



FOOD: Transforming the American Table 1950-2000, is a 3,800-square-foot exhibition in production at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History. Scheduled to open to the public Nov. 20, the exhibition—a creative blend of objects, graphics, video and an interactive, communal table—will be on view for a minimum of two years in the East Wing, on the first floor.

FOOD, like history, is about change. The exhibition explores some of the big changes in food and eating in America between 1950 and 2000 and examines the forces and factors that influenced those transformations. **FOOD** will feature one of the Smithsonian’s most popular artifacts—**Julia Child’s kitchen** from her Cambridge, Mass., home. This is the kitchen where Child, the legendary cookbook author and first star of food TV, cooked for her family and friends, as well as for millions of viewers who tuned in to her three cooking shows that were taped in the kitchen in the 1990s. The exhibition will place Julia Child’s kitchen within the context of the last half of the 20th century, blending her impact on American culinary history with other significant strands of food history.

A large section of **FOOD**, “**New and Improved!**” explores some of the major changes in food production, distribution, preparation and consumption in America since the 1950s. Stories include the rise of large-scale, centralized production of lettuce in California; the growth and expansion of manufactured “convenience” foods; the expansion of supermarkets and global distribution systems; innovations in food preparation including the microwave oven; and the rise in snacking, drive-thru and on-the-go eating.

Resetting the Table, another section, will look at how shifts in gender roles, working patterns and social, political and cultural movements helped transform the American table. Stories here include the influence of postwar immigrants and migrants on the introduction of new foods and flavors from Asia, Africa, the Middle East and other regions; how suburban men took up backyard cooking and made grilling outdoors wildly popular; the diffusion of Mexican-inspired food into all corners of the country; and the influence of counterculture movements in the 1960s and ‘70s, resulting in back-to-the-land ideas about growing your own food and sharing it communally. This section also focuses on the “good food” movement, represented by individuals like Alice Waters, whose Berkeley restaurant, Chez Panisse, reintroduced and celebrated artisanal, local and fresh foods, and influenced the wider adoption of these approaches to food across the country.

Wine for the Table examines the tremendous growth and expansion of wine and winemaking in America in the postwar period. This section reveals how research at the University of California, Davis, guided the planting and managing of new vineyards in California, and how new technologies helped

control problems that had plagued fermentation and storage processes. The spirit of innovation and community that infused Napa Valley in the 1960s is revealed through the stories of individuals who created new vineyards and wineries, as well as new models for marketing wine. Among the objects featured in this story are the two bottles of Napa Valley wine—the 1973 Chateau Montelena Chardonnay and the 1973 Stag’s Leap Wine Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon—that bested the best of French wines at the 1976 Paris Tasting, an event that is widely seen as the moment when American wine gained international recognition and respect. By the end of the 20th century wine was produced in all 50 states, a development tracked on a map of the United States.

The **Open Table** in the center of the gallery will invite visitors to take a seat at a large, communal table to engage in dialogue about a wide range of food-related issues and topics. The Open Table content will change during the run of the exhibition, with the first rotation featuring an array of food pyramids from different sources and dates. A close look at food pyramids reveals changing ideas about a healthy diet and changing food advice for Americans, a topic likely to engender spirited discussions.

Finally, the exhibition team will be organizing a series of programs and events relating to **FOOD: Transforming the American Table, 1950-2000** to help address the public’s interest in this topic of fundamental importance to the American experience.