

# Martha Rosler and Josh Neufeld Food Riot? Food Riot!

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*I began writing The Art of Cooking in the mid-1970s and periodically revisit the manuscript. A mock dialogue between Julia Child, the early television chef schooling Americans in how to produce haute cuisine at home, and then New York Times restaurant critic Craig Claiborne, it uses food and the construction of elevated taste ("art") to explore value and its relation to gender, class, race, and colonization. The present episode centers on access to food. Specifically, it takes on the people's right to affordable high-quality food – and the repeated effort to either get fair prices, with government support, from producers and middlemen or otherwise obtain and distribute food by other means, such as by seizing and allocating it via actions often called food riots, which are a recurring form of people's justice.*

*Josh Neufeld and I have worked on this comic off and on for about a year, and its topicality and resonance have varied as we did so. In the run-up to publication, when hoarding and price gouging scarred the coronavirus pandemic response, the comic, as already written, seemed to pitch itself in one direction. But as we are about to go to press, with the comic still unchanged, a different question of justice is at stake: people's right to demand justice and equal treatment as well as equal access to social goods under the law in every aspect of life. No justice, no peace.*

– martha rosler

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## Photo sources and references:

**Julia Child photo:** Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University

**Craig Claiborne photo:** adapted from the cover of Craig Claiborne's *A Memoir with Recipes: A Feast Made with Laughter*.

**Page 5, panel 4:** Charles S. Whitman, Governor of New York. From the George Grantham Bain collection at the Library of Congress.

**Page 7, panel 2:** Cover of the *International Socialist Review* (April 1917)

## Articles on the riots:

"Women in Bread Riot at Doors of City Hall: With Babies in Arms they Cry for Cheaper Food – Dispersed by Police," *New York Times*, February 21, 1917.

"FOOD SEIZURE BY COMMISSION, GOVERNOR'S PLAN," *The New York Times*, February 23, 1917, p. 1. Also quoted in "Food Prices Create Disorder," *The American Produce Review* vol. 43, 1917.

e-flux journal #110 — June 2020 Martha Rosler and Josh Neufeld  
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# Food Riot? FOOD RIOT!

A visualized excerpt from "The Art of Cooking: a (mock) dialogue between Julia Child and Craig Claiborne"

by Martha Rosler and Josh Neufeld

IT'S THE MID 1970S. The U.S. is in the midst of a food craze, with gourmet food, vegetarianism, macrobiotics, foreign foods, regional specialties, and whathaveyou occupying the public's attention. Everyone agrees that there is art in cooking, if only we could locate and learn it. **Julia Child** and **Craig Claiborne** have been meeting regularly to discuss a question that occupies them: If cooking is Art, what is the art of cooking?

Their conversations occur on bus benches, in train stations, restaurants, diners, bistros, and libraries, as they ponder the question -- citing everyone from Kant to line cooks, from Trimalchio to Brillat-Savarin -- of where in the hierarchy of artistic endeavor cooking finds its place.

Julia has captured the hearts of millions of women who see her on public television, in her suburban kitchen, showing them, without airs or snobbery, the basics of French cooking, the standard of civilized dining. Craig, from his high perch at the *New York Times*, is the premier arbiter of fine dining, and at the pinnacle of his profession.

As our scene opens, Julia and Craig are in a small eatery, discussing farming and food distribution, when they are interrupted by a no-nonsense, forward-thinking young feminist who has periodically dropped in on them.

Today she seems a bit more on the *sour* side than usual.



