



Talking Food: Home Food Preservation in Eastern Kentucky

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Abstract: Recent reports detail a rise in the practice of home food preservation in the United States due to economic woes, nutritional concerns, and increasing devotion to local food production. This work examines local food production through the acts of growing one's own food in a subsistence garden and preserving the garden produce at home through various methods (e.g., canning, freezing, drying, burying, cellaring, pickling, and curing). Local food production in two Eastern Kentucky counties was examined through in-depth qualitative interviews¹ with home food preservation practitioners. Twenty home food preservation practitioners were interviewed between Fall 2009 and Summer 2010. Methodologies for data collection included snowball sampling, extended interviews, and participant observation. This research seeks to better understand why home gardeners and home food preservation practitioners are motivated to produce their food in an era of readily available, relatively cheap foodstuffs. Interviews reveal practitioners are motivated foremost by a sense of continuing tradition. Food preservation knowledge was found to be generationally transmitted via female family members. Motivations commonly associated within a local foods discourse were alluded to but not discussed using a clearly articulated local foods discourse. Many practitioners believe that home food preservation is in decline, but insist a return to self-sufficient food production is greatly needed in times of economic hardship. This work contributes to the understanding of local food systems by illustrating the complexity of practitioner motivations and existing food sources in areas commonly considered rural food deserts.

Key Words: Local Food, Kentucky, Knowledge Transference

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“We live in a very different world than that of our grandparents. Americans are juggling jobs with the needs of children and aging parents. The time needed to tend a garden is not there for the majority of our citizens, certainly not a garden of sufficient productivity to supply much of a family's year-round food needs.”

- Bonnie McCarvel and Janet Braun, Mid America CropLife Association

INTRODUCTION

News sources have documented steady increases in both home gardening and home food preservation as economic woes and nutritional concerns rise (Associated Press, 2008; Pratt, 2008; Bernard, 2011). Food production has even been discussed in the most notable of North American homes- the White House. When the nation's First Lady, Michele Obama, stated the 2009 White House garden would be “organic” she promptly received a letter from The Crop Life Ambassador Network, a lobbyist group representing the interests of agribusiness giants like Monsanto and Dow Chemical. In addition to the declaration above stating the most time-pressed Americans are unable to grow their own foods, the letter functioned as a unified voice of agribusiness defending the conventional industrial food system. This voice mandates a food production system which relies upon an industrial supply chain, large-scale implements, petrochemical pesticides and herbicides, and increasing corporate consolidation within the food system. In our time-pressed society, the quote above does beg the question, is tending a garden and producing one's own food simply a nostalgic throwback to our grandparent's era? Who will conduct self sufficient food production and where? This exploration begins at the author's home-Eastern Kentucky; a site where home gardening and food preservation was experienced firsthand. In Central

Appalachia, specifically two Eastern Kentucky counties, twenty interviews were conducted between 2009 and 2010 to explore the impetus behind the self sufficient food practices of home gardening and food preservation. These qualitative interviews reveal insights into motivations and offer an entry point into further studies of home production. The primary question driving this project is what motivates those who grow gardens and practice home food preservation despite access to relatively cheap and accessible food from grocery stores?

Exploring home food preservation in a rural Kentucky region where the practice was tradition, before the discourse surrounding “local foods” became popular, is important to discuss. First, this work can add to general understandings of food systems in rural areas. Many rural areas are increasingly studied as “food deserts” (Hubley, 2011; McEntee & Agyeman, 2010; USDA 2009; Morton & Blanchard, 2007; Blanchard & Lyson 2006). A review of food deserts literature conducted in 2010 revealed most food access measures include access to stores, income, race/ethnicity, food store density, cost, and location, amongst others (Walker, Keane, & Burke, 2010). While some mention of community gardens are included as solutions to rural food deserts (Morton & Blanchard, 2007, pp. 1) self-sufficient, subsistence agriculture like home gardening and home food

