Eat Right, Stay Fit
Gastronomical Tidbits in Modern Anglo-American Proverbs

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Abstract: Paremiologists and paremiographers have shown considerable interest in gastronomical proverbs from various languages and cultures. This is also true for linguists and lexicographers who have dealt with folk wisdom concerning food and drink from a comparative point of view. While many of the studied proverbs are still in use today, there are also numerous proverbs not employed any longer. Above all, modern proverbs have for the most part not been considered at all. This article looks at Anglo-American proverbs that have been coined after the year 1900. While the proverbs mention fruits (apples, cherries, nuts, oranges), vegetables (corn, tomatoes), sweets (cakes, cookies, doughnuts), foods (cheese, eggs, meats, milk), they also deal with cooking (kitchen, pots, pans), eating, and drinking. As expected, the proverbs have much to say about diet, weight, and exercise, giving modern instructions for a healthy life. Some proverbs are rather direct gastronomical rules, but many are metaphorical and can be employed in contexts that have nothing to do with food and drink. This is particularly true for those proverbs referring to food and eating together with scatological and sexual references. The more than hundred modern proverbs under discussion represent folkloric wisdom or worldview about food, drink, and a healthy lifestyle befitting modernity.
Keywords: Paremiology. Proverb. Gastronomy. Health. Anglo-American.

Título: «*Eat Right, Stay Fit* - Delicatessen gastronómicas en refranes angloamericanos modernos».
Resumen: Los paremiólogos y paremiógrafos han mostrado un gran interés por los refranes gastronómicos de diversas lenguas y culturas. Lo mismo ocurre con los lingüistas y lexicógrafos que han investigado de forma contrastiva sobre la sabiduría popular relativa a la comida y la bebida. Aunque muchos de los refranes estudiados se siguen utilizando, también hay una gran cantidad que ya no se emplean. Los más ignorados han sido en su mayoría los refranes modernos. En este artículo se examinan los refranes angloamericanos acuñados después de 1900. Aunque los refranes mencionan frutas (manzanas, cerezas, nueces, naranjas), verduras (maíz, tomates), dulces (pasteles, galletas, dónuts) o diferentes alimentos (queso, huevos, carnes, leche), también se abordan el proceso de cocinar (cocina, ollas, sartenes), comer y beber. Como era de esperar, los refranes aportan datos sobre la dieta, el peso y el ejercicio, dando instrucciones modernas para una vida sana. Algunos refranes son normas gastronómicas bastante directas, pero muchos son metafóricos y pueden emplearse en contextos no relacionados con la comida o la bebida. Esto afecta sobre todo a aquellos refranes relativos a la comida y la alimentación junto con referencias escatológicas o sexuales. Los más de cien refranes modernos analizados representan la sabiduría folclórica o la visión del mundo sobre la comida, la bebida y un estilo de vida saludable acorde con la modernidad.
Palabras clave: Paremiología. Refrán. Gastronomía. Salud. Angloamericano.

Titre : « *Eat Right, Stay Fit*. Gourmandises grastronomiques dans les proverbes angloaméricains modernes ».
Résumé : Les parémiologues et parémiographes ont manifesté un grand intérêt pour les dictons gastronomiques de différentes langues et cultures. Il en va de même pour les linguistes et les lexicographes qui ont opposé les recherches sur la sagesse populaire au sujet de la nourriture et des boissons. Bien que de nombreux dictons étudiés soient encore utilisés, il y en a aussi un grand nombre qui ne sont plus utilisés. Les plus ignorés ont été pour la plupart des dictons modernes. Ce travail examine les dictons anglo-américains inventés après 1900. Bien que les dictons mentionnent des fruits (pommes, cerises, noix, oranges), des légumes (maïs, tomates), des sucreries (gâteaux, biscuits, beignets) ou différents aliments (fromage, œufs, viandes, lait), le processus de cuisson (cuisine, casseroles, poêles), manger et boire sont également abordés. Sans surprise, les dictons fournissent des faits sur l'alimentation, le poids et l'exercice, donnant des instructions modernes pour une vie saine. Certains dictons évoquent des normes alimentaires assez simples, mais beaucoup d'entre eux sont métaphoriques et peuvent être utilisés dans des contextes

non liés à la nourriture ou à la boisson. Cela touche particulièrement les dictons liés à la nourriture et à l'alimentation avec des références eschatologiques ou sexuelles. Plus d'une centaine de dictons modernes analysés dans cette étude représentent la sagesse populaire ou la vision du monde sur la nourriture, les boissons et un mode de vie sain en rapport avec la modernité.
Mots-clés : Parémiologie. Dicton. Gastronomie. Santé. Anglo-Américain.

It comes as no surprise that the interest in food has been pervasive throughout human history. Obviously various types of nourishment remain of utmost importance for survival, but over time food and drink have also become associated with both subsistent and enjoyable living. While there are the traditional meals with the family or larger groups at various festivals, there is also the so-called *haute cuisine* that takes the restaurant culture to its highest level. It follows that there is an "intersection of food and culture" (Camp, 1996: 299) that has been studied form the points of view of food and personal age, food and ethnic background, food and certain geographical areas, food and occupational backgrounds, food and religious practices, and much more. The serious scholarly study of the multifaceted aspects of food began in the late nineteenth century and developed into the so-called "foodways" subfield of folklore studies that concerns itself with the "cultural, social, and personal" (Long, 2019: 472) aspects of preparing food, eating, drinking, and not to forget enjoying it all. Of course, there is also a sociolinguistic element in all of this, since meals and drinks have names and are part of proverbial wisdom with its metaphors borrowed form gastronomical observations and experiences. The notion of identity plays into this as well, since various foods relate to individuals and different groups who rely on traditional or innovative foodways. This is best expressed in Anthelme Brillet-Savarin's (1755-1826) proverbial aphorism *Dis-moi ce que tu mange, je te dirai ce que tu es* (1825) that became proverbial in the United States in 1903 as "Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are" (Mieder, Kingsbury, Harder, 1992: 175, Shapiro 2006: 104). The structural formula for these texts was doubtlessly the Spanish proverb *Dime con quién andas, decirte he quién eres* from Cervantes' *Don Quixote* 1615) that is known in English as "Tell me what company you keep, and I'll tell you who you are" (Stevenson, 1948: 386). A shorter well-known proverb expressing the same idea is the American proverb "You are what you eat" from 1887 that most likely is a loan translation of Ludwig Feuerbach's German declaration "Der Mensch ist, was er ißt" from 1850 (Mieder, 2021: in print).

