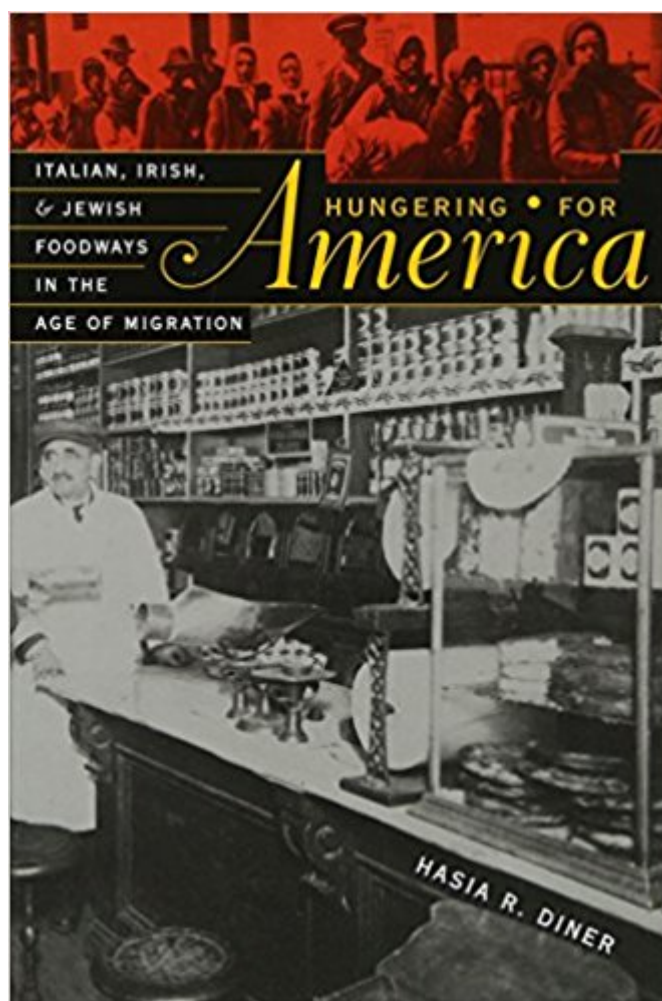


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# Hungering For America: Italian, Irish, And Jewish Foodways In The Age Of Migration



## Synopsis

Millions of immigrants were drawn to American shores, not by the mythic streets paved with gold, but rather by its tables heaped with food. How they experienced the realities of America's abundant food--its meat and white bread, its butter and cheese, fruits and vegetables, coffee and beer--reflected their earlier deprivations and shaped their ethnic practices in the new land. *Hungering for America* tells the stories of three distinctive groups and their unique culinary dramas. Italian immigrants transformed the food of their upper classes and of sacred days into a generic "Italian" food that inspired community pride and cohesion. Irish immigrants, in contrast, loath to mimic the foodways of the Protestant British elite, diminished food as a marker of ethnicity. And, East European Jews, who venerated food as the vital center around which family and religious practice gathered, found that dietary restrictions jarred with America's boundless choices. These tales, of immigrants in their old worlds and in the new, demonstrate the role of hunger in driving migration and the significance of food in cementing ethnic identity and community. Hasia Diner confirms the well-worn adage, "Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this fascinating survey of the eating habits and influences of Jewish, Italian and Irish immigrants, Diner, a professor of American Jewish history at New York University, charts with wit and graceful prose the similarities and differences between these three distinct groups as they encountered mainstream American culture. Italian immigrants, fleeing poverty and a rigid, class-based economic

