

LESSON 1: OUR CHANGING RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

Grade Level: 3rd-5th

Lesson Duration: 5-6 class periods

Exhibition Theme: Dissociation

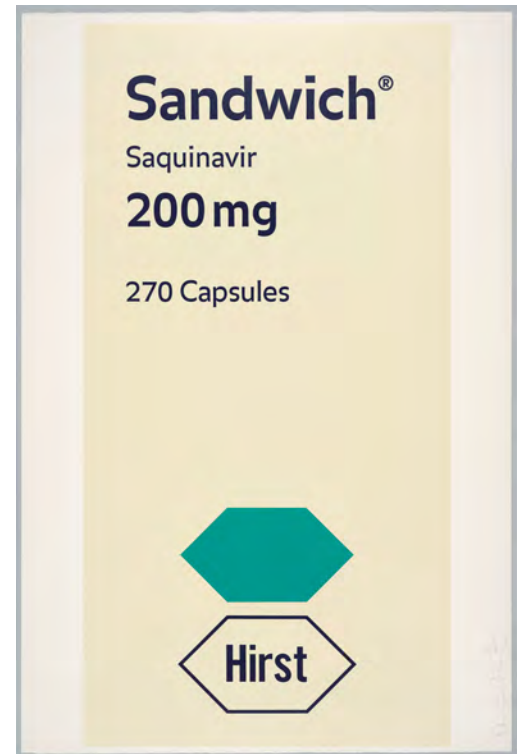
Curriculum Connections: Visual Art,
Social Studies

Summary:

In the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century, food systems in the United States were radically altered by the development of new technologies, manufacturing systems, and processing techniques.

Our relationship with food has shifted with these changes, leading to a dissociation between our food and where it comes from. Contemporary artists have used their platform to comment on this growing disconnect for decades.

Using social studies and visual art as an anchor, this lesson helps students explore their own relationship with the American food system. They will complete a small research project, form interpretations of works from the *Art of Food* exhibition, and create their own piece inspired by Pop Art.



Damien Hirst (British, b. 1965), *The Last Supper: Sandwich*, 1999, screenprint, 60 x 40 in.;
Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer
Image: Strode Photographic

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Essential Questions:

- Where does food come from? How do people get their food?
- How has our relationship with food changed over time?
- How does our relationship with food affect other parts of our lives, like human health and the environment?

Objectives:

Students will...

- Understand what it means to have a “relationship” with food.
- Understand how different food processing techniques and practices have led to shifts in our relationship with food.
- Engage meaningfully with visual art pieces to form original ideas and interpretations.
- Brainstorm and reflect on the different ways people get their food.
- Understand how art can be used to address social issues.
- Create an original art piece using the conventions of the Pop Art style.

Arizona Visual Arts Standards:

VA.CR.1.5, VA.CR.2.3a, VA.CR.7.5b, VA.RE.8.4, VA.CN.11.5

Arizona History and Social Science Standards:

3.SP1.2, 4.SP3.1, 4.SP4.1, 4.G2.1



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Materials:

- Images from *Art of Food* exhibition
- Timeline Research Activity worksheet
- Small Group Art Analysis worksheets
- Drawing paper
- Drawing materials (pencils, erasers, colored pencils, crayons, markers and/or watercolors)
- Internet access

Engaging with Art:

Introduce *Butterscape* (2008) by the artist Malia Jensen, either through the image deck or in the museum's exhibition space. To help get the students comfortable engaging with the art of the exhibition, lead a full-class discussion of the work.



Malia Jensen (American, b. 1966)
Butterscape, 2008, plaster of paris and
enamel, edition 1/3, 2 x 8 x 8 in., Collection
of Jordan D. Schnitzer,
Image Aaron Wessling Photography:

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Use any of the following questions as your guide:

1. Describe what you see. What stands out? Why?
2. What is the object made of? What is its texture? What colors and shapes do you see?
3. What is the subject? What does this artwork remind you of? What does the artwork represent?
4. What words would you use to describe this work?
5. Based on what you see, what do you think the work is about? What evidence supports this? What do you see that makes you say that?

