



Mary Mattingly, Biosphere, 2015. Courtesy of Mary Mattingly, the Bronx Museum of the Arts, and the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de la Habana.

## Museum of the City of New York Serves Up “Food in New York: Bigger Than the Plate”

An Indoor/Outdoor Exhibition Exploring How and What New Yorkers Eat and Why It Matters

Featuring works by 20+ contemporary artists and designers  
thinking creatively about the future of food and food systems

Opens September 16, 2022

Press Preview: September 13, 2022 – 10 AM-12 PM

NEW YORK, NY (September 6, 2022) – Behind every tempting package of processed food at the corner bodega; every carton of fresh berries from a street cart; and every enticing restaurant meal lies an intricate, massive, and changing network of relationships. The **Museum of the City of New York’s** new exhibition, ***Food in New York: Bigger Than the Plate*** examines the powerful connections between New Yorkers—and countless others across the globe—fostered by food. The exhibition, which originated at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum, now adapted to focus on eating and food systems in the Big Apple, *Food in New York: Bigger Than the Plate* is anchored around issues of sustainability and resiliency, labor justice, and equitable access to food. Opening September 16<sup>th</sup>, the indoor/outdoor show marks the first time that the Museum’s back terrace will be utilized as exhibition space.

“Food is the lifeblood of New York City, and so many of the stories that we share about the city center on the ways in which food connects us to each other, to our culture, and to nature,” says **Whitney Donhauser**, Ronay Menschel Director of Museum of the City of New York. “Many of the biggest issues we face globally—from the climate crisis to public health and workers’ rights—are inseparable from how and what we eat. This exhibition serves up a generous portion of the history of the food industry in the city, along with an ample helping of ideas about how we all can get involved and address the issues at hand today.”

**Food in New York** is organized around three themes:

- **Producing:** The land and water in and around today's five boroughs once provided more than enough food to sustain the Native communities who lived here. Once European settlers took over the land, the output changed and, by the end of the 19th century, the city was a major center of food industries. With the rise of trading networks, New Yorkers began to outsource their food production and deindustrialization sent manufacturing elsewhere. The current system's vulnerabilities are laid bare in the face of emergencies such as Superstorm Sandy and the COVID-19 pandemic, as stores struggled to keep their shelves stocked. This section examines some of the innovative ideas and efforts to identify new approaches to creating food locally.
- **Trading:** Since the early 1800s, the city has offered relatively inexpensive, high-quality, and diverse foods through an evolving and expansive network of food sellers, from street vendors to bodegas, public markets and more. This section explores the processes that bring our food to us from far and near as well as the possibilities for re-imagining and re-designing food transportation and distribution.
- **Eating:** New York is known for many things, including its dining experiences. Today, cuisines from all over the world commingle with spots serving favorite local fare in some 23,000 restaurants and eateries -- the most in the nation. From home-cooked meals made in the city's sometimes comically small kitchens to the hole-in-the-wall dining spots and the swanky eateries scattered throughout the town, this section chews on the issue of food system fragility, and the work of innovators who are envisioning new ways to make our eating experiences more affordable, accessible, tasty, and sustainable.

"We hope that visitors will come away with an understanding that there are alternatives to the way we deal with food in the city. When people see how radically different things were in the past and how unnatural and complicated our food system has become, it will be a call to action to change it," says **Dr. Monxo López**, curator of the exhibition. "Just as we have arrived at this system, it's in our control—as consumers and active residents of the city—to make the changes to adapt and make it better. If we did it in the past, we can do it again."

"Global food systems are facing significant challenges and it's up to us as stakeholders and creative thinkers to redesign it to make it more equitable, sustainable, and affordable," says Dr. **Fabio Parasecoli**, Professor of Food Studies in the Nutrition and Food Studies Department at New York University and consulting curator for the show. "**Food in New York: Bigger Than the Plate** showcases the work of artists, designers, activists, and people who are proactively working on ways to reshape the future of food in the city and around the world."

The show features work by 20+ contemporary artists and designers using their crafts to imagine solutions to key global and local food-related challenges. The centerpiece of the inside gallery will be **Mary Mattingly's Biosphere** -- a structural ecosystem that will be growing native plants in saltwater.

Other artists' work presented in the show include:

- **Suzanne Anker's Twilight**, a sculpture composed of flowers, nuts, bees, butterflies, beetles, found objects, Petri dishes and more
- **David Allen Burns & Austin Young's Fallen Fruit**, a colorful archival watercolor painting on organic fabric

- **Stefani Bardin's *Spooky Action at a Distance***, two vintage gum-ball machines from the 1950's retrofitted to dispense a series of actionable climate change "bites"
- **Björn Steinar Blumenstein & Johanna Seelemann's *Banana Passport* and *Banana 'Made In' Label*** exploring the provenance of the yellow-hued fruit
- **Máximo Colón's** specially commissioned photo project featuring some of the *Nourishers* of the museum's neighborhoods (Harlem and El Barrio/East Harlem)
- **Pablo Delano's *Soy Vaquero y de Bayamón*** photograph of shelves in a bodega
- **Steve Ellis'** hyper-realistic oil paintings of kitchen/cooking equipment
- **Tom Fruin's** colorful plexiglass and steel *Bombora House*
- **Maira Kalman and Rick Meyerowitz's *Sub-Culinary Map*** illustration, reimaging New York's subway map by using food names
- **Miguel Luciano's *Pimp My Piragua***, a customized tricycle-turned-piragua cart and sound system, that will be activated once during the duration of the exhibition
- **Bruno Mesz, Marcos Trevisan, & Mariano Sigman's, *A Synesthete's Still Life***, a specially commissioned experimental piece involving touch, smells, and sound
- **Jan Mun's *BeeSpace: To Go***, a portable beehive
- **Naima Penniman's *Foresight***, a painting honoring visionary African ancestors who, in the face of kidnapping, braided seeds into their hair before boarding transatlantic slave ships as security for an uncertain future
- **Nur Saltik's *Share.Food.Tableware***, ceramic plates and cups designed to playfully encourage people to share food and drink by tilting the vessels in different directions, rewarding them with a warm glow of color from underneath as they do so
- **Marije Vogelzang's *Faked Meat*** sculptures depict meatless versions of animal products as well as inventing imaginary meat-free animals
- **Uli Westphal's** images from *The Cultivar Series*, a growing collection of photographs that reveal the mind-boggling diversity of crop cultivars
- **LinYee Yuan/MOLD Magazine's** food manifesto, *Your Mouth Has Power* and *Solstice Kitchen*

