

the PROG



A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Reader,

We hope this issue finds you well—and not entirely weary—at the end of this fall semester.

We write amid a global rightward swing. Our recent issues have taken this on, through war and conflict and, before that, Princeton campus politics from leftist perspectives. These topics are pressing, considering the myriad injustices that require sustained action to address. Yet even in engaging with them, the analytical emphasis of the Prog has also been prone to digressing perhaps too much from grounded experience.

This issue's theme is Food, a topic most associated with the body, the domestic, and the otherwise dirty work of people getting through their days. By taking it up, we have intended to cue an editorial, institutional shift for the Prog. A shift that de-emphasizes the polemic, the geopolitical chessboard, and gives greater weight to themes and forms that fall outside what Princeton campus discourse arbitrates as politically important. With this platform at our fingertips, small as it may be, we have an opportunity, if not an imperative, to do so.

Food cannot be too far abstracted. Its personal meaning is unavoidable; it's so very quotidian. Yet, for something outside our corporeal selves, our relationships with it are deeply intimate. To survive, to live, to thrive, we must eat. To think, to act, we must eat. Food is too often a node in political struggle or conflict: it is weaponized—by the powerful (cake, let them eat it) as much as by the weak (bread riots); it's a sphere in which we make claims to resources, claims to identities; it's a medium of solidarity, a medium of healing.

The most recent Prog began with a dossier on under-reported conflicts abroad, as an attempt to bring closer the distant. In contrast, this issue begins instead by

bringing the personal outward by featuring anecdotes from our writers about meals or foods meaningful to them. Having started with the close-to-home, they go on: their pieces investigate food waste on campus, caste politics and the colonial past of beef lynchings in India, and, lastly, a communal, spiritual realm that gives broader and political meaning to our concept of food as sustenance.

It's worth making a note on the scope of this issue. We can't have hoped to address this subject in all its nuance, although critically missing from the pages to follow is a systemic look at food production. Much food is generated at such cost to human and ecological health, yet many don't have access to it; this is because it is produced, distributed, and wasted as dictated by the whims of capital rather than by human need. Therein we can understand food insecurity as part of a much greater and unsustainable system, one whose deficiencies not only leave people hungry, but also contribute heavily to climate change. Indeed, in this world on edge, no issue stands isolated.

The magazine in your hands strives to show how food stands at this certain crossroad, to show how it is that our political visions and elemental subsistence are intertwined. Taken together, authors of this issue suggest that as we write and as we organize, we will be most committed to liberation when we're grounded—by the smell of garlic on our hands, perhaps, or by finding earth wedged under our fingernails.

In love and solidarity,

The Editors

MASTHEAD

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF NORA SCHULTZ '19
EXECUTIVE EDITOR ALEC ISRAELI '21
MANAGING EDITOR SEYITCAN UCIN '20
DESIGN EDITOR BEATRICE FERGUSON '21
DIGITAL EDITOR KATHERINE STEIFEL '20
STAFF WRITERS RYAN BORN '19
ROHANA CHASE '21*
MASON COX '20
BRADEN FLAX '21
REBECCA NGU '20*
CHRIS RUSSO '20
JASON SEAVEY '21*
NALANDA SHARADJAYA '21
TAJIN ROGERS '20

* - CONTRIBUTED EDITING

COVER ILLUSTRATION: SOMI JUN '20

ILLUSTRATORS: WILBUR WANG '21. NORA WILDBERG '21. JONATHAN ZHI

'21. PEARL PATTERSON

LOGO DESIGN: MARIANA MEDRANO '17

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WHAT WE EAT

WHAT IS A FOOD-RELATED MEMORY OR EXPERIENCE THAT YOU HOLD CLOSE?

BEATRICE

Growing up, my Dad always kept three white painted, wooden beehives in our backyard. I loved wearing my child-sized beekeeping suit and watching thousands of honeybees fly in and out the hives, while my Dad pulled out shelves of honeycomb, from which he would extract and bottle honey. Before the extraction, my Dad and I would take the shelves inside and sample spoonfuls of the honeycomb. I loved the texture and taste of the honey and chewy beeswax together. While I ate, I thought about both the countless bees I saw earlier, and about the care my Dad put into every aspect of beekeeping. Eating honey in this way taught me that food is especially meaningful when you know the labor of love and the emotion behind it.

KATHERINE

When my sibling and I were little, our family would celebrate our birthdays by letting the “Birthday Child” choose dinner. Because one of my brothers and I had back-to-back birthdays, it was a lot more practical. From age five til the year of my parent’s divorce, I would simply ask for a banana milkshake and no peas at dinner. I don’t often see plain banana milkshakes on menus which is just as well – I can’t taste them without thinking back to long summer days in my Dad’s now-broken recliner, slurping the taste of my childhood.

JASON

Food has allowed me to connect with my step-mom Djeneba. She is from Burkina Faso but also spent a lot of her life in France, so the food she makes is always a delicious mix of the two styles. Nourishing family dinners are often what I miss most about home, so when I go back to California, she knows some peanut butter chicken over rice will put a smile on my face. I love her a lot and I thank food for helping to bridge the gap between step-mom and step-son.

SEYITCAN

Though I think it’s prevalent in a lot of cultures, in Turkey there’s an almost mystical power of soup to cure any illness. When I had bronchitis in Istanbul, the first place I went to was a “çorbacı,” or restaurant specializing in soup. Whenever my family gets back from a long trip, the first thing we make is soup to cure our weariness. And it always works! Typically it’s one of two soups in my family: mercimek corbasi or yayla corbasi. Mercimek çorba is the most common variant of lentil soup in Turkey, which is made by blending red lentils and various vegetables. Yayla çorba is a yogurt-based soup with herbs and rice. Regardless of the soup, it’s usually garnished with melted butter and lots of Aleppo pepper.

ROHA

The Nepali version of a dumpling—called momo—has a special significance to my childhood. Making momos is a communal activity, requiring a whole family to work together kneading the dough, making the filling, and packing the two together into delicious pockets. After the momo were finished boiling, we would all gather and eat them off the same plate. They were incredibly hot on the inside, and I remember burning my mouth every time because I couldn’t wait to devour them. Even though it was hours of work, momo making was always a fun and delicious way for me to feel closer to my Nepali family.

RYAN

My Oma (grandmother) would always make certain German foods for me that I came to associate not only as delicious but as forms of love. She would make Sourbraten (roast) which takes literally days to produce but is so delicious and impossible to find in America, or Rouladen, wrapped roast around bacon and onion and mustard, or even the humble potato pancake. It was the best food I'd ever known— and as she got older, weaker, and sicker, I realized that those particular foods and forms of food would forever perish from my life except in memory.

BRADEN

Throughout my life, my picky eating has been a trope, meaning that most of my relevant experiences tend to be variants of one another; the narrow range of potential meal types is a metaphor for the seldom exotic or notable character of any corresponding anecdotes. On countless occasions, people have inquired as to what I would prefer to mark a special occurrence, achievement or celebration. Generally, my response includes a set of very particular selections: pizza, for instance, may be accompanied by some chicken soup. The unconventional simplicity of my preferences astounds, frustrates, and amuses those around me; it represents a kind of infamy, simultaneously the object of a lighthearted roast and the provocation of the indignant sighs that follow attempts to encourage expansion of my dietary horizons. These efforts are much more often made than they are successful, but the efforts themselves contribute to the novelty of the pickiness at which they chip away.

ALEC

Nearly every time I visit my grandparents, my grandmother makes Polish borscht for me. It is fondly known in my family as “the red soup,” due to its tomato (not beet, as in most borscht) base. The red soup is a family tradition, and its recipe has passed from my great-grandmother to her daughter to her children to my generation. It traveled from Poland to Israel to the United States, comforting in its constant presence, containers of it always in the freezer to heat up whenever needed. The red soup is easy to make, too. As my grandmother says, “Soup is very forgiving.”

NALA

My grandmother beat ovarian cancer twice since her first diagnosis in 1992. Before that, she was a high school math teacher who spoke fondly of her experiences in the classroom and fiercely advocated for struggling students, staying late to coach them one-on-one. Due to the exhaustive nature of her treatment, she has been housebound and now bed-bound for years. But when I was little, we used to sit cross-legged on the floor with miniature cooking utensils made from stainless steel. We'd put twenty or so pieces of dal into a tiny pot which sat on a tiny stove, and stirred its contents with a tiny spoon. When I insisted on filling the pot with water to make the game more realistic— effectively wasting those pieces of dal— she did not complain. “How can you say no to the child?,” she would say. “How can you tell her not to imagine, not to play?” Her deep respect for children and their unique strengths and needs has guided her always, even now, when I am eighteen and she is confined to her bed and sometimes less than lucid. Fourteen years since she was last able to sit cross-legged on the floor and play the dal-dal game— our private nickname for it— with me, it's still one of my most cherished memories.