Here are a few important notes about the piece from Olivia Miller, Curator of Exhibitions at the University of Arizona Museum of Art:

“Multimedia artist Malia Jensen creates works that ebb and flow between the domestic and natural realms, sometimes blurring the two environments. Through her work she transforms the banal into the provocative, as she explores texture, form, and natural life cycles. At first, *Butterscape* (2008) appears to be a straightforward representation of a stick of butter. However, the butter has an indentation, as if someone gently mushed it with the heel of their palm. This suggests a soft texture, yet the sculpture is made from hard plaster. Furthermore, Jensen’s titling contradicts the representation of the butter as foodstuff and instead invites the viewer to contemplate its meaning beyond its edibility.”

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So, what does that mean?

- Essentially, this piece challenges the viewer's ideas of what butter is. Jensen's sculpture is true-to-life, and the indentation mimicking the soft texture of butter further enhances the realism.
- It looks soft, but it isn't. It looks edible, but it isn't. The realism of the work makes us take for granted that it is something familiar we can eat. There is a dissociation between what we see (what our visual senses perceive) and what is.
- The title, *Butterscape*, is a play on landscape, a traditional genre of art that carries deeply-rooted historical and cultural associations. Why would Jensen give a stick of butter the same attention as another artist might give a monumental landscape?
- Jensen is offering us more questions than answers. If we can't eat a stick of butter, what purpose does it serve? What meaning does it still have? Why does it exist at all?

Food Discussion:

With a full-class discussion, get the students thinking about people's relationship with food and where it comes from. Use these questions as a guide:

1. What does it mean to have a relationship with something?
2. Where do people get their food?
3. Where does food come from?
4. How do we change/transform our food before we eat it?



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Timeline Research Activity:

Introduce the Food Over the Years timeline and break the students into eight groups. (If the groups are still too big, you can assign topics twice.) Give each group one of the following developments, representing big changes in U.S. food history:

1. Artificial Foods
2. Factory Farming
3. Grocery Stores
4. Fast Food
5. Big Brands and Advertising
6. Genetic Engineering
7. Food Sovereignty
8. Urban Agriculture

Once they receive their assignments, students should conduct research using books and/or the Internet to learn more about their assigned food development and its history. In their small groups, they will complete the Timeline Research Activity worksheet. The research portion can be limited to one class period, or it can be extended over several days depending on the depth desired by the teacher. When each group has completed their research, they will report their findings to the class. They are now “experts” on their food development, so they should be able to give a brief summary of their topic and explain their answers to the questions on the worksheet. Some of the topics may be more complex and challenging than others. If they are struggling, there is information on several of the topics in the External Resources section below.



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Timeline: Food Over the Years

1810: The tin can is patented as a way to preserve foods, combining an airtight container with heat sterilization.

1869: Margarine is first developed as a butter substitute.

1879: Saccharin, the first artificial sweetener, is invented.

1916: The first grocery store, a Piggly Wiggly, opens in Memphis, Tennessee.

1920s: Chicken farmers begin mass-producing poultry and eggs.

1921: The first White Castle opens in Wichita, Kansas, marking the beginning of fast food in the U.S.

1950s: Grocery stores are now a staple of American society.

1957: High fructose corn syrup is first developed.

1960s: Around 60% of Americans own a television, signalling the beginning of decades of food advertising, often directed toward children. Today, food is among the most heavily marketed products.

1967: The microwave oven is invented, making small, quick meals easy and saving home chefs hours of work.

1969: The FDA begins requiring food companies to include a list of ingredients and other nutritional information on their products.

1970s: Hog, beef, and dairy farmers centralize and develop huge operations focused primarily on production and profit.

1970s: Organic farming starts becoming popular as Americans become more concerned with health, pollution, and the environment

1970: Sugar consumption increases from a couple pounds per person per year to 123 pounds per person.



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1971: The farm-to-table movement begins.

1973: Herbert Boyer and Stanley Cohen develop genetic engineering (GE).

1984: High fructose corn syrup becomes the number one sweetener in processed foods.

1990s: There is a renewed interest in farmers markets that continues to grow in the 2000s and 2010s.

1992: Flavr Savr tomatoes become the first GE crop to win USDA approval.

1995: The USDA approves the world's first insecticide-producing crop.

1996: Herbicide-resistant crops are developed.

