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FROM FAMINE TO FEAST: THE GIVE AND TAKE OF FOOD IN A GLOBAL SUBSISTENCE ENVIRONMENT

Laurence M. Carucci
Montana State University

Food is the primary transactional substance for Enewetak/Ujelang people [Republic of the Marshall Islands] and its production, preparation, consumption and exchange are central to how local people fashion and maintain social relationships and how they construct identities. At the same time, while the constitutive properties of food have remained culturally vigorous, the foods themselves have changed radically under colonialism. In particular, rehabilitation attempts in the post-nuclear testing era on Enewetak introduced extraordinary rapid dietary changes in the community and resulted in the onset of an epidemic of sedentary illnesses. The social practices that relate to food production and consumption are explored in this article providing a lens into the shifting ways in which viable and vibrant identities are managed. A close consideration of these food-related practices also highlights the impact of an emerging scenario of foreign food dependency on the everyday lives of members of this increasingly diverse atoll society.

THE FOOD PRACTICES OF THE ENEWETAK/UJELANG COMMUNITY have shifted in direct relation with changes in the social and environmental setting. Rather than bringing stability and a healthful life to the community as a whole and to its individual members, increasing colonial involvement has brought greater instability. In particular, the community's unfortunate involvement with U.S. nuclear testing following World War II not only increased people's anxieties about foods, it intensified the effects of globalization. At first, community isolation on Ujelang led to conditions of famine, with correlative shifts in food practices and ideas about communal identity. Then, with the return to Enewetak, conditions of near-total dependence on

outside foods radically transformed the very ways in which Enewetak/Ujelang bodies were fashioned and forced people to renegotiate the relationships they could embody through the use of food. These refashionings took place within people's bodies, in the community as a whole, and in the ways that the community related to others in a world that extended far beyond the outer reef of Enewetak. As a result of people's dissatisfaction with life on Enewetak, many of the atoll's residents have moved to Hawai'i, Hawai'i. Food practices on the Big Island, although patterned on long-standing designs and experiences from Ujelang and Enewetak, have also, of necessity, been transformed at the same time they have refashioned the way that Big Island Enewetak people have come to conceive of themselves and have redesigned the relationships that they have built with others through the sharing and exchange of food. Tracking these changes demonstrates the centrality of food in the construction and maintenance of the viable and vibrant identities negotiated in social relationships among past and current-day Marshallese.

Historical Background

Like most atolls, in precolonial times, Enewetak provided an ample supply of land and sea foods for its residents as long as the population remained within acceptable limits and as long as typhoons spared the atoll of their ravaging effects. These foods included a diverse array of fish and other marine foods along with coconut, breadfruit, pandanus, and arrowroot, the standard array of land foods that can be grown in the northern Marshall Islands. An outlier of the Marshall Islands in the central western Pacific, Enewetak benefits from a relatively large lagoon, abundant marine resources, and a land area of approximately 2.75 square miles divided among 48 islets. Several islets have brackish water available, and four sizable islets served as long-term residence locations in the historic past. As advantageous as these environmental circumstances may have been in precolonial times, they proved equally attractive to outsiders and, therefore, came to be counterproductive for local residents.

This section of the Pacific has experienced four sequential waves of colonialism prior to independence in the mid-1980s. The Spanish laid claim to the region following Savedra's brief visit in 1529, but significant colonial effects came with the shift from whale oil to coconut oil in the latter half of the nineteenth century and, concurrently, with the arrival of ABCFM missionaries in the 1850s. The German administrative era followed the Spanish, and late in the German era (1885–1914), a government-supported schema was developed that sought to purchase major segments of the

northern Marshall Islands to serve as copra plantations (Merz 1912). This scenario would have left Enewetak people living on three residential islets and nearly 100% dependent on German entrepreneurs. This schema was disrupted by German involvement in World War I, but by late Japanese times (1915–1944), claims to ownership of Enewetak Atoll again had been made by a resident trade-store owner, Ijimarisen. The case ended up in court in Pohnpei before lands were eventually returned to the community. Shortly thereafter, major segments of the atoll were simply appropriated by the Japanese military in preparation for World War II.

Following the Battle of Eniwetok in 1944, those residents who survived the battle were placed by American military officials on two small "Native Islands" along the northeastern fringe of the atoll. As if these sources of disruption were not enough, residents of Enewetak soon became victims of the U.S. nuclear testing following the war, and they suffered significantly as a result of the tests. Not only were they forced to live in exile for 33 years on a much smaller and environmentally less well-endowed atoll that subjected them to waves of starvation, their eventual return to their home atoll in 1980 left them dismayed at the radical changes that had transformed the land and sea into a "New Enewetak," a place where people found that they could not engage in their day-to-day subsistence pursuits. At the very moment that people spoke of their "return," the repatriation, in social, psychological, and physiological terms, was not a return at all because it required the formulation of a radical new set of social practices to adapt to the artificial conditions of near-total dependence imposed by the United States. Under these conditions many major food exchange events retained their familiar contours, but the altered content of the foods began to seriously affect the constitution of local residents' bodies. Cycles of starvation, once the source of fear in the 1950s and 1960s on Ujelang, were now replaced with an array of new "reservation-style" sedentary illnesses that consumed people's nutrient-deficient bodies in epidemics of diabetes and heart disease.