TAJIN

Growing up with a white dad and a Korean mom, I had a different childhood than many “Asians” that I was grouped with—and that I identified with—in grade school. My parents speak English fluently, my Korean was (and is) terrible, and I was a native of [white] American culture in ways that many of my friends were not, even those born stateside. The kitchen, though, where my mother worked her magic after she came home from work, always smelled of garlic and sesame oil and gochujang and kimchi, of recipes conjured out of the yellowed and soy-sauce-splattered pages of Ken Hom's Quick Wok. It was around the dinner table that I felt most Korean. But this was true in the school lunchroom too. Stir-fried chicken and rice, green beans in soy sauce; pork mandu and wilted sesame-garlic spinach. One day from fourth grade, though, remains in my mind. I sat with my friends at a long cafeteria table, ready to talk about chess and Calvin and Hobbes, and opened my lunch, my glasses steaming up from the heat. My mom had packed my bento jar full with jajangmyeon, noodles in fermented black bean sauce, topped with julienned cucumbers. I dug in. (In one picture, 6-year-old me sits with both elbows on the dinner table and my hands under my chin, smiling triumphantly over a finished bowl of jajangmyeon, though most of the sauce seems to have ended up on my chin and cheeks.) In that moment, though, some ten-year-old jock leaned over and made a face. “What are you eating? Eww! That looks like worms!” I was mortified. I don't think I finished my lunch. Honestly, though my memory is a little hazy, I don't think I ate jajangmyeon again for years. In retrospect, of course, it's a pretty mild playground barb, but it's a testament to my white-adjacency, I guess, that I still don't think I've ever felt as Asian-American as I did in that moment.

WHERE DOES YOUR FOOD COME FROM?

AN INVESTIGATION OF DINING HALL FOOD SOURCING

BY: CHRIS RUSSO

There has been no shortage of publicity from dining services about its efforts to improve the environmental footprint of the food Princeton students consume daily. If you've been in any of the dining halls in the past year, you've probably noticed posters, table placards, and napkin holders extolling virtues of the University's emphasis on locally sourced products and encouraging students to "eat less red meat, less often." Terms like "grass fed," "organic," and "local" are thrown around with little delineation—an array of various "good" qualities. These efforts are commendable, but it is worth taking a closer look at where exactly our food comes from. We took a dive into the sourcing of three products in Princeton's dining halls to gain insight into environmental impacts and ethical standards of food we eat each day. We did this research in May of 2018, so below statements reflect University sourcing practices at that time. Some sourcing may have changed in the interim, most notably the peanut butter, which now comes from a local supplier.

PEANUT BUTTER

As of May 2018, peanut butter served in the dining halls was Skippy brand and sourced through the University's primary national food distributor, US Foods. Skippy, a Unilever subsidiary, is produced in a large facility in Arkansas, 1,195 miles away from Princeton. In its products, Skippy uses domestically grown peanuts, which primarily come from the southeastern United States. As a stabilizer, Skippy uses hydrogenated soybean, cottonseed, and rapeseed oils. Soy-

bean and cottonseed oil are predominantly produced in the States, while rapeseed, commercially known as canola, generally comes from Canada.

Life cycle analysis (LCA), which quantifies the environmental impact of a product from all aspects of its production and consumption, suggests peanut butter production, including transport to the consumer and disposal, leads to release of 1.5-2.6kg of CO₂ per kilogram of product. For reference, combusting one gallon of gasoline releases approximately 9kg of CO₂. Only a small portion of these greenhouse gas emissions are released during transportation from producer to the consumer. In contrast to many of its competitors, Skippy does not use palm oil as a stabilizer in its peanut butter. Palm oil is frequently used in peanut butters due to its low cost in comparison to other saturated fats. Global demand for palm oil has driven intensive cultivation of oil palms in Southeast Asia where now, in Indonesia and Malaysia especially, the large, monoculture plantations on which oil palms are grown have led to extensive deforestation and environmental degradation.

EGGS

Princeton dining halls source their eggs from Kreider Farms, a large-scale dairy and egg farm in Pennsylvania, 114 miles away from the University. LCA shows that eggs have an approximate carbon footprint of 4.83kg CO₂ per kilogram of eggs. 65% of greenhouse gas emissions come from feed production, 22% from farm operations, and approximately 5-7% from transportation.

Kreider Farms, which currently owns around six million egg-laying chickens, has come under attack for alleged animal welfare abuses. In 2012, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) released video footage depicting very poor conditions in Kreider's facilities, showing live chickens living among decaying carcasses and maimed by or trapped in cages or feeding equipment. Floors of the cages were caked with feces and swarming with flies. Unsanitary conditions have public health implications as well, as they increase likelihood of foodborne illness. Kreider Farms denied authenticity of the videos, and although the HSUS provided footage and images of employees wearing uniforms with Kreider Farms logos, Kreider Farms maintained the videos were fabricated.

Kreider Farms has since publicly stated that it is committed to humane conditions for its animals and has invested in facilities that provide a higher quality of life. Its "Noah's Pride" line of eggs, which are those served in University dining halls, are laid by chickens housed in an American Humane-certified cage-free facility. As is standard for most cage-free eggs, the egg-laying chickens are housed indoors on multiple tiers at high density.

American Humane certification claims to ensure a basic set of animal welfare standards have been met in the facility and for cage-free egg-laying chickens. The certification requires producers to provide chickens with 1.5 square feet of living space and access to nesting and bathing areas, and prohibits slaughter without stunning and precludes excessively high mortality rates. Beak trimming, a procedure in which the beak of the chicken is removed to pre-

vent aggressive behavior or cannibalism, is permitted under this certification. Animal rights groups have called this procedure cruel and unethical, and it has been banned in several countries. Selective breeding over the course of many decades has led to separate breeds of chicken for meat and egg production. Standard industry practice is to kill male chicks born to egg-laying hens almost immediately after birth, often by maceration. Egg-laying hens themselves are considered “spent” when their egg production falls off, usually around one to two years, at which point the hens are slaughtered.

While Consumer Reports has called the label “somewhat meaningful,” animal welfare groups have criticized American Humane and called their certification a “rubber stamp” that is insufficient in ensuring welfare of animals and is deceptive to consumers, the latter of which may interpret the label as indicating a higher quality of life for chickens than is actually provided.

MEAT

Princeton sources much of its red meat from two Trenton-based suppliers, City Beef and Dutch’s Meats, in addition to some meat from its national supplier, US Foods. We reached out to the two Trenton distributors to discuss where they source the meat they sell to the University.

Jim Nelson, owner of City Beef, provided information on their sourcing. As a smaller distributor, City Beef usually does not deal directly with meat processors or slaughterhouses, but instead buys from larger, regional distributors, who in turn buy from major national processors. While some of City Beef’s products come from local farms and processors, much of the red meat they sell comes from National and from IBP, a Tyson subsidiary. Much of the pork City Beef provides to the University comes from Leidy’s Farms, a Pennsylvania processor that is located 57 miles from the University. Leidy’s is American Humane Certified, which, for pork as for chickens, ensures a baseline standard of treatment for animals but does not guarantee a high quality of life. In pork farms with this certification, nursing mothers can be confined to cages that limit mobility, and American Humane’s space requirements are equivalent to industry norms. Beef supplier IBP

(and other large producers) typically do not even meet this minimal baseline standard for animal welfare, and instead are only bound by Federal law, which does not impose significant space requirements for animals. Industry practices common to large-scale producers like National and IBP include gestation crates (which restrict pregnant sows for months at a time from all movement and lead to muscle and bone degradation) and tail docking (where a pig’s tail is clipped without anesthesia). Gestation crates are illegal in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Sweden, but dominate in United States pork production.

City Beef also provides blended meat for the University’s new “blended beef burgers,” which contain 30% mushroom by weight. While the University advertises purchasing meat for these blended burgers from a local small business, beef for this blend in fact is imported from overseas before being ground at City Beef’s facility in Trenton with locally sourced mushrooms. City Beef requested that the country of origin for this beef not be printed for proprietary reasons, but the product is shipped over seven thousand miles before it reaches campus. Moreover, City Beef has developed this product in line with University specifications, which require beef to be Halal and grass-fed. Mr. Nelson of City Beef stated that it is this requirement that drove a decision to import from overseas, citing difficulties in finding a United States supplier that met those specifications.

When contacted by phone, an employee at Dutch’s Meats, the other Trenton supplier used by the University, indicated that their sourcing practices are very similar to those at City Beef—that most of the meat is sourced through large regional distributors from major national brands like IBP and Tyson, and that a minority of their meat comes from local producers. Another employee at Dutch’s later followed up with me by phone and requested we “throw away” this previously-provided information. Despite repeated attempts from our staff, the Dutch’s employee responsible for the Princeton account could not be reached to clarify where Dutch’s sources their products.

LCA for beef production including transportation shows that greenhouse gas emissions amount to about 22-27kg of CO₂ equivalent per kilogram of beef, with grass-fed and grain-finished beef both

falling within this range. In fact, CO₂ is a secondary contributor to the greenhouse gas footprint of beef—methane released during the cow’s digestion is responsible for 70%, as methane has global warming potential twenty-five times higher than CO₂. Transportation has a relatively minor contribution to this effect, responsible for less than 5% of the greenhouse gas emissions, including even beef shipped overseas. Environmental benefits of grass-fed beef are unclear. Although it reduces the energy requirements for cattle feed by removing cost of grain production, and it can rely on grasses and non-arable land otherwise not useful for human food production, farming grass-fed beef sometimes entails clearing land to create pastures. Land clearing, especially when of forested areas, has a very high environmental footprint as the process of burning not only releases CO₂ but eliminates an important means for carbon sequestration.



