

## AMERICAN FAST FOOD AND SOME ASPECTS OF AMERICAN LIFE

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**ABSTRACT:** This thesis is mainly intended to reveal the aspects of American fast food, its significance, and cultural values.

The interdisciplinary approach of American Studies is applied. It involves history to know the chronological sequence of the emerging process of fast food in America. It also uses sociology and culture to observe the social and cultural meaning of the application of American fast food in America. An economic perspective is utilized to dig up the problem from a capitalistic point of view. All these have been used as integral result in a comprehensive analysis.

This study starts with a discussion of American fast food in general, the history of American fast food and its characteristics. All of these are then related with the study to find American values on American fast food.

The result of this research reveals that American fast food has significances in American society. It deals with the development in technologies and industries which changed the eating habit of society. This change is strengthened by the rise of fast food which symbolizes simplicity and practicality, freedom, women role, and pluralism in American life.

*Key words: fast food, eating habit, American life, influence.*

### Introduction

Food has existed since the existence of human beings. As the main need in human life, food may also influence the way of life of human beings. Some scholars find that the availability of food in a social life shows the way of life and social condition of that society. As Archie Hobson states, the food we eat tells so much about us (1985:176).

Thereby, it can be said that American food may tell about American society, too.

"Food is one of the best ways to understand a culture," states the journal editor Darra Goldstein of the Washington Post. From the early years of American history until now, American society possesses their own way in interacting with food that is created by the social condition. American society at different stages of history has a particular way of treating their sustenance depending on the social condition in each era of American history (2001: par. 2).

The American experience had built American values in facing their reality, for instance in treating their food. Their experience, especially concerned with mobility, has influenced their way of thinking, living, and choosing their sustenance. Their experiences have influenced the American mind in improving their food and then "creating" fast food.

Since its beginning in American social life, fast food has been recognized as food that is prepared quickly. It also reflects a deeper social meaning of a society. During this time, while fast food innovation is going on, Americans have acknowledged that it has become an inextricable part of the American culture, a fast food culture, a culture that reflects the change in choice of sustenance based on the social condition. In this case, sustenance is viewed as a very important thing in human life but it should not inhibit life. Time freed from cooking, ease in eating and other conditions emerge as reasons of why some people like something as quick and practical as fast food.

Fast food brings consequences of a changing of social meaning that is concerned with the social values in American society. Starting as a culinary case, fast food has turned into a social, economical, and cultural phenomenon.

It became more than just food in the kitchen that women were required to cook. It has already been produced consumptively as it was massly produced for the readily available consumer. When America was developed into industry and along with it, Americans were forced to

move toward a more simple mode of living, fast food became the favorable choice to meet the people's need.

In the fast food business, fast food has infiltrated every nook and cranny of American society. An industry that began with a handful of modest hot dog and hamburger stands, now has spread to every corner of the nation, selling a broad range of foods wherever paying customers may be found. Fast food is now served not only at restaurants and drive-thrus but also at stadiums, airports, college campuses and elementary schools, on cruise ships, trains and airplanes, at K-marts, Wal-Marts, gas stations and even hospital cafeterias (Schlosser, 1998: par. 5)

### Historical Background

American fast food is very popular in the world. Historically America did not invent it, but it was the Americans who made it an economic success. Hamburgers, pizzas, french fries are examples of what the worldwide think of American food – fast food. Meanwhile hotdogs and apple pie can be found at ubiquitous fast food restaurants representing America's food and, in many ways, America's culture.

Markus Nowatzki in his History of American Food states:

Hamburgers, pizzas, french fries and all kind of other dishes are connected with a cuisine that is world think of the American food – fast food. Although fast food is not actually an American invention - already the ancient Romans had something like fast food and medieval German construction workers invented the "Würstlbude" - it was the Americans who made it an economic success. And only through all those well known fast food chains, American cuisine in its fastest form has become famous all over ..... But America's food is not only fast food. Like a dry sponge America's culture has sucked up all cuisines, spices, and tastes and created its own. (<http://www.eatinginamerica.de/>)

In the 1920s, the developments in technology and industry began to change the American life-style. These developments have influenced the way of life and way of thinking of the American society. The

condition allows people to go everywhere further, more quickly and cheaply and prompted people to think of outdoor activities, not to mention other leisure activities. These conditions influenced the rise of fast food in America.

