mother to daughter) is one way in which some households have traditionally reproduced their ‘identities’ over time” (Bell and Valentine 66). As well as linking this recipe to familial feminine identities, this section examines how “cooking for others offers women a self-esteem that is elsewhere largely denied [them]” (Cline 101) and illuminates the powerful generational link found within recipes—the heirloom quality of food. It draws mainly upon my own observations as a brownie maker and as a daughter of a renowned brownie maker, elucidating the nature of a recipe to be used, as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett suggests, “as a medium for recalling a life” (333), as a familial heritage and a legacy of womanhood.

Jumping from this microcosmic base, Chapter Three, entitled “Deconstruction of the Basic Brownie,” consists of a deconstructive look at the brownie recipe, analyzing the modes of production and consumption which have allowed the masses to partake of such

a confection. Modelled upon the work of anthropologist Margaret Visser entitled, *Much Depends on Dinner*, it draws connections between the micro and the macro, because, as Wendell Berry attests, "How we eat determines, to a certain extent, how the world is used. This is a simple way of describing a relationship that is inexpressibly complex. To eat responsibly is to understand and enact, so far as one can, this complex relationship" (377). There are very real connections between superstructure and base, between familial memories and exploitative consumption. As Abrahams notes, "the process of consumption and exploitation are too deeply intertwined" (35), so much so that this brownie recipe comes to stand as a testament of "a capitalist-colonist approach to life in which exploitation of subordinated peoples is not only expressed in terms of labor but also in appropriating their cultural styles, including their ways of cooking and eating" (Abrahams 23). Yet, while the exploitative nature of the base is all too apparent, as Lisa Heldke keenly observes, the connections linking a mother's brownie recipe to ozone depletion and slavery are not so readily apparent: "Despite the real interdependence that exists between U.S. consumers and farm workers—in the United States, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Kenya, for example—these connections are often conveniently obscure or invisible to middle-class American consumers, and thus do not inform our decision-making in the grocery store" ("Food Politics" 301). The brownie has become mundane and quotidian and benign through a sleight of hand, a magician's trick. And it is these obfuscating processes, these illusionary projections of reality, that the final section attempts to examine.

In the 1957 preface to his *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes describes the impetus for his semiological work as essentially being a deconstruction of the mundane, the quotidian, the seemingly benign. He writes:

The starting point of these reflections was usually a feeling of impatience

at the sight of 'naturalness' with which newspapers, art and common sense constantly dress up a reality which, even though it is the one we live in, is undoubtedly determined by history. In short, in the account given of our contemporary circumstances, I resented seeing Nature and History confused at every turn, and I wanted to track down, in the decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying*, the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there. (11, emphasis in original)

Chapter Four, entitled "Reconstructing Brownies in *The Kitchen of Meaning*," looks at how "we are prevented from seeing these connections [between our daily lives and the larger institutions] by those very institutions" (Heldke "Food Politics" 302). It is an analysis of how a ruling class is "compelled...to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society...to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones" (Marx and Engels German 65-6), and an examination of how "it is in [the larger institution's] interest for us to be ill-informed about their activity, and about the way individuals support that activity" (Heldke "Food Politics" 302). In order to track down this "ideological abuse" and this "ill-information" and these universal preventions, I examine the creation of cultural myths, the construction of meanings, and how these are influenced by the processes of domination. Finally, Chapter Five, entitled "To Bake or Not to Bake," concludes with an attempt to mediate between the polarities of microcosmic and macrocosmic brownies in order to sketch out some course of action.

### **In Defence of a Brownie-Munching Marxist**

Since the 1848 publication of *The Communist Manifesto*, Marxism as an alternative ideology, methodology, lifestyle, and theoretical perspective has garnered quite a following of nations, scholars, dictators, activists, religious leaders, ecoterrorists, students, politicians, revolutionaries, and this list could go on and on. Yet, as Jennifer Post, observes, "even during periods when political radicalism strongly affected the culture and academic disciplines, when classical Marxism was being applied to research,

folklorists tended to remain less committed to those intellectual currents than to other interpretative approaches" (461). For the most part, folklorists have tended to steer clear of Marxism, being far "more concerned with humanistic than social or political interpretation of data" (Post 461). General reluctance and downright avoidance of Marxist theories within folkloristics can be traced to a number of issues. First and probably foremost, is the blatant ideological nature of Marxism. Marxism has never pretended to be anything but ideologically, and hence, politically motivated. This ideological nature can be very unsettling, as Archie Green observes:

Aversion to "ideology" flows from the unmanageable breadth built into the word; often it connotes malicious propaganda, distorted analysis, and cruel subversion....Folklorists eschew "ideology" as commonly used for two reasons: they do not wish to see themselves as dealing with insubstantial forms; they do not wish to appear as committed to insidious guides. (351)

The negative connotations of ideology, as it has merged with folklore, are not completely unfounded. For example, the rise of romantic nationalism, of peoples and nations "seeking historical justification of their separatist policies" (Wilson 35), is, as folklorist William A. Wilson states, "by definition, a folklore movement" (34). Indeed, as Richard Dorson points out, "[t]he ideological manipulation of folklore...[by countries] quest[ing] for a heritage had its virtues, but in extreme form it became entwined with political ideology and virulent nationalism" (15-6). The infamy of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia have truly sullied any union of ideology with folklore in many folklorists' minds.

While notions of ideology bringing out the "dark side" of folklore continue to beleague folkloristic Marxist applications, there are general trends in Marxist theories and extensions which undermine any burgeoning relations with folklore. José Limón cites two problems in his article, "Western Marxism and Folklore: A Critical Introduction," as being, the "decline" thesis of folklore among many Marxists and the



characterization of folklore as inherently oppositional. According to Limón, the perpetual lauding of “the folk”—“folk” being associated with the rural peasants, the proletariat—has led to lamentations that folklore is dying. As the world becomes more and more mechanized and rationalized and urbanized, Marxist folklorists have tended to assert that “the folk” are assimilated and their folklore disappears, as does the discipline that studies it. Following this, folklore has been formulated as some sort of pre-industrial and pre-capitalist martyr, the assumption being “that all of that which is not produced by or associated with capital is inherently good, a species of Marxist neo-Romanticism” (Limón “Western” 48). Still more problems arise, especially as the folklorist moves into the realm of cultural studies, a movement highly influenced by the political left, by Marxism and its extensions (Narváez 15). In his article entitled “Folkloristics, Cultural Studies and Popular Culture,” Peter Narváez highlights the problems hindering the interface of folklore and cultural studies, and by extension, Marxism. Within cultural studies, he argues, many “works ultimately rest on certain assumptions of passive consumer society” (27), tend to neglect the importance “of cultural continuity and tradition” (28), and often lack concrete ethnographic data (28-9). Within folkloristics, Narváez contends that the widespread acceptance of a pluralism of folk groups, while validating folklore in a diverse spectrum, fails “to encourage an analysis of a dynamic folklore in the midst of intergroup social relations” (24). Also within folkloristics, he further asserts that the prevailing methodology of functionalism “assumes that the most expressive elements of culture contribute toward an integration of society” (24), hence negating issues of conflict.

Despite the problems, shortcomings, and biases on both sides of the fence, the value of meshing Marxism, cultural studies, and folklore is not to be overlooked. Limón contends that folklorists need to “carefully understand folklore as a conditional

expressive repertoire of residual and emergent practices implicated in a not intrinsically benign social matrix" ("Western" 48). In other words, we need to see folklore as a dynamic force in a dynamic world. He further contends that folklore's inherent oppositional character lies not in its pre-capitalist asceticism, shunning all that is capital, but in its "aesthetic act of performance" (50), in its ability to cling onto the use and value of things when all of life is being bottled into consumptive acts. Narváez concludes:

For ultimately in their appreciation of people and their expressions, most students of folklore and cultural studies who are concerned with popular culture stand on the same ground, i.e., they reject ideological pretensions of false "neutrality" and are actively committed to a rational critique of culture that recognizes not only artistic expression but social oppression as well. (29-30)

Wilson concludes his study on "Herder, Folklore and Romantic Nationalism" urging "[t]hose who see folklore not just as a body of tradition to be classified and catalogued, but also as a dynamic force in the lives of men [and women and children] would do well to study and learn from the nationalistic [and ideological] movements of the past century" (35). In the conclusion to his Marxist study of Mexican-American foodways in South Texas, Mario Montañó writes, "[T]he study of folk food preparation and consumption can enable us to go beyond mere description to address issues of cultural outlook and symbolic ethnicity...reveal[ing] counterhegemonic discourses surrounding foods that contest the values and beliefs of the dominant culture" (63). A Marxist study of brownies can enable me to move beyond description and classification, allowing, as Bruce Mason and Eileen Condon suggest, "the depiction of places of consumption as cultural spaces" (83), allowing an analysis of how cultural spaces interact with personal ones—how brownies are both personal and global, familial and societal.

And finally, a blatant declaration of an ideology allows me to shed "ideological pretensions of false 'neutrality'" (Narváez 30), thereby subverting notions of the

"objective" ideal. With undeniable passion, Archie Green urges "cloistered folklorists" (358) to re-examine their ideological bases, recognizing that they do indeed "hold ideological positions" despite self-assurances "that they are immune from the virus of ideology" (351). He writes:

We hold philosophic positions whether stated clearly, carelessly, or else unstated. Further, we live in societies—ours and theirs—denominated "open" or "closed," "libertarian" or "authoritarian," "democratic" or "totalitarian"—umbrellas for the complex structures of thought and deed which shelter everyday life. Few [North] American folklorists interpret their data by conscious metaphysical design. They do not sit in an archive straining songs or stories through an ideological sieve. Rather, they accept mainstream norms as natural or orderly. In this sense, scholars absorb values as they breathe ever-present air....[M]ost [North] American folklorists have accepted dominant ideology...[not realizing that] our central ideology, best labeled "secular liberalism," is as cemented together by deep assumptions as is Soviet [Russian] life by Marxism. (351)

In the pursuit of the apparently "objective" ideal, open declaration of an ideological position is often considered highly "subjective" and therefore *uncritical* and *unacademic*. But, as Paulo Freire reminds us, "one cannot conceive of objectivity without subjectivity" (35). The two are in a "constant dialectical relationship. To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naive and simplistic. It is to admit the impossible: a world without men [and women and children]. This objectivist position is as ingenuous as that of subjectivism, which postulates men [and women and children] without a world" (Freire 35-6). I believe Marxism allows me an avenue for addressing the dialectical nature of the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity. It allows me to be both subjective and objective in my analysis of brownies.

### **In Defence of Self-Reflexive Brownies**

In a letter to Joseph Bloch dated September 21st, 1890, Frederick Engels expounds upon the intricacies of Marxist theory in an attempt to waylay the succinct vulgarity of economic determinism—a notion which reduces culture to be purely

reflective of basic economics. He writes:

The economic situation is the basis, but the various components of the superstructure....also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases determine their *form*...We make our history ourselves, but, first of all, under very definite assumptions and conditions. Among these the economic ones are ultimately decisive. But the political ones, etc., and indeed even the traditions which haunt human minds also play a part, although not the decisive one. (498, emphasis in original)

The relationship between the modes of production—basic economics—and the superstructural institutions—be they legal, educational, political, or religious—seems to be almost cyclical in nature. Each reflects, affects and reinforces the other. Karl Marx asserts, in the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, “The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men [and women] that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness” (11-12). In essence, Marx maintains that basic economics condition our social institutions, which in turn, condition how we come to view life, which in turn, perpetuate the primary precept of production modes. John Storey, as a scholar of cultural studies, describes this relationship in terms of landscape, contending that “the economic base produces the superstructural terrain” (194). He further contends “that the form of activity that takes place there is determined...by the interaction of the institutions and the participants as they occupy the terrain” (194).

To follow a brownie recipe through this cycle and over this terrain becomes rather interesting. While perhaps never overtly listed as an institution in the superstructure, I would suggest that the institution of the family must surely fall into the “et cetera” category, seeing as it is perhaps one of the strongest shapers of our social being, and therefore, of our consciousness. What we learn or do not learn from our grandparents

and our parents, our aunts and our uncles, our siblings and our cousins affects us for good and for bad. As sociologists, Beardsworth and Keil, keenly observe:

The domestic world of the family is inextricably linked to the structures of the wider social system, and this is no less true of eating than of any other aspect of family life. In a sense, the sociological analysis of the family is pervaded by two apparently opposing themes. On the one hand, the family is seen in essentially positive terms, as an intimate, supportive institution. It is seen, at one level, as contributing to the continuity and stability of society as a whole, and at another level as providing the individual with a secure refuge from a demanding world. On the other hand, the family has been viewed in more sinister terms, as a locus of conflict, oppression and even overt violence, with the power differences between men and women, and parents and children, seen as particularly important.... Whatever the viewpoint adopted, however, there can be no doubting the family's continuing importance as a unit of consumption and the powerful formative influences it continues to assert over its members. (73)

Truly, the family is "a social base of folklore" (Bauman "Field" 365), and as such, demands attention.

Richard Bauman contends that "[i]f we are to understand what folklore is, we must go beyond a conception of it as disembodied superorganic stuff and view it contextually, in terms of the individual, social, and cultural factors that give it shape, meaning, existence" ("Field" 362). Highlighting the importance of the individual context, he further comments that "the life history of an individual and the structure and evolution of an individual's repertoire represent important contextual frameworks for understanding the place of folklore in human life" (365). I know of no better way to truly to understand "the place of folklore in human life" than to dissect and digest one's own folklore and speak from one's own experience. Sociologists, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, express: "To understand what people are and what they might become, one must understand what goes on between people and things. What things are cherished, and why, should become part of our knowledge of human beings"

(1). Ronnie Lundy suggests, "We remember those who loved us and showed it by nourishment. With every bite we come closer to telling you—to knowing ourselves—who we are, who and where it is we've come from, and, sometimes, sometimes, where it is we must go" (ix). It seems that this knowledge can be most readily gained through autoethnography—through an analysis of one's own brownie connections, as situated within larger brownie connections. As with Caroline Brettell, in approaching such connections,

[m]y considerations can be situated within the broader context of reflexivity that has characterized both postmodern and feminist anthropology and that has resulted in what Barbara Tedlock has labeled a 'growing meta-anthropological literature.' Among other things, feminism and postmodernism have directed our attention to the autobiographical dimension of the anthropological [and folkloristic] encounter, to a reconsideration of the contributions of life history to anthropological [and folkloristic] research, to the rising interest in the role of biography in women's history, and to an exploration of autoethnography. (224)

The mantra of second-wave feminism seems to have continually been "[T]he personal is the political" (Massey xi). In relation to my topic, I interpret this to mean a number of things: what occurs within the personal realm often reflects and perpetuates greater social structures—be they patriarchal or capitalist or both; what occurs within the microcosm has repercussions and ramifications within the macrocosm, acknowledging the important position the familial sphere occupies as a shaper of our lives; and finally, if a greater understanding is to be gained and change is to come about, then what occurs within the private sphere needs to be given public expression. Carolyn Ellis describes

[a]utoethnography [as] fluently mov[ing] back and forth, first looking inward, then outward, then backward, and forward, until the distinctions between the individual and social are blurred beyond recognition and the past, present, and future become continuous. The inner workings of the self must be investigated in reciprocal relationship with the other: concrete action, dialogue, emotion, and thinking are featured, but they are represented within relationships and institutions, very much impacted by

history, social structure, and culture, which themselves are dialectically revealed through action, thought, and language. (132-3).

I need to make the link between the microcosm and the macrocosm, contextualizing each realm within the other, if anything proactive is to result. I need to understand, as fully as I can, how deeply entwined my *own* brownie consumption is, if any global understanding is to be reached. I need to follow Ariadne's thread through myself. In recent writings, Charles Camp contends that the "key questions [North] American foodways research must tackle" are twofold: "What does the term 'food habit' mean in a consumerist society? Where is significance located in the twisted trail from field to table" ("Foodways" 1996: 302)? Seeing as I am most acquainted with what goes on and has gone on around my family's kitchen table, the starting point of my journey begins at home in my mother's kitchen.

## Chapter Two

# Nasal Memories

In the Taiwanese film, *Eat Drink Man Woman*, the middle daughter of a master chef finds herself one night cooking up a feast to celebrate a job promotion (Central 1994). Sharing her food and her memories with her lover, she reflectively remarks, "All my childhood memories are of cooking. My memory's in my nose." In the letter previously quoted from Frederick Engels to Joseph Bloch, Engels lists some of the superstructural factors which influence the basic forms, uttering the ominous words, "indeed even the traditions which haunt human minds also play a part" (498). No matter how many times I read this letter, my eyes inevitably fall upon that phrase, and that phrase alone, while my mind ruminates ceaselessly upon its implications. I feel as if Engels has somehow touched upon an integral concept governing superstructural institutions—a concept the implications of which have perhaps been sorely underestimated and unconsidered. Indeed, the traditions which haunt human minds *and* human noses *and* all of the human senses are vitally important in securing intimate superstructural bonds—bonds from which it is extremely difficult to extricate oneself, if one even wants to. They are bonds of memories from idyllic, culinary moments in childhood, as my cousin so shared with me: "From the time I was a wee child, I can remember standing on the small wooden chair to help my mom bake, or at least mix the bowl, or lick the beaters" (Frazer 2000). They are haunting ties of kinship and love and food and security, as a friend so related: "My grandmother died when I was seven years old and all my memories of her are intimately tied to food—like the freshly baked



cookies to dip in our tea, the Saturday morning waffles with whipping cream, her easy cheesecake" (Li 2000). They are deeply personal brownie bonds which permeate my very being.

The haunting quality of these traditions becomes increasingly apparent as one considers the nature of such culinary bonds when placed in the context of legacy and heritage. In the preface to her cookbook entitled, *Family Heirlooms: A Collection of Treasured Recipes*, Trina Vineberg writes:

Considering the adventurous excitement in our kitchen, it is not surprising that my happiest times in childhood were spent there, trailing after Mother, flour-smeared and sticky-fingered. Mother had a knack for teaching, and I loved listening to stories about how Grandmother and Great-grandmother had presided over their kitchens. Over the years it became clear to me that they had passed down a tradition—but the tradition was mostly unwritten. And so I began to plan this collection to preserve the spirit of our family cuisine. (n.pg.)

Culinary traditions are imbued with an ephemera of scents, saturated with ethereal memories, enveloped in oral transmissions, and laden with kinetic knowledge. They are indeed precious maternal heirlooms, as Vineberg so illuminates with the title of her collection. And yet, they are traditions, by their very haunting and apparently intangible nature, that have been too often neglected and overlooked. As such, they are largely unwritten feminine traditions which continue to haunt a patriarchal world.

Commenting on such hauntingly feminine traditions, the French feminist, Luce Irigaray, contends:

It is necessary...for us to assert that there is a genealogy of women. There is a genealogy of women within our family: on our mothers' side we have mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers, and daughters....Let us try to situate ourselves within this female genealogy so as to conquer and keep our identity. Nor let us forget that we already have a history, that certain women have, even if it was culturally difficult, left their mark on history and that all too often we do not know them. (44)

Because it has too often been culturally difficult, women have left their mark on history in mundane, and therefore, seemingly insignificant ways. They have concocted recipes and told stories and hung clothes on the line and made quilts and arranged flowers, and in so doing, have made quiet, yet indelible impacts on human history. In an article exploring her own female genealogy, entitled "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens," Alice Walker writes:

And so our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on the creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see...And so it is, certainly, with my own mother....[S]o many of the stories that I write, that we all write, are my mother's stories. Only recently did I fully realize this: that through years of listening to my mother's stories of her life, I have absorbed not only the stories themselves, but something of the manner in which she spoke, something of the urgency that involves the knowledge that her stories—like her life—must be recorded. (240)

While Alice Walker finds her mother in a garden of flowers, I find my mother, and subsequently, my mother's mother in a recipe for brownies. And as I follow these brownie connections through the generations, I become enmeshed in the lives and in the stories of my female progenitors. Marion Bishop asserts "that in making the journey to their own bodies [women] connect themselves with the bodies of other women. I am referring here to the idea of a feminine culinary genealogy—a matri-lineage based not just on a woman's name but also on her kitchen, her act of cooking, and her body" (102). I am a part of a feminine culinary genealogy. And so "for me to remember a recipe is to remember the woman it came from, how it was passed on to her, and where I can situate myself within my culinary female family" (Bishop 103). It is to gain access to my mother's life through her brownies.

### **The Brownie Branch of the Maternal Family Tree**

"Hey, Jess, did your mom bake bread today?" my cousin, Dallas, would sniff the

air and earnestly inquire.

"I don't know. I've been at school all day," I would often quizzically and impatiently respond.

"I think she made bread today," Dallas would reiterate, testing the air again. I would simply shrug in ignorance.

This dialogue occurred often enough throughout my childhood years that Dallas became known as the girl who could literally smell homemade bread from a mile away. We never did test her olfactory senses from a further distance or with different foods. It always started in the schoolyard, after the final bell, as we were preparing to walk or ride our bikes home. She wouldn't bring the topic up again until we parted ways at the driveway to her house. I would then promise to phone her regarding the bread. And never fail, upon opening the door to my own home just one house down, I would be caressed with the securing smell of homemade bread. Naturally, Dallas would then hurry over, usually with her brother, Dustin, in tow. And they, along with me and three of my siblings, would devour loaves of warm, homemade bread sopping with *real* butter. My mother typically limited our insatiable appetites to two loaves before admonishing us that we were going to spoil our dinners. Dallas would head home—smug in the validation of her nose's knowledge and temporarily sated in her appetite for homemade bread.

Having been an observer, taste-tester, and sous-chef in my mother's kitchen for many years, I can still picture snippets of the bread-making process as it happened in our home in the small, rural community of Kersley, which is located in the central interior region of British Columbia known as the Cariboo. It would require a trip to the storage room in the basement, where she would retrieve a bucketful of wheat kernels. Back in the sanctity of her kitchen, she would pour the kernels into the funnel feeding the big electric wheat grinder. As the wheat made its way through the millstones, the fine

powdered flour would fall into a bread tin. The cascading flour would form powdery peaks which would rise out of the tin. My mother would then shake the tin, causing an earthquake that flattened those floury mountains. I think that perhaps that was one of my first jobs in the kitchen—to be the cause of the earthquake, the shifting, settling Atlas, the tin-shaker. I would watch the jostling kernels as they were slowly sucked into the milling stones. I would watch and shake, shake and watch. And when it came time to knead, I can still see my mother dumping out a mound of dough bigger than our little Scottish Border terrier onto the counter. She would roll up her sleeves and begin punching and pulling and pushing and ripping and re-forming that heavy, doughy mass. Every now and then, she'd pinch off a piece and pass it to me. And I'd pop it in my mouth, and savour the breadly sweetness of it. Years later, I would inform a Girl Guide leader that I had been eating dough for years and never had my stomach expand, so she needn't worry about my voracious eating of the pizza dough.

As I matured, so too did my culinary responsibilities. Although I still enjoyed pouring the wheat kernels into the grinder and shaking the bread tin, I was allowed to pinch dough into buns, perhaps even filling those buns with fried hamburger, onions and cabbage to form Kraut burgers. I was allowed to butter, cinnamon and sugar the rolled-out dough for cinnamon buns, and even slice the rolls off using my mother's trick of looping thread or fishing line around the roll and pulling through. I was shown how to remove the kernels of corn off the cob for corn relish and how to pick over and soak dried beans. I learned how to make salad dressing cake and apple crisp and eggplant parmesan. My great-grandmother's plain cake topped with a mix of butter, brown sugar, cinnamon, chocolate chips and nuts became my specialty (See Appendix 2 for recipes). I learned that "cooking is a form of love, one of the most powerful of all forms" (Heldke "Food Politics" 223). And one day, after logging countless culinary hours in my mother's

shadow, I was given the opportunity to make her brownies.

The pressure was incredibly intense. I was probably around twelve years old when my mother left me one evening with the charge to make brownies for a function on the following day. Seeing as she was going out for the evening, she did not have the time to make them herself. She was leaving it up to me. This was my first time to ever even attempt making my mother's brownies. I had watched her make them many times. I had observed and stirred and licked the wooden spoon, but had never actually been left to make them by myself. It was a show of faith on my mother's part. She was trusting me and my blossoming culinary abilities with her coveted brownies. She was counting on me. In my anxiety, the recipe left me completely. My mother knew it by heart—the brownie recipe having long ago become part of her bodily knowledge. I panicked. Running to catch my mother before she left, I timidly asked for the recipe. Doubt flashed across her eyes with my request, but I allayed her fears with a show of confidence. I simply needed the recipe “just in case.” She distractedly told it to me, and I hurriedly jotted it down on a scrap piece of paper. She left. And I was on my own.

3 cubes of margarine. 1/4 cup of cocoa powder. 3 cups of sugar. 3 teaspoons of vanilla. 6 eggs. Pinch of salt. About a cup of walnuts. Something wasn't quite right. I read the recipe on that scrap piece of paper again. I had done as it said, but still it didn't look right. Despite my misgivings, I put it into the oven, hoping for the best. As the baking time came to a close, those brownies really didn't look right. I pulled them out, and knew I had failed. But there was still time to prove myself. There was still a half dozen eggs in the fridge and my mother wouldn't be home for awhile. There was still time. I tried again. 3 cubes of margarine. 1/4 cup of cocoa. 3 cups of sugar. 3 teaspoons of vanilla. 6 eggs. Pinch of salt. Cup of nuts. It still didn't look right, but by this time, I was panic-stricken. Mom would be home soon and there were no brownies

made and she was counting on me and there were no eggs left for a third try. I hoped and prayed and crossed my fingers and prayed some more that brownies just like my mother's would magically appear in that oven. They did not. And my second attempt failed as dismally as my first.

Shamefacedly, I met my mother at the door, attempting to explain the situation. I had followed the recipe she had said, but it hadn't worked.

"What do you mean, it didn't work?"

"It didn't work."

"What did you use?"

"Margarine, cocoa, sugar, vanilla, eggs, salt, nuts."

"Flour?"

"No."

"No flour?!"

"It didn't say."

"Well, of course, there's flour! I thought you'd know that. You've seen me make them."

"I know, Mom, but..."

My mother wasn't really angry, just exasperated and disappointed. And this only intensified when she learned that I had done this not once, but *twice*, and that now there were no more eggs left. Consequently, there would be no brownies at all. It would be many years, and many more hours in the kitchen, before I was allowed to try my hand at my mother's brownies yet again.

My mother's brownie recipe, complete with flour measurements and as listed in Chapter One, is as follows:

1 1/2 cups butter, melted	1 1/2 cups + 6 Tbsp flour
1/4 cup cocoa	1/2 tsp salt
6 eggs	1 cup nuts
3 cups sugar	3 tsp vanilla
Mix together. Pour into greased and floured roaster pan (11x18-inch).	
Bake at 350°F for 25 minutes.	

As far as I can trace it, the history of this particular recipe within my family goes back only a couple of generations. In a conversation with my maternal grandmother, Carolyn Grimm, I learned that back in the 1950s she acquired this recipe from a cookbook, given to her by her mother-in-law, entitled *Selected High Altitude Recipes: Tested in the Solitaire Kitchen* (See fig.2.1). At the time, they were living in Fort Collins, Colorado—a city just north of “the mile-high city” of Denver—hence, the “high altitude.” A perusal of this now tattered and splattered cookbook indicates that it is a company cookbook, produced by the Solitaire company to advertise and utilize many of their trademarked culinary items, including vanilla, baking chocolate, and pecans. The brownie recipe, as it is printed on page 84 of the cookbook (See fig.2.2), is as follows:

1 cube (1/2 cup) butter or margarine  
 2 squares Solitaire Baking Chocolate  
 2 large eggs  
 1 cup sugar  
 1/2 cup plus 2 Tbsp sifted enriched flour  
 1/8 tsp salt  
 1/2 cup to 1 cup chopped Solitaire Pecan Meats  
 1 teaspoon Solitaire Pure Vanilla  
 Melt butter and chocolate over hot water. Beat egg; add sugar gradually; add butter-chocolate mixture and vanilla. Mix flour, salt and nuts; add to first mixture. Blend well. Turn into 9x9-inch oiled and floured pan. Bake at 350°F for 25 minutes. When cold cut in 5 strips each way. Remove from pan. Makes 25 squares.

The apparent discrepancies between the two recipes can be explained somewhat through my grandmother's narrative.