Industrialized, large-scale food producers can sell at price points significantly below those of smaller, local producers, despite growing interest in local sourcing. Economies of scale greatly favor mass production, and logistical innovations have reduced the monetary but not necessarily the ecological cost of food transport over long distances. Therein, market forces create incentives for vendors and producers to be non-transparent or even deceptive about where and how

PRINCETON DINING SERVICES CAN AND SHOULD BE BETTER. BUT CONSIDERING INGRAINED COMPLAINTS OF FOOD PRODUCTION, SUSTAINABLE SOURCING IS A POLITICAL PROBLEM THAT REQUIRES STRUCTURAL SOLUTIONS.

they source their product; they can try to undercut competition and entice customers with claims of sustainability and ethics. Since food products are rarely sold directly

from producer to consumer, instead passing first through several layers of middlemen, it becomes hard for a consumer to understand where their food originates. While transportation looms large in our day-to-day talk about food sustainability, in truth transport distance is only one of several factors that impact greenhouse gas emissions of food production; often its contribution is relatively minor. Compared to peanut butter and eggs, environmental costs of meat will be high even in the best case. Beef in particular, due to its large unit size and high capital cost, is difficult to source locally and rewards large, complicated supply chains, with all of their baggage.

These problems of large-scale food production have led many to seek more ethical, sustainable options. Some go vegetarian or vegan in view of considerable environmental impact of animal products, especially meat. There is also growing interest in buying local products in an effort to reduce a now huge ecological footprint of industrial production. Such efforts, however laudable, cannot solve the problems. Aside from the fact that local products, as discussed above, hardly escape the myriad complications associated with our food supply chain, they are limited by a classed accessibility. Fresh, local food can be expensive, and is often only readily available to a privileged few. This exclusive nature of access to such food poses a danger of mis-assigning blame for the very problems of food production that markets for hyper-local and fresh food purportedly seek to avoid. A moralizing focus on buying the “right” foods reduces a complex issue to a matter of individual choice, entertaining the idea that widespread change can be brought about by personal shopping habits. Of course, problems with our food supply chain are not individual nor wholly on the consumption side, but are systemic, with fault laying most heavily on the production side. Change, then, must come from pressure on producers rather than just on consumers to change.

Princeton Dining Services’ food sourcing, therefore, can be better, and indeed should be. But considering deeper, ingrained complications of food production, sustainable sourcing is more than just a public relations campaign carried out on napkin holders, or a matter of personal choice and habits. In fact, it’s a political problem that requires structural solutions.

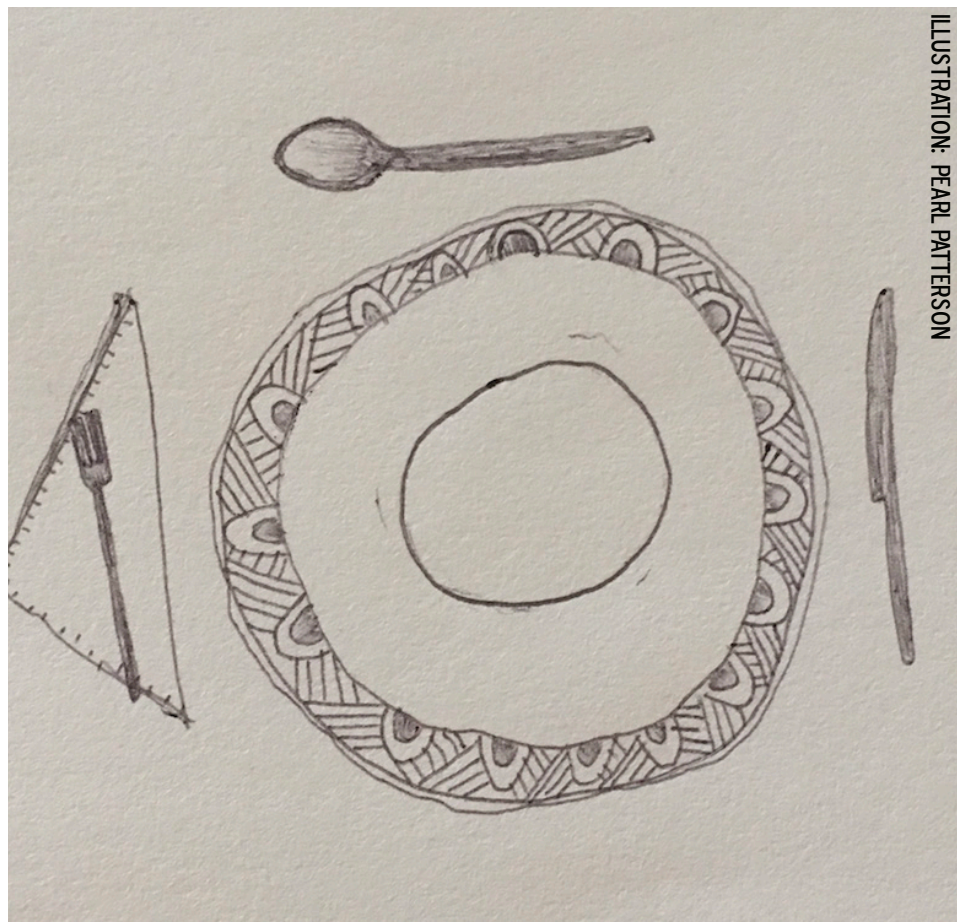


ILLUSTRATION: PEARL PATTERSON

KATHERINE’S (VEGANIZED) BANANA MILKSHAKE

Prep Time: 2 mins, Cook Time: 3 mins,
Serves: 3-4

INSTRUCTIONS:

Blend together bananas, milk, and seeds. Add non-dairy ice cream if desired for richer flavor and smoother texture. Pour into glasses. Sprinkle with granola.

INGREDIENTS:

4 ripe bananas, coarsely chopped
¾ cup almond milk, unsweetened
2 tsp flax seeds
1 tsp chia seeds

BEATRICE’S HONEY PUMPKIN PIE

Prep time: 15 mins, Cook Time: 45 mins,
Serves: 6-8

INSTRUCTIONS:

Preheat oven to 425F. Place pie shell in a pie tin, crimping the edges. Combine and blend all remaining ingredients until smooth. Pour into shell. Bake at 425F for 10 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350F and continue baking for 30-35 minutes or until filling sets. Allow to cool before serving.

INGREDIENTS:

1 9-inch unbaked pie shell
3 eggs, slightly beaten
¾ cup honey
½ teaspoon ginger
½ teaspoon nutmeg
1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon salt
1 ½ cups of pumpkin
1 cup evaporated milk or half-and-half

A MODERN-DAY HUNTER GATHERER

BY: SEYITCAIN UCIN

Patrick Rooney calls himself a “modern day hunter-gatherer.” Hunter-gatherers were nomadic, he explains. They didn’t settle in one place, waiting for berries to pop up or game to come to them; they foraged and searched for food. Rooney survived his junior year at Princeton without purchasing food in any way—he wasn’t a member of an eating club, he didn’t have a dining plan with the University, he didn’t dine on Nassau Street. Rather, he was a regular on the “Free Food” listserv.

Free Food is a self-sustaining email list through which members of the Princeton University community can transmit and receive messages regarding excess food on campus. The spoils generally come from University-sponsored events—student group- and department-organized functions are the largest culprits. A large number of talks, open houses, conferences, and workshops serve food to during the event or in receptions following. Not to mention all that comes from study breaks, which typically offer snacks as incentives to get students’ minds off problem sets and readings.

As a senior, Rooney (class of 2018) ate at least one meal a day off the Listserv—markedly less than when he was a junior, though still significant enough to raise eyebrows. Typical meals featured on the Listserv include full pizza pies or boxes of Indian or Mediterranean cuisine. But eating off the Listserv isn’t about proving that he can sustain himself outside the system. Full, nutritious meals hadn’t always been a given when he was a child. His father grew up in the sixties and seventies in rural Ireland and the Bronx and, throughout his youth, he remembers his father telling him, “You Americans have it good.” Food never went

to waste in the Rooney household. When he got to Princeton, Rooney was dismayed by the pure excess on campus—most clearly shown by the amount of wasted food. And as a student on full financial aid, any money saved on food was money that could be used for creative and academic pursuits.



28 September 2017

Hey Everyone,

I’m working on a year long project on food/ material waste on campus that will include a tremendous collage (like thousands of pictures of food and material waste). Being said, if you could start sending your free food emails with pictures of the spreads attached to them (or sending the pictures directly to me at prooney@) that would be great! I know this isn’t advertising free food, so I apologize.

Happy urban hunter gathering,
Pat Rooney



In September 2017, Rooney began asking subscribers of the Free Food listserv to include photographs in their emails. Rooney intended to compile the photographs into a collage and to display them all over campus, especially in high-visibility areas. He came up with the idea after a hallway conversation with Eve

Aschheim, a lecturer in visual arts, during which an article by a fellow student titled “No Such Thing as a Free Lunch” came up. The article encouraged students to think about effects of having so many free food events on campus. One oft-undiscussed consequence of catered food events—a point the author brought up in his piece—is the associated plastic waste. Plastic bowls, plastic utensils, plastic plates, and plastic serving platters are piled high after events catered by Nassau Street restaurants. Rooney, in his collage project, wanted to make this waste more visible. “Plastic piles up... You might not see it pile up, so let’s pile it up,” he reasoned.



13 October 2017

Hey everyone,

This is just a quick reminder to keep attaching photos of the food you’re posting about to your emails as to help with the project I’m working on in conjunction with the office of sustainability.