Tom and Sara Pendergast (2000:71) point out:

The development of an affordable automobile and the simultaneously governmental support of new road systems physically reinforced this cultural melding, enabling car owners, especially, to go to places they had never been before. This sparked a boom in the tourist industry; travelers who once went by rail, or horse, were now moving faster by car, and began to value things such as speed and convenience as part of their trips. Not only did they need affordable and reliable places to stay, but they also needed similarly reliable places to eat.....

The need for fast, reliable, affordable, and convenient food, along with an increasing acceptance among Americans of a more homogenous culture, led to the rise of the fast food industry, and in particular, of the hamburger's and french fries it served. Purveyors of fast food sprang up in both urban areas and along the nation's highways.

Most of eating consumers were interstate travelers. Travelers who once went by train or horse were now moving faster by car. Thus, it influenced their behavior. They began to value speed and convenience as part of their trips, including meals.

Americans were familiar with food carts, cafeterias and also local diners and eateries. Food carts which were inexistence since the late 1800s, eventually evolved into more permanent "short order" joints and diners. Some cafeterias like Horn and Hardart in Philadelphia featured automat systems in the early 1900s. That system allowed people to extract foods such as pies, sandwiches, and entrees from vending machines for a penny or nickel. Food was becoming merely a fuel for the human working machines, like gasoline. Despite the fact local diners and cafes offered good, wholesome homecooked meals, they were far

away from main thoroughfares and make them inconvenient for the interstate traveler (Bryant, 2001:3).

The need for convenient, reliable, fast, and affordable food, led to the rise of the fast food industry. In the fast food industry the hamburger gained widespread popularity. People took advantage of the growing popularity of this new fast food and applied the industrial principle of standardization to the development of fast food restaurant.

The hamburger fulfilled economic as well as cultural needs. The hamburger, although more than 100 years old, has only recently been modified to become a menu best seller. Hamburgers were not commonly made in America until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the 1920s, the hamburger experienced a complete change of identity of American culture. In the early days of hamburger stands, most were located close to the working-class communities such as near factories and or working-class neighborhoods. Eventually though, the hamburger gained popularity and became an accepted part of the American diet. This attests to Americans' collective willingness to accept a new culture of food service and consider a new staple food (Barnes, 2001:par.4).

This condition is concomitant with the advent of the fast food restaurant. In 1912 the first fast food restaurant was founded. Billy Ingram and Walt Anderson, two men who liked to cook, founded White Castle in Wichita, Kansas. Walt Anderson perfected one version of the hamburger –a square patty with small holes for better cooking, topped with fried onions and placed on a bun of soft white bread. Meanwhile, Ingram with his limited menu standardized its production and made it possible for White Castle hamburgers to be found in many different cities with a uniform product (Pendergast, 2000: 72)

As one of the earliest fast food restaurants, White Castle had many implications for business and culture. White Castle was the first and most influential although never the largest fast food chain. White Castle sold their five-cent burgers "by the sack" and encouraged carryout for those customers on the go. David Hogan in Pendergast (2000:72) states that White Castle advanced food production and distribution to the

volume demanded by the expanding population, and offered an accessible, egalitarian, and standardized style of eating. It also supplied America with a distinctive ethnic symbol because people the world over now readily identify fast-food hamburgers as the food of Americans.

One popular system in fast food restaurant management is franchise. Sandra Guy in her report for *Business* (October 18, 2001) state that historically fast food franchises have been around since the early decades of the twentieth century, patronized by a public increasingly used to and insistent upon the supposed reliability and trustworthiness of branded goods. Some of the early successful franchises are White Castle, A&W Rootbeer, and Howard Johnson's. The most successful franchise is McDonald's. It was started in 1955 by Ray A. Kroc, a Chicago milkshake machine salesman. The man was so impressed by Richard and Maurice McDonald of San Bernardino, California, and their popular hamburger stand, that he joined them in partnership in 1955. Their first outlet opened in Des Plaines, Illinois. By 1960 Kroc had opened 228 drive-ins. These sold fifteen-cent hamburgers, ten-cent french fries, and twenty-cent milkshakes. Finally, Ray Kroc bought out the McDonald brothers name and all in 1961.

As a successful franchise, McDonald's has always been attentive to their architecture as part of business. The original McDonald's architecture was red and white tile with a golden arch abutting each end of the building. Some critics called it too gaudy. Then McDonald's moved to a more modest, brown brick design with a shingled mansard roof in the mid 1960s, but kept the golden arches, now attached to form their widely recognized logo "M" (Pendergast, 2000:72).