These proverbs have found a wide distribution, and so it comes as no surprise that Laura Pinnavaia entitled her comparative analysis of gastronomical expressions "'We Are What We Eat': Analyzing Food and Drink Idioms in English, French, German, and Spanish" (2015). There are many other studies looking at linguocultural similarities and differences in food proverbs (see Mieder, 2009), to wit Berit Balzer and Margit Raders. "'Aus der Küche geplaudert' und 'Wein auf Bier, das rat ich dir': Methodologische Bemerkungen und empirische Befunde zur kontrastiven interkulturellen Phraseologie und Parömiologie" (2004, German-Spanish), Mari Carmen Barrado Belmar, "Tavola, cibi, vini. Traducción o adaptación sociocultural de estructuras paremiológicas italianas y españolas" (1994, Italian-Spanish), Mária Dóbisová. "Experimentelle Untersuchung der Sprichwörter vom und über das Essen im Deutschen und Slowakischen" (2003, German-Slovakian), Françoise Hammer, "'A la carte' – Fixierungsprozesse zwischen Struktur und Kultur" (2003, French-German), Daniela Corina Ionescu, "Romanian and English Food Proverbs and Idioms: A Contrastive View" (2016 and 2017, Romanian-English), and Jian-Jun Wang, "Analysis of Symbolic Meanings Between Chinese and English Food Proverbs from the Perspective of Cultural Linguistics" (2016, Chinese-English). Naturally, there are also numerous investigations of food and drink references in but one linguistic culture, as for example Bärbel Hackmann, *Diätetik und Physiologie im Spiegel des Sprichwortes* (1964), Pekka Hakamies, "Food and Eating Represented in Finnish Proverbs" (2009), Marina Yu. Kotova and Irina Zimonyi-Kalinyina. "Hungarian Proverbs with Components Concerning Food and Hospitality"

(2020), Željka Lilic. "Vino, pane e pesce: Sapori mediterranei nei proverbi" (2000, Italian), Margaret Magat, "Food Metaphors in Filipino Proverbs" (2000), Yumi Matsumura, "Food Culture Reflected in Japanese Proverbs" (2010), Eyo Offiong Mensah and Rosemary Arikpo Eni, "'What's in the Stomach Is Used to Carry What's on the Head': An Ethnographic Exploration of Food Metaphors in Efik Proverbs" (2019), Kate O'Callaghan, "Food Imagery Embodied by Okinawan Proverbs" (2011), and Petronela Savin. "A Cultural Semiotic Approach to Romanian Food Act Phrasemes" (2014).

As can be imagined, there are also investigations of particular food items in proverbial language, as can be seen in the following publications: Peter Heisch, "'Butter' als sprachbildnerisches Element" (2007), Irene Hilgers-Hesse, "Der Reis als Sinnzeichen in Sprichwörtern der Indonesier" (1973), and Rosemeire Monteiro-Plantin, Antonio Pamies-Bertrán, and Lei Chunyi, "National Culture Through Gastronomic Metaphors: Cassava, Bread and Rice in Brazil, Spain and China" (2018). There are even more specific articles that deal with food items used in advertisements for bread or for hamburgers: Patricia Anne Odber de Baubeta, "Bread, the Staff of Advertising" (2000 and 2001) and Mac E. Barrick, "'Where's the Beef'?" (1986). The latter, phrased as a proverbial interrogative, began in 1984 in the United States as an advertising slogan by Wendy's hamburgers. In its wider proverbial or metaphorical meaning the word "beef" is understood to mean "substance" in various senses that go well beyond its original reference to fast food (Doyle, Mieder, Shapiro 2012: 18). But speaking of proverbs with specific gastronomical references, a glance into any reginal, national, or international proverb collections will quickly reveal the pervasiveness of food proverbs. As one would expect, there are also proverb collections entirely dedicated to such proverbs, as for example: Anonymous, "*Bringing Home the Bacon" and "Cutting the Mustard": The Origins & Meanings of the Food We Speak* (2000), Christoph Gutknecht, *Pustekuchen! Lauter kulinarische Wortgeschichten* (2002), Elizabeth Nafula Kuria, *African Proverbs on Food* (2002), Bernd Leon, *Mit schönen Worten kocht man keinen Brei. Reichlich 600 kulinarische Sprüche* (1989), J.H. Macadam, *A Collection of Proverbs of All Nations on Bread and Baking* (1924), Robert Matzek, *Trink und iß, die Liebe nicht vergiß! Sprichwörter und Reime über Essen und Trinken* (1982), Susan L. Rattiner, *Food and Drink. A Book of Quotations* (2002). and Kate Rowinski, *The Quotable Cook* (2000).

In general, it can be observed that most of the proverbs cited in the publications mentioned are traditional texts containing cultural information about food and drink that due to their metaphors can take on symbolic meanings quite removed from the gastronomical reference in them (Williams 1984). Thus, the old German proverb *Der Apfel fällt nicht weit vom Stamm* from the sixteenth century, loan translated into American English as "The apple does not fall far from the tree" around 1830, is not really concerned with delicious apples at all. It is simply an image stating the fruit (a child) is quite similar to the parent, something that the proverb "Like father, like son" and the less popular "Like mother, like daughter" express much more directly. The "apple"-proverb is thus a hereditary text rather than a comment about the dietary value of this particular fruit (Mieder, 1993b). Things are quite different with the American proverb "An apple a day keeps the doctor way" from around 1870 that has become current in German as "Ein Apfel pro Tag hält den Arzt fern." This is in fact a medical folk proverb expounding the wisdom that apples contain vitamins that will be beneficial to one's good health (Mieder 1991). In fact, empirical research has shown that there is solid medical sense in this proverb (Hill, Budnek, and Wise, 1984), even though one need not necessarily eat an apple every day! Things are similar with the very popular proverb "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise" that dates all the way back to the fifteenth century (Mieder, 1993a: 98-134). It is good common sense about solid

sleeping habits that in turn might result in well-being of body and mind, perhaps even in becoming well to do.