Thanks,
Pat Rooney



After pitching the photo project to an administrator in the University’s Office of Sustainability, he gained the Office’s blessing and issued a message to Free Food updating subscribers on the development. With institutional legitimacy, he noticed a significant increase in the proportion of emails



sent out with photos to the Listserv. However, the photos weren't just for preparing his collage. The photos served a dual purpose: Rooney believes that they have a psychological effect—they people more likely to go to the food and eat it. "There's a difference between getting an email saying there is free pizza and seeing a photo of twelve pies," he explains. Seeing an opportunity to "cop a whole pie" attracts more people, and ultimately, means less food waste.

Photos sent out on the Listserv directly combat food waste, but what exactly about the plastic waste? To that, Rooney's answer is to order less catering from Nassau Street. Because the University only supports recycling for plastics of type numbers 1 and 2 (which encompass water bottles and milk jugs among other most common containers), there is no potential to recycle much of the plastic waste from Nassau Street caterers. (Food containers and plastic utensils are typically of the rarer and more difficult-to-recycle types, no. 5 and no. 6 plastics.) The easy alternative, Rooney says, is to order catering from Campus Dining. Their catering service uses biodegradable tableware—a vast improvement over essentially unrecyclable plastics.

Though switching over to catering from Campus Dining requires an institutional approach, Rooney views individual action as the true catalyst to change. He quotes Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." He argues that we can keep the current amount of land for agriculture until 2050, but that this is only possible if we directly attack individual-based excess. He cites that about sixty percent of agricultural land is used to accommodate beef production, while about forty to fifty percent of food that reaches the individual is wasted. Switching to plant-based diets and combatting individual food waste will go a far way to ensuring sustainable agriculture.

To ensure that individuals are doing all they can do on Princeton's campus, Rooney sought to create a "Free Food Database." The database, which he intended to be a web-based service for all Princeton students, would take the approximately six-thousand emails sent out from the Listserv and parse them for data regarding location, date, time, and food type, among

other criteria, and construct visuals to make statistical inferences. Rooney also wanted to build prediction models based on the data. By accessing it, a student would be able to figure out the most likely location where food could be found, for example, on a Tuesday afternoon.

Before Rooney could finalize the Free Food Database and the photo project, he needed to complete his senior thesis—a documentary film on the effects of pollack fishing on the Alaskan salmon population. Before his senior year, he took a gap year exploring Alaska, when he came into contact with effects of the pollack fishing industry. Pollack is a cheap and abundant whitefish used by the fast food industry. Pollack fishers generally use trawlers with large nets to catch pollack en masse. Salmon is a common "bycatch" of pollack fishing, meaning it's unintentionally caught in the trawling net. Because pollack fishers can't legally keep them, the salmon is thrown back into the sea, yet by the time the fishers realize they have salmon on board, the fish are dead. The pollack fishing industry in Alaska has had devastating effects on native communities that depend on salmon for subsistence. Rooney began to take footage of fishing vessels during their pollack runs. As a Visual Arts concentrator focusing on film and video documentary, Rooney's senior thesis was a compilation of footage he took in documentary format. Having graduated, he wants to continue working with nature documentary filmmaking, aspiring to do "David Attenborough-type shit."

Rooney has left an indelible mark on the Free Food listserv, and documentary filmwork has the potential to touch millions as David Attenborough's has. Though having graduated in spring of 2018, Rooney has left behind the his ideas for a Free Food Database and, likely, attempts to lobby the University administration for a more sustainable approach to catering. Without a structure left in place to continue his work, questions of who might take up his projects on Princeton's campus are pending. This exposes, perhaps, a limit to a project of affecting systemic change through individual action. When the impacts of environmental damage are the sum total of everyone's contribution and will affect all life on earth, can isolated, individual actions be enough? ■

UNHOLY COW

HINDU NATIONALISM'S HISTORY OF BEEF AND BLOOD

BY: NALA SHARADJADYA

ILLUSTRATION: NORA WILDBERG '21

Three years ago, on a warm night in a small city in northern India called Dadri, Mohammad Akhlaq and his family spent a typical evening together. They ate lamb for dinner, and then the men went to bed while the women cleared up. No one in the family realized that a rumor had been spreading through Dadri all day: that someone in town had killed a cow.

Cow slaughter is illegal in twenty-four of India's twenty-nine states, including Uttar Pradesh, where Dadri is located. The cow is considered sacred in Hindu culture, and those in India who do eat beef tend to belong to communities of lower Hindu caste or of other religions entirely. Nearly two-thirds of Dadri's residents are Hindu.

A neighbor accused Mohammad's family of the crime, and by the evening, a mob had surrounded their home. Angry villagers carrying bricks and swords pushed in soon after dinner, demanding to see what the family had been eating that evening. The terrified women, in the midst of their housework, swore their meal had consisted of lamb, not beef.

But the mob did not believe them. They dragged the sleeping father and son outside and beat them in front of the house, in full view of a growing crowd. Some onlookers were enthusiastic, others horrified. A few even tried to intervene, but were unsuccessful. It took nearly an hour for police to arrive. By then, Mohammad, who was

fifty-two, had died. His son survived, but sustained a serious brain injury and was permanently disfigured.

The Dadri lynching was one instance of a growing trend of cow-related violence in India. In 2016, two Muslim cattle traders in eastern India—one of whom was just fifteen years old—were beaten and hanged by the side of a road. Six months later and some eight-hundred miles further west, four men beat a

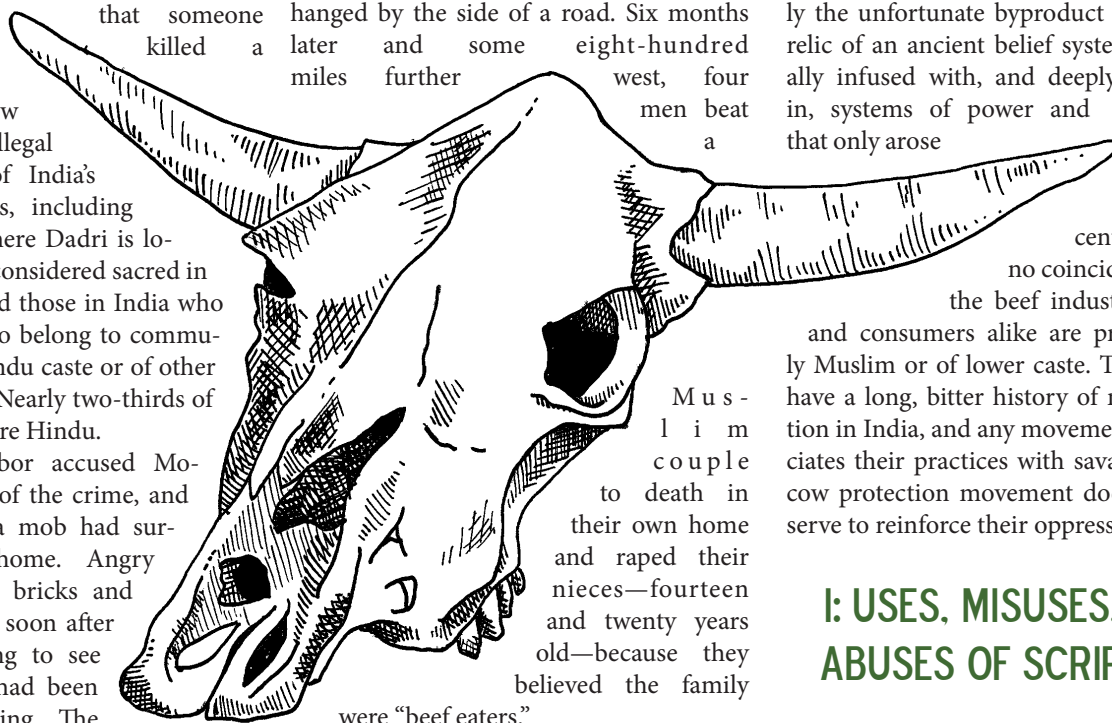
to claim a kind of inherited virtue. They take deep pride in their dietary abstinence and treat those who do consume beef as inferior, dirty, even sinful. While cow vigilantes are extreme in their resort to cruelty and violence, many Hindus sympathize with their intentions.

But cow protection is not merely the unfortunate byproduct or distorted relic of an ancient belief system. It's actually infused with, and deeply implicated in, systems of power and oppression that only arose in India within the last few centuries. It's no coincidence that in the beef industry, laborers and consumers alike are predominantly Muslim or of lower caste. These groups have a long, bitter history of marginalization in India, and any movement that associates their practices with savagery, as the cow protection movement does, can only serve to reinforce their oppression.

I: USES, MISUSES, AND ABUSES OF SCRIPTURE

Cow veneration stems from an ancient principle called ahimsa, which prescribes nonviolence towards all life forms. Accordingly, many Indians observe vegetarian diets; India has one of the lowest rates of per capita meat consumption in the world. Even among those who relax this restriction in favor of seafood and poultry, many still avoid eating beef.

Cows have long been placed above other kinds of livestock because of their unparalleled capacity to supply hu-



were "beef eaters."

Perpetrators of such violence often call themselves cow "protectors." They justify their actions by citing the sanctity of the cow in Hinduism: they insist that when people eat beef, they are violating Hindu rights. They claim legitimacy because the practice their movement descends from, and seeks to preserve—cow veneration—seems to be rooted in ancient scripture.

This notion of longstanding tradition leads many Hindus (not just vigilantes)

mans with useful materials. Their milk can be used to produce yogurt, butter, and ghee, a type of clarified butter that is a staple in Indian kitchens; their dung is an excellent fertilizer.