McDonald's success lay in Kroc's approach in conceiving his franchise operation in its entirety. He systematized to ensure sameness in his outlets, even the smiles on the clerk's faces. Every McDonald's had the same menu and the same general layout with some variations to acknowledge regional differences. For instance, the workers used the same techniques and equipment to prepare the food

Meanwhile, Kentucky Fried Chicken took a different approach from the other fast food restaurants. Founded by "Colonel" Harland Sanders (1890-1980) in 1954, KFC offers stereotypical southern food (a bucket of fried chicken, mashed potatoes, coleslaw, biscuits and gravy). It is also known as the franchise that makes chicken "Finger-Lick'n' Good". It consisted of over 300 outlets by 1963 (kfcindonesia.com: 2001).

Currently, kfcindonesia.com (2001: par. 5) informs that each week nearly 49 million customers come through KFC's doors for Finger Lickin' Good Chicken. The total amount of KFC chicken pieces consumed a year; is 4.6 billion pieces. KFC restaurants worldwide serve 2.3 billion meals a year. Laid head to claw, total KFC chicken consumed worldwide would stretch 245,265 miles. That would circle the Earth at the Equator 20 times or stretch from Earth approximately 20,265 miles past the moon.

There are other fast food franchises that bear mentioning. Dairy Queen, started in 1944 by partners Harry Axene and John McCullough of Davenport, Iowa, sold hotdogs and ice cream, and had 2,500 outlets by 1948. Domino's, with delivery-only pizza service, was founded by Tom Monaghan, who opened his first shop in 1960 and turned it into a franchise in 1967. By the end of 1986, Domino's sold over 189 million pizzas, accruing sales of \$2 billion. Hardee's, largely an imitation of Burger King, began in Greenville, North Carolina in 1961, and its outlets numbered over 900 by 1975. Arby's first appeared in 1964 in Boardman, Ohio, and was the brainchild of Forrest and Leroy Raffel, who tried to attract a more discriminating clientele by offering roast beef sandwiches using an old west décor, and featuring more expensive menu items. Other names in this business include A & W, Big Boy, Blimpie, Burger Chef, Carrol's, Church's Chicken, House of Pizza, Howard Johnson's, Jack in the Box, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Long John Silver's, Pizza Hut, Ralley's, Red Barn, Roy Roger's, Royal Castle, Sandy's, Shakey's Pizza, Taco Bell, Taco Time, Taco Tito's, Tastee Freez, Wendy's, White Castle, White Tower, and many others (73).

### Fast Food and Pop Culture

Discussing American fast food in this writing means discussing aspects of popular culture. Though basically fast food is made to satisfy hunger, its existence reflects some aspects of popular culture. Raymond Williams in Storey (1993:6) suggested that popularity can be defined as being well liked by many people; inferior kinds of work, work deliberately setting out to win favor with the people and as culture it actually made by the people for the people.

American fast food has been popular and consumed by many people. The large number of consumer indicates popularity which is also indicate to popular culture. Some aspects of popular culture in American fast food are large number consumers, using advertising, and money is the goal.

The effort to become popular can be seen through their way of advertising and creating an image of the specific fast food for the consumers. Fast food companies will get a large number of consumers if they advertise their products well. For instance McDonald's spends more money on advertising and marketing than does any other company. Most fast food restaurants offer packaged children meals that contain prizes and have even introduced a site for children's birthday parties. McDonald's has Ronald McDonald, a clown who debuted in 1963. Ronald has friends in "McDonaldland". They are Grimace, the Hamburglar, Mayor McCheese, Captain Crook, and the Professor. A survey of American school children conducted in 1973 found that ninety-six percent could identify Ronald McDonald. The children recognize Ronald second only to Santa Claus (Schlosser, 1998: par. 7).

