

Growing up in a city as eclectic as New York, my interests have consequently followed suit. In my last few semesters of college I have had the opportunity to work in an extremely broad range of media from printing on and stitching fabric to casting bronze and carving wood sculptures, just to list a few. This liberation of media guided me towards a project that would allow me to draw upon all of these aspects of art and design and more. My ends, or my goal in other words, landed on a celebration, and furthermore a step towards preservation, of culture within the context of New York City, a place I know more than any other while at the same time I can never wholly know, due to its grand scale. My means, or my vehicle for achieving this goal, I decided, had to be, or relate to, something ubiquitous across cultures, something necessary and utilitarian while still leaving room for idiosyncrasies, flare and color, in the broadest sense of the word. Cooking, and food in general, struck me as the perfect subject matter to satisfy these circumscriptions, as, in the words of Lyndon B Johnson, among countless others: 'We all gotta eat.' Within the world of food, one aspect, most telling of a culture, is the blend of spices used to flavor a meal; I decided packaging of spice blends would be a great way to celebrate the different cultural enclaves present in NYC.

The tether between food and culture is much more profound and multifaceted than it may seem at surface level. The differences across cultures do not simply amount to what ends up on a plate. Relationships between food and ethnicity bear historical, social, cultural, economic, political, and psychological significance. In other words, ethnic identity formations have been shaped by experiences of food productions and services, culinary creativities, appetites, desires, hunger, and even vomit.¹ These disparities between cultures can be so

¹Gardaphe, F. L., and W. Xu. "Introduction: Food in Multi-Ethnic Literatures." MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States 32, no. 4 (2007): 5-10.

drastic that socio-political tensions and qualms become direct products. NYC, and America as a whole became the ideal stage to witness such events. In the late 19th century, at the front end of the greatest wave of Italian Immigration to the United States, food became a topic of civil unrest. The American public's perception of Italians' diets, and vice versa, became a serious point of contempt. Political writings labeled the diet of Italians as 'Un-American'.² Frederick O. Bushee, in a 1897 periodical, even goes as far as to suggest the relocation of Italian immigrants from the city to rural areas, where 'agricultural colonies composed of Italian peasants' would exist.³ Contrary incidents have also been reported. For example, American staples such as cow's milk were considered by Italians to be poison. There were even accounts of Italians on relief throwing away rations of cold cereal.⁴ Interestingly enough, in the long run foods like spaghetti became staples of the American diet, and cold cereal and milk became integral to most Italian American households.

Generally regarded as the paramount microcosm of America's melting pot character, New York City has served as a vehicle for encouraging tolerance across cultures for decades. New York City, specifically Ellis Island has served as a major port of entry for immigrants into the United States since the 19th Century. This has helped cement NYC as the most diverse city in the world. Approximately 37% of the city's population is foreign born.⁵ With the largest amount of countless different nationalities outside of their respective nations, such as China, Russia, India

² South Italian Folkways in Europe and America: A Handbook for Social Workers, Visiting Nurses, School Teachers, and Physician

³ April 1897 Arena magazine by Frederick O. Bushee

⁴ South Italian Folkways in Europe and America: A Handbook for Social Workers, Visiting Nurses, School Teachers, and Physician

⁵ Semple, Kirk (June 8, 2013). "City's Newest Immigrant Enclaves, From Little Guyana to Meokjagolmok". The New York Times. Retrieved June 12, 2013.

and Andean countries.⁶ The extremely high density of the population is conducive to interactions between different races which eventually leads to tolerance and understanding. One of the earliest and most clear examples of this tolerance in action, in my opinion, is the sharing and enjoyment of different cultures cuisines. As you walk the streets of NYC you can see jewish people grabbing Halal food, Chinese people eating burritos, Puerto Ricans enjoying sushi, etc. Although as outlined in the prior paragraph, food can be a point of contempt between cultures, it can also act as a catalyst towards cultural tolerance, awareness and general amicability within a society. The way different cultures prepare and enjoy food is something that celebrates respective regions, people, events and even ancestors. There is no other form of cultural celebration that can so easily be partook from an outsider's perspective. This is why I chose spices as the subject for my senior project.

During the process of selecting the vehicle for my senior project I decided I wanted to use something powerful within the context of modern day society. In an age where there is a vast surplus of media most information is only considered at surface level, and for a very short time. This is why the packaging that products come in has become a much larger part of the consumer's consideration. When there are too many products for a consumer to individually try, the consumer's natural strategy would be to trust the eye and attempt to discern which product is highest quality and most closely suited to their needs. According to Alec Davis, author of *Package and Print*, 'the conditions that had to be fulfilled before packaging of any kind could flourish were the existence of a trading community.'⁷ Although trading communities had been established far prior, the berth of the modern package did not come about until the 16th century,

⁶ "Selected Population Profile in the United States 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates New York-Newark, NY-NJ-CT-PA CSA Chinese alone". United States Census Bureau. Retrieved April 2, 2017.