As the story goes, she had purchased a 14x18-inch “brownie” pan for thirty-five

cents at a Salvation Army thrift store in Fort Collins for no particular reason except that it was a good deal. The pan was not necessarily a "brownie" pan at the time, but my grandmother's subsequent usage of it strictly for that purpose has solidified this epithet in her mind. After years of consistent brownie-making, it is simply the "brownie" pan (See fig.2.3). Raised during the 1930s and 40s as the seventh child of ten to itinerant labourers, my grandmother never ate brownies in her youth. If they were so blessed with extra treats, which was none too often, it was sugar cookies or popcorn balls, taffy or pineapple upside-down cake. Bread puddings were a fairly consistent dessert, as was homemade icecream in the summertime. No brownies. Raising her own family during the 1950s and 60s, my grandmother met with a middle-class affluence that was stereotypical of the post-war boom. She was a stay-at-home mother and housewife—cooking, cleaning, gardening, shopping, sewing, making lunches. My grandmother does not recall the first time that she ever tasted brownies, but knows that she must have at some point prior to acquiring the pan, and must have enjoyed them. Since she now had a lovely, large pan, it seemed she had to try her hand at making brownies. She flipped through some of her cookbooks, found a recipe, decided to try it, tripled it to fill her rather large pan, and family history was in the making. Everyone liked her brownies, so she just kept on making them. She made them for lunches and took "them here and there." And she always freely gave out the recipe upon request. She tells one story about having given the recipe to her sister-in-law who, while making the brownies, added baking soda, thinking that my grandmother had forgotten to write that ingredient down. Naturally, the brownies overflowed their pan, created a huge mess, and were essentially inedible. My grandmother just laughs at this story, having admonished her sister-in-law at the time to "just follow the recipe!"

While my grandmother "made 'em for years," I do not remember ever having



tasted her brownies. And this is not because I was not around her much. She lives in the same small community of Kersley, British Columbia as my youthful home, and has lived there since I was born. I simply never tasted hers, hence, never made the brownie association. I had always linked the brownies to my mother. It was not until recently that I learned that my mother's famous brownie recipe was really her mother's, which was really out of a cookbook. A few years ago, I went over to my grandparents' house, inquiring about my mother's brownie recipe, and my grandmother informed that it was *her* brownie recipe. Her adamant declaration regarding ownership of this recipe reveals her need for praise and recognition. Although my family has no "secret" recipes and my grandmother shared her brownie recipe liberally, she still desires recognition for having been the original maker of the brownies. It is a source of pride for her, although she will not say as much, just as it was for my mother. She may have given up making brownies after her children left home and there were no more lunches to be made and after her heart attack forced her to change her eating habits, but the recipe is still hers.

Although my grandmother may claim the recipe, as has already become apparent with the listing of the two recipes, there are discrepancies. My mother's brownie recipe, while similar to the one from the cookbook, is not an exact triplication of the recipe. The 1 1/2 cups plus 6 tablespoons of flour is the directly tripled amount of the original recipe. This strongly links my mother's recipe to the one from the cookbook, as 6 tablespoons roughly equates somewhere between 1/3 and 1/2 of a cup (3/8 to be exact), and I often think that someone would probably have written cup measurements rather than tablespoons if this were an original recipe and not hearkening back to a forebearer. Yet, while this calculation is a strong bond to the tripling of the original, many other calculations are not. The tripled amount of 1/8 teaspoon of salt is naturally 3/8, not the 1/2 teaspoon that my mother's recipe calls for. The explicit naming of pecans in the

cookbook version is changed to simply nuts in my mother's, and to simply 1 cup at that, which is what the original calls for—no tripling there. In fact, all Solitaire trademarks are dropped completely, likely due to the fact that my grandmother and mother never used such products and that such name dropping was considered irrelevant. The pure vanilla of the cookbook brownies is listed as simply vanilla in my mother's. The directions are greatly simplified within my mother's recipe, a probable acknowledgement of kitchen experience, hence the loss of the pedantic directions found within the cookbook version. Margarine is dropped as an explicit option in my mother's recipe, with the simple adjective of "melted" being added to summarize the aforementioned pedantic instructions of the original recipe. And finally, in what is perhaps the strongest marker of a new recipe, my mother's recipe calls for cocoa rather than baking chocolate. According to directions on the side of a Fry's Cocoa container, cocoa powder can indeed be substituted for baking chocolate, keeping in mind that a 1 ounce square of baking chocolate is equivalent to 3 tablespoons of cocoa powder mixed with 1 tablespoon of melted butter or shortening. It certainly does not take a mathematician to figure out that an original recipe calling for 2 squares of chocolate, hence 2 ounces, does not triple to  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a cup of cocoa powder. It should be more like 18 tablespoons or  $1\frac{1}{8}$  cups of cocoa, and I suppose the margarine/butter component should also be duly adjusted. My mother's version makes no such butter adjustment and is considerably less with the cocoa. In fact, her cocoa amount is smaller than the cookbook version requires in the first place, before any tripling takes place.

Not wanting to cast doubt on my grandmother and mother's mathematical abilities—seeing as both women are and were known for their thrift and their ability to manage household finances on a strict budget—I would suggest that such discrepancies are there for the very reason listed earlier: being thrifty on a strict budget. That, and the

fact that these thrifty brownies are still very tasty. My grandmother's performance of the cookbook version of brownies is not an exact replication, or should I say, triplication. She opts to use margarine, goes with only 3 heaping tablespoons of cocoa powder, uses artificial vanilla, and keeps everything else pretty much the same. I can well imagine her deciding that over 1 cup of cocoa was too much, and frugally deciding that 3 tablespoons would suffice. I know she would not want to use 3 cups of pecans in one recipe, so would simply add them to the batter until she felt it was a sufficient amount. So, while my grandmother claims a performance of the cookbook brownie, my mother claims a performance of her own recipe which recipe seems ultimately to be a version of her mother's performance of the cookbook version. My grandmother constructed her brownie performance upon a cookbook and my mother constructed her brownie recipe upon her mother's performance. Since "[a] recipe is, then, an embedded discourse, and like other embedded discourses, it can have a variety of relationships with its frame, or its bed" (Leonardi 340), this brownie recipe/performance tracking can become rather complicated. As far as I can ascertain, there are ultimately four versions of brownies circulating within my family. First, there is the recipe from the cookbook, *Selected High Altitude Recipes: Tested in the Solitaire Kitchen*. Second, there is my grandmother's version of this recipe, which differs from the printed text. Third, there is my mother's recipe, which seems to be textual annotation of her mother's brownie performance. And fourth, there is my mother's performance of her own recipe, which again differs from the text. It is this fourth version that I am most familiar with and truly consider to be my mother's brownies. It is this version which testifies to the sentiment that "the recipe itself [is] a mark of relationship between mothers and daughters" (Leonardi 341).

### **A Brownie Virtuoso**

In *The Powers of Presence*, anthropologist Robert Plant Armstrong begins his

ruminations on the affecting power of “art” with the statement: “In all cultures certain things exist which, though they may appear to be but ordinary objects, yet are treated in ways quite different from the ways in which objects are usually treated” (3). While perhaps never generally acknowledged as such, I continue to reiterate that “[c]ooking is a creative thing. [It] is one of the highest of all arts. It can make or break life” (Smart-Grosvenor 296). As such, seemingly “ordinary” brownies are indeed a masterful art form. They are “a distinct product of skill that fulfills certain culturally [and culinary] derived aesthetic criteria at the same that [they] answer basic human needs” (Pocius 414). Armstrong further contends that there are “two kinds of works that bear power—those governed by an aesthetic of virtuosity and those governed by an aesthetic of invocation” (Hufford, Hunt and Zeitlin 69). At this time, I am mostly concerned with the aesthetic of virtuosity, but will address the aesthetic of invocation at a later point. A work of virtuosity bears “the presence of excellence” (Armstrong 10) and “tends to be dedicated to the validation of itself” (Armstrong 11). This type of work is contingent upon being in “a culture within which its presence is acknowledged” (Armstrong 11), accepted and admired “at every instant of its being” (Armstrong 11). Because “[d]iffering virtuosities define differing artistic movements,” often “more than one virtuosity emerges” (Armstrong 13). We appreciate Michelangelos and Monets, Rembrandts and Warhols, Picassos and Dalis, all at the same time. Recognizing the various virtuosities which gave rise to such excellent masterpieces, I suggest that there is an excellence, a virtuosity, governing brownie-making, especially in a culture which seems to absolutely love its sweets, be they brownies, chocolate chip cookies, or doughnuts. As was discussed in Chapter One, the key to brownies is the texture; brownies “should be slightly moist and chewy and never dry” (E. Jones 340). Naturally, some people are better than others at affecting this excellence.

My mother was a fabulous cook, and I do not say that just because I am her daughter. She surpassed her mother's cooking and won renown in our community as an incredible cook. In later years, she even began her own catering business which extended her renown to neighbouring communities. The performance of this brownie recipe was her coup de grâce for many functions—potluck dinners, bake sales, school parties, catered affairs, and this list could continue. As such, my mother's brownies were never present in our house for very long. Mostly, they were made and then taken elsewhere. Perhaps, we children might beg and get one before she hustled them off to some function, but they were never regular items in our lunches, as they were when my grandmother made them for her children. On the whole, my mother was not a believer in dessert. Dessert was never a course of the meal on a day to day basis in my home. It was served on special occasions only, like the arrival of company, or the celebration of birthdays and holidays. It was a treat. As I got older, I became the dessert maker, but not of the brownies, as my previous brownie disaster narrative attests. The brownies were essentially my mother's domain.

The absence of dessert in our house was due to the high esteem that my mother placed on nutrition. Instead of having pudding in my lunch, I had green peppers. I remember my teacher being so overwhelmed by the smell of peppers that she asked me to eat them in the hallway. Even the chocolate chip cookies which my mother made every once in awhile for our lunches contained wheat germ (See Appendix 2 for recipe). Coupled with my mother's extolling of nutrition was her desire to be frugal. She was raising five children on a tight budget. These factors combined to create a brownie performance—the *parole*—different from the recipe—the *langue*. She substituted margarine for butter. Flour was white all-purpose. Nuts meant walnuts in particular. Artificial vanilla was interchangeable with vanilla extract. Sugar was granulated white.

And all this was made in the "brownie" bowl (See fig.2.4). The "brownie" bowl was a glass bowl that once belonged to an automatic mixer. This bowl was used because it was microwaveable. The margarine would be placed in the bowl and "nuked" for a faster process which only dirtied one dish. Everything else would be added to the "brownie" bowl. First, the cocoa would be stirred into the melted margarine to ensure a smooth-textured brownie without any undissolved cocoa chunks. This was especially important considering my mother's general reluctance regarding sifters. She only pulled hers out when she deemed it really and truly necessary. Making brownies was deemed not one of those times. Following the dissolving of the cocoa, the sugar and eggs were added. After beating this mixture soundly with a wooden spoon, the rest of the ingredients would be added in no particular order. In a matter of minutes, the batter was done, poured into the largest pan she had (typically a roasting pan, since she did not own a "brownie" pan), and on its way into the oven. Although the recipe states 25 minutes for baking time, the actual time is more like 35 to 45 minutes, or until the good old toothpick comes out clean. It was and is that quick and simple.

It is no wonder then that my mother should always downplay the brownie-making process. To her, it was so simple and quick. The time-consuming part was the making of the icing. For the most part, she chose to make a traditional chocolate icing from icing sugar, butter, milk, and cocoa. I have no written recipe for this icing, as this was one of the many foods that my mother simply "felt" her way through. Unlike the brownies which she knew by heart but still measured, there was no measuring involved in the creation of this icing. A small amount of butter was melted in the microwave in a cereal bowl. Enough cocoa powder was then added to create a smooth, thick, chocolate paste. To this, she would simply add alternate amounts of icing sugar and milk, adding more or less of each until the desired spreadable consistency was reached. This icing enabled a

nicer stacking of the brownies onto a plate since it hardened and would not stick as much to the other brownies or to the cellophane. These brownies would go to bake sales and the like.

But my mother's favourite icing was German chocolate, which is a cooked icing, ironically without chocolate, made by combining in a saucepan: 1 cup canned milk, 1 cup sugar, 3 egg yolks, 1 cube margarine, and 1 tsp vanilla. Cook this for 12 minutes, stirring steadily. Add 1 1/3 cups coconut and 1 cup walnuts. Beat until cool and thick enough to spread. The original recipe card for this topping called for "1 cube oleo" and I once spent the good part of a childhood afternoon searching my mother's cupboards attempting to find "oleo." I had not the slightest clue what I was looking for, and in desperation—if I recall correctly, it was my mother's birthday, and I had made a chocolate salad dressing cake and wanted to ice it with her favourite topping—phoned my maternal grandmother. Without any hesitation, she told me that "oleo" is a brand name of margarine in the United States. My mother later explained to me that just as Canadians tend to refer to all facial tissue as "kleenex," she grew up referring to all margarine as "oleo." This story aside, German chocolate topping is extremely decadent and gooey. Brownies thus iced did not stack well at all—the icing dripping everywhere—so they were often kept in the pan and only removed upon serving. And still, sometimes my mother would only sprinkle the brownies with icing sugar. This was done for more informal occasions, when time was scarce, or when she had iced half the pan for a function and left the other half for the scavengers at home. Naturally, the un-iced brownies also travelled better in lunches, when we were so blessed with such a treat, since they did not create a sticky mess upon being thrust into a plastic bag.

"From scratch?!" was inevitably the vocal response by tasters of my mother's brownies. Charles Camp writes:

Magic is often identified as the active force behind occurrences for which there is no observable cause but an observable effect. So it is with cookery, much of which takes place in dark places like ovens, at speeds too slow to be observed by the naked eye, according to chemical processes difficult to understand or predict except in error. No wonder that the person or persons who orchestrate the fragile chemistry of cookery are objects of admiration and wonderment. (*American Foodways* 94)

Since my mother's passing, I have laid claim to the "brownie" bowl and have made these brownies on more than one occasion. The response is the same. People marvel and "ooh" and "ahh," testifying to the excellent ability of these brownies to stand on their own. They are good in and of themselves. Within this response and underlying the brownie-making performance however, there are various factors. First and foremost, this response recognizes the work that went into these brownies, despite the fact that my grandmother, my mother and I have all downplayed the performance. We say that it is nothing, that it was no trouble. We perform the role of the humble and modest woman, confident all the while that this brownie recipe is a sure-fire winner. We know it is good, and that we are good at making it. Yet, blatant confidence in one's own cooking would be considered unacceptable by men and women alike, so the confidence is masked. It would be imprudent to brag about one's own cooking. Undercutting this confidence, though, is the notion that it is based upon others initially marvelling at the food. Just as my grandmother experimented with a recipe and only kept on making it because "everyone liked it," "cooking for others offers women a self-esteem that is elsewhere largely denied [them]. But this self-esteem is inextricably tied into [their] need for eater—which for many women means male—approval" (Cline 101). So, while "from scratch?!" bolsters confidence in the recipe and self-esteem with our performance of it, it also "leads women to feel both needy of male approval and vulnerable if the meals are rejected" (Cline 113).



Another aspect of this phrase comes from the perspective of the speaker, especially the female respondent. Because women's guilt is "often associated with the use of convenience foods" (Charles and Kerr 132), genuine respect and admiration arises for anyone who has the time, money, effort, knowledge, and ability to bake anything from scratch. Homemade brownies are so much more impressive than store-bought ones. In a study of women's relationships with food, Charles and Kerr found that "it was not uncommon for women to remark that their own meal provision was inferior to that of their mothers because the latter always cooked from scratch whereas they themselves use more convenience foods" (133). Although women, "may have been seduced by advertisers into *using* convenience foods, [they] have not yet been seduced into approving of it" (Cline 121). It is these conflicting emotions concerning convenience and homemade foods which give rise to guilt and to "lament[s] that [women] themselves did not possess such talents" (Charles and Kerr 133) as baking brownies from scratch or making homemade bread.

There seems to be an intrinsic bond between notions of femininity and the ability to make something "from scratch." My cousin eloquently writes:

The thing about recipes (not withstanding crazy weather and inconceivable flops) is that to me they represent a comfort, a permanence and a stability that I didn't necessarily have with the rest of my childhood. My mom's reliable recipes take me back in time and give me a sense of security and safety in that they can be relied upon again and again. This is also why a flop is so devastating. (Frazer 2000)

The failure of my cousin to re-create her mother's cooking is a failure to secure a sense of maternal stability and feminine continuity. Flops are devastating because they seem to be a blight on the feminine culinary genealogy, on the mother-daughter relationship, on images of self. Psychologist, Janet L. Surrey explains:

The basic connection between women and food reflects a deep and

universal theme in the psychology of women—connection with the mother and connection with the self. The whole expression of the mothering role is reflected in women's relation to food throughout the life cycle. The ability of the woman to mother, to sustain life, to be present and empathically responsive to the physical and emotional needs of the child is actualized and symbolized in the provision of food. Psychologically speaking, this basic theme is reflected in the development of values of intimacy, caretaking, responsiveness to others, and the maintenance of close, empathic connections between people. (245-6)

The night of the brownie disaster, I knew that I hadn't just failed at making the brownies; on some level, I felt that I had failed as a daughter and as a burgeoning woman. My culinary inabilities and inadequacies made it glaringly apparent to me that I *was not* the feminine ideal—such an honour belonged, in my mind, to my mother.

If it is true that “women control food because they cannot control their lives” (Cline 1), then contained within the performance of this brownie recipe is an oscillating power dynamic. The creation of this brownie from scratch is an assertion of power. Why else would my grandmother be so adamant about ownership of this recipe? There is power in the ownership and in the well-done performance of just such a recipe. Why else would my mother allow me to make every other dessert except her brownies? There is power and prestige in performing something well as “the performing self” becomes “an object for itself as well as for others” (Bauman “Performance” 48). The brownies may have initially brought my mother on the stage, so to speak, but they were quickly upstaged by her. She became the object, not the brownies. Performing the brownie recipe was simply a means of drawing the focus onto herself and her prowess in the culinary arts. She won renown, and took pride in that. And there is certainly nothing wrong with that. She was “busy with household budgeting, family food preparation and unending meal-making” (Cline 100). Charles Camp points out that “[i]n the stereotypical ‘Leave It to Beaver’ household where Dad comes home at 5:30 and asks Mom, ‘What’s for dinner?’ the role of cook is a badge of identity and a social constant” (American

Foodways 70). My mother was at work, performing daily household tasks, and deserved all the praise and recognition her family, her husband, and her community could heap upon her. She was a truly wonderful performer of not just this brownie recipe, but of countless other foodways events (See Appendix 2 for some more of my mother's recipes).

### **Summoning Brownie Ghosts**

*It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture [our past]: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) of which we have no inkling. And it depends on chance whether or not we come upon this object before we ourselves must die. (Proust 47-8)*

So writes Marcel Proust in the Overture of *Swann's Way*, the first of eight volumes in his continuous novel, *Remembrance of Things Past*. I begin with this quote because I feel it sums up much more eloquently than I ever could the evocative power of material objects, and in my specific case, the evocative power of a brownie recipe. As I continue to explore this recipe, I increasingly gain access to my own past as it meshes with my mother's life. Throughout this section, I will be relying heavily upon Proust's exquisite description of the evoking and invoking process, as the narrator simply one day stumbles across the material object that opens his past to him, that allows him access to familial memories. The episode, which will be interspersed throughout my text designated with italics, is the inciting incident of Proust's prolific work. The crux of his entire eight-volume novel rests solely upon this moment of remembrance, and I will simply let his beautiful and graceful prose speak for itself.

*...[O]ne day in winter, on my return home, my mother, seeing that I was cold, offered me some tea, a thing I did not ordinarily take. I declined at first, and then, for no particular reason, changed my mind. She sent for one of those squat, plump little cakes called "petites madeleines" ...And soon, mechanically, dispirited after a dreary day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake... (Proust 48)*

As previously mentioned, in the book *The Powers of Presence*, Robert Plant Armstrong “distinguishes between two kinds of works that bear power—those governed by an aesthetic of virtuosity and those governed by an aesthetic of invocation” (Hufford et al 69). Having already discussed the aesthetic of virtuosity, the aesthetic of invocation bears “the presence either of identity...or of effective process (management of the universe)” (Armstrong 10). Such work governed by this aesthetic “exists only in performance” (Armstrong 11) and is thus dualistic. My mother’s brownie recipe is a material object that is excellent in its own right, but when put into practice, when effectively performed by myself, this recipe moves beyond the realm of virtuosity and becomes “a medium for recalling a life” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 333)—my own and my mother’s. Through the recipe, I identify myself as my mother’s daughter, as someone, who through “insider” knowledge, knows the nuances of my mother’s performance—the *emic parole*. Truly, as Armstrong attests, “[t]he work-in-invocation tends to exist in an ambient of time; what has happened to it in the past is a portion of its being” (11). Sociologists, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton express: “When a thing ‘means something’ to someone, it is interpreted in the context of past experiences” (21). The entire reason I make these brownies is not because I especially enjoy the end product; I make them to go through the performing process. It is through this brownie-making process that the maternal connections, the memories, come—not through the brownie itself.

*...No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated,*

*detached, with no suggestion of its origin...Whence could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy? I sensed that it was connected with the taste of the tea and the cake, but that it infinitely transcended those savours, could not, indeed, be of the same nature. Whence did it come? What did it mean? How could I seize and apprehend it?... (Proust 48)*

Ronnie Lundy, in the foreword to a collection of essays entitled *Savory Memories*, suggests that “[f]ood may be the greatest mnemonic device of all....It is not simply that...food reminds us of a bigger, more significant memory, but that so often food is the signifier in the memory itself” (ix-x). Cultural geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan, writes in *Topophilia*: “We cannot recapture fully the essential feel of a visual world belonging to our past without the help of a sensory experience that has not changed, for instance, the strong odor of decaying seaweed” (10), or the intermingling taste of tea with a petite madeleine, or the physical act of making brownies. Edward Casey, in writing on memory, argues:

Remembering has been ensconced too long in the cells of the brain, the vaults of computerized memory-banks, and the machinations of mentation. Let us try putting it back in the lived world, where it has always been in any event, though barely recognized as such at the level of either description or theory. Think of it: *the past kept in things*, those very “things themselves”...For the things will bring themselves forward *to us*, and in fact are never *not* doing so in some fashion. They come to us bearing the past manifestly in monuments, relics, and mementoes [in decaying seaweed, Saturday morning waffles, flower gardens, and brownie recipes]. (85, emphasis in original)

In *The Grand Generation: Memory, Mastery, Legacy*, Hufford, Hunt and Zeitlin assert that “[t]he presence of certain ‘catalytic features’—an aroma, a song, a fabric, a seasonal event—are enough to reproduce powerful, emotionally charged experiences from the past” (38). One of my aunts informs me that “[t]he one thing that really brings back memories is the smell of an orange. That is the smell of Christmas to me, because, when I was a child in Denmark, we only had oranges at Christmas—the regular kind” (Grant 2000). Yet another aunt, my mother’s only sister and my cousin Dallas’s mother, tells

me that “whenever I get recipes from anyone, I write on the bottom of it who it was from and what year I got it from them....I do feel a connection with people as I cook—if I look down and see that the recipe was from your mom or granny [her maternal grandmother and my great-grandmother] or whoever, it brings back memories” (Dale 2000). And, it is these memories “which [truly] haunt human minds” (Engels 498).

*...It is plain that the truth I am seeking lies not in the cup but in myself. The drink has called it into being, but does not know it, and can only repeat indefinitely, with a progressive diminution of strength, the same message which I cannot interpret, although I hope at least to be able to call it forth again and find it there presently, intact and at my disposal, for my final enlightenment. I put down the cup and examine my own mind. It alone can discover the truth. But how?... (Proust 48-9)*

These memories become increasingly important as time passes and takes along with it precious loved ones. Hufford, Hunt and Zeitlin observe:

Death is the ultimate rupture, a rupture that may be mended through private and collaborative rituals of separation...Thereafter the deceased may take up a kind of metaphysical residence in artifacts, songs, rituals, recipes, or other expressions, some of which are bequeathed in advance as gifts, and some of which arrive much later as unexpected surprises...It is in ways of passing the self along and in ways of receiving it that we find a great deal of creativity among benefactors and beneficiaries. Any expression—an artifact, gesture, aroma, or tune—no matter how simple, may become a repository of great significance, a locus where meanings and selves may become powerfully distilled. (101)

Because “[a] sense of the past is inseparable for a sense of place” (Hufford, Hunt and Zeitlin 55), after my mother’s death in 1994, I found myself desperately clinging onto a sense of stability and security that only memories of her could provide. Yet, without some physical trigger, these memories became increasingly difficult to access. I needed to *have* something or *do* something, *hear* something or *say* something, *taste* something or *smell* something, *read* something or *see* something before any stabilizing memory would present itself. I needed and still need a catalyst. The panic that I first experienced with the realization that I was forgetting my mother galvanized me into action. Riding on the

bus one day, I overheard a certain word. Like a skipping LP, my mind became stuck on this word and kept sounding it out, over and over again. Baw-bee. Baa-bee. Bau-by. There was something so insistently familiar about it. Bob-be. Bob-by. Bob-bie. Bobbi! That was it—Bobbi! How could I have forgotten?! It was my mother's name. The knowledge that I had not only lost her physically, but was beginning to find it increasingly difficult to conjure up mental images of her was enough to make me weep. I was losing her again. And so, I embarked on a proactive mission to find her. I sought her out in old journals and photographs. I found her lingering scent in an old sweater, and still refuse to wash it for fear of losing that comforting, securing smell. And most importantly and most effectively, I found my mother through baking.

*...I place in position before my mind's eye the still recent taste of that first mouthful, and I feel something start within me, something that leaves its resting-place and attempts to rise, something that has been embedded like an anchor at a great depth; I do not know yet what it is, but I can feel it mounting slowly; I can measure the resistance, I can hear the echo of great spaces traversed. Undoubtedly what is thus palpitating in the depths of my being must be the image, the visual memory which, being linked to that taste, is trying to follow it into my conscious mind... (Proust 49)*

Psychologist, Janet L. Surrey, discussing the importance of food connections for women, writes:

Emotional openness and sharing, cooperation, attention to and concern for the needs of others, and participation in others' growth are not of direct value in this world. When these basic relational needs are not valued or given outlets for development, there is a sense of being out of touch with oneself, disconnected, and unsupported. Psychologically we could say that the internalized mother-daughter relationship is disrupted, and food becomes an important arena for acting out this disruption. Eating becomes an attempt to reinstate the sense of connection. (247-8)

With a literal disruption of the mother-daughter relationship, food has indeed become "an important arena for acting out this disruption" (Surrey 248) for me, except, instead of eating, I bake. This said, while baking brownies, it is not often that I conscientiously and

consciously seek a maternal connection. On the rare occasion, I have very much made brownies in a reverential air becoming of a sincere invocation. The ritualized performance becomes a prayer to my mother, a pleading summons for her comforting hands to guide, uplift, and ultimately, smooth away life's troubles. In general though, I simply bake brownies never consciously invoking my mother. When dessert is needed for a function, I simply make the simplest one I know—brownies. When life becomes rather chaotic and I begin to feel as if things are spinning helplessly out of control, I have a burning desire to bake. More than a desire, I should say that it is really a *need* to bake. And so, I pull out my mother's brownie recipe, which I do know by heart, as well as bodily, but like my grandmother, I am still fearful of baking completely freed of textual ties. I need the recipe for security and guidance. I am not yet ready to trust my bodily knowledge of brownies. And as the performance begins, the worries begin to wane and the anxieties lose their impending sense of doom. I become grounded, centred, focussed. I bake brownies with almost no thought, like it is second nature. And indeed, brownies are in my culinary nature. Hufford, Hunt and Zeitlin write that "[c]ertain artifacts and behaviors keep us simultaneously in the company of generations before and after us, even in their literal absence" (103). The brownie-making process is just such a behaviour. The brownie recipe is just such an artifact. Edward Casey suggests that "[m]emory recalls mind to place—takes it decisively there and not to its mere representation. We revisit places in remembering...and in so doing our minds reach out to touch the things themselves, which are to be found in the very places they inhabit" (91). In making brownies, I feel as if I can literally touch my mother. In that moment, I feel so much a part of her, that I don't know where she ends and I begin. I achieve a natural oneness with my mother that I have yet to find anywhere else. I invoke an inherent memory of brownies.



*...And suddenly the memory revealed itself....[I]n that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea. (Proust 50-1)*

## **A Bodily Encounter with Brownies**

"Personally, I find baking almost therapeutic," writes a friend of mine. She continues, "I think the whole working with your hands and being rewarded with the end product is the best part. The fact that you may be able to feed others who appreciate it, is well—gravy" (Li 2000). The emphasis which my friend places on the foodmaking process, on "working with [her] hands," touches upon a key component of a feminine culinary genealogy—bodily knowledge. Thus far, I have only touched upon this issue with regards to my brownie-making, indicating that my mother knew the brownie recipe "by heart" and was able to make them without a textual representation present. I have also written briefly on the very physical connection I feel with my mother throughout the brownie-making process. These are both facets of what it is to have a bodily knowledge—a notion this section explores in greater detail.

For centuries, the contemplative figure of "The Thinker" has been upheld as the epitome of pure philosophic thought—an isolated man sitting quietly and patiently, awaiting the cosmic enlightenment that must surely come through uninterrupted thinking and more thinking and still more thinking. With such an emphasis upon uninterrupted contemplation, it is not surprising that the reigning mantra of modern philosophic thought became the Cartesian "I think therefore I am," and certainly not a version that might have read: "I make brownies or scrub floors or weed gardens or wash clothes, therefore I am." Women have traditionally had little to no time for "pure" thought amidst the unending household chores of sewing and washing and cleaning and baking and gardening and this list could go on infinitely. The time for "Thinker-esque" contemplation has been

virtually nil. And yet, are we then to determine that women, on a whole, are not thoughtful beings, capable of making cosmic connections and understanding greater designs? Lisa Heldke argues, "Considered on their own terms, foodmaking activities can challenge the sharp subject/object dichotomy that characterizes traditional inquiry, and that serves to separate such head work from hand work. Preparing food encourages us to blur the separation between ourselves and our food, even as we roll up our sleeves and stick our hands in the dough" ("Foodmaking" 217). I have a friend who says that she finds baking therapeutic. I, myself, make maternal connections through brownies. Alice Walker uncovers her mother's stories in flower gardens. Such examples suggest a philosophic knowledge borne out of hands-on activities.