For commercial achievement Kentucky Fried Chicken use Colonel Sanders as the symbol and spokesperson in advertising. Burger King's mascot is the Magic Burger King. McDonald's established Ronald McDonald houses which provided lodging to parents whose children were getting treatment in nearby hospitals. Both Burger King and Wendy's supported programs for needy children and so forth. One of the examples of the commercial achievement is Kentucky Fried Chicken

Corp. claiming to be the world's second largest restaurant chain with more than 7,410 restaurants in the U.S. and 57 other countries. Kentucky Fried Chicken International currently claims have franchises in two third of the world and the company believes it has significant untapped potential (Feder, 1987: 17)

The other aspect of popular culture that can be seen through fast food is pattern. The headquarters through their franchise system patterns the main products as their uniformity. The key to a successful franchise, according to many texts on the subject, can be expressed in a single word: uniformity. Franchises and chain stores must reliably offer the same product or service at numerous locations. Customers are drawn to familiar brands by an instinct to avoid the unknown. A brand offers a feeling of reassurance when its products are always the same everywhere. "The organization cannot trust the individual; the individual must trust the organization," declared Ray Kroc, one of the founders of McDonald's (Schlosser, 1998: par. 9).

### **Fast food and Woman**

When thinking about women in connection to fast food, the first issue that will arise is how fast food is prepared. Even hamburgers and french fries for instance, are well known, but it still requires skill to be able to cook them. Food and cooking are two matters that are unavoidably related to one another. When looking at cooking from a gender perspective, it is clear to that, cooking has long been defined as one of women's major and most important tasks. It is commonly viewed that women have the significant and important task of food preparation.

Degler states that historically there are two items which have strongly influenced cooking through the ages. Those are geography and religion. In determining what foods grow best, climate and area influenced how food is best cooked for safe and palatable eating. In addition, spiritual values attributed to foods and religious food taboos have prescribed methods of slaughter, cleansing, preserving, and cooking (1980:3). It is this religious factor that is commonly believed to influence

the role's separation of woman and man. Commonly, man is supposed to earn money to support his family while women stays at home, preparing food and taking care of domestic activities.

In any case, American families during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries built their own homes, produced much of the cloth for their clothing, made shoes, also raised and processed most of their food, and did a host of other jobs. In this era, women supervised the cooking and cleaning, and assumed the major responsibility for spinning, weaving, and clothes production. Moreover, apart from these tasks, women were also responsible for some tasks related to agriculture such as the care of certain animals and the tending of gardens. It shows that these contributions were of such importance that a man engaged in farming without a wife was seriously impaired (Gordon, 1978:72).

In the nineteenth century, with the growth of industry men increasingly worked in factories and offices. As a result, families were no longer self-sufficient. Instead, they relied on wages brought home by the husband and, in working-class families, the children. At the same time, women's roles concentrated on mothering and household management.

Strong (1992: 47-48) states that:

.... Women were now expected to be responsible for shaping their children's character and tending to the needs of their husbands. These changes, in fact, produced the "invention" of the male breadwinner and the female housewife.

The emphasis on childrearing and housework as the proper duties of women continued unchallenged until the 1940s. During World War II, however, a massive influx of married women poured into factories and stores to replace men who were fighting. This began a trend in which women increasingly entered the labor force. By being less economically dependent on men, women gained greater power in marriage.

In the twentieth century the development of technology and industry in American society has reformed the status of women in the task of cooking—the cooking belief. Society begins to rethink the family

'cook belief' ideology that "a woman's place is in the home" while a man's task is work to earn money to support his wife and children.

Nowadays, housewives do not spend as much time in the kitchen preparing food as they did a generation ago. Many women work outside the home and have little time for shopping and food preparation (Haselgrove, 1981:122). In this condition, the choice will go to ready meals and certainly fast food because it can now be found and purchased easily. It is a time saver for wives and mothers.

As a convenience food, fast food has influenced women's position and role which formerly said that a kitchen and the cooking belonged to women. As already mentioned, the development of technology made people move faster, and there emerged a new need of speed in food access. Fast food restaurants as another option have strongly influenced the intensity of mothers' activities in the kitchen.

The need for something practical in fast food, however, did not change the significance of eating together in American families. Even if they miss breakfast and lunch, they try hard to eat together at dinner. Considering the practical of fast food, Sever (2002: par.1-2) one of the American states that:

Fast food is often eaten a restaurant or as carry-out to be eaten at home or in the car. American families still sit together for meals and talk just as they always did. However, now the food is often prepared by the restaurant rather than by the mother at home. Table manners continue to be important.

Meals eaten together are an important way to communicate with each other about your life and the events of the day. Fast food has not changed that aspect of eating. Dinner is the important family meal each evening and continues to be in most American homes.

It shows that even with the consumption of fast food, the expectation of eating together still continues in American families, and here a mother's role is very important.