As a result of their disenfranchisement with life on the New Enewetak, people began to move to Hawai'i, Hawai'i in 1991. This move provided access to better health care and improved schools, but it also forced people into conditions of poverty. Therefore, although food on the Big Island remains central to the way in which Enewetak people and other Marshall Islanders perpetuate and fashion a meaningful sense of Marshallese identity, the economic constraints placed on Big Island Enewetak families have extended the nutritional inadequacies of dietary practices learned on Enewetak, even though the array of potential food options seems much broader in Hawai'i than in the outer Marshall Islands.

Food as an Index of the Social Condition

Food has long been recognized as a central component of human endeavors. In *Ancient Society*, Lewis Henry Morgan imagined that the "Arts of Subsistence" were an important part of the naturalized way that the earliest groups of humans foraged in their "restricted habitats" (1985, 20), attempting to show that human subsistence practices became more complex (marked by the transformation of edibles through fire or the transformation of natural gathering through pastoral or agricultural pursuits) as social relationships became more complex. In an analogous way, Malinowski didactically set food aside as a primary or "basic need," an essential part of metabolism that he considered an "interaction culturally framed" (Malinowski 1944, 91). Yet, the tautological idea that all societies must come up with some mechanism to sustain its members reveals nothing about the uniquely cultural contours of "need fulfillment." As Sahlins points out (1976, 170 et seq.), the environment may present broad constraints on the foods that people consume, but what is actually eaten and how, why, when, and where it is eaten are all ordered by conventions of culture rather than by the largess or stinginess of particular environments. The undeniable regime of structuration provided by a certain cultural logic is certainly a critical component of food-related social practices. Yet, formative as it may be, it leaves concerns of relative power, the contested and confluential elements of various social milieus, and a variety of other historical and contextual concerns underexplored. These factors are readily apparent in the choices and practices of Enewetak/Ujelang people.

Quite unlike Morgan or Malinowski, Marx recognized that "modes of subsistence" were inherently social forms rather than natural practices, even if, at their most formative historical levels, he thought they were necessarily communal (1964 ed.). Marx's insight, however, was rendered by theorists like Radcliffe-Brown (1952 [1940]: 190–91) and Fortes (1953) to mean that social structure provided the central driving force of the social order; and other practices, including food acquisition, exchange, preparation, and consumption, were secondary. Food, therefore, became a garnish that reflected, in the conceptual and gustatory domains, larger concerns in the society (Douglas 1984; Leach 2001). In a similar way, many scholars, including distinguished Pacific scholars, have viewed food as a core facilitator of social interaction (Marshall 1981). Although this is certainly not false, I argue that food not only facilitates social interaction, but that it is the primary symbolic domain through which Marshall Islanders, at least, give a certain embodied order to social practices. These distinctions may seem subtle, but like the shift from a geocentric to heliocentric universe, I believe

they help us move further from a Eurocentric view toward a view of Marshallese social action rooted in Ralik-Ratak and Enewetak/Ujelang sensibilities.[1] In this view, food serves as the central constitutional component of lived existence, not just as an amplifier of sounds that derive their resonant contours from another source.

Food as Constitutive of Human Materiality: The Primary Marshallese Transactional Material

In the Ujelang and Enewetak view, food provides far more than nourishment for the (preexistent) body. In the local conceptional view, newborns carry at their core the matriclan substance of their mothers, whereas they are linked to their fathers by blood.[2] A person's core is shaped by clan, whereas external features are linked to genitors, usually indexed by blood. Yet, at times, a woman, just by dreaming about a certain man, can birth an offspring whose external features are like those of the lover of her dreams. Growth processes, analogous to those of plants (both termed "*eddek*"), are promoted by consuming the products of the sea (these provided by men) and those of a certain parcel of land (provided by women and some by men). Through time, these products weave a person's core identity into the land, making them "one with" (or "the same as") that land. As they mature, and invest their own labor in the land, the land, reciprocally, becomes increasingly one with the person who has worked it. And since these same land parcels, on Enewetak, were worked by one's ancestors since the first moments of Enewetak time, one's sharedness with these ancestors is also made manifest through the working of land and through consuming the products of that land. As one becomes old and dies, their substance is then physically blended with that same land, further instantiating the ideas of oneness with that land. And products of the land, the "staples"—or what Marshallese call "real food"—are also at the core of what one eats. These foods, embodying an essence that links a person's core being with the land on which that person labors, and of which s/he is an integral part, provides the consubstantial base of a person's identity and of meals they consume. Indigenous staples included breadfruit, pandanus, coconut and arrowroot. When available, these staples remain important foods in contemporary times although their value has shifted.

It is also critical to eat fish and products of the sea or sky; yet these (like the men who fish or ensnare birds) shape the external features of the body. Eating large quantities of fish lends sheen and beauty to the body, but eaten alone, fish are not a true meal. They are more like "fast food" or "snacks" to be eaten on-the-fly. In some ways analogous to Trobriand

Islanders (Weiner 1976: Ch. V), Enewetak and Ujelang people certainly value the elements of youth and irresistible attractiveness. These qualities may be enhanced by consuming fish and other products of the sea, but such foods are truly complements to a meal and contribute to external beauty rather than to one's core essence.[3] A beautiful young man or woman has been well provided for by their fathers, but the sea products that make them externally attractive (and which come from a common fishing domain) do not ground their core identity. Rather they are expressions of rank: both rank controlled by chiefs (who once received all turtles, whales, and dolphins and then distributed them as they saw fit), and rank that is the manifestation of fishing (or bird-snaring) prowess or comes from sailing skill that frequently accompanies fishing.