In an article entitled "Foodmaking as a Thoughtful Practice," feminist philosopher Lisa Heldke reassesses what it is to be "thoughtful." She writes that "[f]oodmaking, rather than drawing us to mark a sharp distinction between mental and manual labor, or between theoretical and practical work, tends to invite us to see itself as a 'mentally manual' activity, a 'theoretically practical' activity—a 'thoughtful practice'" (205). She continues, "Dispassionate objectivity, the standard for scientific inquiry, is not the ideal in cooking; good cooking is good in part because of the emotional attachment you have to the people for whom you're cooking, to the tools you're using, and to the foods you're making" (222-23). Good cooking is truly about love, creativity, and artistry. It is mastery of form and content, a work of virtuosity, a manifestation of excellence. It is also a work of invocation, linking through its performance generations past, present, and future. Heldke further contends:

By seeing ourselves as connected to the things we grow and cook—by transforming the subject/object dichotomy into a relationship which recognizes the interconnections between us and those foods—we are also called upon to recognize a mode of interaction that might be called "bodily knowledge." ... Theories like Descartes's conceive of my body as an

external appendage to my mind, and see its role in inquiry as merely to provide a set of (fairly reliable) sensory data on which my reasoning faculty then operates to produce objects of knowledge. But growing and cooking food are important counterexamples to this view; they are activities in which bodily perceptions are more than meter readings which must be scrutinized by reason. The knowing involved in making a cake is "contained" not simply "in my head" but in my hands, my wrists, my eyes and nose as well. The phrase "bodily knowledge" is not a metaphor. It is an acknowledgement of the fact that I *know* things literally with my body, that I, "as" my hands, know when the bread dough is sufficiently kneaded, and I "as" my nose know when the pie is done. (218, emphasis in original)

When I write that my mother knew how to make brownies "by heart," I mean that the knowledge for brownie-making literally coursed through her veins. Years of repeated kinetic activity absorbed into her being—her hands, her nose, her eyes. It was second nature. It took no thought. Brownies came naturally. Truly, as Casey notes, "[T]he past is sedimented into the *body*, becoming amassed there" (85, emphasis in original). She had internalized the knowledge needed to make brownies. It is a knowledge found "in the eyes and the hands. You have to be able to "finger" a ball of pie dough to tell if it needs a bit more ice water... You need a teacher—a hands-on teacher—for that. Bodily knowledge is acquired through embodied experience" (Heldke "Foodmaking" 219).

My grandmother found a brownie recipe in a cookbook that suited her needs.

Being an experienced cook, having been taught by her own mother, she felt confident in modifying some aspects of the recipe to suit her tastes and needs. Marion Bishop notes:

[T]he writing, sharing, and cooking of a recipe constitute more than just meal preparation. These tasks can also be understood as rituals that keep a woman in touch with her inner desire and the voice of her body; and recipes can also be read as texts that connect a woman's outer and inner worlds. In fact, recipe writing is a discursive act that requires a woman to rely on her connection with her own voice—what brings her pleasure and satisfaction. (100)

And my grandmother taught her daughter, my mother. My mother then took her mother's performance and made it into a recipe, but like her mother, confidently

modified some aspects of the recipe to suit her own tastes and needs. And my mother taught her own daughter. In a very physical sense, she taught me how to make brownies. The night of the brownie disaster, things didn't "feel" right or "look" right, but I was still too inexperienced, still too unsure of my own bodily knowledge to fully trust it, and that is why I failed. I was getting so caught up in measurements that I neglected to acknowledge that I did indeed know the recipe—my eyes knew the "look", my fingertips knew the "feel." I simply was not listening. And to a certain extent, I still do not listen or fully trust my embodied culinary knowledge. Like my grandmother, I too still "dig out the recipe" for brownies, and this is perhaps why the two of us continue to fall short of my mother's cooking. My mother absorbed recipes, digesting them until they were firmly imprinted within her. They became a part of her—a part of her kinetic culinary repertoire, a part of her bodily knowledge of food. There was really no longer any recipe, just a piece of her. So, to make her brownies is to foster within myself, a piece of my mother. I have embodied her life into my own through a brownie recipe.

In "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother," Luce Irigaray urges:

We must also find, find anew, invent the words, the sentences that speak to the most archaic and most contemporary relationship with the body of the mother, with our bodies, the sentences that translate the bond between her body, ours and that of our daughters. We have to discover a language [*langage*] which does not replace the bodily encounter, as paternal language [*langue*] attempts to do, but which can go along with it, words which do not bar the corporeal, but which speak corporeal. (43, translator's emphasis in brackets)

I believe that recipes can be this corporeal bond between women and between the generations. In terms of my mother's brownie recipe, this is certainly the case. Marion Bishop expresses:

It is the ability of a recipe to bind the experience of the body, the unwritten, into measurable amounts that can be replicated, that makes the idea of feminine culinary genealogy not just about cataloging names, but

about literally preserving the *sense* of a woman's life. Each recipe serves as a textual token—something a woman can hold in her hands that speaks of and connects her to wor(l)ds both linguistic and corporeal. (103-04)

Although I may hold in my hands a seemingly simple brownie recipe, that recipe truly is the key to unlocking the embodiment of my mother within myself.

### **Baking Legacies**

I read a story once about a religious leader who found himself in the position one day of attempting to counsel and comfort a mother after the death of her young son. The grieving woman related how

[s]he had been abandoned by her husband and left to raise a little boy. When [her son] was nine years old he contracted a fatal disease. He came to know, in his little boy mind, that he would not live. And for the last two or three weeks of his life he would cling to his mother and say, "Mama, you won't forget me, will you? Mama, please don't forget me. Mama, I won't be forgotten, will I?" I was deeply moved, for I sensed that exposed in the pleadings of this little boy is something of the feeling of every soul who has ever lived. We hope that, somehow at least, we will be remembered. We hope that there will be something about us worth remembering. (Packer 11-12)

In the final days of my mother's battle with cancer, I know that she came to reflect seriously on her life and was afraid that she had not left a substantial mark on this life—a legacy. "[T]he urgency that involves the knowledge that her stories—like her life—must be recorded" (Walker 240) took hold of my mother. In a blessing of comfort and peace to her at that time, she was told that she should not be afraid or anxious, that her attributes and her characteristics were found within her children. Her life had not been in vain because she had imparted to others something of herself. Her stories have been recorded and absorbed, and are continually being written as her children make their own ways in life.

The noted sociologist, Emile Durkheim, believes that "[t]he miracle of sociability...is first experienced in the continuity of generations: although individuals die,

the lineage continues" (qtd. in Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 33). Although my mother is gone, I am still here as a living testament to her life. Life goes on. Hufford, Hunt, and Zeitlin write that "[o]ur legacies speak to us our identities and roles within the expanded framework of the human unit of time. Legacies make these identities and roles tangible, encapsulating and intensifying our sense of them" (91). Since "she is gone, her recipes...give...access to her, through aroma, taste, and texture" (Bishop 95). Brownies continue to be made. At the end of film, *Like Water For Chocolate*, the narrator—a third-generation cook—sits in her modern-day kitchen, with an old family cookbook on the table (Miramax 1993). The ghostly apparitions of her mother and her great-aunt stand behind her, as she passionately decries: "How I miss [my mother's] cooking...the smell of her kitchen...her talking while she prepared the meals...her Christmas rolls. Mine never turn out like hers. And I wonder why I cry so much while I make them. It must be that I'm as sensitive to onions as Tita—my great aunt. She'll continue to live as long as someone cooks her recipes." My mother will continue to live as long as someone cooks her recipes, as long as I make her brownies.

Zeitlin, Kotkin and Baker observe that "[f]amilies travel light. As the greater part of our experience slips beyond our reach, we clasp a mere handful of stories, expressions, photographs, and customs. Our photo albums, attic trunks, even our memories can only hold so much" (2). And so, for me, this particular brownie recipe is "used as a medium for recalling a life" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 333). I remember my mother and her performance of these brownies. This recipe is "cherished more as [a] text connected to lives than as instructions to follow, for with changing food preferences, old recipes rich in eggs and animal fat and time-consuming to prepare often serve more as food for thought than for eating" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 333). And I take pride in the fact that I remember my mother's performance. I know that melting butter on the stove was replaced by

margarine in the microwave. I know the context of this recipe and the nuances of my mother's performance of it. I know the oral tradition, the things not written down. I know. And yet, my knowledge is based upon memory, which is subject to caprice and whimsy, selection and obfuscation. Just as the performance aspect of this recipe, the actual brownie, is ephemeral, so are our memories and our lives. Still, the recipe, the concept remains, and I can take comfort in these brownies, knowing that I am a performer like my mother before me and like her mother before her. More than just for the pure function of eating, the brownies come to represent the familial ties of the generations. And "[w]hile written recipes might not feed the hungers of the body, they might temporarily quell the hungers of the soul" (de Silva xxxi-ii). My mother's brownie recipe is a common thread that weaves its way through time, ultimately transcending it. Her brownies are a legacy, a feminine culinary genealogy, a work of virtuosity, a work of invocation, a thoughtful practice, a mentally manual activity, a bodily knowledge, and therein lies their power.

*But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, taste and smell alone, more fragile but more enduring, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, remain poised a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection. (Proust 50-1)*

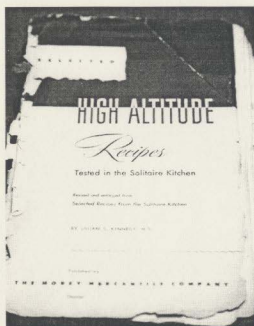


Fig.2.1. The original brownie recipe cookbook.

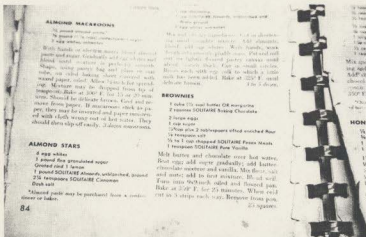


Fig. 2.2. The original textual brownie recipe.





Fig.2.3. My grandmother with her  
"brownie" pan.

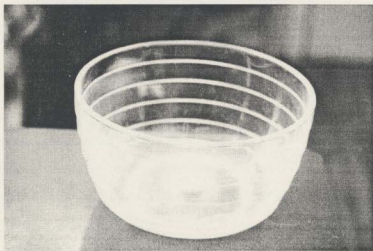


Fig.2.4. The "brownie" bowl.

## Chapter Three

# Deconstruction of the Basic Brownie

At the beginning of her essay entitled, "Culinary spaces, colonial spaces: the gendering of sugar in the seventeenth century," Kim F. Hall quotes from a popular domestic manual published in 1602 by Hugh Plat entitled, *Delightes for Ladies*. After citing some of his verse, which includes such lines as, "Let piercing bullets turn to sugar balls, / The spanish [sic] fear is hushed and all their rage" (168), she comments:

Seventeenth-century cookbooks are filled with spices, peppers, sugars, nuts, as well as more obviously precious substances such as gold and ambergris which were the stuff of world trade: when an English woman made a confection from a cookbook like Plat's, she implicitly helped foster watershed changes in England's economy. For a popular recipe such as marzipan, she would have used rosewater made from her own roses and almonds imported from the Middle East by way of Italy. She also used a great deal of sugar, first produced in a Portuguese (and later English) sugar colony, refined in Antwerp, and then sold by London merchants. This demonstration of her family's status and her own culinary expertise thus depended on England's increasingly colonial trade practices. Plat's verse, while seemingly looking inward from the English seas to the English home, actually links his English woman reader to a broader colonial context. (169)

Because "[t]he recipe for the interpretation of a text is never fully contained in the text" (Duranti 244), to come to a greater understanding of the implications of my mother's brownie recipe, one must come to read "between the lines," as Hall has done with Plat's *Delightes for Ladies*. Such a reading is what the noted Marxist, Louis Althusser, would deem "symptomatic" (28). John Storey explains this concept: "[T]o read a text

symptomatically is to perform a double meaning: reading first the manifest text, and then, through the lapses, distortions, silences and absences (the 'symptoms' of a problem struggling to be posed) in the manifest text, to produce and read the latent text" (118). In examining the nature of social conflict as evidenced within folklore along the U.S.-Mexican border, José Limón suggests, "Perhaps another significance of folklore in social domination lies in its very absence. Should we account for folkloric silence as well as for its expression" ("Folklore" 223)? Such conspicuous absences and silences are often integral to not only understanding the work, but in the operation of the work itself, as Pierre Macherey, building upon Althusser's work, contends: "To explain the work is to show that, contrary to appearances, it is not independent, but bears in its material substance the imprint of a determinate absence which is also the principle of its identity" (79-80). He further contends that "[w]e always eventually find, at the edge of the text, the language of ideology, momentarily hidden, but eloquent by its very absence" (60). Truly, "[w]hat is important in the work is what it does not say" (Macherey 87). It is "[t]his silence [which] gives it life" (Macherey 84).

Relating such ideas to my mother's recipe for brownies highlights, as Tansey and Worsley point out, that

[t]he modern food system is not inevitable but has deep historical roots which are bound up in humankind's various attempts to control the biological, socio-economic and cultural aspects of food. The interplay of the forces involved has shaped the food system, producing food shortages and surpluses, hunger and overnutrition, technological brilliance and junk foods in the same world. (qtd. in Bell and Valentine 195)

While the brownie within the context of my family and my life is very much intertwined with "shared memories and repeated pleasures" (Younghusband 1998), as I move from the table to the field, from the microcosm to the macrocosm, from the superstructure to the base, the brownie takes a darker turn into the shadowy realms of capitalism and

colonialism, imperialism and acculturation. The power displayed comes not from maternal memories and feminine culinary legacies but from oppression and racism, pollution and greed, wealth and amorality. Because “the process of consumption and exploitation are too deeply intertwined” (Abrahams 35), the rose-tinted memories of the brownies of my youth are swallowed up by my own consumer conscience. I begin to see the social costs of my consuming memories, as I come to understand the price—not just monetarily, but humanistically and morally—that was paid for those recipe ingredients to be available for my own gluttonous consumption. Wendell Berry attests, “How we eat determines, to a certain extent, how the world is used. This is a simple way of describing a relationship that is inexpressibly complex. To eat responsibly is to understand and enact, so far as one can, this complex relationship” (377).

Commenting on this complexity, Mary Douglas notes: “If food is treated as a code, the message it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. The message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries....Food categories therefore encode social events” (qtd. in Kalcik 47). In a recent article chronicling how sugar has shaped Western culture, historian James Walvin deconstructs how one such seemingly simple social event—a cup of tea—has come “to define English ‘character’” (Mintz Sweetness 39). He writes:

We need, then, to make the link; to look behind the obvious social *manifestations* of 18th century sweet tastes (sweet tea/coffee, the ubiquitous sugar bowl, sugar on sale in contemporary shops) in order to tease out the defining global context. Put simply, cheap accessible cane sugar was a function of British economic and colonial power. But who thought this, who thought about the slaves - the instruments of sugar cultivation - when adding sugar to their tea or coffee in 18th century Britain? (22, emphasis in original)

And who thinks about it now? Who thinks about seemingly mundane brownies as being

harbingers of capitalist horrors? Who listens for the silences and seeks out the absences? Yet, as I consider how it is that such exotic ingredients as vanilla and cocoa and sugar made their way to a small community in northern British Columbia—to a place far from cacao plantations and vanilla orchids and sugar cane fields—so that they could make their way into a brownie recipe, I cannot help but recognize the transaction of food across the boundaries. I cannot help but hear a conspicuous silence and acknowledge a determinate absence. I cannot help but observe that each and every ingredient “speaks” of a social, “cultural, symbolic, and economic power” (Babcock 214) dynamic, both historical and contemporary, which is continually utilized “in the production and manipulation of material signs” (Babcock 214). And I feel compelled “to think through and beyond those [commodity geographies], emphasising each commodity’s biography as it moves through these geographies” (Bell and Valentine 199-200), to explore the encoded stories and lives of such ingredients.

### **1 1/2 cups butter**

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, although my mother’s brownie recipe may have called for butter, she always used margarine. The dynamic duels between butter and margarine throughout the years have been described as “archetypal” (Visser 113). There have been bans and stigmas, advertising campaigns and misconceptions, derisions and clogged arteries. And still the battle rages. Butter is often viewed as “the *crème de la crème*, the quintessence of the risen richness of milk itself, and as such has traditionally belonged to the exclusive category of ‘best’ things” (Visser 84, emphasis in original). And with this richness and association with status arises the notion of the “butter mystique” (Visser 85), that butter is irreplaceable and inimitable, that nothing is comparable to or better than butter. Margarine, having been “born from, through, and for the new industrial age” (Visser 103), challenges those claims.

Margarine was first introduced as a butter substitute in France in 1869. At that particular time, butter was difficult to get, not to mention expensive, since "Europe had recently suffered a devastating cattle plague" (Visser 102). As well, "Western Europe was [becoming] too densely populated to support dairy and cattle herds large enough to meet all its fat needs" (Heick 1). England, for example, was already "import[ing] the bulk of its butter requirement from abroad" (Hoffman 14). Because "[t]he Industrial Revolution...generated a vast new field in which fats and oils were required" (Heick 1) and "because industrial work demanded a diet with minimum ballast and maximum energy value...[t]he improvement in the supply of fats was particularly important" (Hoffman 12). And so, in an attempt to appease "the large deficiency in the supply of fats for the diet of the poor, in particular urban, working-class people" (Heick 1), Napoleon III held a competition to find "a cheap substitute for butter so that the poorer elements of society could have some spread on their bread" (Heick 2). The French chemist, Hippolyte Mège-Mouriès, answered that call "with a concoction made from cow fat" (Ayto 173), with some milk added for palatability. He sold his patent to the Dutch in 1871, after the quick end of the Franco-Prussian War—patents to the Americans and Prussians followed shortly thereafter (Visser 102-3). Holland was already a major exporter of dairy products to the industrially-exploding England, a country whose "swiftly emptying countryside could supply less and less of the nutritional needs of the vast urban conglomerates being created by the factories" (Visser 103), and seized upon the opportunity to make some foreign exchange. Apparently Denmark, also a major dairying country, "went so far as to subsidize the use of margarine domestically in order to have more butter for export" (Heick 2), for which they could get a better price. Historian, W.G. Hoffman, writes about how margarine eventually spread onto the world scale: "Wherever the population was increasing, or urbanization, industrialization, rise in

prosperity, and improvement in nutritional conditions were evident, the margarine industry grew in importance" (16).

Before such growth could occur though, margarine needed to break its ties with beef tallow and lard (Hoffman 15). Near the end of the nineteenth century, these raw materials for margarine were becoming "increasingly scarce because agriculture was obliged to change from fat mast to meat mast, in view of the popular demand for more and more and better meat" (Hoffman 15-6). Beef suet was hard to come by, needing to be imported from the United States, and such import costs "made it more and more difficult to keep the price of margarine low enough so that people who ate it could afford it" (Visser 103). At the dawn of the new century, scientific developments occurred which changed the course of margarine history. Between 1902 and 1915, the process whereby oil is hardened was discovered and perfected (Visser 103). And, it was argued, "[i]t makes no difference, as far as taste goes" (Visser 103), as to what type of oil is used, because all properties are removed during processing. Such a development opened up endless colonialist and capitalist possibilities, as "tropical and sub-tropical regions of the earth [namely, Nigeria, Brazil, India and the Philippines, became] sources of basic stocks of raw material for the industry in Europe and North America" (Hoffman 16).

As the margarine industry leapt at the chance to move beyond the confines of the Western world, "no time was lost in developing plantations of oil-bearing crops: oil and coconut palms, cottonseed, sunflowers, soy beans, maize, peanuts, sesame, rapeseed, even shea butter (the fruit of an African tree), babussu palms from Brazil, and olive trees" (Visser 103). Margarine producers "could [now] cheapen their wares because the people who actually grew the oil seeds...could be paid little" (Visser 105). Anthropologist, Margaret Visser, observes:

As giant food corporations formed and expanded, tropical plantations fell

more and more under their control. Unilever (which began as a butter-and then a margarine-selling business) is now the world's largest food-processing company...Unilever decides in large measure what crops will be grown, and in what quantities, in many Third World countries, particularly in Africa....The invention of margarine, where raw materials are reduced to complete neutrality and then given character by means of additives, was a major factor in the creation of the giant modern systems of food production and profit. (104-5)

This margarine model assigns food production "for profit and export and not for local need" (Warnock 40). Underdeveloped countries become trapped "because of the legacy of colonialism and the existing world capitalist system of production and trade" (Warnock 40). Just a few years prior to the gripping television images of starving Ethiopian children in the mid-1980s, a report from the Food and Agricultural Organization claimed that according to arable land distribution and cultivation, "Africa could feed nearly three times its present population. However, this scenario presumes the use of all potential farmland in staple food production for local consumption (no agricultural exports)" (Warnock 211-2). The development of farming monocultures consisting of oil-bearing crops bound for margarine production and consumption in the "developed" world, of cocoa to be sent off for the creation of Western confections, including brownies, of vast fields of sugar cane to be refined and consumed in the "First" World, has fueled the oppressive legacies of famine, poverty, and all the ugliness that stems from such conditions.

Commenting on the commodification of margarine, one margarine historian writes:

The history of margarine is a prime example of applied technology meeting the changing needs and desires of the consumer...[It] has been a noted example of the possibilities inherent in food technology to meet the changing needs of society. It is also an example of consumer movement to an alternate food when a traditional food was unable to meet consumer demand and price needs. (Heick 2-4)



Indeed, margarine seems to be the chameleon commodity. In its quest to “no longer be the poor man’s substitute for butter, but an alternative used by all classes” (Heick 163), it has been a multitude of colours, including pink (Visser 107), added additive after additive, and led advertising campaigns galore. Visser asserts that “[o]nly giant corporations with their technology and machinery for subtracting calories, changing flavours, substituting materials, and, above all, publicizing the results, can manage the trick. A cow is incapable of changing its ways to conform to fashion. Margarine, on the other hand, is versatility itself” (110). As such, margarine is “a substance born of the industrial age, expressive of technological claims and methods” (Visser 85). It is a signifier of industry, technology, and business in all its glory, having been “a creation of political intuition and scientific research” (Hoffman 33), having also been “a major factor in the creation of giant modern agribusiness with its stress on efficiency and profit” (Heick 163). Margarine is now big business concerned with the manipulation of science, markets, and consumers, obsessed with money, power, and development. As Margaret Visser notes, the battles between butter and margarine

represent the great oppositions articulated in our culture: the land versus the city, the farm (despite the extent to which dairy farming has become mechanized) versus the factory, independent versus corporately-controlled business, tradition versus not-necessarily-preferable novelty, nature versus human manipulation, labour-intensive versus machine-operated industry, uniqueness versus interchangeability. (113)

### **1/4 cup cocoa**

“Food of the gods” is the English translation of the cacao tree’s taxonomic name, *Theobroma* (Davidson 176). The cacao tree, from which cocoa derives, is a tree native to tropical America, in the region “between Southern Mexico and the northern Amazon

basin" (Davidson 176). Its fruits had been "a commodity of trade, an object of warfare, and also a currency" (Davidson 176) for generations to the peoples indigenous to that region, "including the Mayas, the Aztecs, and the Toltecs" (McGee 397). Wealth, status, prosperity, and ceremonial rites were often displayed through the consumption of chocolate—a hot or cold beverage consisting "of roasted cocoa beans, red pepper, vanilla, and water" (McGee 398). Cultivation of the trees and trade of the beans "became a major source of wealth of the Aztec merchants" (Davidson 176), especially when chocolate was considered "a drink for warriors and the elite" (Davidson 177) among the ruling Aztecs. To meet their demands for chocolate, "cacao was being transported in sizable quantities to the Aztec capital" (West 108) as a form of tribute from the subjugated peoples under Aztec rule (Davidson 177). So, by the time the New World was "discovered," chocolate was already well established as a part of the native culture. It is thus not surprising that when the Spanish explorers arrived in the early sixteenth century, having learned of the New World from a triumphant Columbus, they quickly learned of the delights of chocolate.

It is reported that, on the return from his second journey to the New World, Columbus brought some cacao beans, but the uses of such materials "were unknown or overlooked at the time, for most early references credit Cortés as first bringing cacao beans to Spain for royal consumption in 1528" (West 105). Cortés and his conquering Spaniards "soon realized the full value of the black 'almonds'" (Davidson 177) having had the opportunity to both observe the preparation of chocolate beverages and taste the end product (West 105). It appears that the beverage which "pleased the Aztec nobles pleased the Spanish crown as well, and so began chocolate's ascent in the Old World" (West 105). Crucial to chocolate's palatability among the Spanish, who found the original drink of chili peppers and ground cacao beans "quite spicy and bitter" (de Lempis

385), was the addition of cane sugar. "No one knows when or where this discovery...was made" (de Lempis 385), but it was this sweetened version of the chocolate beverage which "proved to be immensely popular" (de Lempis 385) among the Spanish conquistadors. News of this sweetened wonder "travelled faster than the substance itself" (Davidson 177), and it was only by 1585 that "cacao beans began to reach Spain...[a]s a commodity of trade" (Davidson 177). The Spanish court became renowned "throughout Europe for its prowess in preparing chocolate drinks" (Davidson 177), adding a variety of "non-traditional" flavourings, "among them [the aforementioned] sugar, cinnamon, cloves, anise, almonds, hazelnuts, vanilla, orange-flower water, and musk" (McGee 398). Naturally, chocolate consumption quickly spread outward from the Spanish court to the other upper class societies of Europe. It was new, it was exotic, and it was expensive. "Besides being classist, the drinking of chocolate was also sexist, being a beverage predominantly served to men" (Fuller 8). By the mid-seventeenth century, chocolate houses were all the rage throughout Europe, becoming "centers of political, economic, and social debate for the wealthy and powerful" (West 111), precursors to exclusive men's clubs.

To create such a climate for commodification and consumption, culinary historian Harold McGee notes, "Not only would the Spanish die for their chocolate: they would also kill for it" (399). They laid claims to countless plots of land in order "to exploit, along with the Indians living on it" (Young 27), all that they could. They wanted gold, and they wanted chocolate. And from the sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries, the Spanish monopolized world cacao production. Cacao was their "most important crop, and they controlled its trade and consumption in Europe as well as in their colonies" (West 108). Yet, "[a]s demand grew and the population of Mexico and Guatemala declined through disease and serfdom, other tropical countries began to be exploited as

cacao producers" (Davidson 178). And so began cacao's "botanical diffusion by humans" (Clarence-Smith and Ruf 2) throughout the globe, travelling from one suitable climate to another. As early as 1590, cacao seedlings were planted in Fernando Po, "a small island that lies near the equator a few miles off the coast of western Africa" (West 108). By 1663, cacao seedlings were in the Philippines (West 109). The Spanish endeavoured to keep a hold of their chocolate monopoly, "to keep the secrets of its cultivation and preparation" (Minifie 1), but the "[a]ddiction, or at least the quest for stimulation" (Clarence-Smith 31), had already gripped Europe. Every sovereign power wanted a piece of the chocolate market. The French led the assault around 1660 with "active cacao production in their own Caribbean possessions of Martinique and St. Lucia" (West 111). Other Caribbean holdings followed shortly thereafter, including Britain's Jamaica and Trinidad (Davidson 178). The Portuguese spread into Brazil. And soon, the Dutch East Indies were involved in cacao production as well (West 111). By "the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Europe's supply [of cacao beans] came mainly from these Caribbean plantations and, in declining quantity, from America itself" (Davidson 178).

Cacao has been described as "a prima donna" (Davidson 176) among plants. It "requir[es] shade when young, and [is] susceptible to fungi and pests. Diseases are [now] controlled by breeding resistant varieties" (Davidson 176) and by the "heavy use of chemicals—regardless of the medical consequences" (Coe and Coe 268). Cacao also has an incredibly "voracious appetite for virgin forest" (Clarence-Smith 3), in part because the freshly deforested lands enjoy "low concentrations of the many pests and diseases specific to cocoa" (Clarence-Smith 4). In fact, cacao likes virgin land so much that planting it "in lands previously used for other crops was rarely successful. Land could be left fallow for twenty years or more" (Clarence-Smith 4), but still cacao refused to grow.

This “prima donna” quality of cacao has made “[c]ocoa cultivation...effectively a wasting asset, rather like mining, and the cocoa frontier [has been] driven relentlessly along, sometimes ‘jumping’ huge distances from one continent to another....In the longer term, cocoa represented a threat to the very existence of the tropical forest, and thus to gathering activities, biodiversity and climate” (Clarence-Smith 4). So, as cacao began traipsing the globe looking for suitable environments, “an assault on the forest” (Clarence-Smith and Ruf 2) was launched, during which “large groups of immigrants rapidly clear[ed] tropical forest to plant cocoa” (Clarence-Smith and Ruf 1). As the land was cleared for cacao, it was not uncommon for those who originally lived on it to be “cleared” also: “Some of the original forest dwellers suffered from ‘ethnic cleansing’, others were outnumbered by immigrant strangers, while yet others became the major local cocoa producers” (Clarence-Smith 125).

