

The Food of a Younger Land: A Portrait of American Food--Before the National Highway System, Before Chain Restaurants, and Before Frozen Food, When the Nation's Food Was Seasonal

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A remarkable portrait of American food before World War II, presented by the New York Times-bestselling author of *Cod* and *Salt*.

Award-winning New York Times-bestselling author Mark Kurlansky takes us back to the food and eating habits of a younger America: Before the national highway system brought the country closer together; before chain restaurants imposed uniformity and low quality; and before the Frigidaire meant frozen food in mass quantities, the nation's food was seasonal, regional, and traditional. It helped form the distinct character, attitudes, and customs of those who ate it.

In the 1930s, with the country gripped by the Great Depression and millions of Americans struggling to get by, FDR created the Federal Writers' Project under the New Deal as a make-work program for artists and authors. A number of writers, including Zora Neale Hurston, Eudora Welty, and Nelson Algren, were dispatched all across America to chronicle the eating habits, traditions, and struggles of local people. The project, called "America Eats," was abandoned in the early 1940s because of the World War and never completed.

The *Food of a Younger Land* unearths this forgotten literary and historical treasure and brings it to exuberant life. Mark Kurlansky's brilliant book captures these remarkable stories, and combined with authentic recipes, anecdotes, photos, and his own musings and analysis, evokes a bygone era when Americans had never heard of fast food and the grocery superstore was a thing of the future. Kurlansky serves as a guide to this hearty and poignant look at the country's roots.

From New York automats to Georgia Coca-Cola parties, from Arkansas possum-eating clubs to Puget Sound salmon feasts, from Choctaw funerals to South Carolina barbecues, the WPA writers found Americans in their regional niches and eating an enormous diversity of meals. From Mississippi chittlins to Indiana persimmon puddings, Maine lobsters, and Montana beavertails, they recorded the curiosities, commonalities, and communities of American food.

Mark Kurlansky is the New York Times bestselling author of many books, including *The Food of a Younger Land*, *Cod: A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World*, *Salt: A World History*, *1968: The Year That Rocked the World*, and *The Big Oyster: History on the Half Shell*. He lives in New York City. Prepare yourself to learn that mountain oysters aren't seafood and that nobody likes lutefisk the first time they try it. This audio documentary about the American cuisine enjoyed during the Great Depression comes from the author's research into manuscripts written under Roosevelt's WPA, the Works Project Administration. Narrator Stephen Hoyer reads hundreds of recipes, making them more palatable with his nuanced pronunciation of ingredients and lively renditions of cooks describing their preparation of traditional meals. He imitates the African-American speech of the Old South so well that he must occasionally translate his own words into contemporary English. There's no traditional story, just colors, smells, and flavors transmitted through audio. Listeners can be assured they'll be hungry during most of the delicious feasts described. J.A.H. AudioFile 2009, Portland, Maine

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