A second, complementary set of social practices demonstrates the constitutive effects of food to Marshall Islands life. *Kajiriri* (caring for) and its related form *enajidik(i)* (to feed, fed, etc.) lie at the core of a large set of "relationship-making" practices (*kokajiriri*) that have long been viewed as distant analogues of American adoption. I have explored these practices in another location (Carucci 2008), but they provide an expansive domain in which food is actively employed to create relationships and transmit components of identity. If human bodies and core components of personal identities are made manifest through consuming foods with certain qualities, as noted above, it is equally true that relationship making is accomplished, in large part, through feeding. Indeed, relationships can be made with far greater facility through feeding than through birthing. Furthermore, even relationships made through birthing already incorporate food-sharing relations because newborns incorporate elemental characteristics from their parents that are themselves contoured by other feeding and consumption practices.

It is with this set of local ideas about food, feeding, and eating in mind that I believe we must rethink the primacy of food in Marshallese life. Food is far more than the need to eat that Malinowski envisioned because Enewetak and Ujelang people's ideas of primacy refer to the very constitution of human bodies and to the construction of certain types of identities. Equally, in exchange, food is far more than a facilitator of social relationships; it is the nurturing substance out of which social relationships are made.

From Famine to Feast: The Global Made Local

I would now like to move from this brief consideration of world view and social practices in the 1970s and early 1980s to a historical consideration of

the food practices of the Enewetak/Ujelang community both before and since that time. The rapid social changes forced onto the Enewetak/Ujelang community have proved traumatic in many ways, most particularly in their effects on subsistence, food use, and body form. Yet heart wrenching as these changes have been, they offer the analytic advantage of compressing the historical effects of global capitalism—processes often visible over long periods of time—into a short time frame, placing them in vivid relief.

Changes in dietary practice are long standing among northern Marshall Islanders. Petersen (2009) suggests that what he calls the "Breadfruit Revolution" substantially altered consumption patterns throughout Micronesia in precolonial times. Although the development of indigenous hybrid breadfruit varieties had less significant effects in the northern Marshalls than on more verdant atolls nearer the equator, they still contributed to a more diversified diet. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, colonially inspired shifts to plantation-style copra production had even larger effects on dietary practices and on social relationships. A fairly steady stream of imports had only just begun to have substantial effects on outer island consumption patterns during the era of Japanese Civil Administration when the Japanese military began to appropriate local foods for their own use, subjecting local people to periods of famine. These conditions intensified as the battles of World War II progressed along the "Northern Road to Tokyo."

Unfortunately, the end of the war did not bring an end to times of suffering for the inhabitants of the northern Marshall Islands. As is well known, Enewetak people along with Bikini people were both forced into exile by the United States after World War II to allow military forces to conduct nuclear tests on their home atolls. The effects of these moves on both groups was substantial, with Bikini people first facing starvation on Ronedik (Mason 1948) then, once moved to Kili, having to adjust their subsistence from fish-based subsistence practices on a northern atoll with a large lagoon to a more agriculturally focused approach to subsistence on a coral pinnacle, with a treacherous reef crossing and no lagoon resources (Kiste 1967). The immediate effects included shifts to cyclical periods of famine, when winter surf made the reef crossing virtually impossible, and to alterations in gender relations and the division of labor because men, the primary fishers on Bikini, were faced with considerable challenges to their standard forms of identity construction.

Enewetak people, moved from their homeland to the much smaller atoll of Ujelang in 1947, soon faced cycles of starvation in their new home. As with Kili residents, such traumatic alterations in daily food gathering and consumption practices forced a shift in mental orientation. Many years later

the fear of famine that arose from these historical experiences would contribute to the willingness of the community to accept any alterations to their current foodways with the rationale that "we will never again be hungry." In the short term, however, frequent famine forced Ujelang people to reinstate, or even elaborate on, many of the food practices that people had used in pre-Japanese times just to survive. *Pikukuk*, an unleavened arrowroot loaf moistened with immature coconuts and baked in an earth oven, was a food invented (or reinvented) during this era. Other starvation foods such as "leaf soup" or "baked pandanus runner roots," pushed the margins of "the edible" far beyond the recalled contours of historical consciousness.

If local people's recollections are accurate, social relations on Ujelang also moved toward a more radical separation of male and female roles during this period of time. Nevertheless, these conditions were not just the natural effects of environment operating to give a certain shape to social organization. Rather, at precisely the same moment that the United States focused world attention on Bikini and Enewetak as nuclear test sites and the center of technological development, U.S. policies toward the residents of the Marshall Islands rendered local people as marginal as possible in this internationalization process. These policies moved islanders *back* to traditionalist styles of subsistence and handicraft production that had been unknown for decades if not an entire century (U.S. Civil 1948). Some see this policy as one that fashioned Micronesians into visible specimens in a "human zoo," but this particular zoo was largely lacking in an audience of attentive observers. Certainly, populist images of island life in the postwar era depicted local people as quaint and amorous, if distant from the concerns of the modern world (Moore 1945, 1948; Markwith 1946). These depictions are particularly ironic, in that both the amorous and military/political concerns of the so-called modern world were highly dependent on the direct sacrifices of the same islanders (O'Rorke 1986; Teiawa 1994; Barker 2003).