Throughout cacao’s global dispersion, deforestation has been the key, and the key to deforesting has been to utilize slaves. While a significant number of African slaves were taken to cacao plantations in the Americas, “[b]y the end of the nineteenth century cacao was being cultivated in several West African countries, and by the early twentieth century it had been planted in Sri Lanka, Malaya, Java, Sumatra, New Guinea, the New Hebrides, and Samoa” (Davidson 178). It seems that, instead of taking the slaves to the New World rainforests, plantations were taken to the slaves’ places of origin. Currently, West Africa accounts for over half of all cocoa production in the world (Considine and Considine 317). Yet, while “Brazil and the Ivory Coast are leaders in the cocoa bean belt” (Fuller 14), the United States, West Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom are the world’s major importers and processors of cocoa, not to mention consumers (Considine and Considine 318). The countries currently leading the way in worldwide per capita chocolate consumption include Switzerland, Norway, Great Britain,

Belgium, Austria, Germany, Holland and the United States (West 120).

The discrepancy between the places of cacao cultivation and cocoa production, between where the actual plantations are and where the processing, manufacturing, and consuming takes place, has been in effect since the Spanish invasion of the New World. The seizure by "developed" countries of struggling, "under-developed" countries' primary resources has only been aided by technology. Once Europeans and North Americans got a hold of cacao beans, there was no turning back. Although, "[a]t the end of the eighteenth century chocolate [still] remained a drink for the rich" (Davidson 178), that was not to last for long. As cultivations and plantations sprang up around the globe, so too did commercial manufacturers of cocoa. This "has been an important industry in Western Europe since the late eighteenth century" (Davidson 180), and the listing of names becomes a "who's who" in the chocolate world. The founding of a chocolate factory in England in 1728 by J.S. Fry (indeed, the same brand of cocoa available today) was the first of its kind in that country (Minifie 2). The first American chocolate mill was established in 1765, "in what is now Dorchester, Massachusetts" (West 115), becoming Baker's Chocolate (the very same brand of baking chocolate sold today), after Dr. James Baker, in 1779. There were Lindt and Nestlé in Switzerland, Rowntree and Cadbury in England, Dröste and van Houten in Holland and Menier in France (Davidson 180).

And all these manufacturers applied the growing technology of the Industrial Revolution to chocolate. The invention of a steam engine, in 1795 by Fry, which could crush cocoa beans faster, "meant that chocolate no longer had to be prepared manually, but could be manufactured on a large scale" (Fuller 11). But it was the invention of the screw press in 1828 by van Houten—a machine which could squeeze out more of the cocoa butter, creating a smoother powder which in turn made a smoother drink—that

truly revolutionized chocolate production (Davidson 179). The cocoa butter could then be added in greater amounts to chocolate in order to make it more malleable and cohesive. Fry introduced the first malleable and cohesive "eating chocolate" in 1847 (McGee 401), but as late as 1914, "chocolate was probably still more drunk than eaten" (Clarence-Smith 11). Chocolate became even more mass-produced, but "[p]rices remained high, due to import duty levied on cacao beans" (Davidson 179). With the duties reduced in 1853 and cheap imported sugar readily available, chocolate prices lowered, but it "was still a luxury" (Davidson 179). The marriage of milk and cocoa, in 1876, to produce milk chocolate made chocolate even more accessible for mass consumption, especially in areas where milk was already cheap and plentiful (Davidson 179). Eventually chocolate consumption grew because of "the introduction of cocoa powder in 1828, the reduction of excise duties; improvements in transportation facilities, from plantation to factory; and the invention of eating chocolate, and improvements in manufacturing methods" (Fuller 12).

Chocolate rations during World War I established chocolate's nutritive value, as well as its stimulant value. While chocolate's caffeine content is virtually negligible when compared to coffee—it has been said that it would take approximately a dozen or more chocolate bars to equal the amount of caffeine found within one cup of coffee (Fuller 112)—as it couples with sugar, it becomes truly stimulating. So much so that "[b]y the dawn of the Second World War, chocolate confectionery was outselling sugar confectionery in England, and has continued to so ever since" (Davidson 179). The industrialized world has never looked back. "By the mid-twentieth century...chocolate had been transmuted into a solid food of the masses, available to all" (Coe and Coe 235). And, although "efforts to increase cacao production may hasten clearing the world's already dwindling tropical rainforests, essential bastions of biological diversity" (West

121), the rate of chocolate consumption increases (West 120). And, although, as I write this in the spring of 2001, a vessel carrying child slaves destined for cacao plantations was discovered off the coast of West Africa (Crossette 2001), brownies continue to be made and chocolate bars digested. The exploitation inherent in cacao cultivation and cocoa production reminds us that “[a]ddiction, or at least a quest for stimulation must have affected [and must continue to affect] the elasticity of demand for chocolate” (Clarence-Smith 31-2), that chocolate remains “one of humankind’s primary obsessions” (Szogyi xi).

## **6 eggs**

“It was the domestication of the Indian jungle fowl and its gradual spread westward that brought the egg as we know it, a standard dietary item, to Europe” (Ayto 102). This domestication began “in India circa 2000 BC” (Zeidler 22), thus making the chicken a relative “latecomer...among the domesticated animals (sheep and goats go back twice as far)” (McGee 55). Despite their domesticated “lateness,” chickens “slowly moved eastward and westward” (Zeidler 22), making their way into the Orient, into China and even onto the Pacific Islands. As to how they arrived on the islands, it is not known, but “they were present long before the era of the Spanish discoverers” (Zeidler 22). Upon Magellan’s arrival in the Philippines, cockfighting was already well established as a traditional sport (Zeidler 22). In fact, McGee believes that the chicken’s migration “westward to central Europe circa 1500 BC and...[to] the Mediterranean around 1400 BC” (Zeidler 22) and eventually to Britain “during the first century BC” (Davidson 378) was “for largely nonculinary reasons” (McGee 55), for the sport of cockfighting. Being at least 2500 years old, cockfighting “is one of the oldest recorded human games or sports” (Dundes vii) known. Although originating somewhere in southeast Asia, possibly India, it “was quickly adopted in Persia, Greece, and Rome”



(McGee 55-6). While cockfighting predominated, "[t]he less flamboyant hen and her eggs remained in the cultural background, but we know that eggs were commonly eaten in the West from Roman times on" (McGee 56). And as the Western empire grew to include the New World, the Americas, "which had no indigenous hens" (Davidson 378), were "'invaded' by chickens from Europe, brought over when Columbus landed in the West Indies in 1493. The mainland birds were brought over by the settlers of Jamestown and Plymouth nearly 100 years later" (Zeidler 22).

Despite the chicken's ever-growing presence in all parts of the world, it "led a largely unnoticed career until the eighteenth century" (McGee 56). In 1749, the French scientist, Antoine Ferchault de Réamur, having learned of an Egyptian method of incubating eggs, wrote a book "on the subject of chicken incubators" (Visser 141). It was revolutionary, as it allowed birds to be "hatched in all seasons of the year" (Visser 140) and allowed Europeans to "eat the same amount of chicken and eggs, and pay the same price for them, all year round" (Visser 141). By the early nineteenth century, poultry breeding in northern England had "become a hobby of the industrial working class" (Davidson 378). But, it was "[t]he arrival in Britain [and in the West in general] of various Asian breeds of poultry during the mid-19th century [which truly] revolutionized attitudes to hens" (Davidson 378), making "poultry breeding a fashionable pursuit" (Davidson 378). These exotic, "showy, spectacular birds, so different from the run of the barnyard, touched off a chicken-breeding craze" (McGee 58) in both Europe and the Americas. "'[H]en fever,' as one observer of the American scene called it" (McGee 58), gripped the Western world. Davidson notes that "[t]he decorative appearance of Asian breeds, their egg-laying capacity (winter as well as summer), and the eggs themselves (large and brown, practically unknown in Europe until then) stimulated interest in poultry generally, and led to the establishment of standards" (378). McGee states that "hundreds

of new breeds were developed, and the chicken took on new prominence among farm animals" (58). Aesthetics were not the only governing principle in poultry breeding, and by the end of the nineteenth century, the white Leghorn "was developed from Mediterranean stock" (Davidson 378) and "emerged as the champion layer" (McGee 58).

While the nineteenth century saw the emergence of many new poultry breeds, including the Leghorn which was developed for its egg-laying capacity, the twentieth century has seen the this breed become "merely an element in an industrial process whose product [is] the egg" (Smith and Daniel 263), "a biological machine" (McGee 59). It is no longer "a free and lively creature" (Smith and Daniel 263), but a cog in the rationalized, industrialized gears of the the poultry industry. As with cocoa and margarine, it was the industrialization and, subsequent, urbanization of society which led to an increased demand for the product. Egg production had to keep up with the demands, while at the same time creating a greater demand. Supply and demand is a vicious cycle which pulls agriculture into the realms of big business. "Farming today is fully concentrated in the hands of a few. In the United States, eight firms control half (approximately 3.5 billion birds) of the poultry industry" (Rice 1996). In the twentieth century, images of chicken coops are quaintly archaic. It was in 1934 that "a Californian businessman called John Kimber seized upon the growing realization among chicken farmers that eggs were one thing and chicken meat another, and that the production of each would be more profitable if undertaken separately" (Visser 136). It was an idea that truly "revolutionized modern chicken farming" (Visser 136). The already egg-renowned white Leghorn became even more "intensively bred for egg-laying power" (Visser 137) and for white eggs at that, since "most North Americans prefer eggs white" (Visser 137). It was also around this time, in the 1930s, that artificial lighting first began its systematic usage. Farmers had known for years that hens lay more in the summer when there is

more sunlight, and scientists now know that light stimulates a hen's pituitary gland to increase production of the hormone responsible for ovary activity (Visser 137). Hens could now lay eggs year-round, transcending "[n]ature's built-in rest-period" (Visser 137) of the fall moult preceding winter .

Nowadays, hatchery houses incubate thousands upon thousands of "replacements for 'spent' hens" (Visser 138). Born in incubators, Leghorn chicks are quickly sexed, with "nine out of ten baby cocks...suffocated or incinerated, or crushed to death and then fed to hogs" (Visser 138). The males are deemed unnecessary, with "[t]housands of male chicks...destroyed on a single day" (Visser 138); only a relative few are kept for the breeding of more laying hens. Under such restrictions, these baby hens have been "carefully bred to increase output and eliminate such interference as broodiness, the hen's inclination to stop laying and sit stubbornly on its nest until its eggs hatch" (McGee 58). They have been bred for one purpose and one purpose only, to lay as many eggs as genetically possible in as short amount of time as possible. They are bred for docility, to mindlessly perform their function. To maximize egg output with minimal expenditure, these hens are placed into wire cages with up to four or five other hens, since "[c]losely confined hens don't waste energy on unproductive movement" (McGee 58). Such close quarters also "economize on the high heat which encourages egg-laying" (Visser 138). Because "[i]n close confinement, chickens often peck and worry each other; they are therefore routinely declawed and debeaked" (Visser 138). Talons and beaks are deemed unnecessary in egg production, just as long as there is a sufficient amount of beak to eat. Their eggs simply fall through the mesh of the cages into collection trays or conveyor belts.

These production lines are egg factories or "battery-houses, where birds are packed into cages, often in darkness and fed on a high-energy diet with additives to

'force' egg-laying" (Balfour and Allen 49). Their poultry feed also includes vaccines and antibiotics to curb diseases that are inevitable with "confined flocks of genetically homogeneous animals" (McGee 58). Everything is monitored for optimum efficiency and uniformity. And when efficiency is not being met, when the "egg-laying abilities have run their course" (Rice 1998), production might be enforced "to resume as before by inducing the birds to molt via a forced starvation—up to fourteen days" (Rice 1998). If such "inducing" is still unproductive, the "spent" hen is simply slaughtered. Most laying hens last a maximum of two years (Visser 137). Essentially, "today's laying hen is born in an incubator, eats a diet that originates largely in the laboratory, lives and lays on wire and under lights for about a year, until she lays less frequently, and produces between 250 and 290 eggs" (McGee 58). Not surprisingly, disease stemming from such unclean and cramped conditions runs rampant in these factories, despite the antibiotics, which means that eggs coming out of such conditions are often high in those same antibiotics, lacking in vitamins, "low in essential fatty acids and high in insecticide residues" (Balfour and Allen 49). And the amount of droppings generated by chickens is enormous. Visser notes that "[c]hickens raised by modern methods [both broilers and laying hens] produce...200 million tons a year in the United States alone" (139), with "forty-one kilograms (ninety pounds) per year per laying fowl" (Visser 139). It is thus not surprising that "[c]hicken manure has become a troublesome noxious waste" (Visser 140), with proposed removal methods including the use of it as a filler in cow feed. In conclusion, the plight of the modern chicken is a prime example of objectification and alienation as it is truly "no longer a free and lively creature but merely an element in an industrial process whose product [is] the egg" (Smith and Daniel 263). It is "a biological machine" (McGee 59), exploited, controlled, and modified for the seemingly insatiable appetite of human beings.

### 3 cups sugar

Sugar historian, Roger Knight, contends that “[s]ugar’s history is one of the crucial meta-narratives of Western colonialism” (xi). The West’s apparently insatiable craving for sweetness arguably began in the fourth century BC, when word of a wondrous sweetening substance, different from honey, spread westwards from India into Europe, and these deliciously sweet crystals slowly began trickling into the West. By the eighth century AD, the conquering Arabs introduced sugar cane “on a large scale, planting cane in Spain and southern France and laying the foundations of the vast world-wide sugar consumption of later centuries” (Ayto 284). For the most part, consumption was limited to those who could afford such an expensive luxury, the upper class. As consumption grew, new land needed to be found to meet the growing demands, and in 1492, Christopher Columbus found it. On his second voyage to the New World, “Columbus planted sugarcane in Hispaniola (Santo Domingo)” (de Lempis 384), and interestingly enough, returned to Spain with “specimen plants and pods of cacao” (West 105). It was a trade-off that would certainly pay-off, seeing as “[t]he sharp increase in European sugar consumption was associated with the vogue for three new beverages: chocolate, coffee, and tea” (de Lempis 384)—three drinks, incidentally, which are considered rather bitter without the now seemingly prerequisite sugar.

Like cocoa, it was not until the Industrial Revolution that sugar consumption really became available to the masses, “not until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that sugar and sweets became truly popular” (Teuteberg and Flandrin 446). The “explosion in consumption was made possible by European colonial rule in the West Indies” (McGee 387-88), and this explosion continues today. “While cane sugar may have been lauded in the West for its whiteness at a quite early date, the great bulk of sugar traded world-wide prior to the second half of the nineteenth century would have

been anything but white" (Knight 135). Mechanization of the refining process in the later half of the nineteenth century allowed for the removal of all nutrients—those unsightly "non-whites"—that may have once been found in sugar; "all that remains is fitly described as 'empty calories'" (Balfour and Allen 107). The body cannot metabolize such "empty calories," so toxic substances are created, and sugar becomes a harbinger of such illnesses and health problems as diabetes and appendicitis, tooth decay and bowel tumours, obesity and varicose veins. So, while sugar continues to be found "in countless processed foods" (Balfour and Allen 108), the social implications possibly linked with the over-consumption of sugar increase in severity: juvenile delinquency, irrational behaviour, Attention Deficit Disorder, sadism, and even homicide (Balfour and Allen 107-09).

To create such a climate for over-consumption, sugar cane also had to traipse the world, plantations springing up in divers places in order to meet the demands. "And millions of Africans were enslaved to satisfy" (McGee 388) these demands. Because "the relentless hard labor combined with poor food, accidents and disease ensured a short life expectancy on the sugar plantations" (Galloway 115), new slaves had to be continually captured and traded. Like the modern-day laying hens, the slaves' sole purpose was to perform a function, and when they could no longer perform that function, they were "stimulated" into doing so, or disposed of. James Walvin writes: "What had emerged, on the back of African slaves in the Americas, was an economic nexus with extraordinary global reach and consequences. And it all hinged on sugar" (22). Walvin continues to contend that sugar "is a remarkable - and central - historical fact; the cultivation of a commodity (which was itself alien to the Americas) by enslaved labour which had been shipped thousands of miles, on American lands seized by invading Europeans, and all to satisfy a taste for sweetness in Northern Europe (thence clean

around the world)" (22). Sugar was "a highly 'politicized' commodity" (Abbott 1) that resulted in the perpetuation of patriarchal, racial hierarchies "in which a European elite of planters, merchants, military and officials dominated a small population of 'poor whites' and a large population of slaves" (Galloway 84).

And a version of this practice still exists today. "The American farmer, as our story book image of him suggests, simply no longer exists" (Rice 1996). Agriculture is agribusiness now. It is run by an elite. It is "a multibillion-dollar industry, increasingly dominated by large corporations and conglomerates" (DeWind, Seidl and Shenk 380), in which farmworkers, especially immigrant farmworkers, are merely expendable pawns. In the sugar cane harvests of Florida, for example, contract workers come from the West Indies to cut cane. Being cheap, foreign, and sometimes illegal, they are driven to work excruciatingly hard at "dangerous and dirty work" (DeWind, Seidl and Shenk 389) for minimal pay. They are exploited and taken advantage of, manipulated and essentially enslaved (DeWind, Seidl and Shenk 382-95). In modern-day Brazil, "[t]he voracious demand for sugar cane has been disastrous for the small farmer and rural worker" (DeWitt 34). In the northeastern section of the country, "the evils of monoculture" (DeWitt 36) intensify, as "the green sea of sugar cane is more vast, less broken by islands devoted to other crops, than ever before" (DeWitt 33). DeWitt ultimately argues that "malevolent legacies of the colonial era" (39)—including the concentration of land ownership among the dominant wealthy minority, who further their wealth on the backs of the poor and at the cost of environmental resources—plagues Brazil's northeast coast, keeping that "region in an underdeveloped status" (38). Historian, Bill Ashcroft, echoes these sentiments of "malevolent legacies of the colonial era" (DeWitt 39), stating that "[t]he economic and political effects of sugar in colonial societies are clear consequences of the totalitarian nature of sugar plantation mode of production" (44). The violence and

exploitation, the slavery and indenture, the concentrated land ownership and the monoculture, the ruin of local economies and the institutionalization of poverty, “have all had incalculable consequences on contemporary societies. The abolition of slavery, independence, and nationalisation have done little to ameliorate the totalitarian, hegemonic and inequitable system of sugar production” (Ashcroft 44). Sidney Mintz asserts that “[t]oday the consequences of [sugar] transplantation and of adjustment during a period nearly five centuries long define us, even those of us who are Native Americans” (Caribbean 1-2).

And so, sugar—white, granulated, refined sugar—comes to signify over-consumption and obsession. It “is a metaphor for the whole historical process of sugar production, with its catastrophic effects on the population and environment of sugar producing colonies, its implication in the spread of European military and colonial power, and its revolution in the diet of Europeans” (Ashcroft 35). It is “a symbol of the modern and industrial” (Mintz Sweetness 193). Sugar is about desperation and addiction, as “both plant and product are negotiated into aesthetic objects of transcendent mystical properties whose essence was vaunted to produce a wholesome moral economy” (Sandiford 23), as the industrialized and developed world seeks to feed its sugar addiction.

### **1 1/2 cups + 6 Tbsp flour**

Historically, the finest product arising from the milling of cereal grains was called “flower” (Davidson 309). The rest was just “run-of-the-mill” and ordinary. Being the best and the finest, “flower” was a luxury that “only the superior class enjoyed” (McGee 274). Although there are as many types of flour as there are cereal grains, flour today is synonymous with wheat, and usually white at that, as it is in my mother’s recipe. If flour other than white is needed, it is generally so listed—“‘[w]hole wheat flour’ would have



been an oxymoron" (McGee 285) traditionally. Wheat is considered to be "the second oldest (after barley) of cultivated cereals. It is now the most widely cultivated, exceeding rice in the quantity grown" (Davidson 844). The wild wheat grasses, predecessors of the numerous modern varieties, "grow, or once grew, over a wide area of Western Asia" (Davidson 844). At the dawn "of recorded history wheat had already become firmly established all over temperate Asia and Europe, its cultivation limited only by climate" (Davidson 844). While being extensively cultivated, "wheat was [still] the most esteemed of cereals, comparatively expensive and not for the poor" (Davidson 844). To have had the "flower" of wheat, instead of barley or millet, would have been a richly privileged luxury indeed.

For millennia, "preference was for lighter breads" (McGee 282). Since wheat is a naturally light-coloured grain, the whiteness of its "bread was a mark of purity and distinction" (McGee 282). For the ever-expanding Roman empire, the status association of wheat, as well as the nutritive value, were irresistible. They became "highly dependent on wheat, and imported vast amounts from growing regions in their empire" (Davidson 844). Britain had been growing wheat long before the Roman invasion, but "[b]y AD 360 the Romans had built up wheat-growing in Britain to such an extent that wheat was exported from there to feed the army on the Rhine" (Davidson 844). With the fall of the Roman empire, "the wheaten infrastructure created for it...tended to disintegrate" (Davidson 844). The Middle Ages saw wheat once again rise in prominence as a status symbol for the upper classes. The poor had to forego the delicate, light wheat and digest the hardy and rough barley and rye. It was only in the eighteenth century that "[w]heat became the predominant bread grain" (Davidson 844). And this change was markedly affected by the establishment of wheat in the New World. The Spanish first introduced it in Mexico in 1529, and as the European expansion spread, "the

enormously productive wheat-growing areas of the Midwest, Canada, and Argentina came to outstrip anywhere in the Old World" (Davidson 844). The United States, Russia, and China are now the leading worldwide wheat producers (Davidson 844).

Along with the wheatfields of the New World, wheat came to mass prominence in the past few centuries due to evolving technologies in milling. McGee notes that "[g]rinding equipment progressed from the mortar and pestle to two flat stones and then, around 800 BC in Mesopotamia, to a circular motion that made feasible the eventual use of animal, water, and wind power" (275). The first mill harnessing this circular motion was the hourglass mill, "so called because of its shape. The bottom was the conical grinder; its top was an extension of the upper stone to make a big funnel filled with grain" (Davidson 310). Man-power, often in the form of slaves, or animal power turned the pivot of the upper stone by pushing or pulling large wooden handles (McGee 276; Davidson 310). Large, flat millstones harnessed with water power were first mentioned in 150 BC, and "spread throughout W. Europe, bringing the potential of fine flour to most communities" (Davidson 310). Around 1000 AD, at the beginning of the Middle Ages, the Arabs brought the windmill from Persia, spreading mills even further (Davidson 310). With the advent of steam power, conventional stone mills embraced the new industrial power, but the output was still relatively low. It was just not enough to meet the demands of consumption. And consumers were increasingly demanding pure white flour. The naturally light ground wheat was just not good enough. They wanted the wheat "flower." To this end, the French developed a process of double milling wheat, "which greatly increased the extraction of white flours from stone mills" (Davidson 310), but it was still not quite fast enough or good enough. By the 1820s, a roller mill was being tested in Hungary (Davidson 310). In 1834, this fast and efficient rolling process was perfected by the Swiss and "quickly adopted all over Europe and America. Its multiple steel rollers

not only ground the grain, but also separated the various fractions (bran, germ, endosperm)...For the first time, truly white flour was available at a low price" (Davidson 310). And the mass use of white, refined flour truly became maladaptive, "accountable for dietary deficiencies" (Farb and Armelagos 218).

In its whole form, wheat is one of the most protein-rich, and therefore, most nutritious staple cereals, with more nutritive value than rice (Davidson 310). The protein found in wheat "supplies all the amino acids which are needed in the human diet, except that it is rather low in lysine...By a happy coincidence beans and other pulses are rich in lysine, so a diet of wheat products and pulses, common in many poor areas, is well balanced even if hardly any animal foods are eaten" (Davidson 845). Yet, as McGee notes, in today's world, "[i]f people can afford to get more of their calories from meat, they will, and they have. We lean less heavily than did our ancestors on the staff of life" (280). And, unfortunately, the general North American affinity for whiteness, be it sugar or eggs or flour, creates problems. In order to obtain white flour, only the endosperm of the grain is utilized. "The color has no practical or nutritional significance and is oxidized simply to obtain a uniform whiteness" (McGee 290) for "commercial convenience or for alleged 'customer appeal'" (Balfour and Allen 58). The whiteness of the endosperm is only further enhanced by "various additives, such as bleaching agents, extenders, improvers, and so on" (Balfour and Allen 58), which serve to eliminate whatever trace nutrients that might have survived the refining process. Discarded in this process is the wheat germ, the bran, and the covering coats, which accounts for about thirty per cent of the wheat and almost all of the nutrients (Balfour and Allen 56-58). Synthetic vitamins are then added to "enrich" the flour, apparently "mak[ing] up for the loss" (Davidson 309) of the original nutrients. As such, "the most nutritious parts of the wheat are eaten by animals instead of by people" (Balfour and Allen 57). Wheat, once

"the most esteemed of cereals" (Davidson 844), is now literally cast before swine. A significant percentage of wheat is "used as animal fodder" (Davidson 844).

While bread may be "the staff of life," white refined flour, like white refined sugar, really has no nutritional value. Once considered "a status symbol reserved for the very wealthy" (Williams and Echols 19), white flour has now flooded the market, blinding consumers and creating a society of vitamin supplements (since the "white" version of "the staff of life" cannot even support life). Also like sugar, the mechanization and industrialization of the refining process is what has allowed such a flooding for mass consumption. Great tracts of land around the globe have been cultivated to supply this demand for not just grain, but for white flour in particular. Yet again, agribusiness is in control, with devastating effects on the land. The land is continuously plowed and planted again and again and again. There is no crop rotation. Biodiversity is absent. Monoculture reigns supreme. Pesticides run rampant. Genetic modification becomes quotidian. The land is never allowed to lie fallow. The demands must be met, but at the cost of the earth's life-giving richness, her very soil. "Two hundred years ago, American cropland had topsoil that averaged twenty-one inches in depth. Today, only about six inches remain. Every year in the U.S. an area the size of Connecticut is lost to soil erosion" (Rice 1996). Wes Jackson contests:

Soil loss lies at the core of the problem with agriculture. When the extractive economy of industry moved into the potentially renewable economy of agriculture—took it over, in fact—not only were the traditional problems of agriculture worsened, new problems were added. With the industrialization of agriculture the chemical industry made it possible to introduce chemicals into our fields with which our tissues had no evolutionary experience. (361)

And the obsession with the superficial aesthetics of white flour continues.

## **1/2 tsp salt**

Salt “has always been a highly prized commodity” (McGee 545). Anthropologist, Margaret Visser, notes that salt’s “historic importance has been a direct function of its rarity” (58), and its preservative properties which have led to many traditional beliefs surrounding the “magic” and “divinity” of salt to protect, to preserve, to divine and to cause fortune or misfortune (Opie and Tatem 338–44). Salt has been collected, mined and harvested for human and animal consumption throughout the ages. But such activities were always governed by huge expenditures of time and energy: “[s]alt is an exceptionally heavy commodity” (Visser 61). Besides collecting whatever natural surface deposits of salt there may have been, traditional methods for attaining salt have included sending miners into salt caves to chip away and dig out the precious mineral. Perhaps the most widely spread way of attaining salt, though, has been the “solar and non-solar evaporation of brine, marine or non-marine” (Adshead 137). Such evaporative processes have included everything from boiling seawater in pots and pans to flooding areas of land with seawater to create brine ponds in which the salt concentration grows higher and higher as the wind and the sun take their toll, until all that remains is “the edible rock” (Visser 56) of salt.

Like most spices and like most of these brownie ingredients, salt was once considered a status symbol reserved for the very wealthy. During the Middle Ages, when exotic spices first started appearing in European cooking, a salt-cellar would be set on a banquet table, “mark[ing] off the close friends of the family from those ‘below the salt,’ who were not considered worthy of such intimacy” (Visser 77). As with most of the other brownie ingredients, the rise of industrialization, mechanization and technology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries allowed for faster and safer methods of harvesting and mining, and therefore, cheaper salt. Mass production demands mass consumption

and vice versa. Salt increasingly became available to the masses of all classes, especially as "Europe became predisposed to *chien* and man-made energy, non-Europe to *shai* and natural energy" (Adshead 137, emphasis in original). Commodity historian, S. Adshead, notes:

Ever since readily accessible local supplies of timber ceased to be abundant...Europe had maintained a high energy [*chien*] solution to its problems in seeking new sources [of salt], while non-Europe had adopted a low energy [*shai*] solution....From this dichotomy flowed others. The European salt industry through its supersession of *shai* increasingly escaped the constraints of weather and the seasonal rhythms these imposed, while the non-European salt industry remained, indeed became more, subject to variations of sunshine, rain and wind. For non-Europe, the year was still made by nature; for Europe [and the New World] increasingly by culture. (137, emphasis in original)

Seeing as time was and continues to be money in a predominantly capitalist world, the desire to transcend nature and her restraints became an all-consuming necessity. When the wood was gone, coal, natural gas, electricity and petroleum were utilized to bring about high yields of salt. The mines went deeper, discovering oil in the process, and it was discovered that this once rare commodity abundantly veins the earth's crust: "[t]he earth contains almost inconceivable quantities of salt" (Visser 82). To access these supplies, mining engineers simply inject water "into the salt seams through tunnels bored from the surface; the brine is pumped out and then evaporated to produce salt again" (Visser 58), usually with a multiple-effect salt evaporator. The first of such machines was built in 1899 in the United States and allows for the salt to be "separated from the brine, heated, cleaned, spun and sucked dry, then mechanically packed and labelled. The process is fast, and the salt is fine-grained and extremely free from impurities" (Visser 62), flowing easily from the salt shaker because of a chemical coating on each grain to keep them separated. It is nice and white—a seemingly integral characteristic in the industrialized world, be it flour or sugar or salt.