"COW PROTECTION IS ACTUALLY INFUSED WITH, AND DEEPLY IMPLICATED IN, SYSTEMS OF POWER AND OPPRESSION THAT ONLY AROSE IN INDIA WITHIN THE LAST FEW CENTURIES."

The fact that cow veneration seems to be guided by a kind of agricultural pragmatism leads many to believe that the practice must be thousands of years old, dating to the agrarian beginnings of Indian society. But the work of historian D. N. Jha exposes an inconsistency between content of early religious texts and their modern interpretation. In particular, he shows that Hindus held diverse perspectives about dietary ethics, challenging the claims of many cow protectors (and sympathizers) about the history of beef avoidance.

Many ancient Hindus ate plenty of meat, including beef. Sometimes, they even used cows in ritual sacrifices. In one text, a widely respected sage proclaims his deep appreciation for the meat's tender flavor. Even though some texts encourage followers to avoid cow slaughter, few treat cows as "inviolable" or suggest that to slaughter a cow or to consume its meat would be to commit a grave sin. The cows that were given this status appear to have belonged to Brahmins—the highest caste, that then specialized in religious scholarship—and were often given in exchange for priestly or scholarly services. Many Hindus saw other cows as perfectly acceptable sources of food or tokens of sacrifice. It's also important to recognize that while beef avoidance was seen by many ancient Hindus as a virtuous

practice, few expected to hold the people around them to the same standard. The idea that the killing of cows anywhere, by anyone, was an implicit violation of Hindu "rights" simply did not exist.

Still, as time went on, the practice of cow veneration took root in Indian society, and from it emerged a complex hierarchy based on food. The special role that was afforded to Brahmin cows gradually came to be understood as deriving from the high status of the caste with which they were associated, instead of from the services for which they were given.

Cows also became identified with notions of feminine virtue and maternal devotion for their submissive, docile natures, and because of the way they selflessly nourished their human domesticators. These ideas have persisted; in much recent literature that advocates beef avoidance and cow protection, explicit references are made to "mother cow."

If cows were so pure, so virtuous, so sacred, then the people who killed them and ate their meat seemed to demonstrate a deviation from a fundamental Hindu principle. Diet, then, became viewed as an expression of caste. If diet did not yet explicitly confer value, it certainly indicated the latter: those who ate beef were clearly low down in India's caste hierarchy, those who avoided beef but continued to consume other kinds of animal flesh were somewhat higher; vegetarians, who more completely incorporated ahimsa into their daily lives, were higher still. The perceived purity of an individual's diet supposedly reflected something deeper about their spiritual character, which in turn indicated a level of sophistication, of status, and, so, naturally, of power.

The peculiar belief tying diet to purity led to a stricter understanding of caste delineation. Because purity was achieved in part by diet, and otherwise transferred through filial relationships, it became taboo to marry or even eat with someone outside one's caste. Centuries later, settlers of the British Raj would take offense to the Hindus who refused to "pollute" themselves by eating with them, white non-Hindus. The matter was further complicated with the arrival of Muslims in India, who eschewed pork but felt no qualms about eating beef. Modern cow protectors and their allies often claim that beef-eating came to India with the first Islamic conquest, that the sav-

age practice was brought over by similarly savage, ruthless invaders. This is manifestly untrue—Jha's analysis shows that there have always been beef-eaters in India—but arrival of Muslims did fundamentally alter the role of the cow in Indian politics and society.

India was ruled by Muslims from the twelfth to the nineteenth century, but the most powerful, notable Islamic dynasty was the Mughal Empire, which was more or less continuously in power for three-hundred years starting in the sixteenth century. The Mughals left indelible marks on Indian history, culture, and society. It was a Mughal emperor who, as a tribute to his favorite wife, commissioned the grand, delicately beautiful mausoleum that is now a world-famous icon of India: the Taj Mahal. The Mughal period also marked one of the first times in Indian history that the cow was explicitly used for political gain. Many emperors refused to eat beef or to serve it in their palaces; some went so far as to impose restrictions or total bans on cow slaughter—in an effort to accommodate the belief systems of Brahmins, who sat at the top of the caste system. These actions presented a new way of understanding the cow. No longer just as an object considered by many to be sacred, it was a tool whose religious value could be wielded to serve a political end.

Similar policies were adopted by Hindu rulers like Shivaji, a seventeenth-century warrior king who claimed that the slaughter of cows amounted to the "oppression" of Brahmins. It would be a mistake, however, to suggest that these rulers were more sincere because they belonged to the religion whose beliefs they claimed to be defending. Their eagerness to gain the support of powerful members in their society may have been equally rooted in self-interest.

Yet the symbolism of a Muslim ruler personally and publicly engaging in beef avoidance cannot be overlooked. By the end of the Mughal empire, Muslims had been in power for centuries and many rulers had enacted other policies to emphasize the inferior status of non-Muslims in India. That some Muslim rulers still felt compelled to make such overtures to the Brahmin community—to single out a group distinct from its exploitable brethren and worthy of preferential treatment—is remarkable, and indicative of the emergence of a complex relationship between caste and religion.

II: DIVIDE AND RULE

Whatever developments occurred in the pre-colonial period, caste, as we understand it today, was fundamentally shaped by British colonial rule. In his 2001 book “Castes of Mind,” Nicholas Dirks, an American historian of colonial India, argues that colonial-era anthropologists and historians often distorted features of Indian cultural practice, producing a reductive, mythologized narrative that came to define, inform, and even replace systems that had existed for thousands of years in more nuanced forms.

"THE BRITISH ALSO DELIBERATELY INVOKED CASTE (OR, AT LEAST, WHAT THEY THOUGHT THEY UNDERSTOOD ABOUT CASTE) TO JUSTIFY THEIR CONTROL OVER THE SUBCONTINENT."

In part, this was simply a consequence of the Western tendency to infantilize non-European societies. But the British also deliberately invoked caste (or, at least, what they thought they understood about caste) to justify their control over the subcontinent. A people marred by intractable social divisions like caste were a people in need of colonial rule—an excellent pretext for a deeply insidious undertaking.

Early colonial-era historians noted the four varnas, or categories of labor, that are often cited as the overarching framework of the caste system. At the top sat Brahmins, who were priests and scholars; then Kshatriyas, who were rulers and warriors; Vaishyas, who were farmers and merchants, followed; Shudras, who performed manual labor, were at the bottom. Individuals who fell outside these categories were external to the fabric of respect-

able society—these were the so-called “untouchables,” who were relegated to such lamentable tasks as disposing of dead cattle and removing human waste from sewers.

This conception of caste derives from an ancient text called the Manusmriti, which aimed to provide a set of rules of conduct in line with the social framework of varnas. Like all ancient texts, it was written in Sanskrit, which means it was almost certainly produced (and studied and taught) by Brahmins—as religious scholars, they were the only members of Indian society who studied the language. Therefore, the Manusmriti speaks less to Hindu practice than it does to Brahmin ideals of Hindu practice. Brahmins had the most to gain from this construction of caste (note that the varna model places them above all others, even kings). It was Brahmins, not Indians at large, who sought to enforce this particular scheme of social organization.

In pre-colonial India, caste was at once more complex and less significant than the British made it out to be. Indians were aligned along a variety of modes of social organization, like geography and local rulership, which sometimes took precedence over varna. Among non-Brahmins, the more relevant construct was jati, which that identified people by their occupation. Jatis (the word literally translates to “birth”) could be thought of as clans: people belonging to a particular jati shared cultural practices and surnames, and frequently married among themselves. Many refused to share food and drink with members of other jatis in the same way that they opposed intermarriage—this idea of dietary “pollution” kept many jatis socially isolated from one another.

Nevertheless, writes Dirks, British scholars treated the Manusmriti with “canonical importance,” in part because it was useful to construct a narrative of Indian society that essentialized the role of religion. Aided by local Brahmin guides, the British took varna to be the primary or exclusive social delineator in an Indian society that could now be thought of as a Hindu society—a civilization with an inherently religious structure and purpose. Then, the British could write themselves as dutiful agents of the White Man’s Burden, filling the political vacuum they claimed was inherent to India’s tribe-like social structure.

Dirks’ analysis fits with what we have seen of the history of the cow up to the

Mughal period. The primary hierarchical distinction that motivated politics of cow purity was not the unwieldy stratification of varnas, which was present but not especially material in daily life, but rather the simple dichotomy between Brahmins and non-Brahmins. Brahmins were, indeed, the main purveyors of the notion of caste—it was their holy cows that first motivated the infusion of food and power, and it was they whom later rulers sought to placate—but under colonial rule, caste took on a more central role in the lives of all Indians.

The British were quick to note that caste had the potential to “stand in the way of national mobilization,” as Dirks puts it, but this was more a consequence they happily welcomed than an active goal of their study of caste. Things changed in 1857, when a massive rebellion erupted among the native ranks of the colonial army. Simmering tensions broke when the rumor that a new supply of ammunition had been coated with either beef fat or pork fat spread through a group of native Indian soldiers in a company near Delhi. The sepoys, as they were called, began to protest this injustice—for if either version of the rumor were true, it would be deeply offensive to either Hindus or Muslims. News of the conflict they had initiated quickly spread. Soon, most of northern India was seized by full-on mutiny, agitated by a growing resentment among the native Indian population towards their colonial rulers. The Rebellion lasted eighteen months. In its wake, the colonizers strengthened their bureaucratic infrastructure, promoting the British Queen to Empress of India, creating a role of Viceroy who would serve as the Crown’s arm in India, and introducing an Indian Civil Service that they hoped would reinforce their control.