The proverbs mentioned thus far, old as they are, continue to be cited with considerable frequency in the modern age. However, that is not necessarily the case with many of the proverbs mentioned by the studies dealing with gastronomical proverbs (Doyle, 1996). The examples cited by John D.A. Widdowson in his article "The Things They Say About Food: A Survey of Traditional English Foodways" (1975) show that quite clearly. When he quotes the proverbial rhyme "Apple pie without the cheese / Is like a kiss without the squeeze" (7), older readers might still recall this humorous text. But the younger generation barely has any recollection of it. And yet, the following observation by Widdowson does not only apply to traditional food proverbs but also to modern ones:

> Our attitudes towards food and drink are revealed in many proverbs and saying. Indeed, the saying 'man is what he eats' neatly and effectively encapsulates the common notion that food is a fundamental influence on our physiology and therefore on our personality. Well-known proverbs […] illustrate the metaphorical extension of simple observations about food and its consumption to a wider field of social comment (6).

There is no doubt that proverbs in general and also those "about food reflect the gastronomic and culinary norms of the cultures from whence they come" (Morton, 2008: 6). To be sure, these comments can serve as a fitting segue to a presentation and analysis of primarily modern American proverbs, i.e., texts that are not older than the year 1900, as they can be found in *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* (Doyle, Mieder, and Shapiro, 2012) and its three supplements (Doyle and Mieder, 2016, 2018, and 2020). Of the 1617 proverbs registered with earliest found references, additional contextualized annotations, and bibliographical information 115 texts or 7.1% have been identified as gastronomical proverbs. Many of them will be discussed below, cited with the date of their first reference and the page number in the dictionary or the supplements. Together they represent something akin to a generalized American worldview expressed in them (Mieder, 2020).

Since food and drink are of the essence in sustaining a healthy life, it is understandable that several modern proverbs contain generalizations dealing with these matters. Expanding on a modern proverb "Life is a garden" (1914, 142) that had its start with a song from the musical *Suzi*, there is now also the newer "Life is a garden; dig it" (1972, 142) that originated as an ant-proverb to the earlier text with the punning addition of the hip 1960s expression "dig it." The meaning is clearly that life has to be cultivated like preparing a garden for vegetables and fruits. Of course, one never knows what challenges life might present, but there is also hope that they might be positive or even sweet, as in the proverb "Life is (just) a bowl of cherries" (1931, 141-142) that might have originated from a song written by Lew Brown. But in the same year, perhaps understandably so, its proverbial twin "Life is not a bowl of cherries" (1931, 143) gained currency, stressing that things are never just wonderful. Related to these proverbs is "Life is like (is just) a box of chocolates" (1994, 143) that had its start in the motion picture *Forrest Gump* where it appears in slightly longer form" Life is a box of chocolates, Forrest. You never know what you're going to get." And yet, life needs to be confronted with optimism as a very popular proverb claims: "If life hands you lemons, make lemonade" (1910, 140). It is always good to make the best out of a situation, something that is also expressed in a considerably newer proverb that follows the structure of the "lemon"-text: "If life hands you scraps, make a quilt" (1992, 140;

MacDowell and Mieder 2010). Alas, modern proverbs about life as such can also be quite crass by bringing scatological references into play (Mieder, 2020: 232-239):

Life is (like) a shit sandwich (without bread). (1966, 143)
Life is a shit sandwich: the more bread you have, the less shit you eat. (1978, 143)
Bread is a reference to money in this case.
You can't make chicken salad out of chicken shit (feathers). (1949, Doyle and Mieder 2016: 91)
You can't sprinkle sugar on shit and make (call) it candy (dessert). (1999, 245)

While orally transmitted folk proverbs contain their share of scatological references, they usually don't appear in large numbers in printed proverb collections. But in any case, there is no doubt that more recent times have brought about freer social acceptance of scatological and also sexual references in proverbial language as will become clear in examples to follow (Mieder, 2020: 215-244).

Since "candy" and "dessert" have been mentioned, it will most certainly be of interest how modern proverbs treat such sweets:

There'll be pie in the sky when you die. (1911, 196-197)
The proverb entered oral tradition as a proverb from a song by Joe Hill. It satirizes the concept of patiently enduring earthly misery and injustice in the hope of gaining a heavenly reward.
There are two sides to every pancake. (1915, 230-231)
The proverb probably originated as an anti-proverb based on "There are two sides to every argument (story, coin). The term "anti-proverb" was coined by me in 1977 to describe "an allusive distortion, parody, misapplication, or unexpected contextualization of a recognized proverb, usually for comic or satiric affect. […] Sometimes they pass into oral tradition as proverbs in their own right" (Doyle, Mieder, Shapiro 2012: xi, see Barta 2007 for French anti-proverbs dealing with food and drink).
That's the way the cookie crumbles. (1955, 273)
The winner gets the cookie and the loser gets the crumbs. (1986, 43)
The cake is a lie. (2007, Doyle and Mieder 2016: 89)
The proverb is a cryptic reference to the video game "Portal." In other words, there will be no cake or reward at the end. This proverb somehow brings to mind the infamous proverb "Let them eat cake" that has erroneously been attributed to Marie Antoinette. However, it is already found in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782, written in 1766-1767) before the queen had even arrived in France (Shapiro 2006: 653). See the extensive scholarship on this proverbial statement known throughout the world (Taylor 1968a, Shojaei Kawan1996, Campion-Vincent and Shojaei Kawan 2000 and 2002.
You have to risk it to get the biscuit. (2010, Doyle and Mieder 2016: 88-89)
The proverb probably entered oral tradition as a proverb from the 2009 motion picture *Fired Up!*

As can be seen, some of the proverbs under discussion are from very recent times – a clear indication how quickly new proverbial wisdom can be disseminated via social media today. In any case, for such very new proverbs the ability to make computer searches of vast databases are of special value to establish their popular currency. But to return one more time to sweets, there are two proverbs that refer to donuts (doughnuts) that are quite unique. I certainly enjoyed using them with my young nephews and nieces:

Keep your eye on the donut and not on the hole. (1908, 71)
The proverb also grew into these four lines in 1939 in *Food Industries* (issue 2, p. 540): As you go through life, / no matter what your goal, / keep your eye on the doughnut / and not on the hole."
Don't miss the donut by looking (shooting) through the hole. (1999, 60)

These two texts, while perhaps humorous to adults, are also quite didactic in telling young and old to watch out for essential matters. The proverb "You can't have any pudding if you don't eat your meat" (1983, 209) might also be directed quite literally at a youngster as an encouragement to clean the dinner plate. However, it can also be interpreted figuratively as a general statement that there will be no reward without any effort. It is, of course, exactly this polyfunctionality, polysituativity, and polysemanticity that adds up to what characterizes proverbiality for both old and new proverbs (Mieder, 2004: 9).