With equal irony the Peace Corps volunteers, who were sent in the 1960s and 1970s to Micronesia on a self-help mission, became a principle inspirational force that led to greater dependence. Of course, the stated intent was quite different—to improve American-style educational competencies (Carucci 2005), to assist with small-scale agricultural enterprises, to set up purchasing cooperatives, and, in other similar ways, to encourage local people to dedicate themselves to development (Asselta 1971). Rather, as cycles of famine increased in frequency on Ujelang during the late 1960s, as rats overran this small, isolated atoll consuming many critical starvation foods, and as the health of the aged and youngest members of the

community became increasingly endangered, a Peace Corps volunteer on Ujelang convinced local people to stage a strike. Indeed, the strike proved salvational in that it brought some relief from abhorrent conditions, both financial and food related. But it also marked the beginning of what would become a standard U.S. response to food shortage: the provision of a menu of highly processed staples that would eventually lead people to near-total food dependence and epidemic levels of diabetes and heart disease (Carucci 2003, 2003b). Although these food supplies were intermittent between 1968 and 1979, with the return to Enewetak in 1980, they became a daily necessity. Without other options, consuming imported foods was absolutely imperative to the sustenance of human life.

From a foods perspective, what remained constant throughout the span of two generations that followed World War II was a focus on the underlying constitution of acceptable meals. The cultural pattern remained one in which a full meal had to have a food and a drink, and the food portion had to contain a staple and a complement (cf. Carucci 1980; Pollock 1992, 28 et seq.). As noted, the major changes during this time frame, culminating with the repatriation of the Ujelang/Enewetak community to Enewetak Atoll in 1980, involved the move from cycles of famine to an era of "plenty" and, simultaneously, a move from nutrient-dense local foods during the times of starvation to nutrient-hollow "faux foods" in relative abundance following local people's return to Enewetak.[4]

The changes had other substantial consequences as well. Obviously, long-standing cultural beliefs about the way that foods wove personal substance and identity together with the land from which the foods derived no longer fully aligned with the consumption of imported foods. Equally, through becoming nearly 100% dependent on U.S.-supplied foods (at first this seemed a fair exchange to Enewetak/Ujelang people given long-term U.S. use of Enewetak), the contours of day-to-day existence were radically transformed in the community. During the years I lived on Ujelang in the 1970s, most days of the week we had to fish and gather to survive; men focused on fishing and women on gathering (although, again, with men performing certain land-based tasks of provisioning and women certain forms of fishing or sea collecting within the exterior reef) (see Carucci 1980: Ch. IV). Throughout the 1980s, there were virtually no land foods to gather on Enewetak, and during the 1990s, supplies of local foods increased at a very gradual pace, with coconut leading the way, pandanus a distant second, and breadfruit and taro lagging far behind. Even today, local food trees are underproductive, and the produce cannot possibly meet the community's needs. Equally, although fish are available on Enewetak, trees to build and maintain canoes have been lacking for more than thirty years,

and fuel for the outboard motor boats that had come to replace canoes is always in short supply. Under these conditions, fishing has moved from a near-daily pursuit for men to an occasional venture in support of major festive events.

Therefore, during the past thirty years on Enewetak, the ways people became interconnected with the land of their ancestors through daily labor was made impossible at the same time that the contours of the social order were also transformed. With women's gathering at an end and men's fishing radically curtailed, only a few residual elements of daily subsistence practices could be maintained. Women cooked and cared for children, and men built onto their houses or worked on communal projects such as those focused on their church. But their fishing and collecting practices were substantially altered. Many young men and women played cards or bingo; others dedicated far too much time to drinking.

With the daily physical routines of gathering and fishing interrupted and with a plethora of high-fat complements and low-satiety staples, the physical structure of people's bodies changed at an appalling rate. These processes were exacerbated by a lack of firewood on the New Enewetak, which made people highly dependent on small kerosene cook stoves and upon boiling or frying rather than baking and brazing. Within a decade, diabetes and heart disease were rampant, diet-related diseases that were virtually unknown on Ujelang. Thus, by interweaving their bodies with a particular segment of the global marketplace—a segment that depended on the cheapest staple foods and complements—members of the Enewetak community began to fashion new parameters of psycho-physical identity into their bodies. No longer were they made part of particular local land parcels, extended families, and clans through consuming the products of those lands. Rather they have come to be woven into the global marketplace as part of an emergent underclass in relation to their American providers. Although they are active agents who work to differentiate themselves from other members of this class, and while they shape foods in unique ways that reference Enewetak/Ujelang and Marshallese identity in innovative new ways, they no longer control the full array of productive processes that formerly allowed local people to shape all components of their own lives, defining and manipulating an environment from the first moment of life through death.