In this vein of conquest, the British also sought to reconfigure Indian society. In 1951, a military historian named Neil Stewart published a letter in the Marxist journal *Science and Society* in which he described how this goal was realized in the Army almost immediately after the Rebellion. Military leaders were concerned by solidarity that had emerged among regiments in which diverse groups of soldiers had been allowed to serve alongside each other. Differences in caste and religion “had been rubbed away by contact in the ranks,” providing a collective strength that precipitated and facilitated the Rebellion. As the

colonial army could not function without manpower of native troops, sepoys could not be eliminated; so the soldiers had to undergo a kind of forced social restructuring instead, to quell any chance of future rebellion. Sepoys were separated by religious distinctions and sorted into regiments thereof, while British officers retained sole control over leadership and discipline. This transformed the army into a “weapon of repression” that continued to serve colonial ends until India gained independence from colonial rule almost a century later.

This strategy of “divide and rule” was soon wielded to great effect among civilian populations as well. One of the British government’s favored tactics appeared under a guise of an ethnographic imperative, an urge to classify and document caste with meticulous care. “To keep India” after the rebellion, writes Dirks, “the British felt the need to know India far better than they had.” This project was approached in a variety of ways, most crucially in the form of a census that was regularly performed through the second half of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth.

The principal construct they sought to reframe and catalog was jati—a difficult task, given that the broader classification of varna did not always cohere with the individual occupational castes. While varna applied exclusively to Hindus, and was, at that, a primarily Brahmin construct, jatis more accurately reflected the nature of caste in daily life. Similar groupings existed among other major religions, too, indicating the enduring force of the caste hierarchy even after conversion.

Yet H. H. Risley, a British colonial civil servant who took on and expanded the census program in the late nineteenth century, placed great stock in the idea of varna. Whereas jati described a function in society, varna explicitly conferred a sense of worth; after the census became more regular, some caste groups went so far as to organize and petition to be recorded within a higher varna. Thus, the interpretation of caste manufactured by the colonial government was adopted by Indians themselves. It became imperative to secure and maintain a high status, and historians and sociologists have frequently observed that members of lower castes seeking to rise up often adopted practices that had been identified with higher-caste communities. In this vein of upward mobility, the fiercest advocates

of the early cow protection movement (as we know it today) were often members of lower castes, looking for ways to showcase their superiority.

"THE FIERCEST ADVOCATES OF THE EARLY COW PROTECTION MOVEMENT WERE OFTEN MEMBERS OF LOWER CASTES, LOOKING FOR WAYS TO SHOWCASE THEIR SUPERIORITY."

Hindus took on the British con-tortion of caste with great fervor, and contributed to an orientalist view of India by helping to do the work of conflating beef avoidance with high status as well as with Hinduism as a whole. As religious politics grew to define Indian society in the decades that preceded Independence, the cow—though it continued, in many ways, to fall along caste lines—also rose above caste and became a larger symbol of religious identity and division.

III: COW PROTECTION AND THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

The first cow protection societies were formed in the 1860s, just a few years after the pivotal 1857 Indian Rebellion. Given what we know about the dietary component of India’s social hierarchy and the deliberate enforcement of this hierarchy by the colonial government, it’s hard to believe this was mere coincidence. It seems unlikely, in fact, that cow protection could have grown from cow worship without the increased politicization of the cow (beginning with the Mughals) and the deliberate stratification of caste by the British.

At any rate, by the end of the nineteenth century, the movement had gained considerable momentum. Many Hindus

expressed sympathy with its demand that the British government outlaw cow slaughter throughout the subcontinent. The movement became closely tied with—and was often directly led by—Hindu fundamentalists, who opposed colonial rule because they felt it did not sufficiently accommodate their beliefs and practices. They preached “Swaraj,” or self-rule, a term used specifically by a chief architect of cow protection in the nineteenth century and, later, by Mohandas Gandhi. One might even say that the forefathers of Hindu nationalism were at the forefront of the Independence movement.

Yet the increasing Hindu religiosity framing Independence troubled Muslim leaders; although they, too, craved autonomy from colonial rule, they feared that an independent India whose way had been paved by Hindus might not be especially welcoming or empowering to Muslim Indians. Intermittent but bitter outbreaks of violence between Hindus and Muslims, sometimes sparked by disagreements over cow politics, stoked these fears. Solidarity that made the Indian Rebellion of 1857 possible had all but vanished. Muslims had good reason to be wary of how anti-colonial sentiment was being fuelled by cow protection. The movement threatened the beef industry and its predominantly Muslim (and lower-caste) laborers—forerunners of modern-day “cow protectors” sometimes tried to physically prevent cows from being transported to locations where they might be killed for meat or skinned for leather. Moreover, if cow slaughter were ever to be completely banned, it would prohibit the tradition of cow sacrifice on Eid al-Adha, the holiest Islamic holiday.

Some accounts, however, suggest that many of the most outspoken Muslims were neither particularly attached to the idea of beef as food nor to cow sacrifice. They identified beef with their poor, and had already taken to sacrificing goats instead of cows on Eid after centuries of living in a pro-cow society. In India, the festival is actually known as “Bakrid” (Bakra-Eid), stemming from the Urdu word for “goat.” Rather, these Muslims were rankled by the idea of a Hindu religious practice being codified and forced upon non-Hindus. If unchecked, Hindu leaders—even those who spoke out against the caste system and advocated secularism, as some later would—might continue to institutional-

ize their own religious doctrine, privileging themselves further in the eyes of the law. Cow protection, then, did not merely threaten the relationship between Muslims and cows, but presented a danger to their very position—already subordinate—in Indian society.

In these early decades of the modern cow protection movement, the feature that distinguished it from previous politicized treatments of the cow was its wholehearted embrace of the policing of others. Where earlier, rulers co-opted the cow to gain the support of a tiny elite, large populations of average Hindus now set out to codify their dietary hierarchy in order to elevate themselves. In this way, they wielded the cow as a weapon.

In the twentieth century, the mantle of cow protection continued to be taken up by leaders of the Independence movement. Mohandas Gandhi, in particular, was a fervent advocate of cow protection; he once wrote a fond ode to “mother cow” in which he insisted that the cow’s life of unrequited self-sacrifice made her nobler, more worthy of respect, than our own human mothers, who required assistance in old age and the “expenses of burial or cremation” in death. To Gandhi, the very purpose of Hinduism was to share the message of cow worship with others; “true cow protection” meant “conquering the Muslims by our love.”

As a pacifist, Gandhi strongly disapproved of the violence employed by some of his peers in the name of cow protection. The movement, he said, had devolved into a sectarian “feud” that stood little chance of resolving itself. Like other Indian figures in the struggle for independence, Gandhi championed tolerance and envisioned an India in which no one religion took precedence over any other. Yet his rhetoric betrayed an attitude of superiority, a prescription of “conquest” over those lesser individuals whose religions had not yet evolved to prohibit cow slaughter. Gandhi occupied a strangely intermediate position among political and religious leaders of his time. He was not a Hindu nationalist, yet his political philosophy had been deeply informed by Hindu principles. He advocated for India to become a “secular state” that did not institutionally prioritize any particular religion over any other, but he vociferously defended and sought to circulate one of his own religious views. Spirituality

informed Gandhi’s life and politics. When he was assassinated in 1948—less than six months after India won its independence from Britain in 1947—he was leaving a multi-faith evening prayer that he conducted daily, inviting worshippers of all castes and religions. The killer, a Hindu nationalist, shot him three times, point blank, in the chest. Nathuram Godse and his seven co-conspirators were affiliated with a paramilitary organization called the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which sought to establish supremacy of Hindu ideology and culture in India. The RSS had emerged some twenty years prior on the heels of rising anti-colonial sentiment; leaders hoped that, come Independence, a strong Hindu organization might be able to fill the political vacuum left by the British and, in doing so, quell pluralist ideology. Indeed, just four years after India became independent, the RSS helped form a right-wing organization—the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—that would go on to push its agenda in Parliament for the next seventy years.

IV: BEEF LYNCHING AND THE FOREBODING PRESENT

Today, the beef industry employs some two million Muslims and Dalits—members of casteless (“untouchable”) communities—and produces two million tons of beef per year. The meat that is not exported is consumed in the five Indian states that do not attempt to curb the industry, as well as by many of India’s poor, Hindu and non-Hindu alike, who favor beef as a cheap source of protein over the purer dietary restrictions available to caste Hindus. The industry has sustained itself for decades—centuries, even. The trend of lynching Muslims and Dalits in the name of cow protection is fairly recent. According to unofficial estimates, ninety-seven percent of cow-related hate crimes between 2010 and 2017 occurred after the election of India’s current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, in 2014.

During his campaign, Modi, who belongs to the BJP, famously circulated stories of his childhood as a train-side tea-seller, choosing to make his lower-caste background visible. This is not unusual—the RSS and the BJP often tout leaders and politicians from lower castes as evidence of their participation in a shifting tide in Indian social ethics. Yet these examples only

tell part of the story—while many local politicians and, indeed, some influential ones have belonged to lower castes, the vast majority of the BJP’s internal leadership remains dominated by Brahmins and other “forward” or upper castes.