2009: Monsanto controls virtually all of the American corn and soy seed market.

2015: For the first time, Americans spend more dining out at restaurants than they do on buying groceries to cook at home.



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Small Group Art Analysis:

Give each group the Small Group Art Analysis worksheet that corresponds to their food development. Each worksheet has a different piece of art selected based on the corresponding food development. Have the students discuss the piece and answer the questions in their groups. If they are struggling to make the connection between the art piece and their food development, they can start by doing some research, or list any associations they can make with the art.

When forming an interpretation, it is okay not to have all the answers, and there is no one single "correct" answer. Once each group has completed their worksheet, they will report their thoughts to the class. After they give their interpretation of their artwork, the rest of the class can offer their own thoughts on the pieces.

Artmaking Extension:

Several of the pieces from the timeline activities were from Pop artist Andy Warhol. Many of Warhol's works contain repetitive imagery, and some of his most famous pieces (like his Campbell's Soup paintings) were centered around food. Pop artists used humor and irony to address the growing trend of mass production and consumerism in the mid-20th century. Unlike traditional art, their subject matter came from pop culture, such as advertising, comic books, etc. Warhol and other Pop artists tried to make their art like their subjects: mass-produced, with as little trace of the individual artist as possible.

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1. Show students the [Tate Kids What is Pop Art? video](#). Discuss any observations and questions they have from the video.
2. Review the works of Andy Warhol from the *Art of Food* exhibition. Have the students pick out characteristics of Pop art they can see in the pieces.
3. **Instructions for Art Activity:** Fold a piece of paper in half hot dog style, unfold it, and fold it in half again hamburger style. When you unfold it, the paper should be split into four equal sections. Choose your favorite food, and draw it in one of the sections. Repeat the same drawing in the other four sections, trying to keep them as identical as possible. Use colored pencils, markers, crayons, or paint to fill in each drawing with different colors. Be creative—Pop artists didn't shy away from humor or color, and neither should you!
4. Have the students show their work to the class. They should be prepared to talk about what their chosen food means to them and how they chose their color palette.



Andy Warhol (American, 1928-1987)
Banana (II. 10), c. 1966, two screenprints on styrene and laminated plastic, 23 3/4 x 53 3/4 in.
Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation
Image: Strode Photographic



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Final Reflection:

To wrap up the lesson, lead a full class discussion, using the following questions as a guide:

1. Do you feel more connected to the food you eat after what you have learned? Why or why not?
2. What do you think was the most important development in U.S. food history we discussed? Why?
3. How do art and other types of visual imagery help shape our relationship with food?
4. What was your favorite piece of art from the exhibition? Why?



FOOD TIMELINE RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Directions: Research the food history topic given to you by your teacher. Answer the following questions with your group using the information you find.

Food Development: _____

When was your food development first introduced? Give a brief summary explaining what it is.

Choose three important moments in the history of your topic. List them here.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



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FOOD TIMELINE RESEARCH ACTIVITY



Was your food development positive, negative, or both? Why?

Name(s):

Date:



SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: FACTORY FARMING

We have discovered how our relationship with food has changed over time. Now, let's take a closer look at some works from the *Art of Food* exhibition. Discuss the artwork below and answer the questions that follow with your group.



Andy Warhol (American, 1928-1987), *Cow 1966*, 1966, Screenprint on wallpaper mounted to canvas, each of six panels: 90 x 28 3/8 in.

Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer

Image: Aaron Wessling Photography

Describe what you see in the artwork. What images or symbols do you recognize?

What stands out in the artwork? Why?



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SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: FACTORY FARMING

How is food represented in the artwork? How does the artwork make you feel?

How might the artwork relate to your group's food history topic?

Name(s):

Date:



SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: ARTIFICIAL FOODS

We have discovered how our relationship with food has changed over time. Now, let's take a closer look at some works from the *Art of Food* exhibition. Discuss the artwork by Damien Hirst below and answer the questions that follow with your group.



**Describe what you see in the artwork.
What images or symbols do you recognize?**

**What stands out in the artwork?
Why?**

Damien Hirst (British, b. 1965), *The Last Supper: Omelette*, 1999, screenprint, edition of 150, 60 x 40 in.

Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer

Image: Strode Photographic



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SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: ARTIFICIAL FOODS



How is food represented in the artwork? How does the artwork make you feel?

How might the artwork relate to your group's food history topic?

Name(s):

Date:



SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: GROCERY STORES

We have discovered how our relationship with food has changed over time. Now, let's take a closer look at some works from the *Art of Food* exhibition. Discuss the artwork below and answer the questions that follow with your group.



Jonathan Seliger (American, b. 1955), *Fresh*, 2016, cotton, pigment, aluminum powder, silkscreen, Mylar, 5 ¼ x 4 ¼ x 1 ½ in.
Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer
Image: Aaron Wessling Photography

Describe what you see in the artwork. What images or symbols do you recognize?



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SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: GROCERY STORES



What stands out in the artwork? Why?

How is food represented in the artwork? How does the artwork make you feel?

How might the artwork relate to your group's food history topic?

Name(s):

Date:



SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: FAST FOOD

We have discovered how our relationship with food has changed over time. Now, let's take a closer look at some works from the *Art of Food* exhibition. Discuss the artwork below and answer the questions that follow with your group.



Andy Warhol (American, 1928-1987), *Hamburger (Double)* (IIIA.67), 1986, screenprint, 31 3/8 x 24 in. Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer
Image: Aaron Wessling Photography

Describe what you see in the artwork. What images or symbols do you recognize?

What stands out in the artwork? Why?



SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: FAST FOOD



How is food represented in the artwork? How does the artwork make you feel?

How might the artwork relate to your group's food history topic?

Name(s):

Date:



SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: BIG BRANDS & ADVERTISING

We have discovered how our relationship with food has changed over time. Now, let's take a closer look at some works from the *Art of Food* exhibition. Discuss the artwork below and answer the questions that follow with your group.



Describe what you see in the artwork. What images or symbols do you recognize?

What stands out in the artwork? Why?

Andy Warhol, (American, 1928-1987), *Campbell's Soup Can (Tomato) (II.4a)*, 1966, screenprint on paper shopping bag, 23 7/8 x 17 in. Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer
Image: Strode Photographic



SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: BIG BRANDS & ADVERTISING

How is food represented in the artwork? How does the artwork make you feel?

How might the artwork relate to your group's food history topic?

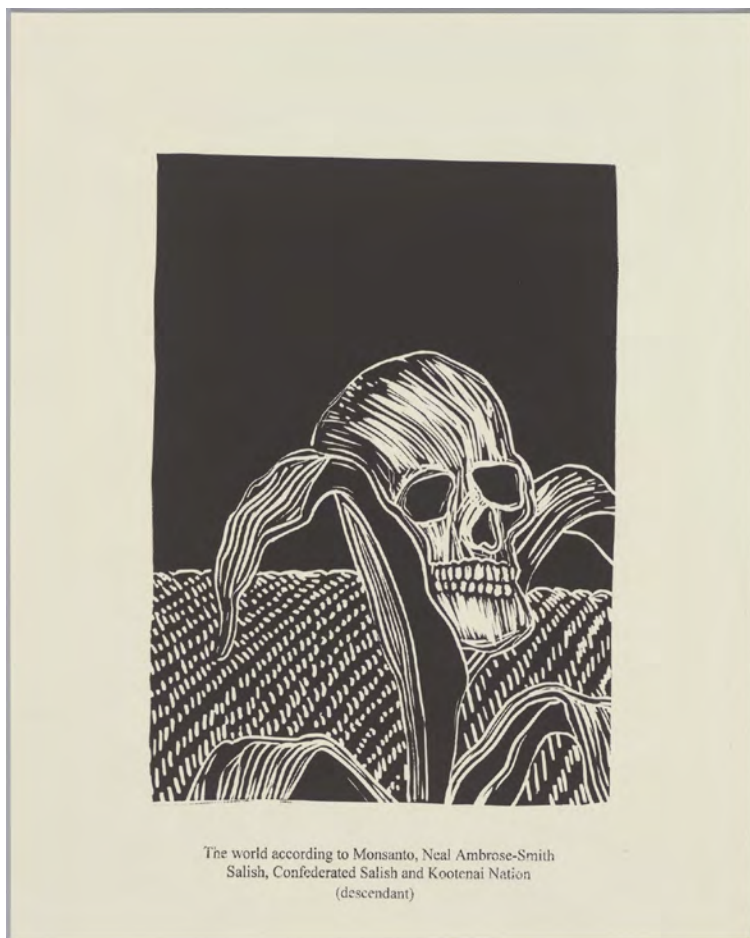
Name(s):

Date:



SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: GENETIC ENGINEERING

We have discovered how our relationship with food has changed over time. Now, let's take a closer look at some works from the *Art of Food* exhibition. Discuss the artwork below and answer the questions that follow with your group.