The United States certainly initiated this exchange of inexpensive, surplus commodities beginning in the late 1960s. Nevertheless, Enewetak people also participated in the determination of its form. They begged for larger quantities of polished white rice, rather than demanding nutrient-dense brown varieties, precisely because they had become accustomed to

white rice during Japanese times and accepted inexpensive American substitutes after the war. They accepted tea and coffee, with plenty of granulated sugar, as a substitute for coconut that would take decades to grow on Enewetak, because these were the drinks they became accustomed to during earlier moments in their various colonial encounters. They welcomed white flour (rather than requesting whole wheat) and readily fashioned it into edible products because they were already familiar with the "clean" white variety and quite unfamiliar with its "dirty" brown (nutrient-rich) wheat sibling. And, lacking firewood to make earth ovens or bake bread, doughnuts, and other high-fat bakery items became the only staples that readily could be made from flour. Therefore, following repatriation on Enewetak in 1980, with few local products to consume, the effects of consuming faux foods provided by the United States struck Enewetak/Ujelang people with amazing rapidity. They continued to follow the long-standing practice of combining staples, complements, and drinks to produce "healthy" meals but with no understanding that the faux foods in every category lacked the nutrient density (*uurn*, "substance content") of local foods, they could resist neither conditions of total dependence nor the negative health effects of an imported diet.

What did not change with the repatriation on Enewetak was the way in which local people continue to rely on food as the central operator in relationship making. Relationships continue to be initiated and maintained through feeding. Foods no longer necessarily make a person part of the land through transmitting elemental components of the land that are embedded in each bite of food grown on a particular land parcel. Equally, labor on land no longer is the normative way of becoming one with the land (although it does continue to operate as one way to demonstrate this end). Nevertheless, participating in food provisioning, food preparation, and the consumption of foods that are thought of as "Marshallese foods" or "Ujelang foods" is still a core component of relationship making. If the rate of koka-jiriri relationships (so-called adoptions) has dropped, it is not because the feeding relationships at their core are no longer feasible. Rather, today's increasingly flexible residence arrangements are manifest as new feeding relationships that are more similar to American notions of fosterage (Carucci 2008). Indeed, over the past forty years, the exchanging of food has increased and feast events, in particular, have become inflated (in terms of quantity if not diversity of products) since the return to Enewetak. Similar trends, although with different constraints, apply to Enewetak/Ujelang people on the Big Island, where a sizeable segment of the community has chosen to migrate.

Food and Identity in a Wider World

If Enewetak people nibbled at the margins of global capitalism when they visited Majuro; and equally, if they fed on the spoils of capitalism on Enewetak (taking whatever set of foods and faux foods the United States would provide), once people moved to Hawai'i, a migration that began in 1991, they were surrounded by a much more elaborate display of capitalist merchandise, including foods. New constraints on consumption presented themselves, however, and the largest of these was limited income. Therefore, in spite of a wide array of goods available to them, much of this food is never purchased. In part, these food supply decisions are based on a lack of wealth relative to extended family size. In part, of course, such decisions are also based on familiarity. Therefore, on Enewetak, the narrow range of foods on which people came to depend continued to be purchased on the Big Island. Cheap staples—polished rice, granulated sugar, bleached flour—form the core of meals. In addition, the nutrient impoverishment that accompanies such a diet continues as well. When I asked several women about these continuities, their answers were all similar to this response:

> Well, as you say, we could purchase corn or green bean(s) here, but we are unable (to purchase) the amount we need to live. In this family (about 18–20 members), maybe we need seven or eight cans. But the amount of change required to buy seven tins will almost buy a (20-pound) bag of rice. With the rice, all of us eat for maybe two days. With the corn, it is gone right now.

Indeed, in some ways, the Big Island diet has become less healthy since another long-standing cultural practice, slightly transformed, continues in this setting. When men, the typical navigators, drive to town, they frequently return with treats for the young children. At times, these may be small toys but, more likely, the treats are candy, cookies, or cola. The old Ujelang pattern was similar: a voyager would return with small tokens from a voyage. But if it was a provisioning trip, perhaps the sailors would bring coconuts or sweet green coconut husk (*kanauei*) from a distant locale or perhaps coconut crabs, lobster, or, on Ujelang, papaya (where the only actively producing papaya were on Kalo, at the furthest end of the atoll). Any unusual item was a treat, but all of the food treats were highly nutritious. Current day food treats are all faux foods, typically "sweets," but many also high in saturated fats.

Because the array of staples has continued to be conditioned on the Big Island by practices routinized through nearly an entire generation on

Enewetak, and while sweet treats limited in supply only by their cost have made the diet less nutritious, the array of complements has actually improved in a nutritional sense on the Big Island. Here the array of canned complements like corned beef and spam available on Enewetak have been replaced with frozen chicken or with laying hens that can be purchased inexpensively after they have passed the time of maximum egg production. Moreover, baking in outer-island style earth ovens, in-home ovens, or in ovens made from 55-gallon drums (for those in less urban circumstances) has replaced much of the frying that was a required routine on Enewetak. Therefore, on balance, dietary practices have not improved in a nutritional sense, but neither have they regressed. Rather, sweet treats on the negative side are counterbalanced by a more nutritious array of complements (proteins) and cooking methods on the positive. Significant improvements in nutritional value, however, are not likely to occur until income levels increase (e.g., Tarasuk, Fitzpatrick, and Ward 2010). Until that point, life just above the poverty level, will keep Marshallese concerns about the costs of more nutritious foods at the front of their minds.