When discussing cooking in relation to fast food, it is important to evaluate women's thought about food preparation. Naturally, most

women still believe that cooking is an important part of their role in a family. According to research by Nickle Charles, cooking is still an important role of women. In his effort to uncover women's attitudes about cooking, the majority of women (respondents), thought that it is particularly important to be able to cook. Generally, women still believe that part of a woman's role as wife, and partially mother, is to be able to cook.

As stated by Nickie Charles and Marien Kerr in *Women, Food and Families*:

To try to uncover women's attitudes towards these gender divisions we asked whether they thought it important for women to be able to cook. A majority of them (116) thought that it was important and only a minority (27) felt it equally important that men are able to; an even smaller minority (14) felt that the ability to cook was not important for women. Their responses to this question clearly revealed how intimately bound up with a woman's role as wife, and particularly mother, is the ability to cook. (1988:45)

Some comments that Nickie got from his questionnaires state that:

It depends what sort of a woman you are really. If you're going to go to back to work after you've had children or if you're not going to have children at all then it's not really important. I think if your husband can cook and you're both working then that's fair enough. Let him do it. But if you are going to have children and give up work you have to be able to cook really. (45-46)

It shows that men also have to have responsibility and ability to cook. Moreover, the domination of men in the fast food business has influenced the belief that the ability of cooking refers only to women. As mentioned earlier, most owners of fast food restaurants who for sometime also served as the chief cook of the restaurant were men. For instance, there was Colonel Sanders with his secret recipes. Also, William Rosenberg was an eighth-grade dropout who delivered messages for Western Union, drove an ice cream truck and then in 1946 opened a

doughnut shop in Quincy, Massachusetts, that he would later call Dunkin' Donuts ("You pluck a chicken," he said, "you dunk a doughnut"). A third example is Richard and Maurice McDonald of San Bernardino, California with their McDonald's. Before Ray Kroc bought them out it was already recognized as one of the most successful fast food restaurants (Pendergast, 2000:74-75), and its success has only increased since then.

It is also significant to mention that Glen Bell, a former Marine in San Bernardino, ate at the new McDonald's and decided to copy it, using an assembly-line system to make Mexican food. His first Taco Bell opened in 1962. Thomas S. Monaghan, the founder of Domino's Pizza, spent his childhood in a Catholic orphanage and in a series of foster homes, got kicked out of school in the tenth grade, joined the Marines, bought a pizzeria for \$900 in Ypsilanti, Michigan, in the early 1960s, and met his wife while delivering a pizza to her college dorm room and so forth there are too many to be mentioned here. Billy Ingram and Walt Anderson, the two men who founded White Castle, the first American fast food restaurant, discovered that fast food restaurants are more than a matter of cooking. Their obsession turned their kitchen into a small factory in order to make money (Macey, 2001:57).

The discussion above shows that cooking is now not only a woman's task. The rise of fast food restaurants with most of the owners and founders as men shows that it has influenced the women's position as cook/baker. Cooking not only refers to preparing meals for a family but it can also be a way to make money. It is already a common occurrence for women to work in a restaurant where a "man" is the primary cook and the culinary expert of the restaurant.

### **American Values Reflected in Fast Food**

Before discussing the American values reflected in American fast food, values, as the main topic in this chapter can be described as the personal belief which is not necessarily concerned about what is good and what is bad. This is a personal preference rather than a claim about reality.

Values have a profound effect on individual. As a part of society the individual then influences the society as People (1995: 23) puts it "There is no society without individual." The reasons why Americans eat fast food then reflect the values of what every American believes about something.

Meanwhile in society, values represent the qualities that a group of people believe are essential to maintaining their way of life. Fast food existence and its popularity in American society shows that fast food has already become a part of American life. Moreover, the emergence of fast food has influenced the previous eating culture.

Values influence people's choices and behavior. Values can be the criteria of people's selection in action and become a backdrop also for judgment, preference, and choice at times implicit and unreflected upon values nevertheless perform as if they constituted grounds for decisions in behavior (Sills, 1972:283).

Values make people prefer some things to others. People select one action over another based on the values that they believe. American fast food and its popularity in American life shows that there must be values which have influenced what Americans do in regards to fast food. Furthermore, the reflected values in fast food will be discussed below.

### **Simplicity and Practicality**

As mentioned before, the tendencies of eating quickly and on-the-go became part of American society's choice when deciding what to eat. Some researchers show that Americans care more about how they eat than what they eat. For some reason laborers, students, travelers, people on vacation, sport fans and so forth prefer something simple and practical, and the fast food industry is paying attention to this eating habit.

