

21H.S01: Food in American History

Sugar Six Ways

Due: Session 4

What:

Locate a historical recipe published before 1986 that requires sugar. How does your recipe represent one or more of Sidney Mintz's six "principle uses" of sugar (which he lists in chapter 3 of "Sweetness & Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History")? Are there ways in which it does not conform to his six-point model? Why or why not? Write an essay of roughly 5 pages explaining the ways in which the use of sugar in this particular recipe fits with—and also, diverges from—Mintz's argument about the continuities and changes in the six ways that sugar has been used and consumed over time. Make sure that your essay has these essential components, not necessarily in this order:

1. Your own original, clearly stated argument, i.e. your answer to the questions posed, above.
2. Your assessment of Mintz's argument about the six functions or uses of sugar.
3. A description and discussion of your recipe as a primary source, as far as you know—who wrote or prepared it? When? Where? Etc. (for more considerations, see below.)
4. The full recipe (*in addition to* the five pages of text for the paper).
5. Proper citations as footnotes or endnotes in Chicago Manual of Style.

Length & Format: Approximately five typed, double-spaced lines, 1" margins, 12-point font, *numbered* pages. Be sure to give your paper a specific, descriptive *title*.

Citations: Footnotes or endnotes in Chicago Manual of Style (standard for citations in historical scholarship). Examples:

First citation of a work in the paper

Book—Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 43-44.

Article—Marcy Norton, "Tasting Empire: Chocolate and the European Internalization of Mesoamerican Aesthetics," *American Historical Review* 111, No. 3 (June 2006), 665.

Unpublished interview—Pedro Theroux, (home cook), in discussion with the author, September 2014.

All subsequent citations:

Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 101.

Norton, "Tasting Empire," 688.

Theroux, interview.

How to find a recipe: You may use any recipe, as long as you can prove that it was published (or otherwise circulated) before 1986, the year that Mintz's book was first published. The main resources for this are cookbooks or books on food history that might contain recipes.

21H.S01: Food in American History

You could use a family or other recipe that you know of through oral testimony, as long as you can obtain confirmation from a source (like your elderly relative Pedro) that it was prepared and eaten before 1986.

You may also find a historical recipe that is available online, as long as you can prove that it was originally published before 1986—see the list of recommended online collections.

Given the relatively short deadline for this assignment, you should spend less time hunting for an exotic recipe and more on analyzing, and writing your essay about it.

Some questions and considerations to keep in mind: that cookbooks and recipes are a kind of primary source for writing history. As with all primary sources, historians must consider both their possibilities and limits. The greatest limit of all is that historians cannot claim to know for certain from such sources *which* (if any) recipes/dishes people prepared, *who* prepared them, or *how many people* read, prepared, or ate the items in any given book or menu. On the other hand, there is a great deal of information that we can know or at least infer from them. We can analyze them by trying to answer such questions as: What form of sugar was recommended and what does this tell you about the economic, technological, cultural conditions of the place where and time during which the recipe was published? What ingredients were commonly available, considered exotic, or altogether absent? What techniques, cooking implements, and technologies (brick oven, electrical appliance) were recommended or necessary for the recipe? Does the author offer any further hints about the recipe, when (time of day, season, holiday or other occasion) it was likely to be prepared or consumed? Does the recipe reflect a particular national, religious, ethnic tradition or other sort of orientation or purpose (e.g. healthful, economical, luxurious, political activism, culturally diversity, technological sophistication, avant-garde, ecological, created for a particular social group like children/Mr. Moms)?

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

21H.S01 Food in American History
Fall 2014

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.