As the abundance and apparently over-abundance of salt has been manifested, "[t]he use of salt for culinary purposes has become 'statistically insignificant' in relation to the quantities in demand for industry" (Visser 82). Salt has moved beyond the mere table and pasture becoming "primarily an industrial mineral rather than a commodity" (Adshead x). Adshead contends that it has been "in consumption that the greatest change took place" (141) in the last two centuries. Not only were people simply adding more salt to their cooking, but "the rise of the large scale prepared foods industry: tinned soups, frozen dinners, canned preparations, take-aways, junkfoods; tins of sardines, potato chips, burgers, tomato sauce, pickles, pretzels and pizzas...contained considerable quantities of salt" (Adshead 141). These processed, precooked, prepackaged foods have become more and more mainstream in an increasingly urbanized environment, as people want something "quick" and "easy." Adshead declares, "Cooking, from being the conversion of the raw to the cooked, became the conversion of the precooked to the overcooked" (141). And salt is an extremely useful preservation tool in this process.

Despite the growth of salt in the processed foods industry, it has been the "massive increase in the non-alimentary market" (Adshead 141), especially in the chemical industry, which has vaulted salt above and beyond its food bonds. Adshead notes that "the chemical industry stands dominant in the consumption of salt and this is the essence of its modern transformation....In 1800 at least ninety per cent of all salt was directed to human alimentary consumption....In 1985 at least ninety per cent of all salt was directed to non-alimentary consumption" (142). The importance of salt to the chemical industry had its beginnings in 1810, when a scientist by the name of Humphry Davy "succeeded in separating the components of common salt" (Visser 77) into sodium and chlorine—two elements which are "absolutely lethal to anything living" (Visser 78). Yet, while being lethal to anything living, these elements of salt are utilized extensively

in industry—in everything from bleaching flour and paper to making soap and plastics to concocting herbicides and poisons for chemical warfare. “Plastic, pesticides, the aerosol can: all are the progeny of chlorine—and therefore of common salt” (Visser 79). Visser contends that “[b]ecause of the salting of our roads, the necessity for ‘automotive fluids,’ for aluminium, and for plastics in every car, the automobile is the world’s largest consumer of salt” (79). Components of salt are everywhere, in virtually everything—our cars, our clothes, our cleaning products, our food, our soil, our air, our bodies. Adshead writes:

The world of salt in the modern age, though varied, was basically undivided. As salt had once served to variegate taste, express distinctions and avoid the plenum which culture abhors, so now, under its components of sodium and chlorine, it serves to create the multiplicity of consumables which pursue the same end of *vita humanior*. So long as this end is held in view no salt need lose its savour. Trade in salt may diminish, since high technology had made its production possible almost anywhere, but its industrial consumption is unlikely to decline. There is no substitute for salt. (Adshead 173-4, emphasis in original)

As consumption continues to skyrocket, “the salt industry has been called ‘perhaps the most tangible realization of the ideology of perpetual growth’” (Visser 81). Salt continues to transcend its earthly bonds, but not without a price.

In writing on the future of the salt industry, Robert P. Multhauf argues “that, while the supply of common salt and the ingenuity of the chemist may be inexhaustible, its principal auxiliary raw material—the hydrocarbons which are chlorinated—and the principal source of the energy consumed by the chemical industry, come from the same source, petroleum; and petroleum appears not to be inexhaustible” (236). The energy costs of mining, refining and dividing sodium chloride are extremely high, and the byproducts of the chemical industry are far-reaching. Salt not only embodies flavour, but it also seems to be the mother of industrial pollution. There are massive gaping caves in



the seams of the earth where salt once was: "[a] quarter of the city of Detroit, Michigan, stands over the hollow warrens of a salt mine" (Visser 58). The salinity of soils, lakes and rivers has been changed. The emphasis on chlorine products has left the other half of salt, sodium hydroxide, "an excessive waste product" (Visser 79), creating a major disposal dilemma. The earth has been inundated with "chlorinated hydrocarbons, man-made substances which have not so far been found in nature. They are not, therefore, *unmade* by nature either: they are 'non-biodegradable' substances" (Visser 79, emphasis in original). They are herbicides and pesticides, PCBs (poly-chlorinated biphenyls) and CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons or Greenhouse gases). And they are everywhere and in everything and everyone, as biologist Rachel Carson asserts:

As the tide of chemicals born of the Industrial Age has risen to engulf our environment, a drastic change has come about in the nature of the most serious public health problems....For the first time in the history of the world, every human being is now subjected to contact with dangerous chemicals, from the moment of conception until death....[S]ynthetic pesticides have been so thoroughly distributed throughout the animate and inanimate world that they occur virtually everywhere. They have been recovered from most of the major river systems and even from streams of groundwater flowing unseen through the earth. Residues of these chemicals linger in the soil to which they have been applied a dozen years before. They have entered and lodged in the bodies of fish, birds, reptiles, and domestic and wild animals so universally that scientists carrying on animal experiments find it almost impossible to locate subjects free from such contamination. They have been found in fish in remote mountain lakes, in earthworms burrowing in soil, in the eggs of birds—and in man himself. For these chemicals are now stored in the bodies of the vast majority of human beings, regardless of age. They occur in the mother's milk, and probably in the tissues of the unborn child. (187, 15-6)

Truly, as Margaret Visser points out, "[t]he familiar salt-cellar appears at times to have unleashed a double demon with whose dance we Sorcerer's Apprentices can barely keep up" (82).

## 1 cup nuts

As mentioned previously, nuts in my mother's recipe specifically refers to walnuts. It is interesting to note "that in many European languages, the generic term for nut is also the word for walnut" (McGee 272). For example, "[i]n so far as the French have an equivalent to the term 'nut', it is *noix*, but that word usually indicates the walnut" (Davidson 833, emphasis in original). Walnuts are considered "second only to the almond in [worldwide] popularity and consumption" (McGee 272). The most popular walnut strain "of worldwide consumption is the English or Persian [or Italian] walnut, a tree that is considered to be native to southeastern Europe, the Middle East, and eastern Asia" (Considine and Considine 2088). While this particular strain is not native to the New World, nut-bearing trees "all have both Old World and New World representatives" (McGee 264). Food historian, Harold McGee asserts

that very few fruit, vegetable, or spice plants were known to more than one continent before the spice trade and discovery of the New World. The same is true of the cereals and legumes, but not of the nuts.... This is because the nut-bearing trees have simply been around a lot longer than the other food plants. Long enough, in fact, that they existed before North America and Europe had split apart, some 60 million years ago. The transcontinental distribution of many nut trees is, then, a mark of their great antiquity. (264)

With such an ancient history, it is not surprising that "[w]ild walnuts have been gathered and eaten since prehistoric times" (Davidson 833). The utilization of walnut oil in food preparation and of walnut juices in textile dyes has an equally long history (Davidson 833).

Reports of the ancient Greeks transporting Persian walnut trees across the desert for transplantation in the Carthage area credits this civilization with the first-known walnut cultivation (Considine and Considine 2088; Davidson 833). As has become a matter of course with the majority of these brownie ingredients, transplantation and

cultivation soon spread. Walnut trees sailed across the Mediterranean into Greece, Italy, and France. It has been noted that “[t]he Romans were prepared to pay a high price for good walnuts” (Davidson 833), calling these nuts “Jupiter’s acorns” (Davidson 833). Ironically, the leap of English walnuts across the Channel from France into the British Isles occurred in the fifteenth century. The relative lateness of this transplantation was due mostly in part to English “climatic conditions [which] make [walnut] cultivation difficult” (Davidson 833). English or Persian walnut trees tend to do best in mild climates with semi-arid conditions (Considine and Considine 2088). Despite the apparent climatic difficulties, English cookbooks from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries abound with walnut recipes, suggesting that walnuts “must have been grown extensively” (Davidson 833) somewhere in the British empire.

As with sugar cane, the “discovery” of the New World opened up new opportunities for land development. Persian or English walnuts were quickly “introduced to the West Indies, North America, and western South America” (Considine and Considine 2088). Although, as was mentioned before, the New World had (and still has) indigenous walnut strains, the European English or Persian version “achieved and retains dominance” (Davidson 833). The New England settlers carrying and planting their English walnuts ensured this. As well, the work of Spanish missionaries in the eighteenth century to bring English “walnut trees to California” (Considine and Considine 2088) proved especially fruitful. The United States now produces nearly three-quarters of all nuts consumed in the worldwide English or Persian walnut market (Considine and Considine 2089). The majority of this cultivation and production takes place in California (McGee 272). France and Italy follow up as the world’s other major producers. The production and consumption of the native walnut trees of North America, including the black walnut, “often regarded as the national tree of the USA” (Davidson

833), and the butternut or American white walnut, are low key and domestic. Although significant quantities of the black walnut are often harvested along the eastern seaboard of the United States, where it naturally grows, consumption is typically limited to the areas “near where the nuts are harvested” (Considine and Considine 2088). The “troublesome hard shell[s]” (Davidson 833) of both the butternut and the black walnut make them harder to process, so preference is given to the “easier to shell” (McGee 272), imported cousin. As with Walvin’s assertion of sugar production to be “a remarkable - and central - historical fact” (22) due to its nature as an alien commodity in an alien land produced to satisfy demands in other foreign lands, the production of the English walnut on American soil is rather remarkable. It is rather remarkable that “the walnut tree native to the United States is not the key producer of commercial nuts, but rather the major production is from the [English or Persian walnut] imported from another continent” (Considine and Considine 2088). Such an incorporation of the Persian walnut, the exotic Other, onto American soil and into American culture is central to issues surrounding exploitation and acculturation.

As with any major modern-day agricultural endeavour, walnuts are big business. A poultry farmer does not yield thousands of eggs if s/he is constantly wandering about looking for eggs in the many diverse places that free-roaming chickens are apt to lay in. And so it is with walnuts. California did not become the world’s largest producer of Persian walnuts without entrance into agribusiness, in which everything is monitored for optimum efficiency. Because “[w]alnuts have the reputation of being very susceptible to infestation” (Minifie 250), many of those non-biodegradable salt compounds found in pesticides have made their way onto and into walnuts. They are put into the soil to ensure maximum growth. They are sprayed onto the trees to ensure maximum harvest. On these large plantations, walnuts “are usually shaken off the tree by a large and violent

device attached to a tractor" (Davidson 833). And workers—some of the 1.5 million seasonal farmworkers in the United States alone, who are routinely threatened and cheated, abused and jeopardized—are paid an average of \$6,500 per year (Rosenberg xiii) to do the back-breaking labour of picking up the pieces. Wendell Berry writes, "The industrial farm is said to have been patterned on the factory production line. In practice, it looks more like a concentration camp" (378).

### **3 tsp vanilla**

A vine-growing tropical orchid, vanilla is the only member of this large family of flowering plants to produce an edible fruit—a long, slender pod shaped like a string bean. "[I]ndigenous to the rainforests of the Caribbean, Central America, the southeastern coast of Mexico, and the northernmost latitudes of South America" (Rain 36), vanilla vines, when allowed the natural freedom of unrestricted growth, will "climb high into the forest canopy, drawing some of their nourishment through aerial roots that grip the host trees" (Rain 36). The pod itself is virtually flavourless and scentless until fermentation, when the fragrant and tasty chemical compound of vanillin "become[s] readily discernible" (Rain 37). It is this "biochemical fact," according to culinary historian, Patricia Rain, which "makes it remarkable that, in antiquity, vanilla's virtues were discovered, let alone that an efficient means of curing the beans was developed and the plant itself brought under intensive cultivation" (37). While Eurocentric historians consider vanilla to have been "[d]iscovered in Mexico" (Bender 291) by the conquering Spaniards, the Totonac Indians of the Gulf coast region of Mexico had, at least six hundred years prior to that so-called "discovery," been cultivating and processing vanilla beans in a fashion "very much like the methods used today in commercial vanilla extraction" (Rain 37). They believed vanilla to be a plant sent from heaven, a plant which would provide them with "a source of eternal happiness" (Rain 37). Cherishing this heavenly gift, "Totonac farmers learned

to husband the vine to great advantage" (Rain 38). This cultivated vanilla was utilized by the Totonacs as a medicine, a perfume, a flavouring in food and drinks, an aphrodisiac, and an insect repellent (Rain 37). During the cultivation process, the farmers curbed the vines' growth upward to a maximum of five feet, so that energy would go into the production of flowers rather than height. They practised hand pollination, since natural pollination of the vanilla orchid is only effected "by a few species of ants and hummingbirds and the tiny melipona bee" (Rain 38). With less than a day to pollinate—vanilla orchids only blossom for that amount of time—it is not surprising that fertilization resulting from natural pollination tends to be rather low.

Word of this heavenly gift spread, and when "the Aztecs subjugated the coastal Indian tribes" around 1000 AD, the Totonacs were required "to surrender a portion of their annual vanilla harvest as tribute" (Rain 38). It seems Montezuma enjoyed drinking his chocolate flavoured with vanilla. When Cortés arrived in 1520, the oppressed Totonacs embraced his mission and marched with him into the Aztec capital. His eventual thanks for their loyalty and service was more oppression, "to double their taxes. Evidently he and his officers had quickly developed an appetite for their product" (Rain 39). It is not known if Cortés took vanilla back to Spain at this time, but by the mid to late sixteenth century, vanilla was rising as a popular chocolate flavouring. It seems "Europe's royalty and wealthiest classes" (Rain 39) also enjoyed drinking their chocolate flavoured with vanilla. It was said that, in England, "Queen Elizabeth became [such] an extraordinary devotee of vanilla [that] in her later years [she] allegedly consum[ed] only food and drink enlivened with its flavor" (Rain 40). But while other parts of Europe, especially France, embraced vanilla, the Spanish "eventually cast it aside for cinnamon" (Rain 41).

While vanilla may have lost its favour with the Spanish, it was in "the eighteenth

century that vanilla took over the role it has held ever since" (Ayto 307), as a favourite flavouring in desserts of all kinds. And this was largely due to the love affair the French had with vanilla. It is even reported that vanilla made its way into the United States of America with a returning U.S. ambassador from Paris by the name of Thomas Jefferson around 1789. Apparently, he craved vanilla so much upon his return to North America that he specially ordered vanilla pods to be shipped from Paris so as to share the delights with his associates (Rain 42). Patricia Rain contests that "[t]o support this national habit and to reduce its cost, the French shipped Mexican vanilla cuttings to the Bourbon Islands (now Madagascar, Réunion, and the Comoro Islands) and their other tropical colonies, thus becoming probably the primary agents for dispersion of the species outside the New World" (41).

While the French successfully transplanted vanilla orchids into their colonies by as early as 1730, it would not be until the mid-nineteenth century that any fruit would be produced. While other introduced crops such as cacao and sugar cane were proving wildly successful, and hence, wildly profitable in their new lands, vanilla continued to fail. It would grow, but no pods were being produced. It took a full century for the Europeans to discover what the Totonacs had already known for nearly a millennium. In 1837, a Belgian scientist by the name of Charles Moren travelled to Mexico "to study the botany of the vanilla orchid and Totonac methods of cultivation" (Rain 41). Until that point, the Totonacs still had a monopoly on the world vanilla market. In 1841, following Moren's findings, a former Réunion slave, by the name of Edmund Albius, perfected an artificial vanilla pollination technique which employed the use of "a slender bamboo stylus" (Rain 41). It is a technique that is still in use today, often "performed by dexterous women and children" (Rain 41). And thus, the Totonacs' vanilla reign ceased. Madagascar and Tahiti are now the world's main growing regions (Bender 291). The

Totonacs are still involved in vanilla production, but only as plantation hands. Rain writes that "the tropical forests of southeastern Mexico have largely been destroyed, and most of the land where vanilla once grew wild is now used to pasture cattle or for citrus production....[D]espite their vast knowledge of both the territory and the needs of vanilla, [the Totonacs] are struggling to keep their ancestral crop growing in a vastly altered environment" (43).

Despite increasing technology, "hand pollination [with a bamboo stylus] remains the usual practice" (McGee 214) in cultivating vanilla crops. In fact, "attempts to improve traditional methods for culturing vines have not been very successful. Modern cultural methods tend to make it more difficult to control the spread of fungus diseases which attack terrestrial roots of the plant. Research has been underway for many years to develop a hybrid that will be more resistant to such diseases" (Considine and Considine 2061). Naturally, this still makes vanilla an expensive commodity, whose "steep price [is] second...only to saffron" (McGee 215). To combat vanilla's seeming unwillingness to be uprooted, transplanted, acculturated, and genetically modified, technology has had to come up with other ways of making vanilla. Because "expenditure on food does not increase in the same ratio as income, but becomes relatively lower, [p]eople learn to expect that food will be cheap; money is for spending on other things" (Visser 105). In order for vanilla to become "one of the most popular flavourings worldwide for confectionery and other sweet foods" (Davidson 820), for it to become "so commonplace that its name serves generically to indicate things that are plain or ordinary" (Rain 35), it had to become inexpensively indispensable. Just as margarine emerged as a synthetic, less-expensive version of butter, vanilla too is now "flattered" through cheap imitation. Synthetic vanillin "was one of the earliest achievements in the field of flavours" (Minifie 313), being first "produced by German chemists in 1874 from coniferin, the glucoside



found in the sapwood of certain conifers" (Davidson 821). Artificial vanilla "can also be produced from other sources such as coal tar extracts" (Davidson 821), "clove oil" (Minifie 313), and "the lignin in wood wastes" (McGee 215). "In the leading process for making vanillin, waste sulfite liquor from the pulp and paper industry is the starting material" (Considine and Considine 2061). Synthetic vanilla is now a widespread imitation food, often blended with natural vanilla in many extracts to spread the "real" vanilla even further (Minifie 313).

### **Mix together**

The historical brownie recipe, arising at the dawn of a new century in the New World, was born out of a world in which industry and technology raged. Time was money. Mass production and mass consumption were becoming of paramount importance. And the quest to be in control of such processes was the all-consuming desire of the "developed" world. Certainly one might argue that mass consumption eroded social and class boundaries, eliminating status symbols by introducing the "universal availability of everything" (Visser 85). Such availability makes it "easy to say that a culturally pluralistic and egalitarian ethic is taking over" (Abrahams 34). That would be naive, because simply put, "eating other people's foods has often been a sign of their having been subjugated" (Abrahams 34). And as such, the brownie recipe becomes an index of signs, symbols, and icons. The ingredients that combine to form the recipe and the eventual performance are abounding with ideologies and concepts, with stories. There are "Jove's acorns" and "the food of the gods" mixed with the heavenly nectar of vanilla and the "flower" of all flours. The brownie recipe truly has been "negotiated into [an] aesthetic object of transcendent mystical properties whose essence [has been] vaunted to produce a wholesome moral economy" (Sandiford 23), however carnivalesque. As these stories, these ingredients, mesh and meld into the brownie, the

brownie appears "to be an extension of a capitalist-colonist approach to life in which exploitation of subordinated peoples is not only expressed in terms of labor but also in appropriating their cultural styles, including their ways of cooking and eating" (Abrahams 23) and their very ingredients. It is a capitalist-colonist attempt at transcendence.

As the appropriation increases and the transcendence of earthly bonds is attempted, not only are people "alienated from their work [and their food], experiencing themselves only as commodities [or consumers], and suffer[ing] grievously, both physically and psychologically" (Berger 50), but even the food itself comes to epitomize alienation, an inverted form of religious or mystical transcendence. Nowhere is there a more prime example of an alienated worker than a slave or an itinerant worker, who works the plantations and the orchards as an open commodity. Even the plants themselves have been alienated from their origins, uprooted and transplanted, domesticated and cultivated. It goes without saying that the laying hen is a victim of alienation, trapped within her little cage and mindlessly producing a product. Even margarine and artificial vanilla are forms of alienation, as oils and wood chips are manipulated by science to create something "just as good" as the original. Their sole reason for even being is based upon a consuming need. They have been commodities since their very conception.

Although the brownie has never been commercialized to the same extent as the doughnut or the chocolate chip cookie, it still comes to symbolize a society based upon consumerism, the likes of which the world has never before experienced, as Thomas Merton observes:

Nowhere, except perhaps in the analogous society of pagan Rome, has there ever been such a flowering of cheap and petty and disgusting lusts and vanities as in the world of capitalism, where there is no evil that is not

fostered and encouraged for the sake of making money. We live in a society whose whole policy is to excite every nerve in the human body and keep it at the highest pitch of artificial tension, to strain every human desire to the limit and to create as many new desires and synthetic passions as possible, in order to cater to them with the products of our factories and printing presses and movie studios and all the rest. (53)

We eat synthetic vanilla and butter. Our processed and refined foods have no nutritional substance, and are merely concerned with the aesthetics. White, refined sugar may be toxic, but at least it makes us feel good. White, refined flour may be devoid of any vitamins, but at least it looks “good,” being so clean and bright and white. And “[a]s more sugars and fats, more foods in processed form, are consumed, the quantity of vitamins and minerals available grows less. A diet high in fat and refined carbohydrates, combined with sedentary habits, also has meant a marked rise in obesity” (Farb and Armelagos 214). We have more food available to us than ever before, but our overall nutrition has not improved—“the decrease in food prices has been accompanied by a decrease in quality” (Flandrin 440). Time is money and the machines need to be fed, so the clocks tick on and the neon lights appear. Always open. Open 24 hours. There is just not enough time in the day to meet the demands of consumption.

“The religion of progress has been paramount for two centuries, and for much of that time the drawbacks of progress seemed negligible” (Flandrin 441). The brownie has been a marker of affluence, of transcendence from poverty’s stigma. Yet, this transcendence has been superficial and perverse. Its capitalist character cannot allow for true transcendence because “[c]apitalism is characterized by the concentration of ownership and power, centralization of production, and the hierarchy of command. Given this system of production, it cannot solve the long-run problems of population growth, inequality and exploitation, resource distribution, and environmental degradation” (Warnock 316). Indeed, as Tansey and Worsley pointed out at the beginning of this chapter:

[t]he modern food system is not inevitable but has deep historical roots which are bound up in humankind's various attempts to control the biological, socio-economic and cultural aspects of food. The interplay of the forces involved has shaped the food system, producing food shortages and surpluses, hunger and overnutrition, technological brilliance and junk foods in the same world. (qtd. in Bell and Valentine 1995)

It seems the industrialized world's capitalist transcendence has depended upon the descent of other parts of the world into famine and poverty. In order to have "Haves," there must be "Have-Nots." There are Mr. Bumbles in this world because there are little Olivers, and there are Olivers because there are Mr. Bumbles. To ascend beyond earthly ties, the earth must be destroyed.

What becomes increasingly frightening is the idea that this "American Dream," this brownie recipe for capitalist transcendence, is placed on a pedestal as being the pinnacle of all that one should ever desire to aspire to have and to be. The developing world looks to these neon lights on their television screens and in their video stores, and wants it because they are indoctrinated to want it. Yet, "the increasing adoption of high-fat diets [of brownies] in newly affluent nations around the globe threatens to wreak financial disaster on fragile developing economies" (Rice 1998). This disaster looms because increased consumption means increased exploitation. Once-exploited nations are now exploiting—cutting down their rainforests and committing genocide—in order to attain that "American Dream." In so doing, these nations become increasingly alienated from their own roots, and "a growing classification of human beings [arises]: the half-formed man between cultures, and therefore of no culture...[who] apes the West, is frustrated by it, and often ends up hating it" (Kaplan 148). And so, the industrialized world's "brownie" dream, its ideology based upon mass production and consumption, infiltrates throughout all the earth, injecting into her inhabitants lusts and desires, attempting to make us all "brownie junkies" who seek our highs in constant consumption.

## Chapter Four

# Reconstructing Brownies in *The Kitchen of Meaning*

On more than one occasion, I have delivered a condensed version of this brownie thesis to undergraduate folklore classes. I begin, as I have also done here, by leading them through maternal memories and around my mother's kitchen. Some pipe up with their own unique food memories, sharing their personal "brownies," be they of kimchi or Kraft dinner or buttermilk or any number of seemingly endless possibilities. It is profoundly and poignantly life-affirming. But, by the time I have finished with my rapidfire assault consisting of battery houses and agribusiness and migrant farmworkers and slavery, pummeling these poor, unsuspecting students with everything from pesticides to child slave labour to multinational corporate greed, they are pretty much petrified with horror. They often sit wide-eyed and silent before me, looking apprehensively at me and the brownies. The realization that the brownie they have just eaten, or that sits on the desk before them partially consumed, contains such blatant ugliness and amorality disturbs the majority of them. None have yet been physically ill, but I can tell by the general lack of eagerness to take a second brownie (when many initially expressed how good they were) that many have been unsettled, and for the moment, have lost their appetites. And I think many wonder, as I once did, how they did not see such things before? How could they have missed such blatant exploitation and oppression? Lisa Heldke contends that "[d]espite the real interdependence that exists between U.S. consumers and farm workers—in the United States, Mexico, Costa Rica,

and Kenya, for example—these connections are often conveniently obscure or invisible to middle-class American consumers, and thus do not inform our decision-making in the grocery store” (“Food Politics” 301). We miss the brownie connections, but how? What obscures and obfuscates and clouds and fogs? What magician has been at work? What is going on?

Somewhere betwixt table and field, micro and macro, superstructure and base, a veil descends. Facades are constructed and pictures adjusted and images tweaked. The workings of the field become “conveniently obscure” and virtually invisible to the consumer eye. In his book on the nature and history of migratory labour in California, entitled *The Lie of the Land*, Don Mitchell concludes that “[n]ot only do migratory workers in agricultural California have to continually fight just to survive—to find shelter and food and money enough to maintain themselves and their families—they also have to continually fight their own aestheticization, their dissolution, in the landscape” (200). The harshness and brutality of the field are smudged with stroke of a watercolourist’s brush, blending and dissolving into the hazy, murky background. And all becomes “beautiful.” California remains an alluring mecca, and brownies remain “the classic comfort food” (Land qtd. in Fuller 26). But the questions still remain. Who or what is blurrily painting and performing card tricks? How is it being done? And why? In order to answer these questions, illuminating the processes of “magic” and artistry, I must enter the “kitchen of meaning.” In a 1964 article of that title, the pioneering semiologist and cultural critic, Roland Barthes asserts:

To decipher the world’s signs always means to struggle with a certain innocence of objects. We all understand our language so “naturally” that it never occurs to us that it is an extremely complicated system, one anything but “natural” in its signs and rules: in the same way, it requires an incessant shock of observation in order to deal not with the content of messages but with their making: in short the semiologist, like the linguist,

must enter the "kitchen of meaning." (158)

To understand how the brownie has become so "natural" and "innocent," mundane and quotidian, I must gain greater insight into the creation of cultural myths, the construction of meanings, and how these are influenced by the processes of domination.

### **Construction of the Mythical Brownie**

Housed within structuralist theory lies semiology, a systematic reflection on the "vast science of signs" (Barthes Mythologies 111), symbols, and forms. According to Barthes, semiology is a "[s]cience of social messages [and] of cultural messages [and] of secondary information" ("Kitchen" 158). It is an "[a]pprehension of everything which is 'theatre' in the world, from ecclesiastical pomp to the hairstyle of the Beatles, from lounging pajamas to the debates of international politics" (Barthes "Kitchen" 158). It is an analytical methodology which studies "the life of signs at the heart of social life" (Barthes "Kitchen" 159), separating language and deciphering meanings. The Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, pioneered this science with his structural breakdown of language. According to his semiotic theory, language is divided into two component parts—the inscription and the concept or image. The inscription is the written or verbal signifier, while the concept or image that such an inscription evokes is the signified (Storey 73-4). For example, the word "brownies" is a signifier which evokes the signified, the conceptual image, of "small, rich chewy squares of chocolate cake, containing nuts" (Ayto 39). The linguistic marker or signifier coupled with the concept or signified creates the sign.