Clearly, Big Island residents are not able to weave their identities into the landscape in the same way that was once possible on prewar Enewetak. Nevertheless, they do engage in sets of practices that draw on the same toolkit of identity fashioning foods. First, as Enewetak/Ujelang people purchased land in Hawai'i, and as they traveled back and forth to the Marshall Islands, they brought sprigs of pandanus, breadfruit, and other favored trees from their home land parcels to plant on the Big Island. Using this mechanism, continuities of identity could be fashioned in this new land (Carucci 2002). Moreover, because of the greater richness of the Hawaiian landscape, Marshallese often bring home mangoes, breadfruit, coconut, and other land products that most residents of Hawai'i either purchase at the store or no longer eat. These products, as well, allow people to define themselves as "truly Marshallese." Fish is a common part of the diet as well, occasionally fished, but mostly purchased from other fishermen friends of an Enewetak/Ujelang community member. Getting rid of fish craving (*jolok batur*), remains, in Hawai'i, a very Marshallese act. Driven by a primary Marshallese "need," fresh fish are hard to refuse even if the price exceeds what a household head knows that s/he should pay for these items.

As Chase Hensel has noted for Yupik people in Bethel, Alaska, not only does food form a primary mechanism for identity construction, its contours shift systematically as people in Bethel move from rural to urban contexts (Hensel 1996: Ch. IV). Indeed, for members of the Enewetak/Ujelang community on the Big Island, food continues to be linked to identity, but rather than weaving one's person into an inextricable unity with the land

parcel on which one's extended family resides, food becomes a deictic marker for what it means to be Marshallese. On Ujelang, "ethnic"-type identities of this scale were used infrequently because there were few contexts in which one's distinctive identity as Marshallese stood in contrast to any "others" of significance. Certainly, one would occasionally hear people contrast themselves with Chuuk people through food practices, most frequently noting that Chuuk residents were enamored with rotten fish (unlike us [Marshallese]). More frequently, one would hear Ujelang people contrast themselves with Marshall Islanders through their food practices, noting that Marshallese ate sea cucumbers or shark.[5] In an inverse way, Ujelang residents noted that Marshall Islanders would not eat dog, whereas most Enewetak/Ujelang people considered it a delicious food. In spite of this occasional reliance on food as a marker of something like "ethnicity," there were a restricted number of occasions when self-definitions of this sort were relevant. In contrast, on the Big Island, where one's identity as an Enewetak/Ujelang person, or as a Marshall Islander, is confronted with the contradiction of not residing in (or on) those locations,[6] food becomes a much more critical deictic marker of something like an ethnic identity. Equally, on the Big Island, one's Marshall Island identity is continuously marked in opposition to a wide array of persons claiming *kama'aina* Hawaiian, *haole*, Japanese Hawaiian, Samoan, or a plethora of other identities. Being Marshallese becomes meaningful here because it supersedes the taken-for granted, and the use of certain genera of foods—gathering and eating breadfruit, for example—becomes a marker of that large-scale identity. On Enewetak, eating a certain type of breadfruit, *betōktōk*, from a certain land parcel, contributed to much more finely grained constructs of identity grounded in residence and interpersonal relationships including those of extended family and clan, but it had nothing to do with defining one's self as Marshallese.

Embedded in stories that circulated among Ujelang community members in the 1970s about starvation and hardship in the 1950s and 1960s were sentiments that demonstrated just how people had survived these times through communal effort and sharing. Indeed, the sentiment in the 1970s remained that "all the people of Ujelang are simply one" (i.e., one large extended family, who **shared** as family as well). Much of this weaving together of the community as "one only" rested on the sharing of food. Yet, looking closely at Jack Tobin's food records from the 1950s (Carucci and Maifeld 1999), or looking at my own records from the 1970s, it is clear that sharing practices were less than equal. The least well-nourished family in Tobin's 1952 survey consumed fewer than one-third of the calories of the best-fed family,[7] and the worst-fed families in the 1970s consumed just over

half of the calories of well-fed families. (Perhaps it is not surprising that there are continuities through time such that offspring of the worst-fed families in the 1950s are among the worst fed in the 1970s, the 1990s and even on the Big Island in 2003 and 2006.)

In spite of stories that suggest "we are all just one" and in spite of many documented occasions when food was shared among various extended families, the sharing may have ameliorated but did not eradicate subtle distinctions within the community that separated those who were well off from others who were not well versed in the skills of life (what Marshallese term *jetali*). Although everyone shares food, sometimes less eagerly than others, the sharing does not eliminate internal distinctions of value in the community. And such value has long been constructed, in part, out of differential food-collecting, fishing, and birding abilities. Because the most highly ranked foods, fish and other complements, contribute directly to external beauty, smoothing the skin and making it reflective and desirable to others, it is not surprising that the relative quantities of these highly valued foods separate those persons and families of highest value from others who have less access to such prime foods. Therefore, food creates distinction in its unequal distribution at the same time that the sharing of food is emblematic of community "oneness" and the eradication of distinction.