preservation are typically not included as a measure when examining food deserts, reflecting a gap in the research. Second, this work could give insights to the notion promoted by local food system supporters that home food preservation is a community-building alternative to the oft criticized “buying local” or “voting with one’s fork” individualism (Click & Ridberg, 2010, pp. 310). Home food preservation practitioners might be motivated by a plethora of reasons- none of which might be associated with local food movement ideals. Teasing out motivations for any practice is a complex process. This research, however, could be duplicated in other regions of North America to yield basic insights into the desires of community members who shape the feasibility of their local food “alternatives.” This research also seeks to fill the gap in the literature of the sociology of agriculture and food by offering a socio-cultural analysis of home food preservation which until recently, has been lacking.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies of home food preservation indicate a dearth of knowledge about its socio-cultural aspects as an individual practice of self-sufficiency today. Some works focus on home food preservation as an informal economy while others discuss the practice as an income supplement for the rural elderly that provides maintenance of meaningful self-sufficiency ideologies. Most recent works explore the practices of home food production and preservation from a political and ideological perspective by analyzing the practice for its community-building potential and as an act of food

relocalization. Halperin described home food preservation as one of many ways of “making ends meet” in rural Kentucky by exploring the informal economy (Halperin, 1990, pp. 131). Halperin went on to say home food preservation was part of the balancing act of finding internal or external wage labor with something she calls reciprocal cooperative labor. Other research on food preservation has linked home gardening and home food preservation with practices of self-sufficiency (Quandt, Popyach, & DeWalt, 1994, pp.184). Specifically, Quandt, et al., studied nutritionally vulnerable rural elderly residents who were supplementing their livelihoods with home gardening and food preservation. This coupling of subsistence gardening and home food preservation is not unusual given the instrumental nature of the production and preservation cycles which save abundance from becoming spoiled. Citing remote geographies and cultural norms of rural Kentucky, self-sufficiency and independence were found to be a central tenet in the “food ideology” (Quandt, Popyach, & DeWalt, 1994, pp.195) that prompted the elderly to possess home gardens and preserve their produce.

Few sociological studies specifically examine home food preservation from a socio-cultural perspective. Click and Ridberg (2010) interviewed home food preservation practitioners about politics and found they considered themselves to be members of a food movement (pp. 308). Increases in home food preservation indicated for them a “food revolution” was simmering and practitioners were seen as moving from consumer-oriented approaches (voting

with one’s fork/dollars) to supporting environmental beliefs of alternative food movements (Click & Ridberg, 2010, pp. 310). Similarly concerned with motivations of home gardeners, Black (2010) provides a narrative influenced by Habermas that Kentucky vegetable gardeners are not simply agrarian holdovers but are instead motivated by resisting corporate control and industrial food production, thus shaping their “lifeworlds” (pp. 124). Examining “agrobiodiverse” rural gardeners and home food preservation practitioners in the Ozarks, Campbell (2010) found the low-income home-gardeners shared characteristics of frugality, desire for fresh foods, consumed a diverse selection of wild and cultivated plants, and were politically conservative (pp. 10). McEntee (2010) explored a distinction between contemporary localism and traditional localism in order to move toward a “reflexive localism by examining myriad motivations for consuming local foods in a rural area”

(pp. 797). Of all the works that come before, this study most shares commonalities with McEntee’s work in that it is exploring the motivations of home food preservation practitioners to create a more complex understanding of local food.

METHODS AND DATA

I chose to examine Eastern Kentucky, considered Central Appalachia, because of its complex history of subsistence agriculture- one that was “robust” during the antebellum period and then declined during the postbellum era (Billings and Blee, 2000, pp. 157). Despite this decline, subsistence agriculture and small scale home manufacture were still a large part of the Central Appalachian economy in the years leading to industrialization, 1910-1920s (Scott, 1996, pp. 213). Kingsolver (2011) discusses how mixing cash and non-cash activities like gardening were considered “skills required for community engagement.”

	2009 Pop., thousands	2009 Land Area, 2000 sq. miles	2009 % Pop. White Non-Hispanic	2009 % Pop. African American	2009 % Pop. Hispanic, Latino	2009 % High School Graduate	2009 % Bachelor's Degree or Higher	2008 Median Household Income	2000 Average Travel Time to Work, minutes
Wolfe County	7,099	222.78	98	0.4	1.3	54	11	\$23,310	34
Lawrence County	16,573	418.78	98	0.4	0.5	58	7	\$29,015	36

The knowledge we consider part of local food systems today were “old hat” for Eastern Kentucky residents who grew up during the Great Depression (Kingsolver, 2011, pp. 144). Two Eastern Kentucky counties, Wolfe and Lawrence, were utilized as a focus area

because of their subsistence agriculture history, as well as, the author’s social capital could provide a network of participants. In Eastern Kentucky, residents identify themselves largely by the county they are from, much like residents of large urban areas might

identify as being from a particular borough or city quadrant. Thus, a county level approach was most useful and enabled utilization of the county extension offices and schools system listservs.