To fulfill customer need, fast food restaurants improved some services. Fast service is the main answer. In their service, certainly 'fast' is the dominating style, fast food, fast service. A recent service improvement is home delivery. Home delivery service was believed to be



the next big growth area for the restaurant industry. Meanwhile delivery is beginning to be viewed as too labor intensive. Instead the drive-thru window and takeout in general are another choice.

Many applications in fast food value refer to simple and practical means. One of simple practicality can be seen in the experience of the early drive-in restaurant Royce Hailey's Pig Stand, opened in Dallas Texas in 1921. Drive-ins, one fast food institution, celebrated the cultural importance of the automobile. The invention what was called "Car hops" allowed a car to become a dining room of sorts. "Car hops" were most common among to teenagers. After ordering their food they could eat it in the open air without having to unbuckle their seatbelts (72)

With the advent of drive throughs, formal ritual among family members and close friends in the private dining began to become a thing of the past. Eating in public became more acceptable and in some places, especially in urban areas, people no longer ate as a group around the table. They preferred food that could be eaten quickly and on-the-go.

Food preparation in fast food restaurants has changed. The change has already evolved and thrives. By fast food they do not have to prepare some equipments of eating preparation. Even without spoon, a man can eat when he want to. A Chicago market researcher, Leo J. Shapiro, stated after a study of Americans eating habits in John Harris' *I don't want good I want fast* (1990:186) that "We used to eat when the food was ready. Now we eat when we are ready."

The hamburger is perhaps the most simple and practical means of all fast food. It is easy to cook even by the unskilled. It is easy to bring anywhere, and it is cheap and practical because it required no utensils.

Phil Patton state in his *Made in America* (1992:263) that:

Meanwhile, the rise of the hamburger itself as an icon of the American diet corresponded to the drive for self-service. The hamburger - which began as the hamburger sandwich - aspired to be the universal American food. It was beef, the most favored of American foods. It was pre-ground, almost pre-digest (not unlike the "healthful" steak

of Dr. J. H. Salisbury). It was portable and required no utensils. And it could be customized with the addition of various toppings and garnishes. It was easy to cook, even by the unskilled.

The trend of simplicity and practicality in consuming fast food has raised the question about its health, the malnutrition. Malnutrition in the United States is a particular problem in low socio-economic areas. The problem is due to both the lack of money to buy food and, more importantly, to the lack of education as to how to choose a proper diet with the money available. But, malnutrition is not just confined to poor people. The rapid pace of today's society has virtually eliminated breakfast from many people's diets. The proliferation of snack foods can detract from eating a balanced diet even when money is available. Aged people find it hard to get around so they just don't often shop for food. They also may not be able to eat the same things as they did when they were younger. In America deficiency diseases can still be found in some population groups in this country. As much as 30 percent of the population is overweight or obese (Labuza, 1977:157). American fast food restaurant has been pointed as one of this caused.

This fast food phenomenon It had been classified by some people as "junk food" phenomenon. Larsen (2001: par. 1-2) defined that junk food is a slang word for foods with limited nutritional value. Every person has their own list of foods that they call junk foods. I would include foods that are high in salt, sugar, fat or calories and low nutrient content. She continued that Salted snack foods, candy, gum, most sweet desserts, fried fast food and carbonated beverages are some of the major junk foods. Generally, they offer little in terms of protein, vitamins or minerals and lots of calories from sugar or fat. The term 'empty calories' reflects the lack of nutrients.

Paradoxically, even though Americans know that much of fast food is in fact junk food they continue to consume this food in vast quantities. William Muller in his *Are Americans Eating Better?* states that consumers say they are worried about health, salt, and cholesterol



but when it comes down to it, factors such as easy preparation, taste, package size, and appeal to children dominate their buying behavior. When it comes to eating, they often say one thing but do another (1989:30)

When choosing what to eat, Americans are also still relatively inflexible. For instance, Pizza is viewed as a leisurely sit-down food. It is also viewed as suitable for dinner because of price and time commitment. Fried chicken is still viewed as too messy to eat in a sit down restaurant and it's too expensive to eat for lunch. Primarily for lunch Americans choose hamburgers, because its fast, inexpensive, and can be eaten anywhere.