Ogden Nash also had something to say about sweets in his poem "Reflection on Ice-Breaking" that deals with the start of a love relationship in somewhat of a flippant way: "Candy is dandy but liquor is quicky" (1931, 33). As expected, there are several proverbs dealing with alcohol, and with the United States being the country of the automobile, some of them express warnings against driving under the influence of alcohol:

> Gasoline and whiskey do not mix. (1915, 94)
> Drinking and driving do not mix. (1928, 63)

There is also the proverb "Drinking and thinking do not mix" (1992, 63) that began as a splendid anti-proverb to the previous text, referring to the detrimental influence that too much alcohol has on mental coherency. Of course, the proverb "Alcohol will preserve anything but a secret" (1904, 4) expressed a related idea several decades earlier. One is reminded of the fourteenth-century British proverb "When wine is in, wit is out" about which Archer Taylor (1890-1973) wrote an elucidating article dealing with its historical dissemination in Europe (Taylor 1968b). Two additional proverbs warning against driving in an intoxicated condition can be mentioned here as well:

> If you drive, don't drink; if you drink. don't drive. (1935, 63)
> Friends don't let friends drive drunk. (1976, 86)

They probably are best understood as proverbial slogans against drunk driving without any figurative applicability. That is also true for the very short cautionary slogan "You booze, you lose" (1986, 24) that most likely originated as an anti-proverb of the somewhat older "You snooze, you lose" (1950, 236). The folk medical proverb "What butter and whiskey won't cure, there's no cure for" (1939, 31) also lacks any extended or figurative application. But that is quite different for the proverbial advice "Always drink upstream from the herd" and its variant "Don't drink downstream from the herd" (1983, 120). Sure, it might have its literal application in life with cattle on the ranch, but the proverb figuratively suggest that one should try to stay ahead of the crowd. Finally then, the proverb "Life is too short to drink bad wine" (1985, 144) needs to be mentioned. It most likely was coined by a wine connoisseur, who might on occasion also utter the comical variant "Life is short; drink the good wine first!"

Drinking is, of course, only one side of life's prerequisites with eating being its complement. Realizing the American worldview contains pecuniary aspects (Mieder, 2020: 155-184), it should not be surprising that the proverb "You can either eat well or sleep well" (1912, Doyle and Mieder, 2020: 59-60) was coined at the beginning of the twentieth century. It might well be difficult to understand for the uninitiated until it is explained that it had its start in the financial world of the Stock Market. The *New York Times* of 3 November 1984 offers this explanation: "There is an old saw on Wall Street that you can either eat well or sleep well – but not both. The moral, of course,

is that risk and willingness to accept it are perhaps the key elements in determining the likelihood of stock market profits" (Doyle and Mieder, 2020: 59). In other words, if you want to eat well, take risks and hope for a profit, but if you want to sleep well, you better be a conservative investor. In any case, this is clearly a modern proverb with a limited applicability, but a useful piece of pecuniary wisdom just the same.

One might well think that modern proverbs have not much use for animals as metaphors any longer. But that is not at all the case (Mieder, 2020: 185-214) and can be seen in these two proverbs connecting the "eat"-verb with animals:

It is a dog-eat-dog world. (1935, 282)
The proverb probably had its start as an anti-proverb of "Dog does (will) not eat dog" from the sixteenth century.
It is possible to swallow (You can eat) an elephant – one bite at a time. (1921, 67-68)
In other words, it is possible to conquer seemingly impossible tasks by going one step at a time.

Other proverbs referring to eating are rather didactic in nature, giving advice or trying to convince someone to act in a certain way. They certainly don't refer to any particular meal or food as such:

You've got to eat. (1907, 66)
Eat it up (Use it up), wear it out, make it do, or do (go) without. (1933, 66)
A New England proverb that was heard frequently as a slogan for frugality during the Second World War. One certainly still hears it today quite often in rural Vermont.
If you don't know what it is, don't mess (fool) with (eat, touch) it. (1950, 134)
The cautionary proverb and its variants warn against taking risks with the unknown.
A closed mouth does not get fed. (1989, 173)
The proverb states that one must speak up in order to be counted or acknowledged. Note also the modern proverb "A closed (shut) mouth gathers (catches) no feet" (1956) that originated as an anti-proverb blending two proverbs and a proverbial expression: "A closed mouth catches no flied," "A rolling stone gathers no moss," and "to put one's foot in one's mouth."
Slow feet don't eat. (2014, Doyle and Mieder 2020: 63)
A very recent proverb with the meaning that one has to work (move) in order to succeed (eat). It had its start in the world of sports and is frequently seen as a slogan for action on T-shirts.

It must be observed, however, that there are a couple of proverbs that take eating into the scatological realm, advising in rather crass ways how not to act:

Don't shit where you eat. (1953, 227)
The earlies written reference appears in Saul Bellow's *Adventures of Augie March* (New York: Viking, 1953), p. 21.
Don't eat yellow snow. (1971, 236)

The "snow"-proverb might not be immediately clear to someone not acquainted with solid winters and lots of snow. But if you live in Vermont, as I do, you would most certainly know that the "yellow snow" refers to a dog or person for that matter having urinated in the snow. The proverb might well be said to a child who out of ignorance and curiosity would put the spoiled snow into its mouth. Of course, in a more metaphorical sense the proverb can also simply argue against doing something foolish or ill-advised somewhat ironically, to be sure (Morton, 2003: 161).