The study was open to adults of all races and sexes aged 18-80 who self-identify through the screening survey as practitioners of home food preservation, or those who have practiced it in the past 20 years. Participants were recruited by word of mouth and through email from contacts within the public schools and agriculture extension agencies in both Wolfe and Lawrence counties. Potential participants were given a telephone survey to determine eligibility before interviewing. Snowball sampling was then used with eligible contacts until ten participants in each county were interviewed. Having lived in both counties, social capital assisted the author in accessing information channels and making initial contacts who recommended potential participants through snowball sampling. The public

school system was chosen as a recruiting site because of the dense social networks that exist between faculty and community. Agriculture extension was chosen as a recruiting site because agents have direct contact with home food preservation practitioners and usually offer classes on preservation.

From September to November 2009 and May to July 2010, 20 in-depth ethnographic interviews, ten per county, were conducted. The interviews were casual, largely unstructured, and conversational. Participant observation was conducted in the summer of 2010 to reveal actual practices and working relations while corn was cooked and prepared to be frozen. Participant observation is essential to “obtain a great breadth of information which allows us to correct biases which may be present in interlocutor’s discourses” (Medina, 2004, pp. 61). In addition to taking notes and photographs, the participants were recorded using a digital audio recorder and were filmed for a documentary that is in the works.

Table 2. Questions Guiding In-depth Interviews

1.	What are the reasons for conducting home food preservation?
2.	What foods are commonly preserved?
3.	What length of time has the practitioner preserved foods at home?
4.	Where did practitioners gain their preservation knowledge?
5.	What is the role of home food preservation in the formation and maintenance of community relationships?
6.	How long have participants been and intend to be a practitioner?
7.	How do practitioners situate themselves in the local and global food systems?
8.	How are practitioners engaging in informal exchanges or reciprocal economies?
9.	What are the relations of gender in the process of home food preservation?
10.	What are the economic factors surrounding the practitioner’s use of home food preservation?
11.	What preservation techniques are used?

Video was vital in capturing practitioners as they demonstrated their techniques. The film will also serve as a gift to interviewees and an archival medium for future generations since many practitioners do not follow guidelines in books or possess written instructions for their work. A list of questions indirectly guided me during the informal interview process.

Using Nvivo, the audio files were transcribed and line-by-line coding was used to produce eight emergent themes. Themes included reasons for practicing home food preservation; sources of knowledge; the role of women in home food preservation; current and anachronistic practices used; market linkages for practitioners; reasons for cessation of home food preservation; and thoughts on the future of home food preservation. Hermeneutic interpretation was used to analyze the case studies in order to prioritize an understanding of practices and discourses situated in larger contexts.

Discussion of Findings from Qualitative Interviews

Interview participants were selected using a snowball method. Average participant age was 60 years. All participants were Caucasian and most participants had at least a high school level of education. Eight participants were retired from previous careers, some possessed college education (four worked in the public school system as teachers or administrators), three had worked in a factory, and one was a former County Attorney. Five participants are currently employed outside the home- as a school guidance counselor/former home economics teacher, a housecleaner/elderly care worker, a railroad worker, and two are teachers. Two are small business owners (a body shop and a craft/antique shop). Five participants work at home- one schools her children at home; another assists a family member with childcare; one stopped tending

a garden and preserving a few years ago because she is taking care of her ill husband; and two work on their family farms. All of the practitioners raised the produce they preserved and a few supplemented what was grown with store bought items and sometimes discounted meats.

