

Mudry, Jessica, Concordia University, Canada

Making the Calorie Human: The Technology of the Calorimeter and Quantitative Food Culture

The calorie has become a pervasive unit of measure of food. We read about calories in public policies like the World Health Organization's "calories per capita per day," in national nutrition guides like the United States Department of Agriculture's food pyramid, and in hundreds of diet books in the popular press. The calorie, however, existed well before its integration into discourses of food. The calorie and its measurement technology the calorimeter have, I argue, abetted the creation of a quantitative food culture, where food and eating have become acts of measurement, usurping experiential, cultural and qualitative discourses of food and eating. This paper examines how the technology of the calorimeter may be considered an epistemic technology in that by making food and eating calculable activities, it concurrently makes a new cultural knowledge about food, one that relies on numbers instead of taste.