

What I'm Reading (Nov. 1)



By Chuck Dinerstein — November 1, 2019

From what may have been the first fake science news to the actual road between farm and table (with a stop to admire the writing of NY Times restaurant critic). It's autumn in New York.



Image courtesy of pasja1000 on Pixabay [1]

“Around 12 million people were listening, most got the joke. It was Halloween after all but if you consider that about 1 out of every 12 people ... who heard the broadcast thought it was true and that some percentage of that 1 million people ran out of their homes, towels over their faces, clutching children, breaking limbs. Well, that constitutes a major freakout.”

October 30th was the eighty-first anniversary of one of the greatest and perhaps the first science “fake news” – the Mercury Theater broadcast of War of the Worlds. I wrote about it about a year ago; you can find my thoughts here. What is more intriguing is the backstory that can be found here as a transcript or as a podcast from Radiolab, one of the early originals and one of the best of the genre.

Foodies, and I am a confessed one, love farm to table. It can mean knowing the provenance of your foods, where they were grown, under what conditions, and by whom. Or it can merely be food coming to your plate with the fewest intermediaries, the farmer, and the chef. In reality, the

logistics of our food are both awe-inspiring and at times, a bit disturbing. Our nutritional infrastructure is hidden in plain sight. Perhaps we would appreciate and care for it more if we saw it more clearly.

“All Americans, from urban to rural are connected through the food system. Consumers all rely on distant producers; agricultural processing plants; food storage like grain silos and grocery stores; and food transportation systems. ... The food supply chain relies on a complex web of interconnected infrastructure. For example, a lot of grain produced throughout the Midwest is transported to the Port of New Orleans for export. This primarily occurs via the waterways of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.”

From the Conversation, a look at the road from farm to table, [We mapped how food gets from the farm to your home](#) [2].

“Diners who walk in the door eager to hand over literal piles of money aren’t greeted; they’re processed. A host with a clipboard looks for the name, or writes it down and quotes a waiting time. There is almost always a wait, with or without a reservation, and there is almost always a long line of supplicants against the wall. A kind word or reassuring smile from somebody on staff would help the time pass. The smile never comes. The Department of Motor Vehicles is a block party compared with the line at Peter Luger.”

When I was a younger man, I made the pilgrimage to Peter Luger – an iconic steak house with what was then a Brooklyn sensibility. But fuhgetaboutit. This week, the NY Times restaurant critic, Peter Wells, wrote a [scathing review](#) [3] awarding them no stars. His writing was beautiful, alternating snark with on-point criticisms, I am jealous. He has made a bit of a career out of those snarky moments. Here he is [discussing](#) [4] Guy Fieri’s restaurant in Times Square.

“What exactly about a small salad with four or five miniature croutons makes Guy’s Famous Big Bite Caesar (a) big (b) famous or (c) Guy’s, in any meaningful sense?”

Finally, with the World Series over, Halloween in the rearview mirror, and the stores amping up for the lost weeks between Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years, it is time to pause.

It’s autumn in New York

Why does it seem so inviting?

Autumn in New York

It spells the thrill of first-nighting

Glittering crowds

And shimmering clouds

In canyons of steel;

They're making me feel:

I'm home

From the great American songbook, a classic from 1934. While I admit I am partial to Frank Sinatra's recording, I offer you instead, the [beautiful saxophone](#) ^[5] of Charlie Parker.

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[1] <https://pixabay.com/photos/foilage-reading-book-literature-3741244/>

[2] <https://theconversation.com/we-mapped-how-food-gets-from-farms-to-your-home-125475>

[3] <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/29/dining/peter-luger-review-pete-wells.html>

[4] https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/14/dining/reviews/restaurant-review-guys-american-kitchen-bar-in-times-square.html?_r=0

[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_KaNwqdlz50