The following were the most discussed themes that emerged from conversations with practitioners. Motivations primarily consisted of continuing a traditional practice the interviewees had “always done.” The intergenerational transmission of home food preservation from grandmothers to mothers to practitioner was stated by all interviewees. Additional themes surfaced that share commonalities with a local food discourse and include a general sense of community-building and socializing through the sharing and preserving of food and skepticism of the industrial food system. Preferred taste of home produced foods and saving money in lean economic times was also commonly stated. Predictions for the future of home food preservation were mixed. Many people said preserving is a “dying art” while others noted increases in gardens as an indication others are picking it up for economic reasons. Most of those interviewed expressed concerns over younger generations not having time or desire to garden or preserve foods. Since the desire to continue a traditional practice, the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, and the future of home food preservation were the most discussed themes, they will be elaborated here. Additional themes involving gender dynamics amongst practitioners, time constraints, and informal food economies/gifting will be examined more closely in future works.

Teasing out “Tradition” as Motivation

When asked why they preserved foods at home every single practitioner’s initial

answer was uniformly, “it’s just something I’ve always done.” This would imply the practices continue simply out a sense of obligation to tradition. Exploring this sentiment a bit more, practitioners would discuss how they had relied on growing and preserving their own foods as children and continued the practice because it brings back fond memories. Practitioners were happy to share stories of their family working together and truly seemed to enjoy reminiscing about preserving as part of their cultural tradition. Many practitioners also preferred the taste of their home grown foods and said it is superior to grocery store produce because they control how it is made. Some practitioners were more concerned with cleanliness and taste,

“I remember way back when, before we had electricity or freezers, mom would can the corn and it takes on a different taste canned. But the reason I won’t [buy canned corn] is because you shuck that corn and sometimes those little old white worms are on there and the big old worms, and I can’t stand worms. [Laughs.] I know that I look at my corn much closer than they do in these commercial processing plants. There is no way in this world that I can think to buy canned corn out of the store.”

Over the course of the interviews several other factors would appear as further impetus to preserve foods. Among those factors, concerns about health and food additives, a sense of pride and accomplishment in producing one’s food, a desire to save money, and skepticism of the industrial food system. Constance, a retired teacher and agriculture extension agent who diversified her farm by growing grapes for a Lexington, KY winery was the only practitioner to explain her motivations using a clear local foods discourse.

“I’m beginning to worry about everything that we have in commercial canning. Even the lids of the cans, you know, they have the BPA leaking. My daughter has discovered that in the United States

you cannot buy the seals for your own home canning that don’t have it, but she found a place in Canada that you can purchase them and she’s purchasing those.”

Constance also stated concerns with salmonella and food safety citing recent food recalls. We spoke at length about Mad Cow Disease, or Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), and she stated this was why she consumes only local beef. Constance’s concerns extended beyond the conventional food system and included vulnerabilities of our food system from terroristic threats as a reason to be vigilant. Citing a news story, Constance told me that experts worry the next terrorist act against the United States could come in the form of introducing biological agents into our food supply. When I asked her if she is worried about issues like peak oil, she stated that “not enough people are worried about the environment or peak oil.” She told me that if the electricity grid were to go down, “city dwellers would have about five days worth of food before starving.”

Not everyone articulated Constance’s concerns of the health impacts from and vulnerabilities of the industrial food system, though there was general consensus that garden and home preserved foods were better for one’s health. Most all the practitioners take pride in their work and commented on the pleasure they derive from being largely food self-sufficient. When asked how it makes them feel to grow their own food and preserve it Donnie answered, “I like to do something that at the end of the year, you have a showing for it.” Leeoma went on to remark about the satisfaction that comes from watching their garden grow over the months and then having food all winter.

Saving money seemed to be another motivating factor for people who produce their own foods. When asked what she does with the food she cans Leeoma replied, “It

saves on your grocery budget. You don't have to buy all them groceries...We don't have to run to the grocery and buy our beans all the time, or buy corn." Nearly all practitioners mentioned saving money as an impetus for conducting home food preservation. When asked if the practice would be a good investment for beginners who lack the equipment and knowledge, a few practitioners stated that preservation requires a substantial investment. Several practitioners mentioned inheriting their canning supplies from their mothers or grandmothers. Rowena remarked she enjoyed the memories evoked when using her grandmother's pressure cooker and colander that was handed down to her. Gary remarked that a new pressure canner costs around \$85 to \$120 dollars. He recommends buying them used at yard sales and replacing gauges to ensure proper functionality. Glass jars are reused year to year as long as they are not cracked and many practitioners save some of their own seeds and start their own plants. Though many people save their bean seeds from year to year, fewer saved their tomato seeds (except those fond of the Heirloom varieties), and even fewer started their own potato plants opting to buy these from stores.

