Visser (1999) Food and Culture- Interactions

Visser, Margaret


Visser’s article mainly takes about how culture and food are “interwoven”. When changes are made it greatly affects the way that society eats and obtains foods. She goes on to explain how inventions such as margarine and additions like corn flakes lead to a change their culture and their future culture. As time goes on each society will make adoptions that will work, and some that will fizzle out. When the corn flake ads were being introduced into Spain they did not take hold. People there don’t eat their milk plain and it’s not apart of their culture and it won’t have an lasting effect. However, margarine was a huge success. It was easily obtainable, cheaper and it tasted sp than butter. After its introduction to society, it became a household object and it changed the way culture was in the dairy market for farmers, buyers and even the livestock (I think I know what you mean but this sentence needs clarifying). Another close example of this, is the distribution of chocolate. It once was a delegacy and now it’s a household treat.

Borrowed culture is another point she tries to make. Recently, people around the world, especially America, have been trying to eat healthier. The Mediterranean culture is very healthy and their diet was seen by Americans? avoid passive construction to make the people happy and healthy. They eat raw vegetables, fish, less red meat and drink red wine. Once people started to notice how this life style and culture was like in the Mediterranean, people started to adopt it. It is very common in America to see people trying other eating methods in order to have lower body fat and fight the obesity sigma sp that is attached with America. However, if you adopt a different diet you don’t always adopt the correct culture. By taking up this diet, their body has tremendous changes and it may not be sustainable in their normal lives: activities they fulfill, hours a day they work etc. So they (who are they? Americans? or non-Mediterraneans generally?) started to make adaptations to the diet: adding more red meat, eating more eggs etc. The Mediterranean diet is culture for the natives, having easy access to fresh foods and being raised to eat that way awkward, reword. Americans and whoever others across the globe who are adopting this “diet” aren’t taking the culture associated with it.

She then goes on to list many examples of how introducing a certain food to a society will change their culture, but she also makes sure that it can be beneficial and negative (this sentence does not make sense). Introducing hamburgers into China will change their diet and introduce more beef into their culture. This will have a few effect don’t you mean many effects? . They will have more meat in their diet- which equals more protein for growth and bone development, but it also means that they will be able to breed and heard cows on their mass amount of land, which will create more jobs and money for China. However, the negative effect to this is their adaption to beef could possibly cause competing slaughterhouses to lose jobs, which could cause a number of people to have a significantly lower income and thus they may not be able to buy beef. This could cause it to become extinct and be eliminated from in their diet making it a huge cultural change as well.

Throughout her article she demonstrates tremendous knowledge about culture and diet co-mingling, but I feel like it was a little redundant. She could have cut out some of the examples she used, which would be easier for the reader to understand. I also thought it was a little informal for a scholarly journal entry, which can make what she is saying taken less seriously. Besides those two points, she was very clear in what she was trying to prove and her article flowed from each point to the next. I never thought in great detail the correlation between food and culture and their effect on each other, until I read this. I feel more educated on how it affects my daily life and why I eat the way I do.

This was a great choice for this assignment but at times your writing (esp. sentence structure) makes your summary hard to understand. Also, there should not be this many spelling errors in the era of spell check--looks sloppy. I can see an attempt at critical commentary at the end but I suspect the critical thinking handout might have given you more directions for a stronger critique.