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Fast food/organic food: Reflexive tastes and the making of 'yuppie chow'

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Organic food consumption is one of several new trends in eating read as active opposition to industrialized food provision. While fast food consumption is characterized by compulsive gluttony, manifest in fat bodies, alternative consumption practices are seen to be driven by conscious reflexivity, such that consumers monitor, reflect upon and adapt their personal conduct in light of its perceived consequences. The purpose of this paper is two-fold. One is to examine the evolution of organic food from what Belasco called the 'counter-cuisine' to what organic growers call 'yuppie chow', to show how organic salad mix was the carrier of major changes in the organic system of provision, thereby calling into question the notion that organic food is necessarily an antidote to industrialized food. The other is to problematize the facile dichotomies between fast and slow, reflexive and compulsive, fat and thin, and, hence, good and bad eaters, to show where there is slippage and instability in these categories, in addition to a troubling politics of class and gender. To these ends, I showcase the changing provision of a particular organic commodity (salad mix, or mesclun) in California.

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