Mothers sharing Traditional Knowledge

In keeping with the findings of D'sa, et al. (2007) who found that 51% of people get their canning knowledge from family or friends (pp. 1), participants stated their food preservation knowledge comes primarily from their mothers or other female family members such as a grandmother or aunt. Every practitioner stated they learned their preservation practices from their mothers, a grandmother, or an aunt. This knowledge was handed down, mostly unwritten, and memorized by the act of participation. When asked who taught him to preserve Donnie stated, "It's been handed down. Our older

people, mommy and her grandparents, their neighbors up there did it...Once you get the hang of this, its natural." Betty T.G. remarked on the length of her participation as a practitioner,

"Since I was a little kid, I helped my momma. So I have continued every year since then...[We canned] most any vegetable that there was, or fruit. Either there was apples we dried, we canned, we sulphured. Beans, we did the same thing- we dried beans, canned beans, pickled beans. Cucumbers, same story there. Made sweet pickles, sour pickles, salt pickles..."

When asked how her mother learned to can Lillie replied,

"Her mom. Because they had to preserve all their food, because my mother was, you know, a lot older. She was born in 1910, so you know, her mom, I guess, maybe learned from her mother and just passed it generations down. She was older but she had been doing it before I was born."

A few practitioners were either former home economics teachers or had a family member (a mother or sister) who was an agriculture extension agent. In this way their knowledge of preserving was imbued with the food safety guidelines of the United States Department of Agriculture. Gary, who has a community kitchen in his basement and invites friends over for canning events, joked he first took home economics in high school to "meet girls" but ended up learning about canning. He has preserved ever since and referred to USDA standards during our conversation though he admits to being flexible in his adherence to them. The majority of practitioners, however, admitted they rarely referred to USDA guidelines for food preservation. When asked how she knew the length of time to cook foods to avoid botulism, Florence M. said, "I learned it from my mom. I always helped, from the time I was eight years old, I helped her can. And she

would always say, ‘we need to let this cook five hours or whatever, you know.’” She later went on to say she has never had problems with food poisoning and does not know anyone who has. This source of knowledge and a lack of experience with botulism or food poisoning was a common theme among practitioners.

Though some practitioners learned to preserve in home economics classes, the primary form of knowledge was passed down from mothers to children and learned through hands-on practice. A few practitioners noted referring to a friend’s recipe or using the Internet to find new jam or pickle recipes but did not refer to online resources for instructional information.

Future of Home Food Preservation

Two of the twenty practitioners predicted home food preservation will be around in the future. They cited recent increases in gardening and economic decline for this. When asked their opinion on the reasons why more people choose not to conduct home food preservation most practitioners, supporting the sentiment of Mid America CropLife, they stated that people today simply do not have time. Hope and Roger reflected,

Hope: “I think a lot of people, they’re so busy and they work. It’s just faster and more convenient to eat fast food or just buy something that’s frozen and thaw it out or cook it that way. They don’t want to, I don’t think, invest the time that it takes to do it.”

Roger: “It’s quicker to stop and get a pizza.”

Hope: “A lot of the younger generation, growing up now, they don’t have an example. Nobody has ever canned food at their house.”

Roger: “Well even the ones that have, like our children, they don’t always slow down enough to do something like that. It’s easier, the fast paced life they live, it’s easier just to buy it.”

Betty N. also laments that children today are not learning techniques for self-sufficient food production.

“I know of students here in my school that I counsel and work with that still have a feeling that if it’s homegrown, it might not taste as good, and it might not be as good as what they buy in the store. And I think somehow, you know, we’ve missed teaching our young people the need to grow vegetables, the need to preserve those things that they grow.”