On the Big Island, much as on Enewetak, food-sharing events, such as first-birthday parties (*keemem*) and food-sharing events at *Kurijmoj* (Christmas), Easter, "Coming Out of the Holes Day," departures, homecomings, and other times of the year, have been increasingly elaborated. Many people now have "keemem-like" events for graduations and birthdays, and many of the listed events have been further elaborated in their forms. Thus, in every sense, food sharing continues to interweave at the same moment that it creates a frame that differentiates. As others have noted (e.g., Gershon 2007, 482), within diasporic communities, food-sharing events are frequently focused around the church because, unlike events that were "grounded" in place-based exchanges between islets, districts, atolls, or land-parcel units, the church setting has come to be a site continuous throughout the global scene through which recontoured constructions of identity can be expressed. On the Big Island, a shift has taken place in which exchanges that formerly took place solely among members of the Enewetak/Ujelang community are now shared among other Big Island Marshallese. The fact that the Enewetak/Ujelang community dominates this group, constituting perhaps 50% of its membership along the Kona Coast, has eased this transition for those who trace their ancestry to Enewetak. Indeed, the sharing of food, especially through

public exchange, continues to be the prime mode of "relationship making" on the Big Island.

At the same time that sharing creates unity, those who give with greatest largesse are set apart from others who are overwhelmed by the pace of food production in excess. The unlimited array of goods has certainly led to an elaboration of food sharing. Although the array of edibles has been elaborated in certain ways—through the addition of such feast foods as "potato salad," for example—it has also receded in a variety of other ways (the loss of earth-oven-baked unleavened bread, *nurbuton*, or unleavened baked arrowroot bread, *pikukuk*). Indeed, many foods once readily available on the outer islands of the Marshall Islands are less frequent. Yet, when they appear, as imports from the Marshall Islands, they are hyper-valued because of their scarcity on the Big Island. What has increased unabashedly has been the overall quantity of food given along with the frequency of food-sharing events.

In combination, these new events place great strain even on the most *pojak* (well-prepared, well-situated, or literally ready) of participating families. One well-positioned family on the Big Island sold their car to get enough money to begin to plan for their granddaughter's first birthday celebration. Then, after calculating the costs of such a celebration and weighing their options, they decided to send the mother and father of the child, along with the infant, back to the Marshall Islands to hold the keemem rather than face the extraordinary costs of such an event on the Big Island. In spite of the fact that they contributed considerable sums to the Marshallese keemem, the expensive trip proved a less costly way to approach a first-birthday celebration when compared to their attempt to stage a local event. In this case, five members of this large extended household were working full time but only one with an above minimum-wage job. The main household head and his wife had given up on their full-time jobs to reintegrate the various segments of their family who were spread out along the entire Kona Coast of Hawai'i. Even though this was a highly ranked family in the Marshallese community, without those sources of income, a local keemem of any scale was not an option.

On the other hand, in another case, two adult twins, members of the transnational Enewetak community, one from Majuro, the second from Honolulu, came from their homes to stage a special combined keemem for their children/grandchildren on the Big Island. This, too, was a costly event, but combining the keemems allowed for a more impressive event. Moreover, because one of the adult male twins was a candidate for Mayor and the second was planning to run for the Senate seat from Enewetak, the event proved to be a timely occasion to garner support for their candidacies

among Big Island Enewetak residents. Multifaceted in intent, identities could here be interwoven and distinguished through a single event.

From Famine to Feast

Food frequently forms one of the most meaningful and lasting markers of identity, even among people who retain no significant connections to a homeland or to ethnic group members outside of their own families. Rituals of lefse production and consumption are common among a number of my Norwegian friends in Montana who, in other respects, have only residual links to their Scandinavian heritage. Comparably, my own mother of British and French stock studiously studied under the tutelage of my half-Italian aunt to learn to cook sumptuous lasagna and other types of Italian cuisine that constitute my family's strongest link to any type of "Italian-ness." Similarly, for Enewetak/Ujelang people, Marshallese food (*mona in Majel*) is discussed as a central component of what it means to be Marshallese, no matter how radically the consumables that people ingest have been transformed during the colonial era. Given the formative position of foods in shaping the bodies and kin networks of Enewetak/Ujelang people, it should come as no surprise that the physical and social sources of food, the cultural contours and content of food as a consumable, and the ways it is shared with others make food a vastly richer symbolic medium for fashioning and flaunting identities than is the case with my mother's lasagna. From linkages that are produced by consuming the coconut toddy of a certain tree to the shared message, "we are all Marshallese," conveyed through eating rice and fish as finger food, the multidimensional ways that food produces and expresses the characteristics of persons and groups of Marshall Islanders is truly stupendous.

Food's identity-embedding significance has been maintained in spite of its massive transformation under colonialism. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, commodity capitalism has provided many working materials Marshall Islanders have used to transform their lives. The long-term outcome has been a loss of control over a large number of daily routines that allowed people to maintain food self-sufficiency (Carucci 1980: Ch IV). For Enewetak/Ujelang people, the newly adopted subsistence routines and practices has resulted, in a very short time frame, in the exchange of bodies that were exemplars of physical strength and healthfulness for bodies floundering in folds of fat, diseased with diabetes and arteriosclerosis.