Because, as Barthes contends, "any material can be arbitrarily endowed with meaning" (Mythologies 110), the relationship between signifier and signified is therefore arbitrary, the result of cultural conventions. There is nothing in the word "brownies" to naturally link it to 'small, rich chewy squares of chocolate cake, containing nuts'. In fact,

knowing that I am studying folklore, when I respond “Brownies” to people who query as to what I am doing my thesis on, I more often than not get the response, “Oh, like the little fairies?” When I respond in the negative, the next assertion is commonly, “Oh, the little girls who sell cookies then?” When I again respond in the negative, I often receive quizzical looks. This example not only illustrates the problematic general conception of folklore being something “once-upon-a-time” but it also illustrates how culturally and contextually conventional the nature of this signifier-signified relationship is. Even within the food category, if one were in New Zealand, “brownies” would signify something different, “a sweet bread made with brown sugar and currants” (OED 594). It is not uncommon in language for one signifier to have a multitude of signifieds, the correct concept usually being ascertained by contextual and cultural clues. Yet, despite the multiplicity of signifieds for “brownies” and the various brownie signs, this semiological division still remains in a primarily denotative state, concerned simply with linguistic semantics. To gain a greater understanding of meaning, one must go deeper.

Springboarding from Saussure’s work, Roland Barthes took semiology to a whole new level. His main concern was studying “that mysterious operation by which any message may be impregnated with a secondary meaning, a meaning that is diffuse, generally ideological, and which is known as the ‘*connotated meaning*’” (Barthes “Kitchen” 159, emphasis in original). In the 1957 preface to his great semiological work, *Mythologies*, a book that has been deemed “one of the founding texts of cultural studies” (Storey 82), Barthes writes:

The starting point of these reflections was usually a feeling of impatience at the sight of ‘naturalness’ with which newspapers, art and common sense constantly dress up a reality which, even though it is the one we live in, is undoubtedly determined by history. In short, in the account given of our contemporary circumstances, I resented seeing Nature and History confused at every turn, and I wanted to track down, in the decorative



display of *what-goes-without-saying*, the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there. (11, emphasis in original)

His frustration comes not from understanding “brownies” to be ‘small, rich chewy squares of chocolate cake, containing nuts’, but from the implicating connotative notions which equate brownies as being the “uniquely American” (Albright 138) “classic comfort food” (Land qtd. in Fuller 26). There is nothing inherent in the word “brownies” to causally yoke it to being “American” and “unique” and “classic” and “comfortable.” Such an apparently causal connection has been a connotative construct and a mythic creation.

In the concluding essay of *Mythologies* entitled “Myth Today,” Barthes expounds upon the construction of myth. He asserts that myth “*is a second-order semiological system*. That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second” (114, emphasis in original). The primary denotative sign of brownies comprised of the inscription, “brownies,” and the concept, ‘small, rich chewy squares of chocolate cake, containing nuts’, becomes the starting point for yet another level of signification. The brownie sign becomes a signifier which links with another concept or image—in my case, my mother and all the memories discussed in Chapter Two—to create a new sign. The linguistic schema of the denotative brownies coercively kowtows and cowers in the face of the new, mythically-endowed, connotative brownies. Barthes explains:

[I]n myth there are two semiological systems, one of which is staggered in relation to the other: a linguistic system, the language (or modes of representation which are assimilated to it), which I shall call the *language-object*, because it is the language which myth gets hold of in order to build its own system; and myth itself, which I shall call *metalanguage*, because it is a second language, *in which* one speaks about the first. (*Mythologies* 115, emphasis in original)

It is this mythical metalanguage of the secondary signification that “transforms history

into nature" (Barthes Mythologies 129), that creates the confusion of Nature and History through a process of naturalization.

The construction of a metalanguage and the "constant game of hide-and-seek between the meaning and the form" (Barthes Mythologies 118) that such a work-site initiates is the defining principle of myth. Barthes contends that "[h]owever paradoxical it may seem, *myth hides nothing*: its function is to distort, not to make disappear" (Mythologies 121, emphasis in original). Those migratory workers in California are aestheticized through romanticization and artistry. They are not completely eliminated or erased from the landscape, just blended and distorted until the harshness and brutality of *their* reality is not readily discernible to *ours*. They cannot be completely eliminated from the landscape because they are needed to construct the basis upon which the myth resides. Even "the most natural object contains a political trace, however faint and diluted, the more or less memorable presence of a human act which has produced, fitted up, used, subjected or rejected it" (Barthes Mythologies 143-4). The ugliness of global brownie production is there if you know how to listen to the silences, read between the lines, and acknowledge the conspicuous absences. It cannot completely disappear because it is integral to the foundation of both culinary and mythical brownies. We need the ingredients in order to make the brownies. The ugliness obscurely remains so that we can create something "unique" and "comfortable" and, in my case, maternal. Essentially, myth allows brownies to be

deprived of their history, changed into gestures....But this distortion is not an obliteration: [the brownies] remain here, the concept needs them; they are half-amputated, they are deprived of memory, not of existence: they are at once stubborn, silently rooted there, and garrulous, a speech wholly at the service of the concept. The concept, literally, deforms, but does not abolish the meaning: a word can perfectly render this contradiction: it alienates it. (Barthes Mythologies 122-3)

The dichotomy present in the brownie creates a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde scenario, in which the transformation of brownies from its denotative state to its mythic one is all too often characterized by violent, alienating acts. Exploitation and violence of the “developing” world enables the beatification of brownies in the “developed” world. Brownie production is justified through naturalization.

Ultimately, Barthes argues that “myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal” (*Mythologies* 142), natural and absolute. Myth usurps the denotative signification, thus becoming its own denotative and factual system:

[M]yth is experienced as innocent speech: not because its intentions are hidden—if they were hidden, they could not be efficacious—but because they are naturalized. In fact, what allows the reader to consume myth innocently is that he [or she] does not see it as a semiological system but as an inductive one. Where there is only equivalence, he [or she] sees a kind of causal process: the signifier and the signified have, in his [or her] eyes, a natural relationship. This confusion can be expressed otherwise: any semiological system is a system of values; now the myth-consumer takes the signification for a system of facts: myth is read as a factual system, whereas it is but a semiological system. (Barthes *Mythologies* 131)

Connotation ceases and myth *is* fact. It purifies signs making them innocent, giving “them a natural and eternal justification, [giving] them a clarity which is not that of explanation but that of a statement of fact” (Barthes *Mythologies* 143). Barthes continues, “In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics” (*Mythologies* 143). Without question, brownies simply *are* the “uniquely American” (Albright 138) “classic comfort food” (Land qtd. in Fuller 26). They *are* an eternal and natural reality, and therefore, unquestionable—or are they?

Barthes contends that the ultimate “end of myths is to immobilize the world: they

must suggest and mimic a universal order which has fixated once and for all the hierarchy of possessions" (*Mythologies* 155). If we return to the indelible scene between Oliver and Mr. Bumble, little Oliver's brazen questioning of his food allotment questions the unquestionable. He challenges the very mythic construction of the "natural" hierarchy that has placed him as an inconsequential nobody not worth more than one bowl of gruel. He challenges not only Mr. Bumble but the entire mythic universal order and the carefully constructed eternal reality. He challenges the essential myth of his existence, and that makes him very frightening and dangerous indeed. Don Mitchell concludes his study of migratory labour in California arguing:

The production of the beautiful that is now being celebrated in the agricultural valleys in California was (and remains) itself quite an ugly process. So, more than anything, I hope that by connecting landscape to the facts of its production, by stressing the importance of these ugly processes, I have provided a way of seeing that helps make sure those asparagus planters do not indeed simply dissolve into the foggy landscape they made. (202)

Mitchell wants to ensure that myth does not overwhelm and over-ride these workers' lives. He wants to expose the unnatural naturalness and the irrational rationality and the illogical logic of myth construction. Such a quest is rather daunting when one begins to consider what one is up against—the powerful myth-makers.

### **Snacking on One-Dimensional Bourgeois Brownies in the Hegemonic Iron Cage of Rationalization**

There is an old adage proclaiming that "might makes right" and indeed "[p]ower goes far to create the morality convenient to itself" (Carr 229), to rationalize its brownies. The powerful go far to construct the myths that are beneficial and convenient for themselves and for the continuation of their power. They "create the myth about what is right and just in a way that argues for the rightfulness of their activities" (Maxwell 191).

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels contend that the ruling class "is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interests as the common interest of all the members of society, that is, expressed in ideal form: it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones" (65-6). It must give its ideas mythic status. It must create an ideology that does "not just convince oppressed groups that all is well with the world, [but] also convince[s] ruling groups [themselves] that exploitation and oppression are really something quite different, acts of universal necessity" (Storey 117). The accomplishment of this myth construction comes with the ruling class territory, as Marx and Engels note in *The German Ideology*: "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production" (64, emphasis in original). Domination is not simply limited to politics and economics, but "the mechanism [of myth] is being organically extended" (Gramsci 27) to include all of society, as the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci explains:

Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. The capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organisers of a new culture, of a new legal system, etc. (5)

The mythical ideals and ideas of the dominating social group spread forth "organically" and "naturally," universally homogenizing eternity. The social order *goes-without-saying*, it is so pervasively quotidian. And that makes it rather difficult to recognize, let alone dissect and criticize.

Gramsci contends that “[w]e are all conformists of some conformism or other, always man-in-the-mass or collective man. The question is this: of what historical type is the conformism, the mass humanity to which one belongs” (324)? For those of us in the industrialized, “developed” world, this conformism is capitalism. It is Progress, promising us “a kind of heaven on earth” (Heilbroner 113) in which we can have “power over nature...[and] improved material well-being” (Heilbroner 113). Because we come from the “progressive” West, we have a *right* to consume brownies and drive gas-guzzling SUVs, to wear Nike shoes and eat at Tim Hortons, to clear-cut old growth forests and buy something every single day. These things have made our lives *better*. And in our benevolence, we have extended this capitalist vision to the rest of the world. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels observe this capitalist homogenization of the world, stating that capitalism “compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image” (84). The West has “civilized” the world to such an extent that capitalism, as John Storey notes, “is now, more or less, internationally hegemonic” (124). It has been “organically extended” to encompass the world, making it “universal” and “absolute,” “eternal” and *so* “natural.”

Where communism, fascism, apartheid, and dictatorships have explosively erupted and continually faltered, capitalism internationally “succeeds” again and again. Slowly, steadily and subtly, it seeps into cultures worldwide. Its amorphous nature allows it to constantly shift and shape into whatever is expedient, so long as its ultimate monetary ends are not compromised. It will exploit individuals in the “developing” world in order to sell brownies to those in the “developed.” It will then turn around and sell those same exploited workers McDonald’s Happy Meals, convincing them to save

their meagre wages for the latest pair of Adidas sneakers or for the most recent Spice Girls album. It is a chameleon, continually changing its colours to suit the differing global cultural environments, making it palatable and digestible to all religions, races and genders. It signs the anarchist punk band to a major record label, sells Che Guevara T-shirts, and "Disney-fies" Chinese folklore. Capitalism is truly the paragon of hegemony.

A concept devised by Gramsci, hegemony is the process whereby

a dominant class (in alliance with other classes or class fractions) does not merely *rule* a society but *leads* it through the exercise of moral and intellectual leadership. In this sense, the concept is used to suggest a society in which, despite oppression and exploitation, there is a high degree of consensus, a large measure of social stability; a society in which subordinate groups and classes appear to support and subscribe to values, ideals, objectives, cultural and political meanings, which bind them to, and 'incorporate' them into, the prevailing structures of power. (Storey 124, emphasis in original)

The organic extension of capitalist myth purifies and stabilizes through constant negotiation, as Ernesto Laclau asserts: "A class is hegemonic not so much to the extent that it is able to impose a uniform conception of the world on the rest of society, but to the extent that it can articulate different visions of the world in such a way that their potential antagonism is neutralized" (161). Capitalism is all things to everyone, selling everything from peace sign pendants and organic vegetables to nuclear warheads and genetically-modified corn. And through this ever-shifting appeasement, it contains and controls revolutionary tendencies.

While hegemony seeks to maintain a compromise equilibrium through a supple dance of give and take, it not only allows for diversity of expression, but will, on occasion, admit to its own fallibility, if such an admission will keep "the peace" by maintaining social order and containing conformity. This is what truly sets capitalism apart from its counterparts. Still, this admission is far from being benign. Barthes calls

the whole process "Operation Margarine" in which "[a] little 'confessed' evil saves one from acknowledging a lot of hidden evil" (Mythologies 42). A small confession, according to Barthes, "immunizes the contents of the collective imagination by means of a small inoculation of acknowledged evil; one thus protects it against the risk of generalized subversion" (Mythologies 150). He calls it "Operation Margarine" on the basis of a margarine advertisement during which someone indignantly cries out against margarine until one tries it, and then "one's conscience becomes more pliable, and margarine is a delicious food, tasty, digestible, economical, useful in all circumstances. The moral at the end is well known: 'Here you are, rid of a prejudice which cost you dearly!' It is the same way that the Established Order relieves you of your progressive prejudices" (Mythologies 42). Capitalism will admit to a foible, a mistake, a little mismanagement, a minor sin, a lack in judgment, and might even enact justice, give an apology, pay compensations. It will say that such "evils" were ultimately good intentions gone awry. The internment of thousands of Japanese Canadians was a *necessary* and *beneficial* wartime measure that had Canada's best interests at heart. MacMillan Bloedel clear-cuts are a necessary "evil" if we want white paper upon which to print theses. Besides, "what is this trifling dross of Order, compared to its advantages? It is well worth the price of an immunization. What does it matter, *after all*, if margarine is just fat, when it goes further than butter, and costs less? What does it matter, *after all*, if Order is a little brutal or a little blind, when it allows us to live cheaply" (Barthes Mythologies 42, emphasis in original)? And if capitalism can distract us with minor evils, inoculating us through confessionals, it can get on unimpeded with its major ones. We become so caught up in the caloric sinfulness of decadent brownies that we simply fail to notice the greater sins of global exploitation and oppression.

When a little confession is not enough to placate, capitalism will actually



seemingly negate itself. In what has perhaps been the most nefarious hegemonic move in attempts to appease revolutionary restlessness, “the bourgeoisie...obliterated its name in passing from reality to representation, from economic man to mental man” (Barthes Mythologies 138). With the Russian Revolution and the rise of communism, as well as the ever-expanding ideas of non-classist democracies and free enterprise systems, the bourgeois class underwent, as Barthes asserts, “a real *ex-nominating* operation: the bourgeoisie is defined as *the social class which does not want to be named*” (Mythologies 138, emphasis in original). It simply made its name unnecessary, as it melded its ideals and meanings into “the idea of *nation*” (Barthes Mythologies 138, emphasis in original). “Bourgeois” left a bad taste in people’s mouths, so it began its career as a mythical ghost-writer. Everything, as Barthes suggests,

is steeped in this anonymous ideology: our press, our films, our theatre, our pulp literature, our rituals, our Justice, our diplomacy, our conversations, our remarks about the weather, a murder trial, a touching wedding, the cooking we dream of, the garments we wear, everything, in everyday life, is dependent on the representation which the bourgeoisie *has and makes us have* of the relations between man and the world. These ‘normalized’ forms attract little attention, by the very fact of their extension, in which their origin is easily lost. They enjoy an intermediate position: being neither directly political nor directly ideological, they live peacefully between the action of the militants and the quarrels of the intellectuals; more or less abandoned by the former and the latter, they gravitate towards the enormous mass of the undifferentiated, of the insignificant, in short, of nature. (Mythologies 140, emphasis in original)

Capitalism “keep[s] reality without keeping the appearances” (Barthes Mythologies 149), infinitely soliciting myth to remain “invisible,” and therefore, free from wrath and revolutions and angst. Once again, it can move, without imposition, towards its ultimate monetary ends.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire elucidates on the placating homogenization process of hegemony, stating that

[o]ne of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressed and oppressor is *prescription*. Every prescription represents the imposition of one man's [or woman's] choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the man [or woman] prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness. Thus, the behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor. (31, emphasis in original)

Capitalism prescribes consumption for everything. Buy when you are happy. Buy when you are sad. Consume when you are angry, lonely, excited, bored. The pioneering media critic, Marshall McLuhan observes "that the more illusion and falsehood [and myth] needed to maintain any given state of affairs, the more tyranny is needed to maintain the illusion and falsehood [and myth]. Today the tyrant rules not by club or fist, but, disguised as a market researcher, he shepherds his flocks in the ways of utility and comfort" (*Mechanical* vi). Capitalism is comfortable, utilitarian and "democratic." It leads us along, willingly and freely. We are *free* to choose what to buy, when to buy it, and where. Or are we? Herbert Marcuse, in *One-Dimensional Man*, argues that

social controls exact the overwhelming need for the production and consumption of waste; the need for stupefying work where it is no longer a real necessity; the need for modes of relaxation which soothe and prolong this stupefaction; the need for maintaining such deceptive liberties as free competition at administered prices, a free press which censors itself, free choice between brands and gadgets. Under the rule of a repressive whole, liberty can be made into a powerful instrument of domination....Free election of masters does not abolish the masters or the slaves. Free choice among a wide variety of goods and services does not signify freedom if these goods and services sustain social controls over a life of toil and fear—that is, if they sustain alienation. And the spontaneous reproduction of superimposed needs by the individual does not establish autonomy; it only testifies to the efficacy of the controls. (7-8)

As the capitalist consciousness organically extends, it becomes increasingly difficult to extricate oneself. One's worldview is heavily influenced by that of the prevailing social order. Capitalism's victims are often its most staunch supporters and militant defenders,

who follow religiously the capitalist prescription of consumption, who zealously seek after capital in order to become "significant," who exercise their freedoms within the bonds of hegemony, who decry a love of chocolate.

This lack of autonomy is only furthered by the rationalization and mechanization of everyday life. Industrialization is inextricably yoked to capitalism and the myth of progress. Heilbroner contends that "commodification is a necessity for a system that must expand to survive" (100). Such is the system governing capitalism and industrialization. Marcuse notes that "private space has been invaded and whittled down by technological reality. Mass production and mass distribution claim the *entire* individual, and industrial psychology has long since ceased to be confined to the factory" (10, emphasis in original). McLuhan asserts that "[b]y continuously embracing technologies, we relate ourselves to them as servomechanisms. That is why we must, to use them at all, serve these objects, these extensions of ourselves, as gods or minor religions" (*Understanding* 46). In *The McDonaldization of Society*, sociologist George Ritzer defines McDonaldization as "the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world" (Ritzer 1). Canada is by no means exempt from, immune to or averse to utilizing these McDonaldization processes. The principles governing this pervasive process, as identified by Ritzer, are four: efficiency, quantity and calculation, predictability, and control. And as the industrialized world increasingly seeks to become more and more efficient in its creation of more and more uniformity and conformity, as Marcuse observes, "[w]e are again confronted with one of the most vexing aspects of advanced industrial civilization: the rational character of its irrationality" (9). Harold Innis notes that "[m]echanization has emphasized complexity and confusion; it has been responsible for monopolies in the field of knowledge...The conditions of freedom of

thought are in danger of being destroyed by science, technology, and the mechanization of knowledge, and with them, Western civilization" (Innis 190). Such is the irrationality of rationalizing ourselves to extinction.

The monotonous nature of rationalization breeds a certain ennui, a boring, thought-less existence of routinization. And so the quest for stimulation begins. Play a video game. Watch some T.V. Chew gum. Smoke a cigarette. Drink a cup of coffee. Have a beer. Go shopping. Eat a brownie. Anything to divert and distract. Theodor Adorno insists, in "On Popular Music," that

[d]istractive is bound to the present mode of production, to the rationalized and mechanized process of labor to which, directly or indirectly, masses are subject. This mode of production, which engenders fear and anxiety about unemployment, loss of income, war, has its 'nonproductive' correlate in entertainment; that is, relaxation which does not involve the effort of concentration at all. People want to have fun. A fully concentrated and conscious experience of art is possible only to those whose lives do not put such a strain on them that in their spare time they want relief from both boredom and effort simultaneously. The whole sphere of cheap commercial entertainment reflects this dual desire. It induces relaxation because it is patterned and pre-digested. Its being patterned and predigested serves within the psychological household of the masses to spare them effort of that participation (even in listening or observation) without which there can be no receptivity to art. On the other hand, the stimuli they provide permit an escape from the boredom of mechanized labor. (205)

Thus emerges "a kind of blurred dialectic: to consume it [brownies, pop music, TV, etc] demands inattention and distraction, while its consumption produces in the consumer inattention and distraction" (Storey 111). The social order maintains stability, as people are inattentive to the hegemonic forces ruling their lives, too distracted by the capitalist stimulations which breed escapism and inattention.

We cannot see beyond the instant sugar fix of brownies, or the quick caffeine jolt of Coca Cola, or the flickering TV images. Marcuse asserts that

the irresistible output of the entertainment and information industry carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellectual and emotional reactions which bind the consumers more or less pleasantly to the producers and, through the latter, to the whole. The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood. And as these beneficial products become available to more individuals in more social classes, the indoctrination they carry ceases to be publicity; it becomes a way of life. It is a good way of life—much better than before—and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change. Thus emerges a pattern of *one-dimensional thought and behavior*. (12, emphasis in original)

Brownie eaters “are distracted from the demands of reality by [food] which does not demand attention either” (Adorno 205). Eating brownies is an effortless digestion of a pleasant product which exemplifies an affluent way of life, as it appears, “to all appearances, [to be] the product of industry” (Berry 376). Brownie roots have been so watercoloured by myth that brownies are just brownies—a tautological definition that suggests they simply spring forth naturally out of the earth. But, the result of this biological exile from reality “is a kind of solitude, unprecedented in human experience, in which the eater may think of eating as, first, a purely commercial transaction between him [or her] and a supplier and then as a purely appetitive transaction between him [or her] and his [or her] food” (Berry 376). Becoming so distracted and inattentive to our food, so alienated, is it any wonder that we cannot see through the fog and the mist and the illusionary projections?

### **Brownie Branding**

Again, Gramsci asserts that “[w]e are all conformists of some conformism or other” (324). And so there sit the students in the classroom, snacking on brownies in their Gap Khakis and logoed T-Shirts, in their MEC jackets and Doc Martens, utterly enmeshed in their own domination. They have been incorporated and placated, conformed and rationalized. Marshall McLuhan believes that

[o]urs is the first age in which many thousands of the best-trained

individual minds have made it a full-time business to get inside the collective public mind. To get inside in order to manipulate, exploit, control is the object now. And to generate heat not light is the intention. To keep everybody in the helpless state engendered by prolonged mental rutting is the effect of many ads and much entertainment alike.  
(Mechanical v)

Capitalism has been attempting to sell these students a "good" way of life for years. And for those who have uncritically absorbed the myths, buying into capitalist and industrial hegemony, their "[s]ubliminal and docile acceptance of media impact has made them prisons without walls for their human users" (McLuhan Understanding 20). They have been indoctrinated and absorbed until "the mind shapes itself into the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison" (Wollstonecraft 57). They have been trapped within the iron cage of rationalization where, as Foucault notes, "[t]here is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he [or she] is his [or her] own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against himself [or herself]" (155). They have interiorized and intextuated hegemony, allowing "a social law or power [to be] transformed by an instrumental apparatus onto [their] bod[ies]: the law or *logos* of a society is made flesh, is incarnated, and, simultaneously, the bodies of people in that society are transformed into signifiers of these rules, in a process of 'intextuation'" (Fiske 91, emphasis in original). They have become branded signs of capitalism.

In *No Logo*, a recent best-seller by journalist and activist, Naomi Klein, the process of branding is critically dissected. Branding is no longer about selling a product, it has moved beyond that, selling meaning and purpose to existence. Michel de Certeau expresses this process:

The intextuation of the body corresponds to the incarnation of the law; it supports it, even seems to establish it, and in any case it serves it. For the

law plays on it: "Give me your body and I will give you meaning, I will make you a name and a word in my discourse." The two problematics maintain each other, and perhaps the law would have no power if it were not able to support itself on the obscure desire to exchange one's flesh for a glorious body, to be written, even if it means dying, and to be transformed into a recognized word. (149)

The social law, the capitalist order, the unnameable class that begins with a "b", the hegemonic forces, all promise transcendence of the drudgery of life. Buy into a brand and life *is* better, more significant, more meaningful, more spiritual. Klein contends that "[b]randing, in its truest and most advanced incarnations, is about corporate transcendence. It may sound flaky, but that's precisely the point....the products that will flourish in the future will be the ones presented not as 'commodities' but as concepts: the brand as experience, as lifestyle" (Klein 21). Myth ascends, smudging out those dreary denotative ties which continually ground it to terra firma. Capitalism seemingly negates itself, no longer commodifying, but conceptualizing—the products are overshadowed by the canonizing concept.

In Chapter Two I wrote that it is the brownie-making process that is meaningful for me, and not necessarily the end product. The brownies are simply a means of remembering my mother, and it is upon this process that hegemony has seized and capitalized. Sell meanings, not products. Sell the concept of mother and family and happiness, but do it in such a way that it does not appear to be selling at all, just a benevolent granting of purpose, a *natural* process. Deeply personal "brownie" bonds are being incorporated and ultimately perverted. As brands continually "'establish emotional ties' with their customers" (Klein 20), creating meaningful "family" units, it becomes seemingly *unnatural* to sever those ties. Quoting Scott Bedbury, the vice-president of marketing for Starbucks who also once worked for Nike, Klein writes:

Nike, for example, is leveraging the deep emotional connection that people have with sports and fitness. With Starbucks, we see how coffee

has woven itself into the fabric of people's lives, and that's our opportunity for emotional leverage....A great brand raises the bar—it adds a greater sense of purpose to the experience, whether it's the challenge to do your best in sports and fitness or the affirmation that the cup of coffee you're drinking really matters. (21)

In effect, hegemony attempts to usurp meaning in order to sell back its version, which is not that much different from the original except that capitalism again retains absolute control and can now make more money selling and/or granting its purified, sanitized, and socially sanctioned meanings.

For years, as Sidney Mintz remarks, “[t]he good life, the rich life, the full life—was the sweet life” (*Sweetness* 208). And brownies are very much wrapped up in this quest for a good, full, rich, sweet life. They have been a marker of affluence, proclaiming one's attainment of the sweet life. Able to make brownies, my grandmother had it *good*. Being from a democratic, industrialized nation, and moving to another one, she had a *right* to richness and goodness, sweetness and fullness. It is the American way, and by extension, the Canadian way. We are all equal, with inalienable rights, and as such deserve the best. And capitalism, with its benevolent and class-less systems, became the Robin Hood of the people, allowing everyone access to white flour and refined sugar and eggs and chocolate. Everyone can buy prepackaged, individually-wrapped, ready-to-eat brownies. Anyone can purchase brownie mixes or ready-to-bake brownies in their own disposable pans. We all can eat brownies remembering the security of Mom's baking. Even if we do not have a mother, the meaningful concept is still available to us. Brownies can become a part of our “families.” And so, why do we fail to recognize the global brownie connections? Because, as Antonio Gramsci argues,

[t]he active man [or woman or child]-in-the-mass has a practical activity, but has no clear theoretical consciousness of his [or her] practical activity, which nonetheless involves understanding the world in so far as it transforms it. His [or her] theoretical consciousness can indeed be historically in opposition to his [or her] activity. One might almost say



that he [or she] has two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his [or her] activity and which in reality unites him [or her] with all his [or her] fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he [or she] has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. But this verbal conception is not without consequences. It holds together a specific social group, it influences moral conduct and the direction of will, with varying efficacy but often powerfully enough to produce a situation in which the contradictory state of consciousness does not permit any action, any decision or any choice, and produces a condition of moral and political passivity. (333)

Because, for the most part, we have uncritically absorbed a capitalist inheritance, therefore equating myths with facts, we too often fail to recognize that our very actions or inactions are inextricably intertwined with global processes, that we are indeed transforming the world and affecting other human beings in the process by making and eating brownies.

### **The Big Brownie “But”**

This said, we are not all cultural dopes passively regurgitating capitalist hegemony. The very act of making something “from scratch” subverts the rationalization process. Just the fact that I do not make brownies from prepackaged mixes or ready-to-bake frozen concoctions fights the process of industrialization. To some extent, I still understand the procedure behind the production of brownies, and do not believe that brownies simply *naturally* appear on supermarket shelves for my consumption. By participating in and enacting brownie production, I am not a mere consumer, but have regained the power associated with producing and creating. Such empowerment is ultimately about reclaiming space in the world, and this is accomplished in a myriad of ways. Wendell Berry asserts that participating in food production, i.e., growing something to eat, in whatever capacity we can, be it little pots or backyard gardens, creates connections and empowers, subverting the mechanization and rationalization of our personal spaces (377). George Ritzer contends that we can subversively cope with

the McDonaldization process by doing everything from cooking meals from scratch and never buying artificial products to avoiding daily routines and developing personal ties with fast-food employees as we take our time eating to watching as little TV as possible and buying and shopping locally (182-8). We can raise our own chickens and eat foods only grown in our regional biosphere. We can play street hockey and plant trees. We can rip our jeans, deface our Nikes, pierce our noses "in symbolically powerful ways, [which]...may proclaim [our] discontent, challenge dominant ideologies, and ultimately express the yearning for a more meaningful existence" (Wojcik 36). We can generate our *own* meanings. John Fiske contends that "[t]he 'art of being in between' is the art of popular culture. Using *their* products for *our* purposes is the art of being in between production and consumption, speaking is the art of being in between *their* language system and *our* material experience, cooking is the art of being in between *their* supermarket and *our* unique meal" (36, emphasis in original). Making brownies from scratch is the art of being in between. The fact that my grandmother took a company cookbook and changed a brownie recipe to suit *her* tastes and desires—not mindlessly following the culinary prescription—was a counterhegemonic act. To then have my mother change that recipe even more, eventually absorbing it into her bodily knowledge, extended the subversion.