Practitioners who cited a lack of time for some people, blamed the perceived decline of home food on a generation that avoids hard work or relies on social welfare. “There’s so many people anymore, they need a garden, but [the] sun’s too hot or something; they won’t put them out. Then they suffer for it in the winter,” said Donnie. When asked if people should start canning when the economy is weak, Donnie responded an emphatic, “Yes.” Constance poked fun while explaining her grandchildren do not help her in the garden. “They get hot. And there are bugs. They get sweaty. Poor things.” Florence shared a similar sentiment but also acknowledged, like Betty N. that younger generations lack the knowledge. When asked why more people do not garden and preserve Florence stated,

“I’ll tell you why, the kids, people don’t tend like they used to, you know. Kids are not raised up in that. They don’t know how to do it. I’ve got children I know wouldn’t do it. Don’t know how to tend the garden. Some do. The younger ones don’t. The sun’s too hot, they’re just lazy. [Laughs.] They all work [outside the home].”

Betty T.G. alluded to a connection between a decline in home food production and overreliance upon social welfare benefits. When asked if it was common for people who lacked garden space to share with other’s so they can produce their own food she replied,

“Uh, there’s an awful lot of people that don’t garden. You know if you’re sitting there getting your doctor bills paid, I’m sure you’re aware of all

the stuff that goes on, if you can get your doctor bills paid, food stamps, and all that stuff, you know, you sit back and watch TV. We've got a lot of people like that."

For some of the practitioners interviewed, however, health problems of their own or a family member resulted in their reduced participation. When asked if she grows all her food herself Lillie replied,

"I used to, but I don't do it now...my back has bothered me so much that I'm not supposed to be bending over. And I'm supposed to stay out of the sun, so it kind of makes it difficult. Because gardening, you have to do it when you have to do it. Its one of those things, you just can't put it off or the weeds will take it. Or if you put it off and you don't hoe, then it rains and you can't get out. Its one of those things you really have to watch."

Florence who is taking care of her ill husband has not preserved food in the last two years though she had grown and saved food every year of her life since she was a child. In her case, the work required to raise the amount of food they were accustomed to would be too much for one person who is also a primary caretaker.

ANALYSIS

These interviews illuminate the socio-cultural understandings and processes of food in two rural Eastern Kentucky counties, Wolfe and Lawrence, where subsistence gardening and home food preservation is common. Themes present here give insights into the motivations of home food preservation practitioners, the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, and thoughts on the future of the practice. First, when asked why they continue to preserve foods at home, every practitioner responded they had always done so. This would allude to a desire to continue a practice considered a tradition. We could define "tradition" as "the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at

least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant", or as Hobsbawm and Ranger called it, "invented tradition." (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983, pp. 2). Becker's (1998) exploration of tradition defines it as,

...a lingering of the past in the present, a touchstone with those who have gone before and have left behind some of what they held most important for later generations. In this sense, the experience of tradition is personal- a gift of valued skills, customs, or stories, for instance, to younger members of the community... (pp. 1).

These conceptualizations of tradition enable us to understand how home food preservation serves the practitioner's desires to hold on to a practice that brings them enjoyment and evokes fond memories.

Coupled with McEntee's (2010) examination of the distinction between "contemporary" and a "traditional" localism amongst home food producers (pp. 796), these conceptualizations of tradition could be useful. Categorizing local food producers into "contemporary local" and "traditional local," McEntee creates a distinction between a politically motivated local production and local food production that predates a local food movement discourses. These categories are parallel but sometimes overlapping (McEntee, 2010, pp. 786) though those "contemporary local" were driven primarily by a local foods discourse (critiquing industrial agriculture, health benefits of local, rekindling a sense of community, environmental benefits of local, and so on) while the "traditional local" were often driven by a desire to save money and uphold tradition. This study mirrors McEntee's findings that a sense of tradition is the primary motivation for home food preservation. These findings differ from

McEntee's since the overlaps with a "contemporary localism" appear to be present, just not articulated using the language of local food movements.

After probing interviewees to elaborate beyond upholding tradition, several practitioners stated they also prefer the taste of their home produced goods, sought to control the additives, or were skeptical of the cleanliness of the commercial food system. Three of the twenty practitioners voiced concerns that clearly aligned with those of a local food discourse yet all practitioners long, in some way, to enjoy the fruits of their labor and thrive from it on a local level. To frame this finding as traditional local versus contemporary local is too clear a delineation and ignores other less articulated reasons for preserving.