Nevertheless, in spite of the radical shifts in food provisioning and the deleterious effects manifest in people's bodies, food remains a core transactional medium for Marshall Islanders. Indeed, the supply of food is no

longer limited by local environmental conditions but only by availability in local markets and the purchasing abilities of any extended family. If working a particular parcel of land and consuming the products of that place no longer provide a consistent primary practice that interweaves the identities that a people and landscape share (as di Enewetak and di Ujelang: the people of the place and the place brought into being by centuries of labor of its people), consuming foods secured by family or community members, preparing those foods in certain ways, and exchanging and consuming them with others in accord with culturally proscribed rules are as important as ever. Indeed, particularly at feasts, these communal practices have been intensified and elaborated. With migration to urban and transnational locales, the sharing and consumption of foods has become an even more iconic process that marks "who we are as Marshallese," as Enewetak/Ujelang people, or as a particular family claiming ongoing rights to a specific place on Enewetak, a place associated with certain foods.

There are numerous ambivalences in these processes, but those uncertainties are equally important markers of the contours of life in the contemporary worlds of Enewetak/Ujelang people today. Residents of the New Enewetak worry about a new era of starvation in a world where they are dependent on uncertain funding sources to maintain supply ships that provide them with their food. Enewetak/Ujelang people in Majuro now apologize to guests for not having prepared any food for a midday meal. Those apologies mark a recently emerging social practice in a place where jobs are in short supply and there is not enough money to purchase food for three meals each day. And on the Big Island, Enewetak/Ujelang people debate the importance of a properly elaborated first-birthday celebration in relation to the cost of fuel, telephone service, or the payment of a past-due notice on a parcel of land. These discussions are a means of negotiating the effects of default in any one domain on a family's ability to project and maintain a feasible and empowered identity in communities of varied contour and importance.

In the face of such diverse circumstances and in the context of a concomitant set of rapid and substantial changes, food retains its central symbolic place in relationship making and in the fashioning of meaningful social identities. These new identities are certainly less self-assured than in the past, precisely because the symbolic molecules out of which they are fashioned are no longer entirely of local provenience. Nevertheless, in daily practice, their principles of combination still allow Enewetak/Ujelang people in many different locales to see the products and operations as uniquely their own. This new set of practices—moving foods from place to place across an ever-expanding international landscape, combining staples and complements in innovative "Marshallese" ways, and exchanging and

consuming foods in accord with principles understood to be of primordial vintage—demonstrate the vitality and centrality of food in the construction and maintenance of the vibrant contours of living persona and of social relationships among Marshallese in the current day.

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NOTES

1. Ralik-Ratak are indigenous designations for the windward-facing and leeward- (or rear-) facing chains of the contemporary Marshall Islands.

2. This does not mean we should presume that "blood" ties are anything like what Americans mean by "blood," a symbol which has shifted its content significantly from the time of Lewis Henry Morgan (1877) through the investigations of David M. Schneider (1968). Schneider contends his American consultants meant something like "shared biogenetic substance" by blood, whereas consanguinity for Morgan was prebiogenetic, involving flows that linked beavers and humans in common pursuits of morality and industry (McKinnon 2001: 278–88).

3. Ujelang people certainly recognize that this is a cultural model with differential effects on different types of humans. They frequently laughed at me when I felt lethargic after not eating any fish or other complements during times of starvation. Indeed, they had already theorized that Americans were different constitutionally, because they simply surmised (correctly) that I was feeling weak and lethargic, I did not tell them. And they said that the cause was "because I was a dipalle 'white person/American,' not Marshallese." (As I have noted elsewhere, in many other circumstances, they would say I was Marshallese, but in this bodily constitution sense, they posited that I was different.) In their thinking, Americans needed complements (fish/meats) because they were differently woven into their core identity (which Ujelang people know has more components transmitted through males), than is true for themselves, where one's core identity comes from one's mother's clan and is vivified by staples: land foods, which themselves are associated with women.

4. I say in "relative abundance" because the U.S. promise to care for the nutritional needs of Enewetak people held fast for the first decade and a half after their return to

Enewetak. But in 1997, the first threats of a new wave of hunger periods struck the atoll when promised supply ships did not arrive on time. This left the community in greater panic than the times of starvation they had experienced on Ujelang in the 1970s because, if the community were to consume local foods on Enewetak, they would be forced to break the U.S.-imposed tabu against eating local foods, and yet, they would have no choice but to eat a radioactive diet that would lead them to a slow death rather than not eat foods from tabued locations, which would lead them to a more immediate end.

5. Enewetak/Ujelang people thought these foods were despicable, and shark, in particular, was prohibited to them because of the totemic tabu associated with the shark clan, di Pako. While this clan was dying out, many people carried "the blood of di Pako" (through male links with this doomed matriline), and these patrilateral links were strong enough to cause them to honor the tabu.

6. di Ujelang means first and foremost, "a person of Ujelang" although, of course, Ujelang is far more than just a physio-geographic location.

7. It is estimated that the worst-fed versus the best-fed family on Ujelang in 1952, during a time of food shortage (but not a severe famine), consumed the following percentages of an ideal U.S. RDA diet (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. **U.S. RDA ideal level.**

Nutrient	Worst-fed family	Best-fed family
Calories: (2,538 target)	31%	93%
Cholesterol	21%	67%
Sodium	5%	11%
Fiber	13%	63%
Iron	32%	115%
Vitamin A	3%	43%
Vitamin C	19%	93%
Calcium	11%	38%
Protein	25%	69%
Carbohydrate	37%	131%
Total fat	25%	42%
Saturated fat	101%	109%

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