As well, *Food in New York* includes the presentation of several rarely seen objects from MCNY's 750,000 object collection, such as:

- **Charles Frederick** and **William Mielatz** photographs depicting downtown Manhattan from the late 1800s/early 1900s
- **Albert Friscia's** painting *Scavengers* (1935)
- **Philip Rosman's** etching *Passover* (1925)
- **Alexander Alland's** photograph *African American Family at the Table* (1930s)
- The recently restored *Diorama of The Fly Market* (1930s)

Visitors will have the opportunity to savor all the flavors of the city via talks, tastings and special events accompanying the new exhibition:

- **Cocktails & Culture: BBQ & Beer**  
**Friday, September 16, 2022, 6:00PM**  
**Free! Registration required.**  
**In-person**  
 BBQ, beer, and live music, anyone? Dig into plates of ribs and chicken, sample new ales, lagers and ciders, and enjoy live music at our September edition of *Cocktails & Culture*, celebrating

the opening of *Food in New York: Bigger Than the Plate*. Food and drinks available for purchase from Hudson Smokehouse, a pioneer BBQ spot in the Bronx, and the MCNY Beer Garden.

- **“Eat Your Heart Out” year-long event series, co-presented by Museum of Food and Drink (MOFAD):**

- **Historical Foodways**

**Thursday, September 22, 2022, 6:30PM**

**Tickets: \$40**

**In-person**

**Co-presented by MOFAD**

What happens when communities are created through immigration? What foods do they recreate, and how do they transform when native ingredients are no longer available? Join us for a look back at New York's historical foodways, particularly during periods of mass migration.

Award-winning cookbook author and culinary historian **Grace Young** will speak about the foodways of the Chinese community in NYC during the late 1800's. Author and historian **Hasia Diner** will discuss the other immigrant communities that lived next to the Chinese in the Lower East Side during this period of mass migration: the Jews, the Italians, and the Irish. Chef and scholar **Scott Barton** will take us uptown to Harlem to consider how the Great Migration changed the foodways of Harlem, and we'll talk and taste oysters from **Ben “Moody” Harney**, founder of Mother Shuckers, a nomadic oyster cart that harkens back to the days when New York City was a bustling port town with oyster carts lining the streets. Moderated by **Julia Moskin** of *The New York Times*.

The ticket price includes an oyster tasting from Mother Shuckers and a period cocktail crafted by cocktails historian **Dave Arnold**.

- **Halal and the City**

**Thursday, November 17th, 6:30PM**

**Tickets: \$40**

**In-person**

**Co-presented by MOFAD**

Where does halal food fit into the context of New York City dining? And how do issues of religion, class, and bureaucracy impact the halal food that's available and who is able to sell it?

In an evening led by **Krishnendu Ray**, author of *The Migrant's Table* and *The Ethnic Restaurateur*, we'll learn the answers to questions such as these and more as we hear from a New York City halal food street vendor and **Mohamed Attia**, director of the Street Vendor Project. Additionally, we'll go beyond the street cart with **Sameen Choudhry** of Muslim Foodies, a NYC halal restaurant blog run by three women who are seeking to bridge the gap between the mainstream restaurant and halal restaurants.

After the discussion, we'll taste halal chicken over rice and falafel over rice, two of the

classic halal dishes you'll find sold by New York City's halal food street vending community.

- **Rice Cuisines in Harlem**  
**February 2023 (specific date and time TBC)**  
**Tickets: \$40**  
**In-person**  
**Co-presented by MOFAD**

More events and details to be confirmed.

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Exhibition created by the V&A and Museum of the City of New York. The MCNY installation was designed by Marissa Martonyi.



**Social: @MuseumofCityNY #FoodinNYC**

#### **About the V&A**

The V&A was established in 1852 to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers, with a collection of over 2.8 million objects, unrivalled in their scope and diversity, spanning 5000 years of creativity. Today, its purpose is to champion creativity, inspire the next generation, and spark everyone's imagination. [vam.ac.uk](http://vam.ac.uk)

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#### **About the Museum of the City of New York**

The Museum of the City of New York fosters understanding of the distinctive nature of urban life in the world's most influential metropolis. Winner of "Best Museum" in *Time Out New York's* "Best of the City 2021" and multiple American Alliance of Museums (AAM) awards, MCNY engages visitors by celebrating, documenting, and interpreting the city's past, present, and future. To connect with the Museum's award-winning digital content, visit [www.mcny.org](http://www.mcny.org); or follow us on Instagram and Twitter at @MuseumofCityNY and on Facebook at [Facebook.com/MuseumofCityNY](https://www.facebook.com/MuseumofCityNY).

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