While practitioners lack an overt local foods discourse, the heart of many concerns does indeed appear politically motivated. By and large most practitioners take pleasure in the continuation of a traditional food practice and enjoy the self-sufficiency and work involved. Many believe they are saving money and enjoy sharing their foods with others who want or need it. Most of the practitioners believe society would be improved by everyone growing and preserving their own foods. Though few people explicitly showed skepticism of the conventional food system, they did not articulate concepts from a local foods discourse like *food miles*, *community gardening*, *carbon footprints*, *food sovereignty*, or *localization*. Yet, the concepts do seem to be present in action if not verbal articulation. A community canning kitchen exists in one practitioner's basement, some community members share land with others who need it, and an assumption that home food production is superior all point to one conclusion- a need to broaden the local foods discourse to include those who were "foodies" long

before the word came to mean what it does today. This refines our understanding of political motivations and addressed McEntee's self-stated limitation that only upper and middle class people tend to be concerned with local foods discourses (McEntee, 2010, pp. 797). Additionally, these practices take place in areas that could be considered food deserts highlighting the need to include self-production as measures of food access.

The second major theme was the role of women, primarily mothers, in passing on the traditional knowledge of preservation practices. Women, traditionally bearing primary responsibility for food production and keepers of food knowledge the world over (Howard, 2003, pp. 4) have used home gardens as a way to "[transmit] knowledge across generations" (Howard, 2003, pp. 8). North American women have shared their food knowledge both within the family and within the community. South Carolina's tomato canning clubs that began in 1910 promoted a message of "empowerment and social change" for young girls but eventually gave way to traditional gender roles after the Great Depression (Engelhardt, 2009, pp. 90-91). The turn of the century saw the industrialization of food production and an increased reliance upon science as "the home changed from a place of production to a place of consumption" (Nerad, 1999, pp. 4). During the Progressive Era home economics would become academized as the first home economics program was created for women at the University of California, Berkeley (Nerad, 1999, pp. 11). The focus on the science and sanitation of food ushered in food safety concerns and best practices for home food production (Nerad, 1999, pp. 33-36). These changes, coupled with increasing consumerism, led these female holders of food knowledge to alter their practices and increase consumption of store bought goods. Simultaneously,

foodways like gardening and home canning were rejected as lower class acts while industrially canned, store bought foods were associated with middle and upper class status (Levenstein, 2003, pp. 201). Despite the push to purchase instead of produce foods, many women in the study counties have continued to pass down food knowledge through oral traditions and participation as evidenced by all practitioners learning from their mothers or grandmothers and demonstrating to their own children how to preserve, even if the children do not continue the practices.

The scientization of food production and influence of the industrial age is visible amongst some practitioners and could have impacts on food safety. Gary's basement community kitchen exhibits a high level of organization and a near Fordist approach to home production. When asked, Gary gave an exact tally of each vegetable he had canned or frozen in the previous year. Participant observation revealed an efficient assembly-line approach being used that included multiple pots of boiling corn being transferred to a cooling station, then cut at a cutting station, and finally bagged then frozen at the final work station. In contrast, Donnie and Leeoma's preservation practices are more relaxed, with less focus on exact cooking time and organization. If these practitioners were chefs, Gary would be weighing out ingredients on a digital scale while Donnie and Leeoma would be adding a pinch-of-this and pinch-of-that. Many of the practitioners rely on information from previous generations and rarely refer to USDA preservation guidelines. When asked, most all related that it is easy to tell if a HFP food has spoiled or "gone bad." This is noted by cloudiness, change in color of the food, bad smell, and popped seals. These foods are not eaten and no doubt, reduced the likelihood of illness. These more fluid approaches to home food preservation based

largely on oral transmission of knowledge will certainly concern agricultural extension agents who have voiced concern in the past that food safety standards could be outdated or incorrect, leaving practitioners vulnerable to food borne illnesses (D'sa, et al., 2007, pp. 1). It seems the scientization of food production is revealed for many of the practitioners in a piece-meal fashion with preservers picking and choosing what influences and knowledge to incorporate with their traditional knowledge.

