From the Issue Editor

I remember studying for my first-year comprehensive exams in Penn's doctoral anthropology program during a typically hot, muggy Philadelphia summer. Often secreted away in a study room at the Museum Library, I pored over the notes from courses I had taken in all the anthropological subdisciplines over the previous year. At some point in this arduous process, I thought "continuity and change, that really does say it all." Accepting the importance of this theme for all of anthropology, I felt somehow comforted.

PAUL BOISVERT

Years later, as I read through all the fascinating articles for this special Food & Culture issue, covering many parts of the globe and many moments in time, the theme of continuity and change comes to mind again. No surprise really, when you consider that food has always been a necessary part of the varied course of human history and the organization of human cultures. How can food not be considered as fundamental to the warp of continuity and the weft of change in making up the fabric of human endeavors, be they ancient or modern?

Food is everywhere. But it is the endless ways we bring meaning and purpose to the food we grow, prepare, and eat that make food such a fascinating subject of inquiry. In this issue we see the apparently universal link between food and memory; an ingredient, a dish, a meal can immediately evoke certain places, people, and circumstances (Smith, Hernandez and Sutton, Trubek). We learn a lot about social organization and the importance of commensality, from the everyday dinners of peasants in seventh-century Central America (Sheets) as well as the fabulous, cannibalistic ritual feasts of the precontact Aztec elites (Furst). We see the resilience of cooking practices despite major dislocations in place and time (Hernandez and Sutton).

Change is a topic of discussion too. The organization of agriculture, from production to processing to distribution, has been revolutionized in many ways during the past 10,000 years. Whether cataclysmic or gradual, changes in the organization of the food system lead to radically transformed culinary landscapes (Sheets, Trubek). Dislocation of people, such as the Greeks who migrated to the United States, can change what people eat (Hernandez and Sutton). The disintegration of Aztec society with the entry of the Spanish into the New World did not mean the end of tortilla consumption, but it did lead to the end of cannibalism (Furst). A seemingly innocuous event, the introduction of cocoa, a New World crop, to Western culture, propelled vast changes in the diets, cultures, and economies of people around the globe (Danien).

As Clifford Geertz says in *Local Knowledge*, anthropologists try to "come to terms with the diversity of the ways human beings construct their lives in the act of leading them." Using food as the focus of inquiry, all these articles help bring new insight into the quotidian details of human existence, but all the while they ask us to consider bigger questions as well. I hope we provide you with much food for thought.

Amy B. Trubek, Ph.D.
Issue Editor

FOR FURTHER READING

Belasco, Warren, and Philip Scranton, editors. *Food Nations*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Counihan, Carole, and Penny Van Esterik. *Food and Culture: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Geertz, Clifford. *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books, 1983.

Sutton, David. *Remembrances of Repasts*. New York: Berg, 2001.

Trubek, Amy. *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.