In *The Meaning of Things*, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton distinguish between two kinds of materialism: terminal and instrumental. Terminal materialism is defined as consumption for consumption's sake, as a "runaway habit of possession" (231). In contrast, instrumental materialism possesses things in order to serve "goals that are independent of greed itself...operat[ing] within a context whose purpose is the fuller unfolding of human life" (231). The primary distinction between the two is purpose, understanding to what ends possessions are utilized, valued, and made meaningful.

Applying this distinction to their research which involved interviews with 82 families in the Chicago area, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton determine that possessions which “are tokens of remembrance, respect, and *love*; that is, of reaching out beyond the constraints of self-interest narrowly defined to establish bonds that enlarge the being of the individual and unite people” (242, emphasis in original), create meaningful familial ties. Families who use material objects to such symbolic ends are involved in instrumental materialism, and I would add, counterhegemony. My mother’s brownie recipe generates love and memories, and as bell hooks asserts, “[a]s we work to be loving, to create a culture that celebrates life, that makes love possible, we move against dehumanization, against domination” (26). We move against hegemony and capitalism, routinization and mechanization. Creating brownies humanizes because its production is about love and kinship and humanity. By contrast, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton note:

Families that lack shared positive emotional meanings live in a barren symbolic environment. The houses they inhabit and the objects they own are material things—having no other value—to be used and consumed. In such homes children grow up concerned with the safety of their own selves, with little psychic energy left over to care for others. Their goals, like the goals of their fathers [and mothers], are bent on the achievement of terminal rewards, on the immediate gratification of needs conditioned by the consumer culture....[D]eprived on meaning within the home, they cannot find it outside the home either. (242)

These are our cultural dopes, caught up in a habit of consumption that has no other purpose than an “autonomous necessity to possess more things, to control more status, to use more energy” (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 230-1), not recognizing “that the relationship between well-being and consumption is not linear” (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 232).

Wendell Berry insists that “[t]he pleasure of eating [and baking] should be an

*extensive pleasure*" (378, emphasis in original), one that grasps the connections between production and consumption, one that finds *meaning* in those connections. I find meaning in making brownies from scratch because I make connections to my mother, locating myself within the greater framework of my feminine culinary genealogy. I find love and humanization. At the beginning of this thesis, I cited Limón as arguing that folklore's inherent oppositional character, and therefore counterhegemonic nature, lies not in the pre-capitalist "golden" age, but in its "aesthetic act of performance" ("Western" 50), in its ability to cling onto the use and value of things when all of life is being bottled into consumptive acts. In writing on family quilts as heirlooms, Nora Roberts writes:

the fact that we have the capacity to treasure nonmarketable relics of family history and travel memorabilia [and recipes] and can, in this generation, hope to convey such values to our sons as well as to our daughters, suggests that noncommercial humanistic determinations may not need to wait for the future nirvana. We can, even now, as our foremothers did before us, experience ourselves as significant players in the drama of human continuity just by passing down our quilts. (132-33)

And our brownie recipes. In this bequeathing of familial heirlooms, we find our humanity, our capacity to move beyond our selfish interests and learn to love. And while capitalist hegemony seeks to turn love into a box of chocolates and a Hallmark card, I, along with Paulo Freire, "am more and more convinced that true revolutionaries must perceive the revolution, because of its creative and liberating nature, as an act of love" (77). Love is truly the mother of counterhegemonic acts.

## **Chapter Five - Conclusion:**

### **To Bake or not to Bake?**

I like tidy, neatly-packaged, happy endings. While reading a book, it is not uncommon for me to skip ahead to the end, making sure that all ends well before I get too fully invested in the novel. I have been known to throw books across the room when the endings were not up to my expectations or desires. I have even read and reread and reread again particularly devastating dénouements in vain hopes that somehow I had read them wrong, that I had misunderstood, that with the umpteenth reading the text would magically change and everything would end up “happily ever after.” It is never that simple. And it is certainly not that simple now. With my mother’s recipe for brownies clutched in my hand, I have travelled from table to field and back again. Yet, like the returning romantic hero, I have learned much on my travels and can never view home in the same light that I once did. I am different, so home can never be quite the same either. My mother’s brownies have on some level ceased to be simply hers or mine or my grandmother’s. They also belong to a greedy global market and an ever-incorporating capitalist hegemony. They are hegemonic and counterhegemonic. And I am left wondering what to do.

After one particularly rousing presentation on brownies, I stood before the class deflated and said, “Now what?!” Most students looked at me with something between horror and pity, when one student simply said, “Maybe there isn’t anything *to* do. Maybe it’s like yin and yang, good and bad, light and dark—natural.” Maybe. Maybe I have simply discovered that brownies are naturally paradoxical, that with every action there is

an equal and opposite reaction, that there must needs be opposition in all things. Maybe it's like Frederick Smocks says, "For it seems to me that I write not to attempt to explain the world, but rather to deepen its mystery, to unfold, like a blown rose, its power to enchant. Science will explain the world to us. But art, like religion, like cookery, like childbirth, teaches us how inexplicable the world is" (113). Maybe brownies are simply inexplicably intertwined with polarities and antithetical juxtapositions. They inherently contain Olivers and Mr. Bumbles, hegemonies and counterhegemonies, goodness and badness, love and hate, freedom and oppression, enlightenment and exploitation. And I must simply accept this as part of life, as part of brownies. Unfortunately, my contradictory state of consciousness produces a situation, as Gramsci notes, that "does not permit any action, any decision or any choice, and produces a condition of moral and political passivity" (333). Acceptance becomes equated with apathy, with a shrug of the shoulders and a "Well, that's life." But for a child of idealist ex-hippies who grew up with a list of companies to boycott permanently posted on the fridge, such a response just isn't good enough. It isn't good enough that a friend of mine rationalizes and reconciles his unionist and socialist leanings while chowing down on a Big Mac, by saying, "At the end of the day, I think the degree of hunger and taste required supercedes the political side of my mind" (G.P. 1999). It's just not good enough that "[s]lackers spend days on end sharpening their sardonic edge on the whetstone of apathy...philosophiz[ing] on the meaning of a Kraft dinner" (Lasn 115), understanding consumer culture and recognizing the hegemonic forces of capitalism, but still do nothing proactive about it. And so, I continue to wonder what I am to do.

On the one hand, the brownie recipe is a part of my mother, and I can find access to her through it. And as I find that access, I find love and security and bonds that transcend space, time, and capital. And those transcendent legacies, by their very loving

nature, are counterhegemonic, combatting the dehumanizing, hegemonic processes of capitalism and industrialization and rationalization. On the other hand, the brownie recipe was only concocted in the first place because colonizing and imperialist "culinary tourists" appropriated other's cultural traditions, "representing [their] capitalist inclinations to display superiority by mastery over expanding arenas, including new cuisines" (Long 195) and new ingredients. Does the counterhegemonic act of making brownies from scratch really negate the hegemonic processes that make those ingredients available in the first place? Am I transforming the world for good or for bad through brownie production, if I affect it at all? Is unwitting counterhegemony truly countering hegemonic forces? Can one person choosing to make or not make brownies really make a difference? The answer to all these questions is yes and no, contingent upon the acquirement of knowledge and then what actions are taken or not taken with that knowledge.

### **Rise 'n' Shine: Breakfasting on Brownies**

For much of my childhood, I was awakened every morning by my mother pulling back the curtains and saying, "Rise 'n' shine, Jessie. Rise 'n' shine." Marcuse contends that "the determinate negation of capitalism occurs *if and when* the proletariat has become conscious of itself and of the conditions and processes which make up its society" (222, emphasis in original), if and when we wake up, recognizing the dominating forces in our lives. bell hooks writes:

It is necessary for us to remember, as we think critically about domination [over-consumption], that we all have the capacity to act in ways that oppress, dominate, wound [consume] (whether or not that power is institutionalized). It is necessary to remember that it is first the potential oppressor within that we must resist—the potential victim within that we must rescue—otherwise we cannot hope for an end to domination, for liberation. (21)

Locating ourselves within our hegemonies, understanding how we can dominate and be dominated, shakes off the grogginess of sleep and gets us going. Gramsci asserts:

Critical understanding of self takes place therefore through a struggle of political 'hegemonies' and of opposing directions, first in the ethical field and then in that of politics proper, in order to arrive at the working out at a higher level of one's own conception of reality. Consciousness of being part of a particular hegemonic force... is the first stage towards a further progressive self-consciousness in which theory and practice will finally be one. (333)

As I am torn by my contradictory consciousness surrounding a brownie recipe and all that it represents on both sides of the dichotomy, I am already in the first stages of learning. And this knowledge should be empowering, not despairing. McLuhan writes, "There is absolutely no inevitability as long as there is a willingness to contemplate what is happening" (with Fiore 25). As long as I am willing to listen and understand and learn, nurturing my brownie consciousness, there is hope.

But it is not good enough to merely think and ponder and study these things out in my mind; I must act, because as Ritzer notes, "Avoiding McDonaldisation requires hard work and vigilance" (82). It requires making informed decisions. Meeker-Lowry argues that "[t]he key to affecting our economy is to consciously choose to apply our values to economic interactions. If we do not choose our own values, then we subscribe by default to the values of the present system" (1). It requires seeking education on issues and getting involved and concerned with things, raising my level of awareness. Klein writes, "When we start looking to corporations to draft our collective labor and human rights codes for us, we have already lost the most basic principle of citizenship: that people should govern themselves" (Klein 441). It requires acting instead of being acted upon. It requires taking responsibility for my choices and my actions. A humanities professor of mine once wrote:



The future towards which we peer, the society to be approached, attained, or avoided is not something that shall merely happen to humanity independently of our efforts. It is something we can and must shape, direct, and create. And although we should certainly shun grandiosity in our plans and respect the practical difficulties and obstacles ahead, we must never forsake hope that we can steadily improve the human condition. Moreover, in this drama of inevitable involvement in the creation of the future, we must always remember that the greatest of sins is despair or apathy. (McDermott)

Frances Moore Lappé insists that as we begin “[t]aking more responsibility for ourselves—and for the impact of our choices in the world—we start *changing ourselves*. This is the key to overcoming hopelessness” (53, emphasis in original). Understanding the implications of brownies has changed me. As with Lappé, I am learning “that every choice I [make] that align[s] my daily life with an understanding of how I want things to be [makes] me feel more powerful” (8, emphasis added). My choices are powerful because they are *mine*. I am acting for myself and not being acted upon, understanding the implications of my actions or inactions, discerning the consequences, and making informed decisions.

More than a mere brownie recipe, my mother bequeathed to me an inherent hope for this world and a love of life. She instilled in me what Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton refer to as “cosmic goals,” goals which perceive “objective relationships between the self and the wider patterns of order: the community, the species, the ecology as a whole” (249). She lobbied and petitioned, rallied and organized, volunteered and taught, fought and learned. She made choices that shaped her community and her small space in the world to how she wanted it to be. She felt it was her duty as a responsible citizen of this planet to do just that, to make the world a little bit better just by being in it. In “Kind of an Ode to Duty,” Ogden Nash writes, “O Duty, / Why has thou not the visage of a sweetie or a cutie” (141)? Or taste like brownies? Mary Maxwell responds, “Duty cannot be a sweetie or a cutie because it is necessarily

painful. Duty involves self-restraint, sacrifice, and generally suppressing the instinct to follow one's interests" (224). Duty is about being a force for good in this world, shaping, creating, living, loving, and baking. It is about extending our spheres of influence to include others. It is to care, to care enough about this world and this life and this planet to do *something* about it. Wendell Berry contends that

[a] significant part of the pleasure of eating [and baking] is in one's accurate consciousness of the lives and the world from which food comes....Eating [and baking] with the fullest pleasure—pleasure, that is, that does not depend on ignorance—is perhaps the profoundest enactment of our connection with the world. In this pleasure we experience and celebrate our dependence and our gratitude, for we are living from mystery, from creatures we did not make and powers we cannot comprehend. (378)

Whether or not I choose to make brownies, I essay—so much as my imperfect self allows—to wake up without pushing the snooze button, to rise 'n' shine, to seek awareness and understanding and consciousness, to rise above ignorance and boredom, to discern and shape and create and choose, to live according to the dutiful and responsible "cosmic goals" that my mother taught me.

### **Brownie Hopes**

"For some," Ronnie Lundy writes, "especially those who believe that history (both personal and global) can only be told in terms of battles won and territories lost—the idea of...writing about food may seem a playful exercise at best. But...there is an instinctive understanding that such writing—about food, nourishment, need, and all the ways we fill it—is the closest to truth we get" (x). Sidney Mintz contends that "[i]n understanding the relationship between commodity and person, we unearth anew the history of ourselves" (*Sweetness* 214). Anthropologist, Margaret Visser asserts, "The extent to which we take everyday objects for granted is the precise extent to which they govern and inform our lives" (11). Social scientist and futurist, Kenneth Boulding

suggests that to appraise the future, we must not neglect "the 'quiet-noisy' dimension. It could well be argued that the most important things that happen are the quiet ones that do not get into the information system very much and are therefore apt to be overlooked.... Yet the greatest danger in assessing the future is the neglect of the quiet things" (46-7). In travelling from table to field with a brownie recipe, I hope that I have indeed illuminated some truth, some history, some significance. By placing a "quiet" and "everyday" object into differing contexts, I hope that I have let brownies "speak."

In structuring my study under Marxist theory, I hope that I have demonstrated the usefulness of meshing folklore with ideology. Folklorist Jack Zipes writes:

Essentially, Marxism is anti-ideological in its methodology when it allows us to perceive how our needs, wishes, and dreams are manipulated in the name of capitalism, socialism, communism, or any other "-ism." It is perhaps here that the genuine purpose of Marxism and the utopian purpose of folklore coincide: they both seek to enable people to give voice and form to their needs and dreams in a free manner, to enable communities...to be established on a nonantagonistic basis, to expose and overcome social antagonisms. (335)

I hope that I have exposed conflict and manipulation, and even attempted mediation. In writing much of my work from an autoethnographic stance, I hope that I have "interpret[ed] the public and private dimensions of cultural experience and [sought] a critical distance and perspective on each...attempt[ing] to, quite literally, *come to terms* with sustaining questions of self and culture...seek[ing] to understand the dialectics of self and culture" (Neumann 192-3, 195, emphasis in original). And finally, Sidney Mintz writes:

The most profound ethical issues are raised by the assertion that every living human being has a sacred right to eat because decisions are being made all the time that—by their inevitable consequences—end up causing people to die of hunger. Establishing the linkages between such decision-making and its victims, exposing those linkages so that the decision-making itself becomes ethically visible, may be a task remote from

anthropology's older concerns. But it is well worth any anthropologist's time today. (Tasting 11)

I would suggest that it is also well worth any folklorist's time. To paraphrase and slightly alter a famous quote attributed to Karl Marx, philosophers have only interpreted the world, and I would add, folklorists have tended to only describe and collect and catalogue it; the point is to change it.

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## Appendix 1

### Brownie Burn-out

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## MOM'S BROWNIES

1 1/2 cups butter, melted	1 1/2 cups + 6 Tbsp flour
1/4 cup cocoa	1/2 tsp salt
6 eggs	1 cup nuts
3 cups sugar	3 tsp vanilla

Mix together. Pour into greased and floured roaster pan (11x18-inch). Bake at 350°F for 25 minutes.

## GERMAN CHOCOLATE TOPPING

Combine in saucepan, 1 cup canned milk and 1 cup sugar, 3 egg yolks, 1 cube margarine, 1 tsp vanilla. Cook for 12 minutes, stirring. Add 1 1/3 cups coconut, 1 cup nuts. Beat until cool and thick enough to spread.

## BROWNIES\*

1 cube (1/2 cup) butter or margarine	1/8 tsp salt
2 squares Solitaire Baking Chocolate	1/2 cup to 1 cup chopped Solitaire Pecan
2 large eggs	Meat
1 cup sugar	1 teaspoon Solitaire Pure Vanilla
1/2 cup plus 2 Tbsp sifted enriched flour	

Melt butter and chocolate over hot water. Beat egg; add sugar gradually; add butter-chocolate mixture and vanilla. Mix flour, salt and nuts; add to first mixture. Blend well. Turn into 9x9-inch oiled and floured pan. Bake at 350°F for 25 minutes. When cold cut in 5 strips each way. Remove from pan. Makes 25 squares.

\*From Lillian S. Kennedy, *Selected High Altitude Recipes: Tested in the Solitaire Kitchen* (Denver: The Morey Mercantile Company, 1937-47) 84.

## AMARETTO BROWNIES SUPREME\*

1/2 cup butter	1/2 cup flour
2 oz semisweet chocolate	1/4 tsp salt
2 eggs, well beaten	1/2 cup pecans, chopped
3/4 cup sugar	1/4 cup amaretto liqueur

Preheat oven to 325°F. Melt butter and chocolate in a saucepan over low heat. Remove from heat, let cool. Then stir in eggs. Add sugar, flour, salt and pecans, mixing well. Pour batter in a greased 8-inch square pan and bake for 30 to 35 minutes. Brownies should still be soft. Remove from oven and let cool slightly. Poke holes in brownies with fork, and pour amaretto liqueur over top. Refrigerate overnight. Spread chocolate amaretto frosting over brownies and then drizzle white almond icing in a criss cross pattern on top.

### CHOCOLATE AMARETTO FROSTING

3 Tbsp butter	4 1/2 tsp amaretto liqueur
dash of salt	4 1/2 tsp cocoa butter
1 1/2 cup confectioner's sugar	4 1/2 tsp hot coffee

Combine butter, sugar, salt, amaretto liqueur, cocoa powder and coffee and beat until smooth.

### WHITE ALMOND ICING

1/3 cup confectioner's sugar	1/4 tsp almond extract
dash of salt	1/4 cup half and half

Combine sugar, salt and almond extract. Add half and half a little at a time, mixing until smooth.

\*From <http://www.lombardia.com/kitchen/desserts/brownies/recipe006.html>

### A-PLUS BROWNIES\*

1 package (12-oz.) semi-sweet chocolate chips	1 tsp vanilla
1/2 cup sugar	1/2 tsp salt
1/4 cup butter	2/3 cup flour
2 eggs	

In a large bowl, combine sugar and butter; beat until creamy. Add eggs, vanilla and salt; mix well. In small microwave proof bowl, melt 1 1/4 cups of the mini chocolate chips until smooth. Add melted chocolate and flour to first mixture. Pour into a well-greased 9x9-inch square pan. Set aside.

#### TOPPING

1 package (8-oz.) cream cheese, softened	2 Tbsp milk
1/2 cup sugar	1 Tbsp flour
2 Tbsp butter, softened	1/2 tsp almond extract
2 eggs	

In a small bowl, combine cream cheese, sugar and butter; beat until creamy. Add eggs, milk, flour and almond extract; beat well. Stir in remaining 3/4 cup of chocolate chips. Pour over brownie base. Bake in a 350°F oven for 40 to 45 minutes. Cool completely and cut into small pieces. These are very rich, and taste best if chilled. Store in refrigerator. Makes 16 to 24 brownies

\*From <http://geocities.com/Heartland/Cabin/4082/Brownies/index.html>

### APPLE BROWNIES\*

1/4 lb margarine	1/2 tsp baking soda
1 cup flour	1 cup chopped and peeled apples
1 cup sugar	1 cup chopped walnuts
1 egg	1 tsp cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350°F. Melt margarine in microwave or pan. Combine other ingredients and mix with margarine. Pour into a greased 8x8-inch dish. Bake for approximately 40 minutes. Cool and cut into squares.

\*From <http://geocities.com/Heartland/Cabin/4082/Brownies/index.html>

## BLOCKBUSTER BROWNIES\*

8 squares Baker's Unsweetened Chocolate	1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cups butter	1 Tbsp vanilla
6 eggs	1 cup chopped walnuts
3 cups granulated sugar	

Melt chocolate and butter over hot water or in microwave on Medium 4 minutes; remove and blend well. Cool. Beat eggs until lemon coloured. Gradually add sugar, beating until thick, about 3 minutes. Stir in chocolate mixture. Fold in flour, vanilla and nuts. Pour into two greased and floured 8-inch square pans. Bake at 350°F for 35 to 40 minutes. (Do not overbake. These brownies should be very moist in the centre.) Freezes well.

### TOPPINGS

Sprinkle with chopped nuts and Baker's Semi-Sweet Chocolate Chips before baking. Sprinkle cooled brownies with icing sugar.

### GLAZE

Melt 1 square Baker's Unsweetened Chocolate with 1 Tbsp butter and 1/4 cup milk; blend until smooth. Add 1 1/4 cups icing sugar; blend well. Spread over 1 pan cooled brownies.

### ROCKY ROAD

Sprinkle 2 cups Miniature Marshmallows over 1 pan warm brownies. Broil under pre-heated broiler until golden brown. Drizzle with 1 square melted Baker's Semi-Sweet Chocolate.

### TIP

If desired, halve all ingredients to make one 8-inch pan.

\*From a box of Baker's Unsweetened Chocolate.

### BLONDE BROWNIES\*

1/4 cup butter	7/8 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup brown sugar	1 tsp baking powder
1 egg	1/2 tsp salt
2 tsp vanilla	1/2 cup chopped walnuts

Heat oven to 350°F. Grease an 8x8-inch cake pan. Mix together the flour, baking powder, and salt, and set aside. In a saucepan over low heat, melt the butter. Remove the saucepan from heat, and let cool. Then stir in: sugar, egg, vanilla, flour mixture, walnuts. Spread in the cake pan and bake for 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Cool slightly before cutting into squares.

\*From <http://www.geocities.com/katherinesalocks/>

### BUTTERSCOTCH BROWNIES\*

3/4 cup all-purpose flour	1 egg, slightly beaten
1 tsp baking powder	1/4 tsp salt
1/4 cup butter	1 tsp vanilla
1 cup brown sugar	1/2 cup chopped nuts

Stir flour and baking powder together. Melt butter and brown sugar over low heat. Stir in slightly beaten egg; blend in dry ingredients, mixing well. Add vanilla and nuts. Bake in a greased and floured 8-inch square pan in a slow oven (300°F) 25 to 35 minutes. Cut while warm.

\*From *A Guide to Good Cooking* 22nd ed. (Montreal: Lake of the Woods Milling Company, n.d.) 73.

### CHEESECAKE BROWNIES\*

1 1/2 cups flour	6 egg whites or equivalent
2 cups sugar	2 tsp vanilla
1/2 tsp salt	1/2 cup + 1 Tbsp cocoa
2/3 cup applesauce	

Preheat oven to 350°F. Combine dry ingredients and wet ingredients separately; then mix together. Spray a large pan (9x13-inch or so) and pour mix into it.

#### CHEESECAKE TOPPING

3 - 8oz fat-free cream cheese	3 eggs (use eggbeaters)
3/4 cup sugar	1 Tbsp vanilla

Add on top of brownie mix and run through with a knife to swirl. Bake for 40-45 minutes or until done.

\*From <http://www.fatfree.com/recipes/brownies/cheesecake-brownies>

### CHOCOLATE BROWNIES (a)\*

1/2 cup butter or margarine	2 eggs, well-beaten
2 squares unsweetened chocolate, melted	1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup sugar	1/2 cup chopped walnuts

Cream butter; add melted chocolate and mix well. Blend in sugar well. Add well-beaten eggs; mix well. Blend in flour. Stir in the chopped nuts. Pour into a greased 8-inch or 9-inch square pan, spreading evenly. Bake in a moderate oven (350°F) 25-30 minutes. Cool; cut into squares.

\*From *A Guide to Good Cooking* 22nd ed. (Montreal: Lake of the Woods Milling Company, n.d.) 73.

### CHOCOLATE BROWNIES (b)\*

Preheat oven to 325°F.

Grease an 8-inch square cake pan.

Sift together:

3/4 cup flour	1/4 tsp salt
1/3 cup cocoa	1 cup granulated sugar

Stir in:

1/2 cup shortening	3 Tbsp water
2 eggs	1 tsp vanilla

Beat until smooth.

Stir in:

1/2 cup chopped nuts.

Turn into prepared pan. Bake in preheated 325°F oven for 25 to 30 minutes, or until brownies begin to pull away from sides of pan. Makes 24 squares.

\*From *What's Cooking? with Clarendville Local Association of Girl Guides 1984*. 43.

### CHOCOLATE BROWNIES (c)\*

1/2 cup butter	2 tsp vanilla
3 oz unsweetened baking chocolate	1 cup all-purpose flour
2 cups sugar	1/2 tsp salt
2 eggs	1/2 cup chopped walnuts

Heat oven to 350°F. Grease an 8-inch square cake pan. Mix together the flour and salt, and set aside. In a saucepan over low heat, melt the butter and chocolate, stirring frequently. Remove the saucepan from heat, and let cool. Then stir in: sugar, eggs, vanilla, flour mixture, walnuts. Spread in the cake pan and bake for 40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Cool slightly before cutting into squares. These brownies are very chewy.

\*From <http://www.geocities.com/katherinesalocks/>



### CHOCOLATE COCONUT CREAM BROWNIES\*

Sift together:

3/4 cup flour	1/2 tsp salt
1/3 cup cocoa	1/2 tsp baking powder
1 cup sugar	

Stir in:

1/2 cup shortening	3 Tbsp water
2 eggs	1 tsp vanilla

Beat until smooth.

Stir in 1/2 cup chopped walnuts.

Spread 2/3 of mixture in pan.

Combine in small saucepan:

1/3 cup undiluted evaporated milk  
1/3 cup sugar

Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally for 5 min. Remove from heat and add 1 tsp almond flavouring and 1 1/2 cups coconut. Spread cooked mixture over base and gently spoon remaining batter on top. Bake in 325°F oven for 30-35 min. Ice with chocolate icing when cool.

\*From *What's Cooking? with Clarendville Local Association of Girl Guides 1984*. 39.

### CHOCOLATE RASPBERRY BROWNIES\*

1 1/2 cups sugar	1/2 tsp salt
3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder	1/2 tsp baking soda
1 cup fat-free egg substitutes	1/4 tsp almond extract
1 jar (10 oz.) sugar-free raspberry preserves (or apricot, or cherry)	
1 tsp vanilla	1 cup flour

Thoroughly coat a 9x13-inch pan with nonstick cooking spray. Set aside. With an electric mixer, combine sugar and cocoa. Gradually pour in egg substitutes and raspberry jam, beating on low-speed until sugar is no longer grainy. Add vanilla, salt, and almond extract and beat briefly to mix. Combine flour and baking soda and stir in with a flexible rubber spatula. Do not over mix. Turn into prepared pan. Bake in preheated 325°F oven 30-35 minutes. Brownies should be slightly underbaked but not runny in the center. Allow to cool and cut into 2x2-inch squares. Makes 24.

\*From <http://www.fatfree.com/recipes/brownies/raspberry-brownies>

## CHOCOLATE ZUCCHINI BROWNIES\*

Mix in large bowl:

2 - 2 1/2 cups grated zucchini

1/2 cup ripe mashed banana (about 1 medium, if not enough add applesauce)

1 Tbsp water

2 tsp vanilla

Mix separately:

2 cups flour (1 cup whole wheat, 1 cup unbleached white)

1 1/2 tsp baking soda

1/3 cup cocoa powder

1/2 tsp salt

2/3 cup sugar (more if you like it sweeter)

Fold dry ingredients into wet, batter will be stiff. Bake in nonstick oblong brownie pan (7x13-inch or so) at 350°F, 25-35 minutes until toothpick comes out clean.

\*From <http://www.fatfree.com/recipes/brownies/chocolate-zucchini-brownies>

## DARK FUDGE BROWNIE CAKE\*

1/2 cup butter

1 cup all-purpose flour

5 oz semi-sweet baking chocolate

1/4 tsp salt

1/2 cup light or dark Karo syrup

1 cup chopped pecans or walnuts

3/4 cup sugar

1 tsp vanilla, or 1/2 tsp vanilla and 1/4 tsp almond

2 large or 3 medium eggs

extract

Heat oven to 350°F. Grease and flour a 9x9-inch baking pan. In a large saucepan over medium heat, stir the butter, syrup, and chocolate until they reach a boil. Remove the saucepan from heat, and let cool. Stir the sugar into the chocolate mixture, then mix in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. In a separate bowl, mix together the flour, salt and nuts. Stir the flour mixture into the chocolate mixture. Spread the batter into the baking pan. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes and remove from the pan.

## CHOCOLATE GLAZE

3 oz semi-sweet or sweet Baking Chocolate 1/2 tsp vanilla or 1/4 tsp almond extract

1 Tbsp butter

In a small saucepan over low heat, melt the chocolate, butter, and vanilla, stirring frequently. Remove the saucepan from heat, and cool slightly. Drizzle over the brownie cake. Let stand for 1 hour before serving.