The reality is that it is in the interest of groups like the RSS and the BJP to appear to care for the interests of lower castes, even if they are reluctant to offer ideas for constructive policy initiatives to eliminate discrimination and violence. Rather, their broader goal is to secure a Hindu hegemony in India. Frustrated lower-caste Hindus seeking people to blame for their misfortune and struggle are an excellent group with whom to build an anti-Muslim coalition. To this end, much rhetoric of the Hindu right invokes an image of a pan-Hindu movement united around a common resentment for legacy of Muslim colonial rule and an interest in protecting core Hindu values. Modi is at the forefront of promoting this vision, and his ascent to power reflects the country’s acceptance of these values. He even speaks Hindi with a strange, anti-Muslim affectation—he avoids common words in spoken Hindi that are borrowed from Urdu (which is quite similar to Hindi but owes some quarter of its vocabulary to Arabic) and replaces them with arcane words of technically “pure” Sanskrit origin. His most ardent sympathizers may not understand everything he says, but the symbolism is present nonetheless.

Politicians on the Hindu right often appear to imply that threat of a Muslim invasion or takeover persists; some warn of “love-jihad,” a conspiracy that suggests Muslim men are falsely declaring love for young Hindu women in droves in the hopes of marrying them and converting them to Islam. Others allude to the cow, proposing stricter criminal punishments for cattle trading and, in some radical cases, advocating for a total national ban on the industry. These proposals do not have to mention Islam explicitly for Hindu vigilantes to know who to blame—after centuries of distortion and misunderstanding, the cow has successfully been cast as an object of Hindu sanctity. Indeed, more than half of cow-related attacks in recent years have targeted Muslims, while some ten percent of the victims have been Dalits.

Predictably, Modi and other BJP politicians have refrained from expressing unequivocal criticism of the violence. Some

behave as though the crisis has no religious component, speaking up only when crimes have been committed against Dalits while ignoring the far more frequent attacks on Muslims. Others make blanket statements condemning violence as an ineffective solution while maintaining their commitment to cow protection. Thus, India's mainstream Hindu right enacts religious violence while leaving the dirty work to zealous mobs, denying accountability for the lynchings they help incite.

THE FEATURE THAT DISTINGUISHED THIS POLITICIZED TREATMENT OF THE COW WAS ITS WHOLE-HEARTED EMBRACE OF THE POLICING OF OTHERS.

The post-Modi rise in cow-related violence has been especially significant in states led by BJP governments like Uttar Pradesh, where Mohammad Akhlaq and his son were lynched in Dadri in 2015. This is partly because officials within these states are unlikely to be especially critical of such attacks. India's Culture Minister, who is from Uttar Pradesh, described the Dadri killing as an "accident" and a "misunderstanding." These comments, which might not immediately make sense in the context of a mob killing, were likely in reference to conflicting reports about the kind of meat that was found in the Akhlaq home. The attackers naturally believed it was beef, though the family insisted they had been eating lamb. Forensic tests conducted shortly after the attack confirmed the family's claims. Yet there are some who would argue that, if they had indeed been eating beef, the attackers might reasonably have been "provoked" into their crime. Some eight months after the attack, a new lab report found that the original samples from Akhlaq's home had

come from "a cow or its progeny." Lawyers assigned to defend the attackers planned to use these results to argue that they had, indeed, been compelled to violence. Later, it was revealed that the meat that caused all this may not have even been found inside the home—some reports placed it in a trash can some distance away.

But these particulars—the exact nature and location of the pieces of meat that supposedly triggered this attack, and the questionable veracity of each conflicting report—are less important. What is perhaps more telling is that the initial forensic tests were ordered by police investigators, as though Mohammad Akhlaq's last meal was at all pertinent to the gruesome way in which he was killed, as though his death might have been something less than murder, his killers less than culpable, if he had been eating beef.

The myth of the cow, peddled by a fundamentalist right-wing regime and embraced by fierce, frenzied mobs, has thus been neatly adopted into systems of justice and bureaucratic enforcement. Amid the fervor, ahimsa—the prescription of nonviolence from which cow protection slowly emerged—has been quietly and brutally forgotten. ■

KERALA STYLE BEEF FRY

INGREDIENTS

1 kg beef
1 tsp turmeric powder
2 tbsp Kashmiri chili powder
1 tbsp meat masala
1½ tsp garam masala
1 large piece ginger root, crushed
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 tbsp salt, or as required
Coconut oil
Curry Leaves

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cut beef into small pieces. Prepare all ingredients.
2. Marinate the pieces of beef with all other ingredients for about 1 hour.
3. Pressure cook the marinated beef with 3 cups of water about 20 to 30 minutes or according to the meat.
4. Open the pressure cooker and if there are any excess juices, cook until it dries up completely.
5. Heat coconut oil in a pan and add pressure cooked beef. Give it a good stir.
6. Add Curry Leaves and cook on low flame until the beef becomes dry and crisp.

A COMMUNITY OF CREATION

AN INTERVIEW WITH FARMINARY DIRECTOR, PROFESSOR NATE STUCKEY

BY: JASON SEAVEY

The Farminary is a twenty-one acre sustainable farm on Princeton Pike that offers courses to Princeton Seminary students about the intersection of faith and agriculture. At the Farminary, students receive a unique approach to theological education. It is directed by Professor Nate Stucky, who described its mission best: “We want to form these leaders who know how to love well, who know how to love God, and love neighbor, and love land... But we’re not content to let the intellect sit on its own. We want to recognize it within... the whole of what it means to be human.”

Professor Nate Stucky has had his hands in dirt his whole life. He grew up farming in Kansas and worked for local farmers in high school and college. After a stint in Maryland as a youth pastor, he moved back to Kansas to farm full-time. He describes that period as one of “intense vocational discernment” during which he answered a “sense of call to Ministry.” This eventually led him to the Princeton Seminary where he studied for his PhD. He brought the idea for the Farminary to the Seminary President. The President approved, and Stucky came on as Director after graduating in 2015.

I sat down with Professor Stucky in the Fall of 2017 to discuss the Farminary. He could not hide his passion when he spoke. His low and steady tone sometimes rose as if he were delivering a sermon on faith and the land. Our conversation was more expansive than I anticipated, ranging from Wendell Berry to Genesis to the materiality of faith.

The interview was edited for length and clarity.

JASON: In your article “Body, Soul, Soil, and Sacrament”, you reference Genesis 1:29-30,¹ which is commonly read as giving man dominion over life. But you also credit Wendell Berry’s essay “The Body and the Earth” as informing your article. In that piece he emphasizes that we should give up any sense of that dominion over nature. How do you reconcile these two visions?

NATE: That verse in Genesis 1 has caused a lot of trouble. (laughs) And I think there are different ways into it. One way is to ask the question, “What do we mean when we say dominion?” And that question comes on the heels of this description of humankind being created in the image of God. It’s a really profound, bold, thought-provoking assertion that humans are created in the image of God. And then, this invitation, “Here’s the food and I give you dominion.” So if you put those things side by side, dominion doesn’t originate with humankind. It is given to humankind from God. Whatever dominion humankind would have, it should, in some way, reflect or follow the dominion that is demonstrated by God’s own action in that chapter. In the story itself, God has God’s dominion over creation in a way that moves inextricably toward the flourishing of this astonishingly diverse creation. So, if we are going to talk about dominion, I want that lens on. Where its overall telos is the flourishing of this astonishingly diverse creation. And anything that goes against that is not faithfully reflecting the kind of dominion that has been exercised by God.

¹ Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

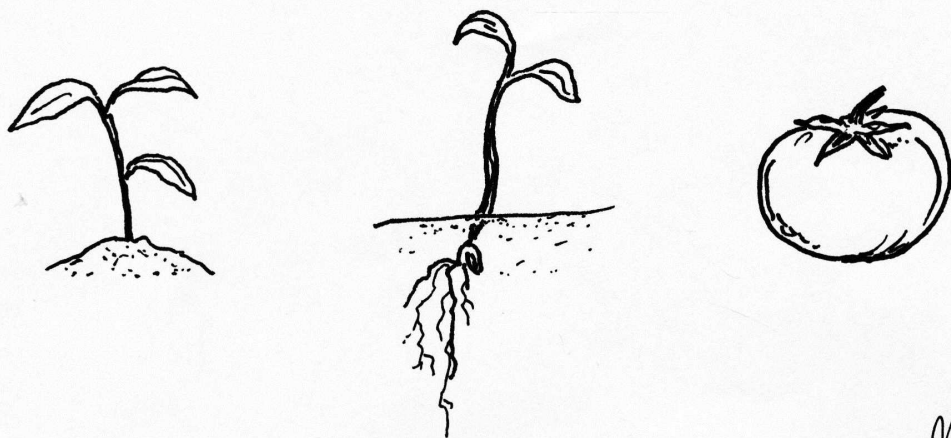
J: So would you go as far as to call that a responsibility to promote life?

N: Yes, without question. One of the beautiful, profound things that Genesis does is that it doesn’t leave us with just one creation story; it goes immediately into the second creation story which is where we get the whole formation of the garden story about Adam and Eve, and the fall, and Cain and Abel, and the death of things. When God creates the first human, the Hebrew for human there is adam and the Hebrew for soil is adamah. So right there in the Hebrew there is an intimate link between human and humus.²

The verse common to many is the old King James translation that said the Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden to till and keep it. So you have the adam put in the garden to till and keep, but the words there that get translated as till and keep are avad and shamar from the Hebrew.

