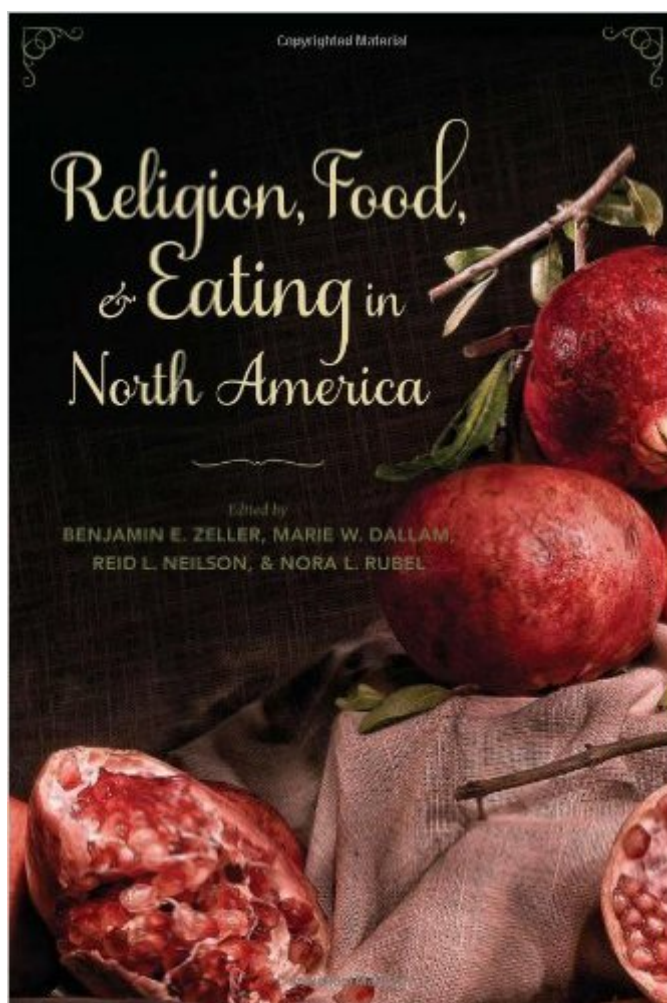


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# Religion, Food, And Eating In North America (Arts And Traditions Of The Table: Perspectives On Culinary History)



## Synopsis

The way in which religious people eat reflects not only their understanding of food and religious practice but also their conception of society and their place within it. This anthology considers theological foodways, identity foodways, negotiated foodways, and activist foodways in the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean. Original essays explore the role of food and eating in defining theologies and belief structures, creating personal and collective identities, establishing and challenging boundaries and borders, and helping to negotiate issues of community, religion, race, and nationality. Contributors consider food practices and beliefs among Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Buddhists, as well as members of new religious movements, Afro-Caribbean religions, interfaith families, and individuals who consider food itself a religion. They traverse a range of geographic regions, from the Southern Appalachian Mountains to North America's urban centers, and span historical periods from the colonial era to the present. These essays contain a variety of methodological and theoretical perspectives, emphasizing the embeddedness of food and eating practices within specific religions and the embeddedness of religion within society and culture. The volume makes an excellent resource for scholars hoping to add greater depth to their research and for instructors seeking a thematically rich, vivid, and relevant tool for the classroom.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Let's begin by saying that every kid in the USA has learned the Thanksgiving story. Do they

know that the Pilgrims came here because of religion? Maybe not, but they all know the menu they served, and they all associate pumpkins, turkey, and cornbread with Thanksgiving. It seems, according to this book, that religious people put more soul into the food. Jewish Shabbat lunches, Muslim Iftars, and traditional Christmas foods (each country has its own custom) all reflect this theory. In the USA, Protestants have always been at the forefront of the health crazes. If you need proof, look at the Kellogg brothers, devout Seventh Day Adventists who ran the Battle Creek Sanitarium, and tried to invent new foods to replace the less healthy cooked breakfasts that Americans ate. There's also the Hallelujah Acres, an evangelical ministry, that encourages raw food diets. The chapter "Dreydel Salad" is not entirely accurate. Traditional Jewish foods in the USA are all Ashkenazi from Lithuania and Poland. KTAV, cited as the dominant supplier of Jewish cookbooks, stressed how Jewish people could impress the nation on how they could be the perfect American minority. It promoted typically dull American ingredients, like canned pineapple and coconut, typical 1950s chintzy stuff. Non-European Jewish foods, like tagine, shish kebab, and couscous, I imagine would have led to stares, sniggers, and xenophobia if they'd been served in the Eisenhower-Kennedy era. Israeli foods would've gotten the same reaction, because until the 1970s most Jewish Americans had never visited Israel. Typical Ashkenazi fare, like blintzes, kugel, and latkes, were considered "traditional" until the 1980s. Today a lot of Jews won't eat kugel. More chapters follow, with the same ethnic-religious connection to food. The movie Annie Hall is an example, where the wasp versus Jew dinner scene highlights the cultural difference. By the 1950s, Yom Kippur was no longer a fast day to non-religious Jews, but a feast day! Borscht Belt hotels celebrated the "high holidays" with huge dinners and comedians. Orthodox Jews would blanch at the idea of feasting and comedy on Yom Kippur, but the likely humorous anecdotes are missing from this book. Most of the material is from second hand sources. Beef was abundant in the USA in the early days, so there was plenty of opportunity for Jewish, Irish, and southern cuisines had the chance to bulk up.

This collection of essays is a buffet of scholarship on contemporary and ancient practices linking food and religion. With both scholarly intricacy and readability, this book may be enjoyed by any person from advanced high school students through senior citizens. Anyone interested in culture, religion, and food will find a fascinating and maybe even delicious bit of learning in this book.

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paperback version

I learned a lot of interesting things from this book. It's very academic, though, so not what you want if you are looking for spiritual insight.

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