Food and drink or eating and drinking quite naturally lead to proverbs and the kitchen where the culinary preparation in pots and pans takes place. The most famous proverb referring to the

kitchen is doubtlessly "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen" (1931, 119) made famous by President Harry S. Truman's repeated use of it. While the proverb has become associated with his name, Truman by his own admission neither originated the proverb nor used it very frequently. In his published works it appears only twice. In its first occurrence in a speech of 17 December 1952 in Washington, D.C., he states clearly where he had picked up this piece of metaphorical wisdom:

> One of the results of this system [of the president's approval powers] gives the President a good many hot potatoes to handle – but the President gets a lot of hot potatoes from every direction anyhow, and a man who can't handle them has no business in that job. That makes me think of a saying that I used to hear from my old friend and colleague on the Jackson County Court. He said, "Harry, if you can't stand the heat you better get out of the kitchen." I'll say that is absolutely true. (Mieder and Bryan 1997: 60).

Truman reiterated his opinion that this proverb perfectly describes the chores and frustrations of the presidency in his revealing book *Mr. Citizen* ((1960), in which the following paragraph concludes his chapter on "Some Thoughts on the Presidency." It is interesting that Truman once again chooses a proverb to summarize everything he has said to describe the position of the president of the United States:

> There has been a lot of talk lately about the burdens of the Presidency. Decisions that the President has to make often affect the lives of tens of millions of people around the world, but that does not mean that they should take longer to make. Some men can make decisions and some cannot. Some men fret and delay under criticism. I used to have a saying that applies here, and I note that some people have picked it up: "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen. (Mieder and Bryan 1997: 60).

Truman is saying here that he used to quote this proverb, and although it appears but twice in his writings, he obviously must have employed it orally to the point that others have started to cite it as well. Many lexicographers and paremiographers continue to name Truman as the originator of the proverb (Mieder and Bryan, 1997: 60-61). But in *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* the perhaps earliest written recording of the proverb has now been registered that supports what Truman has said regarding where he learned it: "1931 *Independence [Missouri] Examiner* 1 Jan. (quoting Jackson County judge E.I. "Buck" Purcell): 'But if a man can't stand the heat, he ought to stay out of the kitchen'" (Doyle, Mieder, Shapiro, 2012: 119).

Of course, the kitchen is the place for pots and pans needed to prepare food. Naturally there are a couple of modern proverbs dealing with them:

> An empty pot does not boil over. (1910, 204)
>
> The proverb is somewhat reminiscent of "A watched pot never boils" from the mid-nineteenth century.
>
> A thin pan will get hot quicker than a thick one. (1938, 188)

These proverbs make literal sense, but they are meant figuratively to describe the emotional state of unengaged or compulsive persons. The fascinating proverb "If greedy waits, hot will cool" (1902, 111) that I learned from my friend Sally Fitzgerald fits to these kitchen metaphors. Her mother would use it to calm down her eager and impatient children. As editors of *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs* we had never heard of this proverb, but with proper database research we were able to establish it as a modern proverb dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century. This was also true for the proverb "Putting a handle on the gourd does not make it a dipper" (1943, 116) that we were able to authenticate as a proverb. There is no doubt that the identification of

new proverbs takes considerable work and relies on the help of many people, especially young students. But to finish this small section on "kitchen"-proverbs, here are two more bits of wisdom: "Never trust a skinny chef (cook)" (1976, 37) and "There is never just one cockroach in the kitchen" (1991, Doyle and Mieder 2020: 58). The first text can be thought of as a culinary equivalent of the classical proverb "Caveat emptor" (Buyer beware) and the other proverb serves as a somewhat drastic metaphor implying that where there is a problem others will surely appear.

Since a gourd has been mentioned, these deliberations can move on to the proverbs that in one way or the other deal with the preparation and consumption of various foods. But, as so often with metaphorical proverbs, their meanings go beyond what meets the eye. This is certainly true for these three more general texts:

The dinner bell is always in tune. (1938, 56)
The proverb implies that no matter of what quality the food might be it will be appreciated by a hungry person.

Labels are for cans (Not people). (1984, 136)
Cans refer to tin containers of food. A most fitting proverb arguing against stereotypes of any kind.

Good talk saves the food. (2006, 250)
Having difficulty understanding this recent proverb at first, my wife, the cook in our house, explained it to me. It refers to a disappointing meal or even substandard food that is nonetheless enjoyed by the conversation with the company present.

What follows are proverbs referring to various food items. While they make specific references, they usually go far beyond making a statement of fact, i.e., they need to be contextualized and interpreted to gather their implied metaphorical meaning:

Even the corn has ears. (1905, 44)
The proverb is a modern equivalent to the much older proverb "Walls have ears." It is a delightful play on "ear of corn" and fits the American taste for corn on the cob.

I throw out corn, but I don't call the fowl. (1921, 44)
The proverb is employed as a retort to one who, although no names have been used, thinks himself the one abused. The meaning resembles the more common and older "If the shoe fits, wear it."

You have to throw the corn where the hogs can get it. (1990, 44)
A somewhat drastic way of expressing that aid of any type needs to be distributed in such a way that it becomes accessible. President Bill Clinton enjoyed using this down-home Arkansasism in reference to foreign aid.

With all this talk about corn, the proverb "One rain won't make a crop" (1905, 213) comes quite naturally to mind together with the image of a garden. That in turn recalls the more personal proverb "Bloom (Grow and bloom) where you are planted" (1971, 23) projecting the growing of plants and vegetables upon one's life as an ever-developing course. In addition, even the world of crime has become characterized by a cautionary proverb employing garden and fruit imagery: "The weed (tree, seed) of crime bears bitter fruit" (1930, 274).