Americans interest in eating a prepared food has impacted the role of the kitchen in the home. One popular story tells about this impact. The story is when a wealthy Manhattan woman was renovating her luxurious apartment at 79th St. and Third Ave. Looking over the blueprints with her one day, the architect asked her: "Where would you like the kitchen?" Without missing a beat, she responded: "At 64th St. and Fifth." (Elizabeth Bernstein, 2000:20)

This anecdote illustrates much about American life as they enter a new phase of society—one of simple and practical value. People work so hard, that they do not want to take on another burden. They are desperate to create oases out of their homes, sparing no expense in the process. As world has become such a busy place, most Americans don't want additional work when they get home. For some people, cooking is still seen as work, and people are too tired to make dinner. In this condition the need of fast food from restaurant, which has become a central part of American life, becomes almost inevitable.

### Pluralism

Seen from historical background, most of American fast food came from outside the US. For a more detailed discussion, the origin of hamburger can serve as one example of how plural American is. Its origins clouded in history and controversy. The name of hamburger is

linked to the seaport town of Hamburg, Germany. German immigrants who traveled from the seaport city brought a dish called Hamburger which they had adopted while trading in the Baltic province of Russia. This dish was one way beef eaten in the US during the nineteenth century. It was a chopped piece of beef that was eaten raw. This dish is believed to be the primitive ancestor of the modern hamburger (<http://www.epicurious.com>).

The term hamburger was mentioned in print on a menu in 1834. In 1884 it appeared in the Boston Evening Journal as "hamburg steak". In 1902 the "hamburg steak" is described as being close to the present hamburger.

Diana Rattray states that:

One of the first mentions in print of "hamburg steak" was in 1884, in the Boston Evening Journal, but the term "hamburger" appeared on a menu (believed to be printed in 1834) from Delmonico's restaurant in New York. In the 1890s, "Hamburg steak" referred to a piece of beef that had been pounded and tenderized rather than a ground beef patty. In Mrs. Rorer's New Cook Book (1902), Hamburg steak is described as beef put twice through a meat grinder and mixed with onion and pepper, closer to the present day hamburger.

(<http://southernfood.about.com/mbody.htm>)

Another popular fast food dish is french fries. Its history started from when American soldiers were stationed in Europe (especially in France and Belgium) during World War I. For the time being french fries has already the part of American culture.

Italian dishes which appeared as fast food also represent the pluralistic nature of American society. Certainly, there are many Italian dishes which are classified as fast food such as pizza, although these are not as quickly prepared as the hamburger. In Italian tradition, pizza was served during special feasts, for instance during a farewell party.

Bailey states that:

Those who bade a permanent farewell to Italy came around in the community. They boasted opera clubs. Italian language news papers, and courts for playing bocci—a version of lawn bowling imported from Italy. On these occasions pizza merged from the hot wood-burning ovens of the little Italy, its aroma and flavor blowing into the hearts and stomachs of Americans. (Bailey and Kennedy, 94-571)

As one popular Italian dish, pizza became an American favorite fast food dishes.

There is also food that has claimed as an original American cuisine, called Fried Chicken. The famous Fried Chicken is Fried Chicken from Kentucky. It refers to a stereotypical southern food. As commonly southern people habit with having fried chicken, coleslaw, mashed potatoes, and biscuits and gravy on a bucket.

Various backgrounds of some fast food dishes enrich the plurality of American society. Fried chicken from Kentucky, pizza, spaghetti, hamburgers, hot dogs and french fries have all become part of the American fast food culture.

The above discussion shows that Americans easily accepts any food which meet what they want. It is because of their pluralism that they do not care where the food comes from. In other words, Americans still keep what their ethnic groups do, while they strongly believe themselves as Americans.

Thing that makes Americans different from each other in their society is the custom of where they came from. In this case, although people come from different places with different customs of dishes, but when the customs appear in the United States they will be the part of American culture. They are in the new vision of place, a new nation i.e. America.