The final theme, the future of home food preservation elicited mixed responses. Most of the practitioners lamented the future of home food preservation as a "dying art form," while several people countered they believed difficult economic times would motivate people to take up the practice. Others who stated time constraints as a reason their children or grandchildren do not practice preserving foods surmised that they would start practicing with age and possibly retirement from their wage-earning jobs. Some practitioners blamed parents and a time-pressed generation for not sharing the knowledge they used to produce their own foods. Others held the belief that even given the opportunity; some people will never produce their own foods since they abuse the social welfare system. These comments could reflect an internalization of stereotypes that portray Appalachians as backward and "atavistic" (Billings, 1974, pp. 316) and explain poverty through cultural deficiencies. Family farms over generations have been "divided again and again to accommodate the increasing numbers of young men" seeking economic opportunities (Billings and Blee, 1995, pp. 262). This has impacted Central Appalachia's potential for subsistence agriculture since many people in Eastern Kentucky might not own their own land or have space for gardens. Poverty, a long-standing challenge for many regions not just

Appalachia, might also be impetus for change instead of a barrier- a “catalyst for folks to re-think their lives...to reconnect with nature” (hooks, 2009, pp. 31). With national concern over the economy and drug addiction impacting families, practitioners think home food preservation and home gardening could nourish communities if done correctly in the future. Time constraints today might pose more barriers for younger generations not practicing home food preservation. Kingsolver (2011) found that some towns perceive young adults as opting out of civic participation but in fact younger generations are absent simply because they are commuting longer distances, leaving little time to participate in their communities (pp. 131). Attending college, more common today than in previous generations, particularly for women, could also explain the lack of preservation participation.

CONCLUSION: A CALL TO ACTION

Studying home food preservation practitioners offers a rewarding opportunity to examine local food systems, alternatives to the industrialized food system, and could possess important policy implications for the rural United States. This work demonstrates the allure of long-term home food production and strength in adherence to a traditional practice- all desired acts in an age that moves ever faster. The role of women in the generational transmission of knowledge demonstrates both the prevalence of female-centered foodways and also the oral nature of home production practices. Home food preservation’s future was said to be a “dying art form” but practitioners also noted hope that younger generations might take up the practice during sharp economic declines and after retiring from wage-earning jobs. Increased participation in home food preservation classes at local extension

offices signals this art form actually has a strong immediate future.

Research to be conducted in summer 2012 will examine the motivations and demographics of home food preservation practitioners and home gardeners in two urban Kentucky counties- Fayette and Jefferson, home to the cities of Lexington and Louisville. Further research could also shed light on the role of changing technology in reducing women’s workload and time constraints. The canning this author can do today differs greatly than that of Depression-era women using open-fire methods. Despite time-saving innovations like electric pressure canners and air conditioning, modern practitioners experience time constraints from full-time jobs, education, and family responsibilities as well.

Findings from this research could strengthen the case for direct marketing sales of locally produced foods. The state of Kentucky has supported the sale of home produced goods as entrepreneurial niche markets since the passage of legislation made direct sales legal in 2003. The Bath County agriculture extension office, in Eastern Kentucky, has a state of the art commercial kitchen that could be used to produce canned goods like jams and salsas. This sort of facility, coupled with resources like the Kentucky Small Business Development Center, offers business and marketing skills to those wanting to turn their home production into a small business. Home food preservationists who certify their products may now sell their goods at local farmer’s markets, a move that strengthens local and regional economies.

In addition to contributing to the field of food knowledge and potential policy implications, this research also serves to document practices of traditional food preservation for future generations who lack this food knowledge and might not learn

through oral generational transmission. Regrettably, several practitioners expressed concern they might pass away before getting to share the knowledge with family members. This creates space for action. In addition to documenting and sharing through film the practices of home food producers, the hands-on nature of home gardening and food preservation opens a door to mentoring relationships between traditional practitioners and those new to the practices. An approach based on mentoring partnerships might spark increased participation in food relocalization efforts such as individual and community gardening and could stoke increases in demands for community kitchens and business incubators. Connecting long-term, traditional practitioners with younger generations could additionally work to bridge urban/rural divides, generational gaps, and contribute to a stronger sense of community. In addition to potential business partnerships for value-added food production, a mentoring partnership could create lasting friendships. And those, like gardens, are always something worth tending.

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