Little wonder that many of the modern proverbs dealing with fruits usually contain metaphors that make them applicable to human life. This is certainly true for three "apple proverbs: "Little apples go to the bottom of the barrel" (1912, 6-7) and its reversed variant "Big apples come to the top of the barrel," "There is (at least) one rotten (bad) apple in every barrel" (1943, 7), and "One rotten (bad) apple does not spoil the whole barrel" (1955, 7) that as a counter-proverb is rebutting the old proverb "One rotten apple spoils the whole barrel." The term "counter-proverb" was coined by Charles Clay Doyle in 1972 to describe "an overt negation or sententious-sounding rebuttal of a proverb, an explicit denial of the proverb's truth. A counter-proverb does not

typically aim or an ironic effect, other than calling into doubt whatever wisdom it is that proverbs are supposed to encapsulate" (Doyle, Mieder, Shapiro, 2012: xi). In any case, the apples of the proverbs are clearly metaphors for people who are being characterized by typical proverbial indirection.

But speaking of people represented by apples, it comes as no surprise to find several proverbs relating to them as "nuts" of some type. After all, there are numerous idioms playing with nuts in the sense of being odd or crazy in a folk speech manner:

There's a nut on every family tree. (1915, 182)
God wants spiritual food, not religious nuts. (1978, 104)

Yet "nuts" can also simply refer to small goods that either can or cannot bring satisfaction to a person striving for a sustainable existence:

Even a blind squirrel can sometimes find a nut (acorn). (1928, 238-239)
In this case, the squirrel stands for a person who is lucky enough to get a tidbit (nut) of something. This proverb seems to have replaced the older "Even a blind hog can occasionally find an acorn" with its somewhat alien farm imagery in a suburban world.
Only monkeys work for peanuts. (1953, 171)
One by one, cocos [i.e., coconuts] fill a basket. (1979, 184)
The idea is that persistent frugality and effort will pay off in the end.

Speaking of monkeys brings to mind the proverb "Monkeys in hard times eat red peppers" (1910, 171) that in turn recalls the sixteenth-century proverb "Half a loaf is better than none" that has its newer equivalent "Half a fish is better than none" (1905, 114). The generic "Half of something is better than all (100 percent) of nothing" (1901, Doyle and Mieder, 2020: 65-66) has also gained considerable currency, but it lacks the more descriptive bread and fish references.

Perhaps less serious, but nevertheless quite frequently employed, are the following three proverbs about delicious peaches, apples, and oranges. The fruit imagery makes them especially appealing and certainly expressive in their general comments on life's encounters:

Everything is not (all) peaches and cream. (1928, 193)
Do not (You cannot) compare apples and oranges. (1949, 6)
There's more than one way to peel an orange (banana, egg, etc.). (1954, 273-274)

The last proverb with its variants is on its way to replace the older proverb "There are more ways than one to skin a cat" from the seventeenth century. Its animal image might be upsetting to animal lovers and particularly to a child who loves the little kitty around the house. Yet that maturing child might well take the animal/food-proverb "The bee that gets (makes) the honey doesn't hang (loaf) around the hive" (1906, 18) to heart while paying heed to the Old Testament proverbial advice "Too much honey cloys the stomach" (Proverbs, 25:27) that warns of sweet saturation (Macintosh 1970, Van Leeuwen 1986). Before leaving this child, the cautionary proverb "Don't put beans (peas) in the baby's ears (up the baby's nose)" (1905, 16) must be mentioned that warns about the power of suggestion. Its earliest references appears in Martin G. Brumbaugh's *The Making of a Teacher* (Philadelphia: Sunday School Times, 1906), pp. 295-296: "A very well-disposed mother, but not wise, on leaving her home one day, said to the older children, 'Now be sure to put no beans in the baby's ears.' The children had never thought of such a thing, but when she returned the baby's ears were filled with beans!" (Doyle, Mieder, Shapiro, 2012: 16).

Two food proverbs telling people what they cannot or should not try to do base their didactic messages on broken eggs and boiled spaghetti:

> You can't unscramble eggs. (1911, 67)
> You cannot push a string of spaghetti. (1935, 241)

For the first proverb it is of interest to recall that Abraham Lincoln had used the precursory egg-proverb "Broken eggs cannot be mended" in 1860 and again on 8 January 1863 but a week after having signed the Emancipation Proclamation:

> I never did ask more, nor ever was willing to accept less, than for all the States, and the people thereof, to take and hold their places, and their rights, in the Union, under the Constitution of the United States. For this alone have I felt authorized to struggle; and I seek neither more nor less now. Still, to use a coarse, but expressive figure, broken eggs can not be mended. I have issued the emancipation proclamation, and I can not retract it. (Mieder 2000: 24-25).

This is indeed a powerful use of a food proverb (strange that Lincoln does not call it such), and it is by far not merely integrated at this place to add a bit of colorful folk language. The coarse or simple piece of wisdom becomes the ultimate point of the entire statement, namely that there is no way of retracting his courageous, laudable, and humane emancipation of the slaves! Yet his proverb has more or less fallen out of use and been replaced by the modern proverb "You can't unscramble eggs" in light of the fact that the image of scrambled eggs as a common breakfast dish is generally on people's minds.

As will become clear from the following proverbs, starting off with yet another "egg"-text expressing an impossibility, considerable wisdom can be communicated via food items with some being more literal than others:

> A boiled egg won't hatch. (1901, 67)
> No matter how (thin) you slice (cut) it, it's still baloney. (1924, 13)
> Baloney (bologna, pronounced "bolognie") in its slang meaning of worthlessness.
> Mustard with mutton is a sign of a glutton. (1927, 176)
> Never ask what's in a sausage (hotdog). (1929, 222)
> This proverb mostly occurs metaphorically in contexts that are best left unexamined because, upon closer inspection, they may reveal unattractive aspects.
> Wake up and smell the coffee. (1943, 41)
> There is also the somewhat newer related proverb "Stop and smell the flowers (roses)" (1951, 82).
> The smaller the pepper, the hotter (sharper) the bite. (1958, 194)
> In addition to its application to cookery, the proverb means figuratively that small persons tend to be energetic, assertive, and perhaps also hot-tempered.