\*From <http://www.geocities.com/katherinesalocks/>

### FAT-FREE FUDGE BROWNIES (a)\*

1/2 cup whole wheat flour	1/4 tsp salt
1/4 cup unbleached flour	1/3 cup unsweetened applesauce
1/4 cup plus 2 Tbsp cocoa	3 egg whites or equivalent
1 cup sugar	1 tsp vanilla

Combine dry ingredients. Combine wet ingredients. Combine wet and dry ingredients. Pour into an 8x8-inch pan sprayed lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Bake at 325°F for 23-25 minutes, or just until the edges are firm and the center is set. Cool to room temperature and cut into squares.

\*From <http://www.fatfree.com/recipes/brownies/fudge-brownies>

### FAT-FREE FUDGE BROWNIES (b)\*

3/4 cup whole wheat pastry flour	3 egg whites or equivalent
1 cup Sucanat	1 tsp vanilla
1/4 tsp salt	1/4 tsp baking soda
1/4 cup plus 2 Tbsp cocoa (Wonderslim no fat, low caffeine)	
1/3 cup unsweetened applesauce	

Combine dry ingredients. Beat wet ingredients. Combine and beat wet and dry ingredients. Pour into an 8x8-inch pan sprayed lightly with nonstick cooking spray. Bake at 325°F for 25-30 min., or just until the edges are firm and the center is set. Cool and cut into squares.

\*From <http://www.fatfree.com/recipes/brownies/fudge-brownies-2>

### FUDGY BROWNIES (a)\*

1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder	1/2 tsp salt
3/4 cup unbleached flour	1 tsp vanilla
1 1/2 cups sugar	1 Tbsp Kahlua
2 egg whites (egg replacer for 2 eggs)	1 Tbsp peanut butter
1/2 cup applesauce	walnuts
1 tsp baking powder	

Spray 8x8-inch pan with cooking spray. In medium bowl, sift together cocoa, flour, baking powder and salt; measure ingredients before sifting. Combine peanut butter with Kahlua warmed in the microwave. It will be kind of gluey. In large bowl, mix Kahlua and peanut butter with sugar. It will be kind of crumbly and won't mix entirely. Whisk in egg [replacer], applesauce and vanilla. Combine flour mixture with egg mixture. Add nuts. Bake 35-40 minutes at 350°F.

\*From <http://www.fatfree.com/recipes/brownies/fudgy-brownies>

### FUDGY BROWNIES (b)\*

1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder	1 tsp baking powder
1/2 cup flour	1/2 tsp salt
1/4 cup whole wheat pastry flour	1 tsp vanilla
1 1/2 cups sugar	1/2 Tbsp coconut extract
2 each powdered egg substitute	1/2 Tbsp almond extract
1/2 cup applesauce	1 Tbsp peanut butter

Warm extracts. Blend in peanut butter. Add tsp water, if necessary to make smooth. In a separate container, whisk up egg substitute. Whisk in applesauce, and then peanut butter mixture. In separate bowl, combine dry ingredients. Add liquid mixture and whisk/stir. Pour into 8x8-inch pan that has been sprayed and floured. Bake at 350°F for 35 to 40 minutes.

\*From <http://www.fatfree.com/recipes/brownies/fudgy-brownies-2>

### GERMAN CHOCOLATE BROWNIES\*

1/4 cup butter	1/8 tsp salt
4 oz sweet baking chocolate	1 cup chopped pecans, divided in half
3/4 cup brown sugar, divided into 1/2 cup and 1/4 cup	
2 eggs	1 cup flaked coconut
1/2 cup all-purpose flour	1/4 cup milk

Heat oven to 350°F. Grease an 8x8-inch baking pan. In a saucepan over low heat, melt the butter and chocolate, stirring frequently until smooth. Remove the saucepan from heat, and let cool. Stir 1/2 cup of brown sugar into the chocolate mixture, then mix in the eggs. Stir in the flour and 1/2 cup of pecans. Spread the brownie batter into the baking pan. Mix the coconut, remaining 1/2 cup of pecans, and remaining 1/4 cup of brown sugar. Add the milk to the coconut mixture and stir until well blended. Spoon the coconut mixture evenly over the brownie batter. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Cool slightly before cutting into squares.

\*From <http://www.geocities.com/katherinesalocks/>

## HOT FUDGE BROWNIES\*

Heat oven to 350°F.

In a large mixing bowl, combine:

1 cup flour	2 tsp baking powder
3/4 cup granulated sugar	1/2 tsp salt (optional)
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa	

Add:

1/2 cup skim milk	1 tsp vanilla extract
1/4 cup unsweetened applesauce	

Stir to blend. Spoon into an 8x8-inch baking pan spray with cooking spray.

In a medium-sized bowl, combine:

3/4 cup brown sugar	3/4 to 1 3/4 cup hot water (see note)
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa	

Stir to blend and pour over batter in prepared pan. Bake for 40 minutes. Serve with nonfat frozen yogurt, if desired.

Note: A fudgy sauce forms on the bottom of the brownie as it bakes. The consistency of the sauce depends on the amount of hot water you use in the recipe. If you use the maximum amount, it's like a chocolate syrup; with the minimum amount it's more like a pudding. I think I usually use about 1 1/4 cup for a medium-thick sauce, which I spoon up over the yogurt to make a hot fudge brownie sundae kind of thing.

\*From <http://www.fatfree.com/recipes/brownies/hot-fudge-brownie>

## KAHLUA BROWNIES\*

1/2 cup butter	1 1/2 cup all purpose flour
3 oz unsweetened baking chocolate	1/2 tsp baking powder
1 1/2 cup sugar	1/2 tsp salt
3 eggs	1/3 cup Kahlua

Heat oven to 350°F. Grease an 8x8-inch cake pan. Mix together the flour, baking powder, and salt, and set aside. In a saucepan over low heat, melt the butter and chocolate, stirring frequently until smooth. Remove the saucepan from heat, and let cool. Beat eggs and sugar until light. Mix in: cooled chocolate mixture, Kahlua, flour mixture. Spread in the cake pan and bake for 40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Cool slightly, then brush the top with about 1-2 tablespoons of Kahlua. Cut into squares.

\*From <http://www.geocities.com/katherinesalocks/>

### KENTUCKY BOURBON BROWNIES\*

1/2 cup black walnuts, broken	3/4 cup flour
2 tsp bourbon	1 1/2 tsp baking powder
1/3 cup butter	Pinch of salt
5 oz semisweet chocolate	1 cup sugar
2 eggs, at room temperature	

Heat oven to 350°F. Grease an 8-inch square baking pan. Combine nuts with 2 teaspoons of bourbon in a small bowl. Cover and set aside. Melt butter and chocolate over low heat. Cool. Beat eggs. Combine flour, baking powder, salt and sugar. Add beaten eggs and cooled chocolate mixture. Mix only until ingredients are well-blended. Stir in bourbon-soaked nuts. Spoon mixture into baking pan and bake 25 minutes. Cool in pan on rack to room temperature.

#### TOPPING

2 to 3 Tbsp bourbon                      3 Tbsp butter

3 oz semisweet chocolate

Brush with bourbon and allow it to soak in. Combine chocolate and butter in a pan over low heat (or bowl over warm water) and stir to blend. Drizzle over the top of the brownies, tilting the pan to cover brownies evenly. When chocolate topping is firm, cut brownies into squares. Layer between waxed paper and store in tightly covered container in the refrigerator or freezer. Makes 25 small squares.

\*From <http://www.courier-journal.com/sarah/1998/0826fair-p06.html>

### MINT BROWNIES\*

1/2 cup butter	1/2 tsp baking powder
2 oz semi-sweet baking chocolate	1/4 tsp salt
1 cup sugar	1/2 tsp peppermint extract
2 eggs	1/2 cup Andes mints, broken
7/8 cup all purpose flour	

Heat oven to 350°F. Grease an 8x8-inch cake pan. Mix together the flour, baking powder, and salt, and set aside. In a saucepan over low heat, melt the butter and chocolate, stirring frequently until smooth. Remove the saucepan from heat, and let cool. Beat eggs until light. Mix in sugar, chocolate mixture, and peppermint extract. Mix in dry ingredients. Add mint pieces. Spread in the cake pan and bake for 25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Cool slightly before cutting into squares.

\*From <http://www.geocities.com/katherinesalocks/>

### MOCHACHINO BROWNIES\*

1/2 cup butter	1 1/2 tsp vanilla
4 squares unsweetened chocolate	3/4 cup flour
1 Tbsp instant coffee powder	1/4 tsp salt
1 cup sugar	1 cup chocolate chips
3 eggs, beaten	1 cup chopped pecans

Melt butter and chocolate together. Add coffee powder. Stir in sugar, eggs, vanilla, and salt, mix well. Add flour and stir to combine. Stir in chocolate chips and nuts. Pour into a greased 9-inch square pan. Bake at 325°F for about 40 minutes. Cool completely before icing.

#### ICING

1/4 cup butter, softened	2 Tbsp coffee liqueur
2 cups icing (confectioners) sugar	cinnamon

In a small bowl beat the butter until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in icing sugar, and continue beating until smooth. Beat in liqueur to combine. Spread icing over the cooled brownies. Sprinkle cinnamon over top. Cut into squares. Store in the refrigerator.

\*From <http://www.donogh.com/cooking/brownies/mochachi.shtml>

### RASPBERRY BROWNIES\*

1 cup (2 sticks) butter or margarine	1-1/4 cup all-purpose flour
5 oz unsweetened chocolate, chopped	1 tsp baking powder
2 cups sugar	1/2 tsp salt
4 large eggs	1 cup chopped walnuts
2 tsp vanilla	1/2 cup Smucker's Red Raspberry Preserves

Butter 13x9x2-inch baking pan. Melt butter and chocolate in a large, heavy saucepan over low heat, stirring constantly until smooth. Remove from heat. Stir in sugar, eggs, and vanilla. Mix flour, baking powder and salt in small bowl. Add to chocolate mixture and whisk to blend. Stir in nuts. Pour two cups batter into pan. Freeze until firm, about 10 minutes. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spread preserves over brownie batter in pan. Spoon remaining batter over. Let stand 20 minutes at room temperature to thaw bottom layer. Bake brownies until tester inserted into center comes out clean, or about 35 minutes. Transfer to rack and cool. Cut brownies into squares. Store in airtight container at room temperature. Makes about two dozen.

\*From <http://www.smucker.com/sk/recipes/desserts/raspberrybrownies.asp>



### TURTLE BROWNIES\*

1 cup sugar	1/2 tsp baking powder
1/2 cup shortening	1/4 tsp salt
1 tsp vanilla	1/2 cup chopped pecans
2 eggs	12 vanilla caramels
2/3 cup flour	1 Tbsp milk
1/2 cup cocoa	

Grease a 9x9-inch baking pan. Mix sugar, shortening, vanilla and eggs. Stir in flour, cocoa, baking powder and salt. Spread in pan. Sprinkle pecans over batter. Bake at 350°F for 20 to 25 minutes, or until toothpick comes out clean when inserted in center. Heat caramels and milk over low heat, stirring frequently, until caramels are melted. Drizzle over warm brownies. Cool completely.

\*From <http://geocities.com/Heartland/Cabin/4082/Brownies/index.html>

### WHITE CHOCOLATE BROWNIES\*

1/2 cup butter	1 cup all purpose flour
6 oz white baking chocolate	1/2 tsp baking powder
3/4 cup sugar	dash salt
2 eggs	1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1 1/2 tsp vanilla extract	1/2 cup white or semi-sweet chocolate chips

Heat oven to 350°F. Grease a 7x12-inch baking pan. In a saucepan over low heat, melt the butter and chocolate, stirring frequently until smooth. Remove the saucepan from heat, stir in the sugar, and let cool. With a wire whisk, beat in the eggs and vanilla until blended. Stir in the flour, baking powder, and salt until well mixed. Stir in the chocolate chips and walnuts. Spread the batter into the baking pan. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Cool slightly before cutting into squares.

\*From <http://www.geocities.com/katherinesalocks/>

## WHITE CHOCOLATE BROWNIES WITH APRICOTS AND HAZELNUTS\*

4 eggs	1 tsp salt
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar	1/2 lb dried apricots, chopped
6 oz butter	2/3 cup hazelnuts, chopped
6 oz good quality white chocolate for baking (to melt)	
2/3 cup white flour	6 oz white chocolate, chopped
2/3 cup cake flour	Additional white chocolate to melt and drizzle over top
1 tsp baking powder	

In large mixing bowl, combine eggs and sugar and whip together until creamy. In saucepan, melt butter and pour over chunked white chocolate. Using a whisk, combine until chocolate is melted. Add to egg/sugar mixture in bowl and mix. In another bowl, mix together flour, cake flour, baking powder and salt. Add to liquid ingredients and stir gently. Do not overbeat. Fold in chopped apricots, chopped hazelnuts and white chocolate chunks and stir briefly. Spread brownie batter into 9x13-inch pan that has been greased and lined with parchment. Bake in 325°F oven for 30 to 40 minutes until golden brown. If desired, drizzle with melted white chocolate or powdered sugar.

\*From <http://www.interlakes.com/lamoreaux/recipes/apribrownie.html>

## ZUCCHINI BROWNIES\*

3 cups zucchini, grated	2 tsp baking powder
1 1/2 cups sugar	2 tsp baking soda
2/3 cup applesauce	1/3 cup cocoa or carob powder, sifted
3 cups flour	3 tsp vanilla
1/4 tsp salt	1 tsp coconut extract

Preheat oven at 350°F. Prepare a 8x15-inch baking pan with cooking spray and flour. In a mixing bowl, combine zucchini, sugar, applesauce, vanilla, and coconut extract. In another mixing bowl, combine flour, salt, baking powder, baking soda and cocoa/carob powder. Mix wet ingredients with dry ingredients just until moistened. Spread batter in prepared pan. Bake for 25 minutes.

\*From <http://www.fatfree.com/recipes/brownies/zucchini-brownies>

## Appendix 2

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## BORSTCH

1 quart jar tomatoes	1 cup sweet cream
2 large onions	8 medium potatoes
1 small beet	4 carrots
1 lb butter	1/2 stalk celery
small bunch of dill leaves	1 good head cabbage

Put 3 quarts water in 4 quart-pot and bring to boil. Peel potatoes, onions, carrots, beet and celery. Put tomatoes into frying pan with 3 Tbsp butter and cook for few minutes. Cut 5 potatoes and beet into halves. Cube carrots and celery finely. Put all this into the boiling water and add 1/2 of the tomatoes. Salt to taste and add 1/4 lb butter. Shred cabbage finely. Put 1/2 Tbsp butter into frying pan. Chop onions finely and fry in melted butter 5 minutes. Add 1/3 of cabbage, some chopped green pepper and fry. Don't overcook potatoes. When tender enough to mash, remove, add remaining butter and mash. Add 1/2 of tomatoes and 3 Tbsp fried cabbage and 1 cup cream. Now cut 3 potatoes into small cubes. Pour them into boiling potato stock which you have left and boil them for 10 minutes. Then add 1/2 of fried cabbage and the rest of the shredded cabbage. Allow to boil 3 minutes. Then pour in the mashed potatoes. Stir so there will be no potatoes in lumps. Last—add rest of fried tomatoes, fried cabbage, chopped sweet pepper and finely chopped dill leaves. When it starts to boil, remove from heat but do not cover too tightly until cool. Salt to taste and serve.

## CARROT SOUP

3 Tbsp butter	4 cups beef broth
6 large carrots, peeled and sliced	1/2 tsp sugar
2 medium onions, chopped	salt and pepper
1 large potato, peeled and diced	

In a heavy 3-quart saucepan, melt butter. Add carrots, onion, and potato, and cook over med-high heat until lightly browned (about 15 minutes, stirring occassionally). Add beef broth (water and bouillon), sugar, salt and pepper to taste. Heat to boiling. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook 15 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Blend or puree until smooth (with hand blender or regular blender).

## BAKING POWDER BISCUITS

2 cups flour	1/4 cup shortening
3 tsp baking powder	2/3 to 3/4 cup milk
1/2 tsp salt	

Cut shortening into dry mixture until like coarse crumbs. Make a well; add milk. Stir quickly, just until dough follows fork around bowl. Turn onto lightly floured surface. (Dough will be soft) Knead gently with heel of hand 10 or 12 strokes. Roll or pat 1/2-inch thick. Dip biscuit cutter in flour; cut dough straight down—no twisting. Bake on ungreased baking sheet at 450°F for 12-15 minutes. Makes 16.

\*for crusty biscuits, bake 3/4-inch apart; for soft sides, bake close together.

## CORN RELISH

12 cobs corn	1 1/2 cups sugar
4 medium onions	4 Tbsp salt
2 sweet red peppers	2 tsp dry mustard
1 small cabbage	2 Tbsp flour
4 cups vinegar	1 tsp tumeric

Cut corn from cob. Peel and chop onions. Chop peppers. Cut cabbage into quarters, remove heart and force through food chopper. Mix all veggies and pour 3 cups vinegar over mixture. Mix sugar, salt, mustard, flour and tumeric with remaining vinegar. Add to veggie mixture. Bring to boil and simmer gently 40-45 minutes. Pour into hot sterilized jars and seal.

## CAJUN GLAZED HAM

4 to 6 lb cooked ham (2 to 3 kg)

### GLAZE:

1 cup brown sugar	1 Tbsp paprika
1/4 cup chopped seeded Jalapeno peppers	1 tsp ground black pepper
2 cloves garlic, minced	1/2 tsp dried thyme
2 Tbsp white wine vinegar	1/2 tsp dried oregano
2 Tbsp grainy mustard or Creole mustard	1 tsp cayenne pepper or Tabasco

sauce

Pierce ham all over with a long skewer. Trim off excess fat. Combine all ingredients for the glaze. Line a baking sheet with foil and place ham on baking sheet with the fat side up. Score ham and spread with 1/3 of glaze. Bake in preheated 350°F oven for 20 minutes. Baste with 1/3 more glaze. Bake 20 minutes longer. Repeat. Total cooking time is about 1 to 1 1/2 hours. Allow to rest about 30 minutes before serving. Serves 8. Serve with chili roasted potatoes.

## CHILI ROASTED POTATOES

6 med. sized red skinned potatoes (2 lbs, 1 kg), unpeeled  
1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted or olive oil  
2 cloves garlic, minced

### SPICE MIXTURE:

1 tsp salt	1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
1 tsp ground cumin	1/4 tsp oregano
1/2 tsp ground black pepper	1/2 tsp paprika

Cut potatoes in halves or quarters, depending on size. Combine melted butter or oil with garlic. Combine spice mixture and whisk into butter or oil mixture. Toss seasoning with potatoes well. Spread potatoes out on a parchment paper lined baking sheet (or place around a roast, etc...) Bake in a preheated 350°F oven (or slightly higher) for one hour or until browned and cooked through. Serves 8.

## EGGPLANT PARMESAN

1 large eggplant	3/4 cup Swiss Gruyere cheese, grated
parmesan cheese, grated	1 cup cottage cheese
3/4 cup Mozzarella cheese, grated	

### Tomato Sauce:

1/2 cup onion, chopped	2 small carrots, grated
1/2 cup celery, chopped	1 tsp oregano
1/2 cup green pepper, chopped	1/4 tsp thyme
1/2 cup mushrooms, sliced	2-3 dashes hot pepper sauce
4 Tbsp olive oil	1 tsp salt
1-19oz can tomatoes	1/2 tsp pepper
1-5 1/2oz can tomato paste	

Slice, brush with oil and broil eggplant on both sides until soft. Cover eggplant with parmesan cheese and set aside. Combine ingredients for tomato sauce and cook for 20 minutes. Mix mozzarella and gruyere cheese together. Assembly: Layer in a 9x13-inch greased casserole dish in the following order: eggplant, tomato sauce, grated cheese, dollops of cottage cheese, eggplant, tomato sauce and grated cheese. Bake in oven at 350°F for 40 minutes. Serves 6.

## LASAGNA

2 lbs hamburger	10 oz lasagna noodles
1 lb sausage	1/2 cup parmesan cheese
1 clove garlic	2 Tbsp parsley flakes
1 Tbsp oregano	2 beaten eggs
1 1/2 tsp salt	2 tsp salt
2 cups tomatoes	1/2 tsp pepper
2-6oz cans tomato paste	1 lb mozzarella, thinly sliced
3 cups cottage cheese	

Brown meat slowly—add next 5 ingredients. Simmer uncovered for 30 minutes. Stir occasionally. Cook noodles in large amount of salted water. Drain. Combine remaining ingredients except mozzarella cheese. Place 1/2 of noodles in 9x13-inch baking dish. Spread 1/2 cottage cheese on top, then 1/2 of mozzarella, then 1/2 of meat sauce. Repeat layers. Bake at 250°F for around 3 hours (begins to look dry).

## APPLE CRISP

5 cups sliced, pared tart apples	3/4 cup quick-cooking rolled oats
1 cup brown sugar	1 tsp cinnamon
3/4 cup flour	1/2 cup butter or margarine

Arrange apple in buttered 9-inch pie plate. Combine brown sugar, flour, oats, and cinnamon. Cut in butter until crumbly. Press mixture over apples. Bake in moderate oven (350°F) 45-50 minutes or until top is browned. Serve warm with icecream.

\* can substitute rhubarb, peaches, raspberries, etc...for apples

\* with rhubarb, add more sugar

\* with canned fruit (peaches, pears, etc...), add cornstarch to thicken

## BANANA COOKIES

1 1/2 cups flour	1 egg
1/2 cup sugar	3/4 cup shortening
1/2 tsp soda	1 cup mashed bananas
1 tsp salt	1 3/4 cups oatmeal
1 tsp nutmeg	1 cup chocolate chips
3/4 tsp cinnamon	1 cup nuts

Mix all ingredients together. Spoon onto greased cookie sheet and put in oven at 400°F for 15 minutes.

### BANANA NUT BREAD

1/2 cup shortening	1/2 tsp soda
1/2 cup sugar	1/4 tsp salt
2 eggs, beaten	1 tsp baking powder
1 1/2 cups crused bananas	1/2 cup nuts
2 cups flour	

Cream shortening and sugar. Add eggs and bananas. Sift flour, salt, soda and baking powder into bowl. Add nuts. Beat with a few quick strokes. Put in a 10x4-inch loaf pan, oiled and floured. Bake at 350°F for 40 minutes.

### CHOCOLATE ZUCCHINI LOAF

3 medium eggs	3 cups sifted flour
2 cups sugar	1 tsp salt
1 cup oil	1 tsp cinnamon
2 squares unsweetened chocolate (melted)	1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp vanilla	1 tsp baking soda
2 cups grated zucchini	1 cup chopped almonds

Beat the eggs until lemon coloured. Beat in sugar and oil. Stir chocolate into egg mixture with vanilla and zucchini. Sift dry ingredients together. Stir into zucchini mixture with almonds and mix well. Bake in 2 9x5-inch greased loaf pans at 350°F for about 50-60 minutes. Let cool in pans for approximately 15 minutes before removing.

### FANTASY FUDGE

3 cups sugar	7 oz jar marshmallow cream
3/4 cup margarine	1 cup chopped nuts
2/3 cup (6 oz can) evaporated milk	1 tsp vanilla
12 oz. semi-sweet chocolate pieces	

Combine sugar, margarine and milk in saucepan. Bring to boil. Stir 5 minutes over medium heat to soft ball stage. Remove from heat; stir in chocolate pieces. Add marshmallow cream, nuts and vanilla. Beat until well blended. Pour into greased 9x13-inch pan. Cool.



### FRESH APPLE CAKE

4 cups fresh apples, cut in 8th and sliced thinly	
1 1/2 cups sugar	2 cups flour
3/4 cup oil	1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp vanilla	2 tsp cinnamon
2 eggs, well beaten	Pinch of salt
1 cup chopped nuts	

Blend apples with sugar. Add rest of ingredients. Pour into greased 9x11-inch pan. Bake at 350°F for 50 minutes.

### ICING

Cook over low heat 1 cup milk with 5 Tbsp flour. Set aside to cook. Cream 1 cup margarine and 1 scant cup sugar. Add to paste. Add 1 tsp vanilla. Beat until whipped cream consistency. (Coconut on top is optional)

### NO BAKE COOKIES

2 cups sugar	2 1/2 cups quick oatmeal
1/2 cup margarine	1/2 cup peanut butter
1/2 cup canned milk	1 tsp vanilla
4 Tbsp cocoa	coconut (as desired)

Put sugar, margarine, milk, and cocoa in saucepan. Bring to boil. Cook for one minute at a rolling boil. Take from stove. Add remaining ingredients. Stir. Drop on wax paper and let cool.

### OATMEAL CAKE

1 cup quick oats	1 1/2 cups flour
1 1/4 cup boiling water	1 tsp soda
1 cup brown sugar	1 tsp cinnamon
1 cube margarine	1/2 tsp nutmeg
1 cup sugar	2 eggs, beaten

Combine oats, water, brown sugar and margarine. Cool and add remaining ingredients. Mix by hand. Bake in 9x13-inch greased and floured pan at 350°F until well done.

### OATMEAL CAKE TOPPING

Mix 1 cup brown sugar, 1 cup coconut, 3 Tbsp butter, 1/4 cup milk and 1/2 cup chopped nuts. Mix up well. Put on cake as soon as taken out of oven. Brown in broiler until coconut is done.

### OLD FASHIONED COCONUT OATMEAL COOKIES

1 cup butter or margarine	1/4 cup wheat germ
1 cup granulated sugar	3/4 cup coconut
1/2 cup lightly packed brown sugar	1 tsp baking powder
1 egg	1 tsp baking soda
1 cup flour	1 1/2 cups chocolate chips and/or raisins
1 cup oats	

Cream butter, sugars and egg together thoroughly. Add flour, oats, wheat germ, coconut, baking powder and baking soda. Mix well. Stir in chocolate chips. Drop by teaspoonfuls onto lightly greased baking sheets. Flatten slightly with a floured fork. Bake at 350°F for 12-15 minutes or until lightly golden. Makes about 3 dozen.

### ORANGE STREUSEL COFFEE CAKE

2 cups sifted flour	1 egg, slightly beaten
1 tsp salt	1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup sugar	1/2 cup orange juice
2 tsp baking powder	1/3 cup corn oil
1 tsp grated orange rind	

Sift first 4 ingredients into bowl. Add orange rind. Make a well and add remaining ingredients. Stir only enough to dampen flour. (Batter should be lumpy) Pour into greased 10-inch pie pan or 2 greased 8-inch pie pans. Top with streusel topping if desired. Bake at 375°F for 35 minutes or until brown.

#### STREUSEL TOPPING

Mix 1/4 cup flour and 1/2 cup sugar in bowl. Cut in 2 Tbsp butter or margarine until consistency of cornmeal. Sprinkle on batter.

### PLAIN CAKE

1 cup sugar	2 cups flour
1/2 cup shortening	2 tsp baking powder
1 egg	1 tsp vanilla
1 cup milk	

Cream first 3 ingredients and then add rest of ingredients. Bake in ungreased 9x11-inch pan at 350°F for around 25 minutes.

### COFFEE CAKE TOPPING

1/2 cup brown sugar	grated orange rind (optional)
1 tsp cinnamon	1/2 cup chopped nuts
2 Tbsp flour	chocolate chips (as desired)
2 Tbsp butter or margarine	

Rub dry ingredients, butter, and orange rind together lightly with clean hands until crumbly. Sprinkle on top of unbaked cake. Add nuts and chocolate chips. Bake.

### RHUBARB CAKE

1/2 cup shortening	1 tsp vanilla
1 1/2 cup brown sugar	2 cups whole wheat flour
2 cups diced rhubarb	1 tsp soda
1/2 cup sugar	1 tsp cinnamon
1 egg	1 cup sour milk

Sprinkle rhubarb with 1/2 cup sugar and set aside. Cream shortening and brown sugar together. Add all the remaining ingredients. Blend all together and then add rhubarb mixture. Pat in greased 9x13-inch pan. Bake at 350°F for 35-40 minutes. Sprinkle with icing sugar for topping when baked and cooled.

### SALAD DRESSING CAKE

2 cups flour	4 Tbsp cocoa
1 cup sugar	1 cup salad dressing (miracle whip)
1/4 tsp salt	1 tsp vanilla
2 tsp baking soda	1 cup water

Sift dry ingredients into bowl. Add the last 3 wet ingredients to bowl. Beat well and bake at 350°F for 25 or 30 minutes in a 9x11-inch cake pan, or two 8-inch round pans.

### GERMAN CHOCOLATE TOPPING

Combine in saucepan, 1 cup canned milk and 1 cup sugar, 3 egg yolks, 1 cube margarine, 1 tsp vanilla. Cook for 12 minutes, stirring. Add 1 1/3 cups coconut, 1 cup nuts. Beat until cool and thick enough to spread.

### SUGAR COOKIES

2/3 cup shortening	4 tsp milk
3/4 cup sugar	2 cups sifted flour
1/2 tsp grated orange peel	1 1/2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp vanilla	1/4 tsp salt
1 egg	

Thoroughly cream shortening, sugar, orange peel, and vanilla. Add egg, beat until light and fluffy. Stir in milk. Sift together dry ingredients; blend into creamed mixture. Divide dough in half. Chill one hour. On lightly floured surface, roll to 1/8-inch. Cut in desired shapes with cutters. Bake on greased cookie sheet at 375°F about 6-8 minutes. Cool slightly; remove from pan. Cool on rack. Makes two dozen. Decorate as desired.







