Welcome From the Editors

Welcome to *Digest* 8:1/2, a special issue on "Foodways in Hard Times."

Hard times are unsettling. They can test us in ways that shake us to the core, make us question our values, and leave us uncertain about the future. As the posters of countless pictures of sourdough bread and other baking projects shared on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated, foodways can be an importance resource for people to draw on when the going gets tough. For at least some of us, foodways have the power to help refocus and to redefine our past, future, and/or ultimately ourselves.

This issue on Foodways in Hard Times had its beginnings in a graduate class Diane instructed entitled "Food and Culture" in Memorial University's Department of Folklore during the Winter semester 2021. To infuse more energy into a seminar offered remotely, she suggested that the students write papers that, if they wished, could be revised to submit for consideration to a journal. When Diane approached Theresa, the idea of the special issue took shape. With memories of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown of March 2020 fresh in everyone's mind, the class settled on foodways in hard times as a compelling theme, although from the beginning the scope of papers extended beyond the pandemic. In the end, six of seven students in the course submitted their work to this issue (the seventh had other commitments for their paper). Lucy Long, Director of the Center of Food and Culture (https://foodandculture.org/) contributed an article based on the work of the Center on comfort foodways during the pandemic, and Jillian Gould, a faculty member in the Folklore Department at Memorial, offered a recipe and personal reflection. Five book reviews rounded out the issue. Diane and Theresa worked with the authors over several drafts; Sarah Shultz provided assistance with editing.

Together, contributors to this special issue explore intersections between hard times and foodways across time—from the 1940s to the Covid-19 pandemic, and space—drawing on a patchwork of places including Japan, India, Bangladesh, Russia, Canada, and the United States. They consider the big picture through explorations of Covid-19 patterns and ramen trends as well as the singular and the personal through a focus on one food or autoethnographic examination of foodways in an individual's life. Together they shake up assumptions, asking us to rethink familiar concepts like comfort, home, community, tradition, and authenticity. They push us to consider the power of informal models of food sharing and community building, and ways of being a family. Importantly, they highlight the agency of vernacular foodways and offer hope going forward.

The significance of foodways during the Covid-19 pandemic is this subject of two articles. Lucy Long spent much of the pandemic thinking about comfort foodways and their role in people's lives. Her article, "Finding Comfort and Discomfort Through Foodways Practices During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Public Folklore Project," describes the Center's cross-cultural project that resulted in the "Comfort Foodways [virtual] Exhibit" https://comfortfoodwaysexhibit.wordpress.com/. Long encourages us to think broadly, settling not on the notion of comfort food, but on comfort foodways. Rather than privileging the preparation and consumption of food that often first come to mind, she considers other

dimensions—including production, procurement, presentation, and cleanup/disposal—to be equally expressive. As Long moves from discomfort to comfort, she asks us to reconsider conventional meanings of comfort food.

In "A Return to Tradition: The Significance of Baking During COVID-19," Juliana Young narrows the focus, offering an autoethnographic exploration of the meanings baking held for her during the pandemic's initial lockdown. Drawing on David E. Sutton's work, Young reflects on how baking brought her home; it was a "return to the whole." Baking's physicality helped create sense of agency and food photos shared with family members were an important source of connection. Her focus on memory and connection are themes that run throughout this issue.

In Roshni Caputo-Nimbark's "Seed Swaps and Sunday Sauce: Lessons about Sharing Food in Hard Times," the author looks to the past for models of food sharing. Drawing on her mother and paternal aunt's narratives of growing up in Gujarat, India and Brooklyn, New York from the 1940s through the 1960s, she explores informal food economies in hard times. Caputo-Nimbark argues that anecdotes about culinary resourcefulness, mutual aid networks, and food-centered festivities highlight economic practices that are unacknowledged or undervalued in capitalocentric discourse but that are as central to the fostering of community and sustainability today as they were in the past.

Ainjel Stephens extends the examination of food's interconnections to community in "Authentic-Ish: Ramen, Culinary Tourism, and Canadian Foodways." In her article Stephens asks why ramen, a dish with origins in nineteenth-century food shortages in Japan, has become so desirable. Through an autoethnographic examination of two Canadian restaurants, she explores ramen's transformation from a food of poverty and points to ways that ramen conflates and contests socio-economic status, cultural identities, and racial identities in complex ways.

In the final article, "Bread, Berries, and Fish: Food and Fairy Encounters in Newfoundland," Karin Murray-Bergquist looks at intersections of foodways and fairy lore in Newfoundland and Labrador. She considers the importance of both bread and berries to fairy narratives before reflecting on the total absence of fish, a surprising silence given cod's centrality to the economy and culture historically. In exploring foodways' links to perceptions of the environment in stories of fairy encounters, Murray-Bergquist investigates concepts of locality, scarcity, and abundance.

The two research notes in this issue tease out the multiple meanings found in a single food. Drawing on oral interviews as well as published sources, Israt Jahan Lipa explores Bangladeshi rice culture. She points out that in Bangladesh, rice is home food, festive food, or, in hard times, a food of survival. Rice pervades Bangladeshi customs, rituals, and daily activities and Lipa shows how it can be both a marker of distinction and a powerful uniting force. For Dana Modell, the meanings of kasha are personal; it is the food that first comes to mind when she thinks of hard times. In "Kasha: The Mighty Buckwheat Groat," Modell explores the role of kasha in her family's foodways. In considering kasha within the

framework of survival/survivor food and refugee food practices, she reflects on how those practices inform her own experience of and relationship to it.

In the Amuse Bouche section, Jillian Gould uses mandelbroit as a vehicle to remember her mother, Marilyn, in all her complexities. As Gould shares her memories and her mother's recipe, she brings together the threads of foodways, memory, and connection that run through the issue in a very personal exploration of loss and resilience. The issue concludes with five book reviews by Charley Camp, Ema Kibirkstis, Claire Schmidt, Sarah Schultz, and Jackie Thursby.

While folklorists more commonly have focused on the celebratory functions of foodways at holidays or rites of passage, the work shared in this issue speaks to the value of looking closely at the mundane. The authors convincingly argue that ordinary practices and daily foodways have as much or more to reveal as those connected to bigger occasions and that foodways can be deeply meaningful not just at life's happiest moments but during the harder times as well.

Diane (Tye) and Theresa (Vaughan)