Of special interest is a "tomato"-proverb based on different British and American pronunciations of the word for this common vegetable. That is a linguistic matter, but the proverb also has a metaphorical meaning in that it stresses the differences between people or cultures. Here are the references that we cited in the first supplement to our *Dictionary of Modern Proverb*:

> You say "TOMATO" [təme:to]," I say "tomaato" [təma:to]. (1967, Doyle and Mieder 2016: 117-118)
> 1967 Robert Troop, *The Hammering* (London: Joseph) 40: "'Naturally I don't want to cause a breach in the Anglo-American alliance, but I sense . . . a disparity of cultures…?' 'I say tomato and you say tomayto?' 'Yes, yes, aptly put,' Horaenson agreed" (ellipsis dots as shown). 1971 Tom Eyen, *Sarah B. Divine! And Other Plays* (New York: Winter House) 83: "'Chekhov! Not Check-off! Must you bring everything down to your own level?' 'You say tamahto, I say tomato.'" 2000 Peter A. Ubel, *Pricing Life* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press) 20: "At first glance, this discussion

may seem unnecessary. You say 'tomato,' I say 'tomahto.' You say 'allocation,' I say 'first-order tragic choice.'" 2004 Sam Horn, *Tongue Fu! At School* (Lanham MD: Taylor) 114: "The following phrases can give antagonists a face-saving out…. 'Different strokes for different folks.' … 'You say tomato, I say tomato [sic]. To each his own.'" The saying, misquoted, entered oral tradition as a proverb from Ira and George Gershwin's song "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off," from the motion picture *Shall We Dance* (1936): "You like potato and I like po-tah-to; / You like tomato and I like to-mah-to; / Potato, po-tah-to, tomato, to-mah-to— / Let's call the whole thing off!" (Doyle and Mieder 2016: 117-118)

From tomatoes it is not far to "cheese"-proverbs in which the dairy product is not intended for persons but rather for mice as unwanted co-inhabitants certainly in country living as my wife and I happen to enjoy:

There's always free cheese in a mousetrap. (1962, 37)
The first recorded reference tells the ambivalence of this seemingly harmless proverb. It appeared in the *Dispatch [Lexington NC]* of 2 June 1962: "Mousetraps furnish free cheese. But the mouse's happiness there is short-lived. For mice and men there is no such thing as a free lunch." This is perfectly applicable to handouts with strings attached.
The second mouse gets the cheese. (1997, 173)
The proverb is often cited together with a very popular proverb from the sixteenth century: "The early bird gets the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese." The "mouse"-proverb can perhaps be thought of as an anti-proverb to the "bird"-text.

But what is one to make of the modern proverb "Old rats like cheese too" (1977, 214)? Who are the rats and what does the cheese imply? Upon a closer look at contextualized references it becomes clear that the proverb with its combined animal/food metaphor refers to an old person's (usually a man's) sexual desire. Such a combination of food and love or sex in folk idioms in general but also in proverbs is nothing new (Kummer 1995, Mieder 2020: 222-232) and part of the "worldwide worldview of woman as delicious food" (Eismann 2001: 119). Sure, the proverb "Sacred cows make great (the best) hamburgers" (1965, 46) has not necessarily anything to do with sex or for that matter with the meat of hamburgers. Rather, it is a food metaphor from journalism expressing the idea that explosive events make the best news stories, including, of course, scandalous stories of the love life of celebrities. But how about the following two "milk" and "meat" proverbs that have very little to do with the food items as such:

Why buy milk when a cow is cheap? (1957, 166-167)
The interrogative proverb is also current in the variant "Why buy milk when you've got a cow at home? This is even more sexist and anti-feministic, even though its metaphor might express it indirectly.
Why go out for hamburger when you can eat steak at home? (1971, 114)
This proverbial interrogative has been attributed to Paul Newman explaining his long and faithful marriage to Joanne Woodward.

Both proverbs probably started as anti-proverbs responding to the considerably older anti-marriage proverb "Why buy a cow when you can get milk for free? (Mieder, Kingsbury, Harder 1992: 123). Be that as it may, they all reduce women to food items to be consumed at men's will and pleasure.

Things are even worse with two additional proverbs that had their start among the African American diaspora. They can, perhaps, be understood at face value, but they more often than not are employed as indirect sexual comments:

The blacker the berry (meat), the sweater the juice. (1929, 19)
The proverb praises blackness, usually in regard to sexual desirability.

The blacker the meat, the sweeter the bone (piece). (1935, 164)
Also praising blackness with "piece" here definitely referring to sexual matters.

This is also clearly the fact with two more "meat"-proverbs where this noun stands for the "penis" and the proverbs as such for sexual pleasures:

It's not the meat, it's the motion. (1951, 165)
The implication is that the size of the penis is irrelevant for effective intercourse. What counts is how it is employed.
Don't let your meat loaf (meatloaf). (1969, 164-165)
Here the punning reference is to male sexual activity.

Clearly these metaphorical proverbs, indirect as they may express it, speak of sexual activities by way of food metaphors that bring oral sex activities into the picture. However, this final "meat"-proverb is in contrast an innocuous statement about life: "Same meat, different gravy" (1967, 165). In this case "meat" has the sense of "essence" and "gravy" stands for superficial trappings or accompaniment.

And yet, there is one more proverb that needs to be mentioned. It is somewhat related to "Just because you're married doesn't mean you're blind" (1961, 163) that is employed by married men as well as women taking a look at a sexually attractive person: "Just because you're on a diet (Just because you've already eaten) doesn't mean you can't look at the menu" (1959, 55). Indeed, this proverb as well can be interpreted sexually by way of its food reference, but it is also often used in its literal sense at a restaurant when facing the vexing choice of having a dessert or letting it pass by. Just looking at the appealing menu and imagining the taste of a delicious pastry is at least something to calm down one's taste buds and, hopefully, keep one's commitment to a diet intact. But speaking of menus, the quite different proverb "If you are not at the table, you may be on the menu" (1993, 248) needs to be mentioned as well. The meaning here is that it is necessary to let one's voice be heard in a discussion to avoid being "eaten up" (pushed aside). With this having been said, this revue of food proverbs has come to America's obsession with diets of all types. Naturally modern proverbs have their say about this to help people along in their desire to stay fit and trim through proper eating and exercising.