system, found in America the ability to take "possession of elite food associated with the well-off" and to forge a new collective ethnic identity; in doing so they introduced Italian cuisine to America and created lucrative culinary business opportunities. The Irish, fleeing famine, did not possess a complex "national food culture" because they came from a place "where hunger... defined identity." But many Irish women became cooks and servants (and incidentally, were always called "Biddy"), and thereby entered domestic American life and became familiar with its bourgeois foods and customs. Eastern European Jews "lived in a world where food was sacred for all," as well as tightly controlled by religious law. Like Italians, Jews made their food a public statement of identity, and the availability of nonkosher foods in the U.S. exacerbated conflicts between traditional and assimilationist factions. Diner deftly juggles a huge amount of detail and analysis drawing upon memoirs, cookbooks, newspaper accounts, films and studies of consumer culture and provides both political and social insights in a highly accessible social history. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In this fascinating survey of the eating habits and influences of Jewish, Italian, and Irish immigrants, Diner...charts with wit and graceful prose the similarities and differences between these three distinct groups as they encountered mainstream American culture...Diner deftly juggles a huge amount of detail and analysis--drawing upon memoirs, cookbooks, newspaper accounts, films and studies of consumer culture--and provides both political and social insights in a highly accessible social history. (Publishers Weekly 2001-11-05) In *Hungering for America*...Hasia R. Diner provides a richly detailed, highly original study of the changing food habits of three groups of immigrants--Italians, Irish, and Jews--who migrated to the United States between 1880 and 1920. (Italian Tribune 2002-02-21) For those with an appetite for an excellent book on cultural history, I recommend *Hungering for America*. (Jack Fischel Indiana Jewish Post & Opinion 2001-11-28) Diner's research--into historical accounts, novels, plays, economic studies, personal narratives and vintage demographic surveys--has produced a book jam-packed with fascinating bits of Italian, Irish and Jewish food lore...Diner's bighearted attitude toward immigrants and their struggles...along with the rich anecdotal material, may inspire a pang of regret when you're finished. (Robert Sietsema New York Times Book Review 2002-05-05)

Well packaged and protected.

I read this book for a book club and could barely make it through. The whole book could be

condensed down to a couple of paragraphs. The entire thing is a collection of two sentence anecdotes about what this or that person once mentioned about food. It is completely lacking in both rigor and storytelling. I would absolutely NOT recommend to anyone. Also, there are no pictures or illustrations in the Kindle edition, just a note to "refer to the print edition of this title" to see the image.

While the topic is interesting, it's a very hard read. The way it's written and the writing style make this the kind of book you read a page or two, and try to come back to...but. I'm only two chapters in hope somebody else reads it so I can get the information in it.

Interesting. For school. Wouldn't use it otherwise

This is a truly intriguing work about three parallel immigrant cultures, and how hunger for an adequate diet was one of the predominant incentives to them for immigration. What makes this study so interesting is how the importance of food manifested itself so differentially among these separate groups once in the United States based upon the histories of the country of origin. Being of Irish extraction I learned for the first time, definitively, why unlike my Italian, Jewish, and Latino friends no Irish "ethnic" foods (other than soda bread) were part of my background. And, it helped me to better understand the critical, but differing, importance of food in the Jewish and Italian cultures I grew up along side. Readers should be advised that this is a serious academic work, one which would be an appropriate college history text. Therefore, the introduction and summary chapters will seem dry and..."academic" to those seeking a purely recreational read. I advise them to walk on the edge and learn something; it's well worth the time invested.

I was looking forward to a class I am going to take that will use this as the core text. After reading it, I'm considering not taking the class. The author notes that it took her at least a decade to write this, and that is with plenty of academic assistance and support. Considering the time and resources put into this book, it is an absolute fail. The redundancy and style are beyond grating. What a rich topic and what potential for an incredible and vivid exploration of it. It's too bad the author totally missed the mark and simply reiterated her same few points ad nauseam.

I've seen the brand Contadini many times in the grocery store, but I never knew what it meant. I also never realized that spaghetti isn't really an Italian food. Ms. Diner included some enlightening facts about the development of immigrant diets and why certain groups of people felt the way they did

about food coming into this country. I found the information about Irish food culture, or the lack of it, really interesting. Unfortunately, that section of the book is unnecessarily lengthy and repetitive. I learned some valuable and relevant information from *Hungering*, but I don't see very many people reading the entire thing if they just pick it up out of curiosity or a passing interest in the subject matter.

Unfortunately while this book does try to explore a fascinating and worthwhile subject, it suffers the same predicament that most non-fiction books for the past three decades have fallen under - incompetent editing. The author repeats, and repeats, and repeats, and repeats, and repeats her ideas and observations. Perhaps she was trying to meet a minimum word limit ordained by her publisher but that consideration shouldn't elicit anyone's sympathy. The constant re-iteration of points (and the author's desert-dry "voice" that exacerbates the repetition with its monotonous tone) makes for such a frustrating reading experience that I could not go past the second chapter.

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