

*Deseret News*, August 11, 2008, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705381404/Cross-called-a-stumbling-block-for-Mormonism.html?pg=all>.

2. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Symbol of Our Faith" *Ensign*, April 2005, 2. President Hinckley made similar comments in messages delivered as early as 1975.

3. Compare, for example, Susan M. Griffin's *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) with Terryl Givens' *Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

## Toward a Mormon Culinary History

Brock Cheney. *Plain but Wholesome: Foodways of the Mormon Pioneers*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2012. Paper: \$19.95. ISBN: 978-1607812081.

*Reviewed by Christy Spackman*

Brock Cheney's history of Mormon food, *Plain but Wholesome: Foodways of the Mormon Pioneers* does much to fill a surprising lacuna in Mormon history. Although a number of books on food and religion exist,<sup>1</sup> there is little academic exploration of the role that food played in the shaping and development of Latter-day Saint culture. While Cheney's work reads a bit like a church potluck, lacking the unity of a well-constructed menu, it nonetheless provides interested readers and academics alike with a variety of tempting morsels to inspire further exploration.

*Plain but Wholesome* explores a variety of culinary-related tropes. The book begins with the material artifacts and culinary memorabilia that allow one to peer back in time, and then travels through the practices of searching for, gathering, planting, harvesting, preserving, and producing food. Structurally, each of the main chapters begins with an anecdote or story, and then builds off one of the themes previously mentioned. These vignettes seek to situate readers in the time period and topic to be explored, and are followed by an interesting collection of historical facts, photographs, and recipes, drawing extensively from the archival resources of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers.

Cheney deserves accolades for re-examining this underutilized resource, and for recognizing that much of culinary history, as women's work, is found not necessarily in written record but more often in the historical silence created when tacit knowledge is passed from mother to daughter. He deftly justifies his source selection, and quite aptly demonstrates the worth of re-examining partial or provenance-less records.

Unfortunately, *Plain but Wholesome* stumbles in its attempts to combine interesting tidbits with larger "so-whats." Cheney is not an academic historian, as the book demonstrates by a lack of historiography or extensive theoretical engagement. For non-academics, this will be refreshing. For academic readers, this lack will occasionally frustrate, especially as powerful opportunities for linking this research with non-Mormon scholarship are missed. The framing themes of "geographical isolation, poverty, and ethnic tradition" (170) that the author sees as central to the Mormon food experience both on the trail and once settled in Utah fade under the shower of interesting facts provided. A stricter editorial hand could have easily effaced this final critique.

Similarly, certain concepts, potentially quite interesting, are glossed over in the rush to get to the next fact or idea. For example, in speaking of baking and sweets, Cheney notes that Christiana Thompson Galli's "Sweet Cream Cake" provided her with a "distinct identity, separate from the younger second wife" when her husband entered into a polygamous marriage (147). Given the well-established explorations of food and identity already present in both lay and academic work, further examination of how Christiana's cake allowed her to create a distinct identity would have allowed Cheney to direct novice readers to already existing works while also providing a unique contribution to the much smaller literature on Mormon women and identity.

However, Cheney's failure to adequately engage with the many opportunities to "go deeper" in favor of "go broader" provide other researchers with a treasure trove of new research directions. His discussion of the proactive role Mormon pioneers, primarily women, played in collecting and promoting the growth of wild yeast (61–73) becomes especially interesting when juxtaposed with accounts about the viticulture and beer brewing that characterized early pioneer life (160–69). One can

easily imagine a variety of research questions growing out of that juxtaposition alone: what role did gender play in the “shepherding” of yeast cultures? How did culinary discourse on the Mormon frontier change as church leaders increasingly codified the Word of Wisdom?

Despite the minor failings of *Plain but Wholesome*, the book is well worth reading on a chapter-by-chapter basis. I personally envision a few groups that would especially benefit from this book. First, *Plain but Wholesome* would work well in an undergraduate or advanced high-school course examining historical research in general or the history of Utah in particular. The introduction nicely demonstrates the need for primary source materials, and does not shy away from showing the difficulties of putting together a historical narrative—both useful but often overlooked starting points for teaching history to novices. Additionally, the anecdotes that head each chapter allow younger readers to easily enter the drier historical materials. Second, *Plain but Wholesome* should appeal to a variety of scholarly fields, primarily for the number of interesting questions it raises. Finally, the book should appeal to a much wider readership just interested in learning more about the pioneer experience or in understanding the ways that early Saints did and did not interact with the wider world. From the opportunity to try one’s hand at creating a bit of living history through the recipes scattered throughout the book to the site-specific histories that may encourage a bit of personal sleuthing, *Plain but Wholesome* provides a wide range of ways to personally engage with history.

### Notes

1. Starting with Claude Levi-Strauss’s and Mary Douglas’s highly differing explorations of Jewish food taboos, and moving to more recent works such as Chirita Banerji, *Feeding the Gods: Memories of Food and Culture in Bengal* (New York: Seagull, 2006); Daniel Sack, *White Bread Protestants: Food and Religion in American Culture* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000); and Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

2. A few useful examples for interested readers could include *Food and Identity: Gender and Power*, edited by Carole Counih and Steven Kaplan (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Press, 2008); Marion Bishop, “Speaking Sisters: Relief Society Cookbooks and Mormon Culture,” in

*Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories*, edited by Anne L. Bower (Boston, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Sarah Barringer Gordon, "The Liberty of Self-Degradation: Polygamy, Woman Suffrage, and Consent in Nineteenth-Century America," *The Journal of American History* (December 1996): 815–47.

## What If Mickey Mouse *Isn't* Mormon?

Floyd Gottfredson. *Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse: "Race to Death Valley."* Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2011. 286 pp. Introductory and supplementary materials by Warren Spector, Thomas Andrae, Floyd Norman, David Gerstein, Giorgio Scudellari, Alberto Becattini, Frank Behmak, Mortimer Franklin, R. M. Finch, Ub Iwerks, Win Smith and Floyd Gottfredson. Hardcover: \$29.99. ISBN 978-1-60699-441-2.

*Reviewed by Theric Jepson*

[*Editor's note*—Please see the full-color web version of this issue at [dialoguejournal.com](http://dialoguejournal.com) for examples of the referenced cartoons.]

The 2010 videogame *Epic Mickey*, before its release, was looking to be one of the more controversial games of the year. And that's without any sex or decapitation. What made it so controversial? Because its Mickey was a bit more adventurous and scrappy and *dangerous* than the carefully controlled Mickey Mouse that developed in the animated cartoons. But that Mickey was never the only Mickey—or even the original Mickey.

Floyd Gottfredson was a Mormon kid born in Utah who started selling cartoons to local papers before moving to Los Angeles and getting a job with the Disney Studio. Though hired as an in-between, he soon found himself assigned to the new *Mickey Mouse* newspaper strip. The creative director of *Epic Mickey* writes that Gottfredson's "strips feel like what Walt [Disney] and Ub [Iwerks, Mickey's creators] would have done if they'd pioneered a medium of still images rather than one of images in motion, a medium where readers would return reliably, for weeks, even months on end."<sup>1</sup>

It was Gottfredson's Mickey that could inspire those looking to recreate the character for a videogame-playing generation.

When I first approached *Dialogue* about reviewing the first