⁷ Davis, Alec. *Package and Print: The Development of Container and Label Design*. London: Evans, 1969.

purportedly in Germany through the paper trade. Prior to the conception of manufactured packaging, traders had used objects provided by nature such as gourds, hollowed tree trunks, leaves, animal bladders, and animal hides as vessels for their goods.⁸

As the modern package became more popular it was supplemented with the seemingly new concept of brand identity. According to Davis, the ability of the consumer to recognize a brand was a crucial condition that had to be fulfilled before packaging of any kind could flourish.⁹ Although brand identity in the modern sense purportedly came to be during the renaissance, the term's etymology dates back to ancient times. Ancient Egyptians used to burn logos into their livestock to claim ownership over them and deter theft.¹⁰ Branding, even as it existed in Ancient Egypt, would serve consumers as a means of building trust in the goods of certain vendors. Moving forward into the modern era, brand identities began conglomerating into bureaucratic amalgams, in parallel with general population growth and partially due to capitalist headwinds. Consumers continued building trust in certain brands, however mass production and bureaucracy, amongst other modern factors, allows many brands to take advantage of consumer's that have built trust in them, and lower the quality of their goods without consequence.

Apart from the recognizability of a brand name or logo, beautiful packaging and marketing can be a joint factor that blindly persuades a consumer. Giving packaging and marketing all of this power and influence is dangerous, as in reality a beautiful package and beautiful advertisement does not ensure the quality of any goods. Ironically, many companies have begun prioritizing and funding their advertising and packaging wings over quality control and other adjacent wings. These dangerous shifts in priority are especially disquieting when

⁸ Davis, Alec. *Package and Print: The Development of Container and Label Design*. London: Evans, 1969.

⁹ibid

¹⁰ Wheeler, Harold (1946). *The Miracle Of Man*. Dunedin, New Zealand: Longacre Press. p. 84.

considering all of the mass produced goods that we ingest on a daily basis. In today's context the designer has more power than ever before, I believe it is the designers ethical duty to be mindful of the quality of the goods, and the integrity of the companies producing these goods, when deciding for whom to produce designs. This is part of the reason why I chose to create a project on packaging and brand identity, because I realize how much power the outside appearance of a product has on a consumer, and I believe it is my responsibility to harness this power to positive ends.

I chose to create a series of spice packages because food and the means in which it is prepared is one of the few aspects of a culture that is literally necessary for survival. This means culinary art and tradition is attached to virtually every culture in the world. Not only is enjoying different cultures cuisines a way of celebrating one's pedigree, it is also a way of celebrating the company of those around you in the present. I believe there is no better way to appreciate the different cultural enclaves present in NYC than by enjoying the cooking that each respectively expresses themselves with and survives from.



CHINATOWN

A huge percentage of the African-American population lives in Harlem, on part of the Great Migration, out of the rural South between 1915 and 1970. In the 1920s and 1930s, Harlem was the focus of the "Harlem Renaissance", an outpouring of artistic work with its preoccupation in the African-American community.



CHINATOWN

CHINATOWN 5-SPICE
Metro Spices

3

is a collection of spices, including ground cinnamon, ground cloves, ground nutmeg, ground allspice, and ground ginger. It is a staple in Chinese cuisine and is used in a variety of dishes, including soups, stews, and stir-fries.

Black Pepper • Cumin • Onion • Onions • Garlic • Chipotle Maple Oil



WASHINGTON HEIGHTS

A huge percentage of the African-American population lives in Harlem, on part of the Great Migration, out of the rural South between 1915 and 1970. In the 1920s and 1930s, Harlem was the focus of the "Harlem Renaissance", an outpouring of artistic work with its preoccupation in the African-American community.



WASHINGTON HEIGHTS

WASHINGTON HEIGHTS ADOBO
Metro Spices

3

is a collection of spices, including ground cinnamon, ground cloves, ground nutmeg, ground allspice, and ground ginger. It is a staple in Caribbean cuisine and is used in a variety of dishes, including soups, stews, and stir-fries.

Black Pepper • Cumin • Onion • Onions • Garlic • Chipotle Maple Oil



HARLEM

A huge percentage of the African-American population lives in Harlem, on part of the Great Migration, out of the rural South between 1915 and 1970. In the 1920s and 1930s, Harlem was the focus of the "Harlem Renaissance", an outpouring of artistic work with its preoccupation in the African-American community.



HARLEM

HARLEM TSIRE SPICE
Metro Spices

3

is a collection of spices, including ground cinnamon, ground cloves, ground nutmeg, ground allspice, and ground ginger. It is a staple in Caribbean cuisine and is used in a variety of dishes, including soups, stews, and stir-fries.

Roasted Peanuts • Red Chili • Onion • Nuts • Cloves • Cinnamon • Salt



JACKSON HEIGHTS

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JACKSON HEIGHTS

JACKSON HEIGHTS MASALA
Metro Spices

3

is a collection of spices, including ground cinnamon, ground cloves, ground nutmeg, ground allspice, and ground ginger. It is a staple in Caribbean cuisine and is used in a variety of dishes, including soups, stews, and stir-fries.

Roasted Peanuts • Red Chili • Onion • Nuts • Cloves • Cinnamon • Salt