Describe what you see in the artwork. What images or symbols do you recognize?

What stands out in the artwork? Why?

Neil Ambrose-Smith (Native American, Salish, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Nation, b. 1966), *The World According to Monsanto*, from *Terrain: Plateau Native Art and Poetry*, 2014, relief print, 10 x 8 in.

Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer

Image: Strode Photographic



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SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: GENETIC ENGINEERING

How is food represented in the artwork? How does the artwork make you feel?

How might the artwork relate to your group's food history topic?

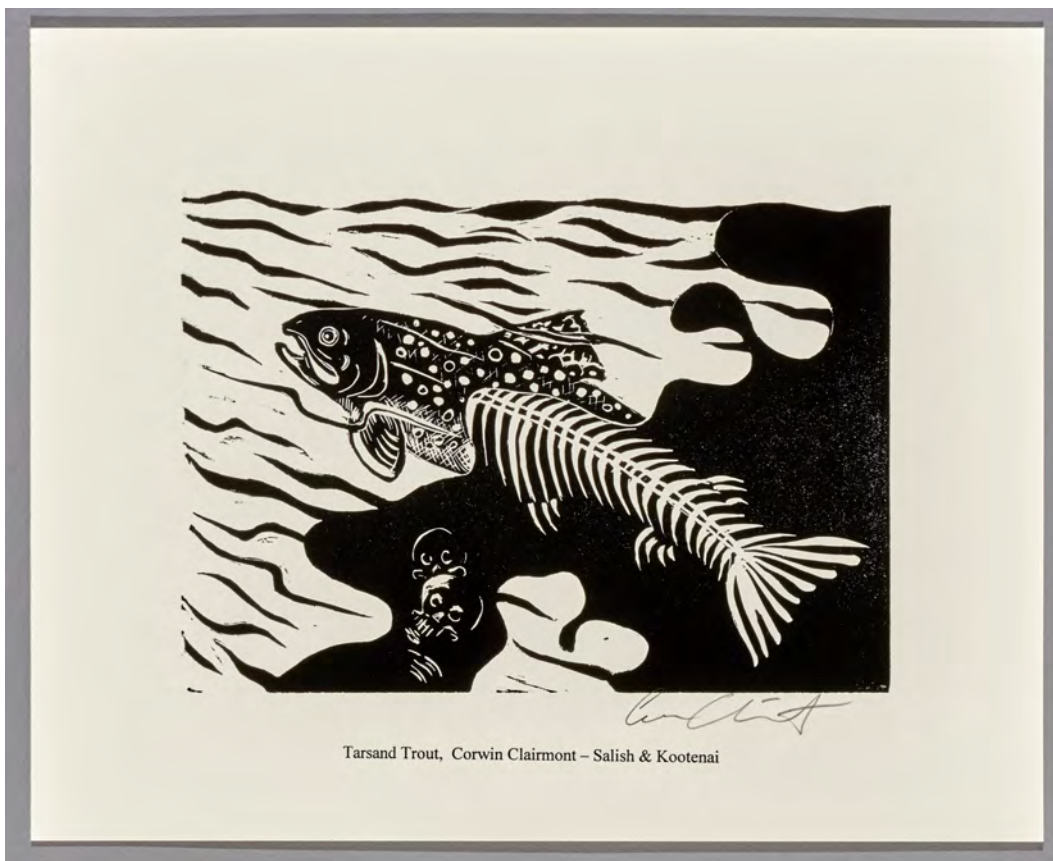
Name(s):

Date:



SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

We have discovered how our relationship with food has changed over time. Now, let's take a closer look at some works from the *Art of Food* exhibition. Discuss the artwork below and answer the questions that follow with your group.