## Freedom

Freedom value in American society has support the success of the fast food restaurants. Freedom in United States has given chances to fast food chains to grow and compete. Freedom means every person has a chance to be successful in whatever he does. No value in the American is more revered than freedom stated McClosky and Zaller in their *The American Ethos: Public Attitudes toward Capitalism and Democracy*. The rights of individuals to speak, write, assemble, and worship freely To engage in any occupation of their own choice, and to be secure from arbitrary restraints on their own conduct are central to the nation's democratic tradition. Equality and popular sovereignty, of course, are given their due, but liberty is more deeply embedded in the nation's system of values than any of the others. (1984:1-2)

One example that can be mentioned concerning with the success of fast food is the success story of Ray Kroc, the man who bought out the McDonald's. Born in 1902 and raised in Oak Park, Illinois. Kroc was just a high school dropout. He was a jazz musician who played piano. Before joining Richard and Maurice McDonald in their San Bernardino, California partnership he was just a milk shake machine salesman in Chicago. Then, Kroc bought out its name and all in 1961, and at last he succeeded in opening the McDonald's franchise for the world. In 1968, McDonald's operated about 1,000 restaurants. Today it has about 23,000 restaurants worldwide and opens roughly 2,000 new ones each year (Schlosser, 1998: par. 4). For the time being, as a result of this freedom, McDonald's Corp has become one of the powerful symbols of America's economy and also the most successful franchise.

Freedom accommodates the culture of competition and cooperation. The competition in gaining youth and children customers, for example, has formed a wide range of marketing alliances. Many of alliances has formed such as Discover Zone a chain of children's play centers with Pizza Hut; it is also Burger King and the children network Nickelodeon, Fox Kid Network, Subway and the Simpsons, Denny's and Major League Baseball, and McDonald's of course, have all signed an

agreement that mix fast food advertising with children entertainment. Another alliance has also done by McDonald's with Walt Disney Co. for an agreement of a ten years global marketing. It followed a decade in which toys inspired by Disney films proved extraordinarily successful in attracting children to fast food restaurants. This strategy is targeted at children between the ages of two and seven. Meanwhile the company's effort in gaining the youth McDonald's Corp. has promotional agreement with the National Basketball Association and the Olympics. This is done so with an assumption that many youth consumers enjoy watching NBA basketball (Schlosser, 1998: par. 21). Through this cooperation, the fast food companies try to build a stronger way in facing the competition in this business.

Beside good impacts discussed above, it is inevitable that freedom has a bad impact in society also as there are many companies that should close their business due to their incapability to survive in hard competition and those who are weak will be out of the business. Freedom has raises monopoly then monopoly raises problems for a free society (Friedman, 1982:120). This may be seen through the end of some franchises during "burger wars" of the late 1970s and 1980s. At that time either a fast food restaurant became more successful or went out of business. One of the burger war victims was "HoJo's" restaurant. By 1967 it boasted over 800 restaurants but was eventually went out of business in the late 1980s (Mehegan, 2001:15).

There are a lot of factors that lead to fast food restaurants going out of business. Freedom generated free competition is the scapegoat that is accused of resulting bad impact on society. The most important factor in the failure is because the companies usually have no enough capital to support sufficient facilities and promotions.

### Conclusion

This study has shown that the industry and technological development has influenced the eating habits of society. Viewing fast

food as an American symbol recognizes that some new phenomenon emerged as a result of American fast food.

Economically it increased income, socially and culturally it produced a new culture, a 'fast food culture' that influenced the previous culture, and it has also influenced the belief of the woman's position as cook in the home.

In the early stages of the American fast food phenomenon, people began to value speed and convenience as part of their way of life. This led to a new way of thinking about their meals and the rise of the fast food business industry. People needed convenience, reliability, speed, and affordable food, and fast food was the answer.

In American society the value of simplicity and practicality are the prominent reasons why they need fast food. The simple and practical values of the food attracted people to look for ways of being able to eat quickly and on-the-go. This style meant that eating in public became a common view in American life.

Pluralism in American society is reflected in the variety of backgrounds of fast food menus. Hamburgers, french fries, pizza, hot dogs and so forth are kinds of American fast food that do not come originally from American cuisine. Meanwhile, the famous fried chicken from Kentucky is one example of original American cuisine. In development of fast food, it enriched the pluralism of America.

The need for fast food has impacted women's position in the family and her cooking role. Fast food existence has changed the belief, that cooking is a woman's job. For many reasons, such as in helping husbands to pay the bills, women also started to work outside the home. Buying fast food is an option for the mother and family who do not have the time to cook. Fast food is one choice for families who need a convenient meal.

Freedom as the basic value of American business has supported the innovations of American fast food. Freedom has formed an atmosphere of good competition in gaining customers. Through advertising, fast food restaurants can impact the way of thinking of its

consumers. In this way, Americans are free to get seek success and to pursue happiness.

Although, American fast food restaurants are more famous than traditional ones, fast food restaurants will not replace home kitchens and traditional food. This is just like television that cannot replace radio.

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