Ellen Davis is an Old Testament scholar at Duke. When she translates avad and shamar, instead of till and keep, she [translates the two words as] work, serve, observe, and preserve. So those are the responsibilities given to humankind in the garden. Work it. Serve it. Observe it, pay attention. And also do what’s necessary to preserve it. So to your question, I don’t know if responsibility is a strong enough word. I think the reality is that we don’t actually know who we are, and we may not actually really be living in the fullest human adamah kind of sense, apart from that intimate relationship with creation. It’s not a curse to go work with the land. It’s a gift that helps us know who we really are. And helps us really know who God is.

² A variable material resulting from partial decomposition of plant or animal matter and forming the organic portion of soil.



J: How does the Farminary play into that entire field of thought?

N: I taught a course out here with one of our Old Testament professors from the Seminary, Professor Jacqueline Lapsley, who had warned me ahead of time, “Nate, you need to know, I kill things.” (laughs) I said, “No worries. I’ll take care of that farm and garden part. You bring the Old Testament expertise.”

It was a one-credit “text and terrain” course. We were reading Old Testament agrarian passages and gardening and we were asking, “How does our time in the garden change the way we spend time with scripture? And how does our time with scripture change the way we spend time in the garden?” So we had spent the time in Genesis 2 and later in the semester, we were out in the garden and Professor Lapsley was planting carrots. So she’s down on her hands and knees and she’s cut a little groove in the soil and she’s placing her seeds in the soil and she has this moment of realization that she is embodying shamar. She is in the posture of service, hands and knees on the ground serving the land and, we trust, also serving God in that. So that’s a moment that, fundamentally, cannot happen in a seminar room or a lecture hall. It required embodiment. It required actually having this intimate contact with the seed and with the soil. And it unveiled meaning within the text that has always been there. But the text itself cries out for that broader relationship. Or maybe a relationship in the first place with soil.

The food that we eat eventual-

ly it comes from the soil. So that connection is more than just theological. It just comes to light in a different way, it’s made three dimensional, it’s made multisensory in this space. And we can recognize, in a way that is really visceral our dependence on the land, our dependence on our neighbors. You have to recognize every time I go to the grocery store and pull a tomato off the shelf, it came from somewhere. It came from some vine somewhere. Maybe it’s hydroponically farmed or maybe it’s from a field in Florida. But regardless, somebody planted this, somebody harvested this, somebody transported it, all these things. At our best, this place unveils some of that. It does open up really big questions like: is this tomato that I’m eating honoring the life and all the lives that are bound up in that, and in so doing, honoring God? Or is it contributing to something more like the destructive version of Dominion?

J: And so do you view this agricultural side as a necessary part of theological education?

N: Too frequently, the question of faith has been reduced to something that is utterly immaterial. They are some abstract thoughts or ideals and maybe it influences how you live your life a little bit, but it’s just a manifestation of the body-spirit divide. I think that the world/millennials/whoever are absolutely right to look at that version of faith and say, “I’m good. (laughs) I don’t need that. Why would I give my life to that?”

And so, for me, part of the pow-

er of this space is that it lifts up again the ways that, in our context, Judeo-Christian faith is a thoroughly material faith. At the center of it all is this confession that God became material in Jesus Christ, and then Christ invites his disciples to follow him and to remember him, not by giving them some book or treatise to read, but by handing them bread and wine, saying, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

So there’s culture there, and there’s land there, and it’s multi-sensory, and it’s in the context of this meal which is Passover which demonstrates this extraordinarily vital connection to the Jewish faith. And to reduce that to some list of beliefs that you’re just supposed to check off and sign your name... it totally strips the faith of meaning. And it divorces it from the nitty gritty joy, pain, struggle, tragedy, triumph of our everyday lives. So, in my most biased moments, I say, “Yeah! The Farminary helps us solve all those things.” (laughs) I don’t know if it does that, but I think it does move us in that direction... We’ve received this faith tradition and we carry it. And that tradition has within itself resources for connecting the questions of transcendence with our embodied material existence.

For the one who is at the complete opposite end, for the dogmatic materialist who says, “Look, there is no anything out there.” What about our experiences of affection, of surprise, of laughter, of sadness, of death, and of birth? These are things that are all sort of pushing us up against transcendence. We have to make our choices about how we interpret these things. So I think maybe the Farminary speaks to both

sides of that.

J: In his essay Berry also says, “To be healed we must come with all the other creatures to the feast of Creation.” Do you have any stories of students or visitors that felt that healing, that “coming to the feast of creation”?

N: One of the sweet gifts that has come about because of the Farminary is that it has attracted students from many many different backgrounds, different theologies, different racial-ethnic backgrounds, and obviously different geographies. And we have attempted to structure this in such a way that students can't get out of their Farminary classes without getting to know each other and without getting to know the land a little bit.

If you go back to Genesis 1 and if you read that Genesis 1:1-2:3 there is this little three word phrase “of every kind”: “sea creatures of every kind,” and “plants of every kind,” and “animals of every kind.” There's this picture that the vitality of creation in the beginning is inseparable from this astonishing diversity. And that variety, that diversity contributes to vitality and doesn't threaten it. The world has a problem with this right now. There are so many tragic scenarios that are emerging in our world because people are interpreting variety and difference as a threat to vitality, rather than as inherent to vitality.

So we bring students from all kinds of various backgrounds, geographies, theologies, races, ethnicities together at the table. When we do our three credit courses out here, we're out here for 4 to 6 hour blocks and there is a potluck meal that is part of all those classes every week. But it's a surprisingly rare opportunity for students to be able to serve each other, which gets back to Genesis 2. But they do this, and they prepare this meal for each other, and then we sit at this table and we share it. If you do that enough weeks, it just carves out this space. I've been intentional about not co-opting the meal time as bonus lecture time, just let the meal time be the meal time. Then that has a way of creating this space where students will talk about whatever we read for the week, or whatever we did in the garden. But beyond that, they'll ask the simple but profound questions like, “Where'd you grow up?” and “What did you bring tonight?” And I can tell specific

stories of students who came to class with a history, or those who are just so clearly at different places theologically. In one case I had these two students who intentionally put themselves on the same work team for the last garden time of the semester. Later one of them told me, “I did that because I was trying to live out the ideals we've been talking about in this class.”

In another case, these two people were at very different points theological spectrum. The last meal that we had a farm, they sat right there, one next to the other at the corner of the table. And I don't think they changed their theological positions, but they saw each other. They were listening to each other and it was clear they were trying to recognize a common humanity and something bigger that held them together than their different theological bases. And all that is not separable from the food, the gardening, the whole community of creation.

J: How has the Farminary informed your conception of wellness and health?

N: Within the Judeo-Christian tradition, Sabbath can be, at its best, this gift that messes with our sense of time. It's like, “No, once every 7 days, just stop. Don't do any work.” I have said many times that I hope people experience time differently here at the farm. I wouldn't separate that from my understanding of wellness. Particularly in this context, if we are defining wellness here according to how much work we can get done, how much we can achieve, our GPA, our salary after we graduate, any of those things, that, ultimately, will distort who I think we were really created to be. So here we are. We sit in this barn, we can hear the breeze, hear the birds, hear the geese. If you really listen you can hear some traffic in the background, but just the presence of this place for me has a time altering impact. There are a hundred different ways I could talk about connections between the Farminary and wellness. I would include how we shop for groceries to how much fossil fuel we use. All those things are part of that. But I think all of that is also connected to who are we at the end of the day? Are we just producers? Are we just consumers? Are we just people who are trying to achieve more and more? Or were we created for community, created for these vital relationships with each other, with the land, with God?.

If we are created for that, then we have to recognize there is no loving relationship with anything apart from a long accumulation of time. It just takes time for any loving relationship to develop and then to endure through time.

So maybe the Farminary slows us down for a moment. And in that slowing, it's like water and soil to the seed. Like oh, now it can grow. ■

HOW TO PREP HOME-GROWN TOMATOES FOR SAUCE

BY: K

Plant your tomatoes in slightly sandy soil (it's the NJ secret) and give them plenty of space. Pick all of them, even the weirdly shaped or partially rotting ones - they can still be used. Score the bottom of the tomato in an x-shape. Sterilize them in boiling water for a little over 45 seconds. Put them directly into an ice bath to cool. Peel the skin at the corners - there should be no resistance. Cut away any bad parts. With or without seeds, boil until cooked. Blend (carefully). Store in airtight container in fridge or freezer until use.

K'S BASIC TOMATO SAUCE

Prep time: 10 mins, Cook time: 2 hours, Yield: 4.5 quarts

INGREDIENTS:

2 large onions
2 tbsp vegetable-based oil
1 tbsp oregano
1 tbsp basil
1 tbsp white sugar
2 tsp white pepper
1.5 tsp garlic powder (or cloves coarsely chopped)
Water - as needed

INSTRUCTIONS:

Coarsely chop onions, sweat in oil. Add oregano, basil, white pepper, garlic powder, and white sugar (for the acidity) to taste. Add in tomato puree, including any water that has separated during storage. Simmer sauce until desired consistency (1-2 hours). If too thick, add water. Blend (carefully). Add in other ingredients as desired.
Vodka sauce: vodka, heavy cream
Bolognese: pre-cooked ground beef or Italian sausage
Ideas for additional ingredients: parsley, ground ginger, celery, carrots, olive oil

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