Tarsand Trout, Corwin Clairmont – Salish & Kootenai

Corwin Claremont (Native American, Salish-Kootenai, b. 1946), *Tarsand Trout*, from *Terrain: Plateau Native Art and Poetry*, 2014, relief print, 8 x 10 in.; Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer
Image: Aaron Wessling Photography

Describe what you see in the artwork. What images or symbols do you recognize?



SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: FOOD SOVEREIGNTY



What stands out in the artwork? Why?

How is food represented in the artwork? How does the artwork make you feel?

How might the artwork relate to your group's food history topic?

Name(s):

Date:



SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: URBAN AGRICULTURE

We have discovered how our relationship with food has changed over time. Now, let's take a closer look at some works from the *Art of Food* exhibition. Discuss the artwork below and answer the questions that follow with your group.



TRUFFLE BUTTER

John Baldessari (American, 1931-2020), *TRUFFLE BUTTER*,
edition 35/50, 2018, screenprint, 32 1/2 x 28 in.
Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer
Image: Gemini G.E.L.

Describe what you see in the artwork. What images or symbols do you recognize?

What stands out in the artwork? Why?



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SMALL GROUP ART ANALYSIS: URBAN AGRICULTURE



How is food represented in the artwork? How does the artwork make you feel?

How might the artwork relate to your group's food history topic?

Name(s):

Date:



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Lesson Vocabulary:

Agriculture - the science or practice of farming, including cultivation of the soil for the growing of crops and the rearing of animals to provide food, wool, and other products

Consumerism - the protection or promotion of the interests of consumers; the preoccupation of society with the acquisition of consumer goods

Contemporary art - the art of today, produced in the second half of the 20th century or the 21st century

Dissociation - the disconnection or separation of something from something else or the state of being disconnected

Factory farming - a system of rearing livestock using intensive methods, by which poultry, pigs, or cattle are confined indoors under strictly controlled conditions

Farm-to-table - constituting, consisting of, or relating to fresh locally grown or produced food

Food sovereignty - the right of peoples to healthy and culturally-appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems

Genetic engineering (GE) - the deliberate modification of the characteristics of an organism by manipulating its genetic material

Mass media - a diverse array of media technologies that reach a large audience via mass communication

Mass production - the production of large quantities of a standardized product by an automated mechanical process



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Pop Art - art based on modern popular culture and the mass media, especially as a critical or ironic comment on traditional fine art values

Processed food - food that has been cooked, canned, frozen, packaged or changed in nutritional composition with fortifying, preserving or preparing in different ways

Organic farming - agricultural system that uses ecologically based pest controls and biological fertilizers derived largely from animal and plant wastes and nitrogen-fixing cover crops

Sustainable agriculture - farming in sustainable ways to meet society's present food and textile needs, without compromising the ability for current or future generations to meet their needs

Visual culture - visual forms and practices within a society, including those of everyday life, popular culture, and high culture, together with the processes of production and consumption or reception associated with them; this includes all visual media



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External Resources:

Conserve Energy Future. (n.d.). *What is Factory Farming?* Conserve Energy Future. <https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/factory-farming.php>

Delson, S. (n.d.). *Andy Warhol's soup can paintings: What they mean and why they became a sensation.* History. <https://www.history.com/news/andy-warhol-1962-soup-can-paintings-meaning-reaction>

Diamond, A. (2019, June 24). A crispy, salty, American history of fast food. *Smithsonian Magazine*. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/crispy-salty-american-history-fast-food-180972459/>

Jitchotvisut, J. (2018, February 5). *The fascinating origin stories behind 20 of America's favorite foods.* Insider. <https://www.insider.com/how-iconic-food-brands-came-to-be-2018-2>

Lisa, A. (2020, January 17). *50 ways food has changed in the last 50 years.* Stacker. <https://stacker.com/stories/2500/50-ways-food-has-changed-last-50-years>

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Tate Kids. (2016, August 9). *What is Pop Art?* [Video]. YouTube.
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<https://www.fda.gov/food/agricultural-biotechnology/science-and-history-gmos-and-other-food-modification-processes>