There is no doubt that the country is facing a problem with people being overweight or obese for that matter. But that health issue is not the topic of the proverb "The opera isn't over till the fat lady sings" (1976, 185). Ralph Carpenter, sports information director of Texas Tach University, uttered this "wisdom" as a bit of humor towards the end of a basketball game. He did not mean it as a slur against large women but thought of a full-figured Valkyrie singing at the end of a Wagnerian opera. Nevertheless, his quip became proverbial and can still be heard today with plenty of women and men raising their eyebrows since they interpret it as an insult. The fact that the more generic variant "The game is not over till the fat lady sings" (1984, 91) gained proverbial status less than ten years later did not improve the matter even though it makes its reference to the world of sports more explicit. But be that as it may, it would be best to drop the "fat lady" connection and simply state the somewhat older generic proverb "It's (The game) is not over till it's over" (1921, 186) that is apocryphally attributed to baseball legend Yogi Berra. And the proverbial claim that "Inside every fat person (man, woman) there's a thin person trying (struggling) to get out" (1939, 195) is also best not used since it might be understood as an offense today. This proverb brings to mind the newer "Inside every old person (man, woman) there is a young one (trying to get out)" (1973, 195-196) that follows the structure of the previous text and can well be understood as reflecting the worldview of a society that is fixed on a youthful and energetic lifestyle that is fixed on the future (Dundes, 1969).

One thing is for certain, obesity is under legitimate attack and several decades ago led to the liberating proverb "Genes are not destiny" (1952, Doyle and Mieder 2018: 23). It can be applied to any kind of disorder, but it has also been shown that genetically obese mice can be kept thin by increasing exercise and decreasing food consumption. Staying fit and trim, watching one's weight, and eating healthy foods have become dominating rules of modern life, as can be seen from the following slogan-like modern proverbs that carry with them a certain literal didacticism:

Feast today (makes) fast tomorrow. (1908, 75)
The proverb appears to be a substitution of the seventeenth-century proverb "After the feast comes the reckoning." It has at times been applied metaphorically to economic matters. Nowadays it can also refer calorie intake.
It is not what you like (want) that makes you fat (it is what you eat). (1917, 147)
Here "fat" is used as a drastic adjective to get a person to take action against weight gain.
Anything good (in life) is either illegal, immoral, or fattening. (1933, 106-107)
This started as an anonymous witticism in a list of such quips in *Reader's Digest* of 24 December 1933 (p. 109).
A moment (minute) on the lips, a lifetime (forever) on the hips. (1940, 168)
To lengthen your life, lessen your meals. (1947, 146)
Get up from (Leave) the table while you are still hungry (before you are full). (1953, 248)
Move it or lose it. (1973, Doyle and Mieder 2020: 72-73)
The proverb might have started as an anti-proverb of the somewhat older "Use it or lose it" (1893) that warns that abilities, faculties, and services must be used if they are not to diminish or be lost entirely. The modern proverb takes all of this into the need of physical exercise to stay in good shape.
Nothing tastes as good as (being) thin feels (looks). (1989, Doyle and Mieder, 2016: 111)
Eat right, stay fit. (1990, 66)
This solid proverbial advice has also been parodied as "Eat right, stay fit, and die anyway" (1991, 66).
Hustle for the muscle. (2013, Doyle and Mieder, 2020: 73)

The last proverb reflects the extreme case of the modern body cult, even though the anti-proverb "No body is perfect" (1958, 23) of the much older "Nobody is perfect" (1763) appears to inform people that the extreme body-building craze is a bit over the top (Mieder 2020: 121-144). That is, of course, not to mean that staying fit and eating well are not good for bodily appearance and health all around.

Whatever the motivation might be to keep body and soul in good balance by proper nourishment and good exercise (Dubish, 1989), there can be no doubt that a price has to be paid for it all. That is true for everything else in life – a fact that has found its very own gastronomical expression in the very popular modern proverb "There is no such thing as a free lunch" (1917, 253). It is based on the relatively new but productive proverbial structure "There is no such thing as X" that had its start two years earlier with the modern proverb "There is no such thing as a stupid question" (1915, 211). Numerous new proverbs have followed, among them "There is no such thing as winning second place" (1929, 199-200), "There is no such thing as a definitive study" (1936, 252-253), "There is no such thing as bad publicity" (1941, 253), "There is no such thing as a little pregnant" (1942, 206), "There is no such thing as a free ride" (1949, 253), "There's no such thing as too much money" (1959, 254), and "There is no such thing as bad sex" (1971, 253-254). But the "lunch"-variant wins the prize for being the most often cited truth of modern life. Here are two interesting references from *The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs*:

There is no such thing as a free lunch. (1917, 253)
From the *Eau Claire [WI] Sunday Leader* 27 May 1917: "Liquor men gathered . . . to advocate passage of an ordinance forbidding free lunch in saloons. Michael Montague, one of the

> delegations, held an opposite view to the others. 'There is no such thing as free lunch,' he said. 'First of all, you have to buy something from the saloonkeeper before you can partake of the lunch'" (there the saying is literal—probably not yet proverbial). And in the *El Paso [TX] Herald-Post* of 27 June 1938 the proverb is applied figuratively as the "punch line" of a fable: A king asks his counselors to summarize economics in a brief and simple way. They respond with 87 volumes, more than 600 pages each, drawing the king's wrath and incurring executions. Further demands and more executions encourage ever-briefer summations until, finally, the last economist, "a man of profound wisdom," speaks: "Sire, in eight words I will reveal to you all the wisdom that I have distilled through all these years from all the writings of all the economists who once practiced their science in your kingdom. Here is my text: 'There ain't no such thing as free lunch'" (Doyle, Mieder, Shapiro, 2012: 253).

This proverb has become so popular that it is often cited in its truncated form of "There's no free lunch." It has, of course, also led to such anti-proverbs as "There is no such thing as a calorie-free lunch" and "There's no such thing as a free lunch … but there is always free cheese in a mousetrap" from 1997 (Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 304). Yet another modern American proverb "Freedom is not free" (1943, 85) is applicable here that was shorted from two the two advertising slogans for war bonds: "Freedom is not free – It is priceless" and "Freedom isn't free. We must fight for it" (Doyle, Mieder, Shapiro, 2012: 85). Lunch or more generally food and drink are not free and nor is the attainment of the directive expressed in the classical health proverb *Mens sana in corpore sano* ("A healthy mind in a healthy body"). But as this revue of modern Anglo-American proverbs expressing gastronomical wisdom has shown, there is much to discant upon regarding healthy living.

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