The role of **JULIA**  
will be played by  
a **STICK** of **BUTTER**

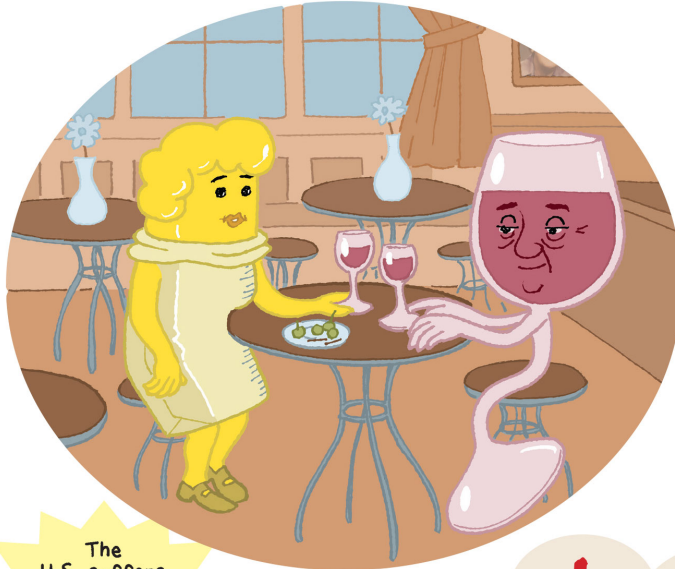


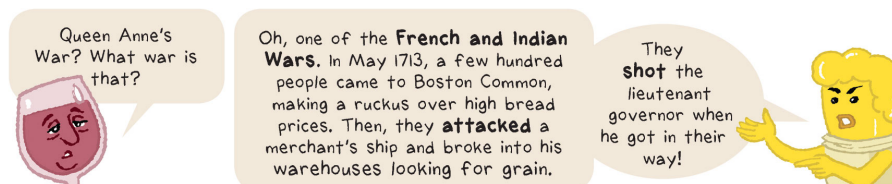
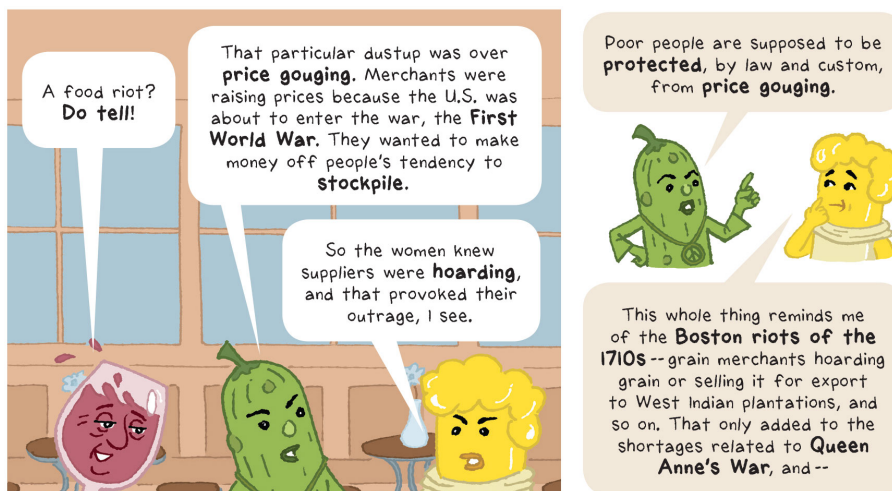
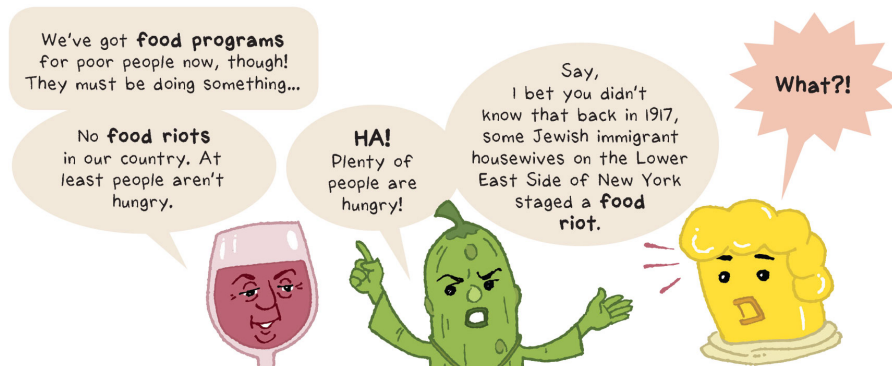
The role of **CRAIG**  
will be played by  
a **GLASS** of **RED WINE**



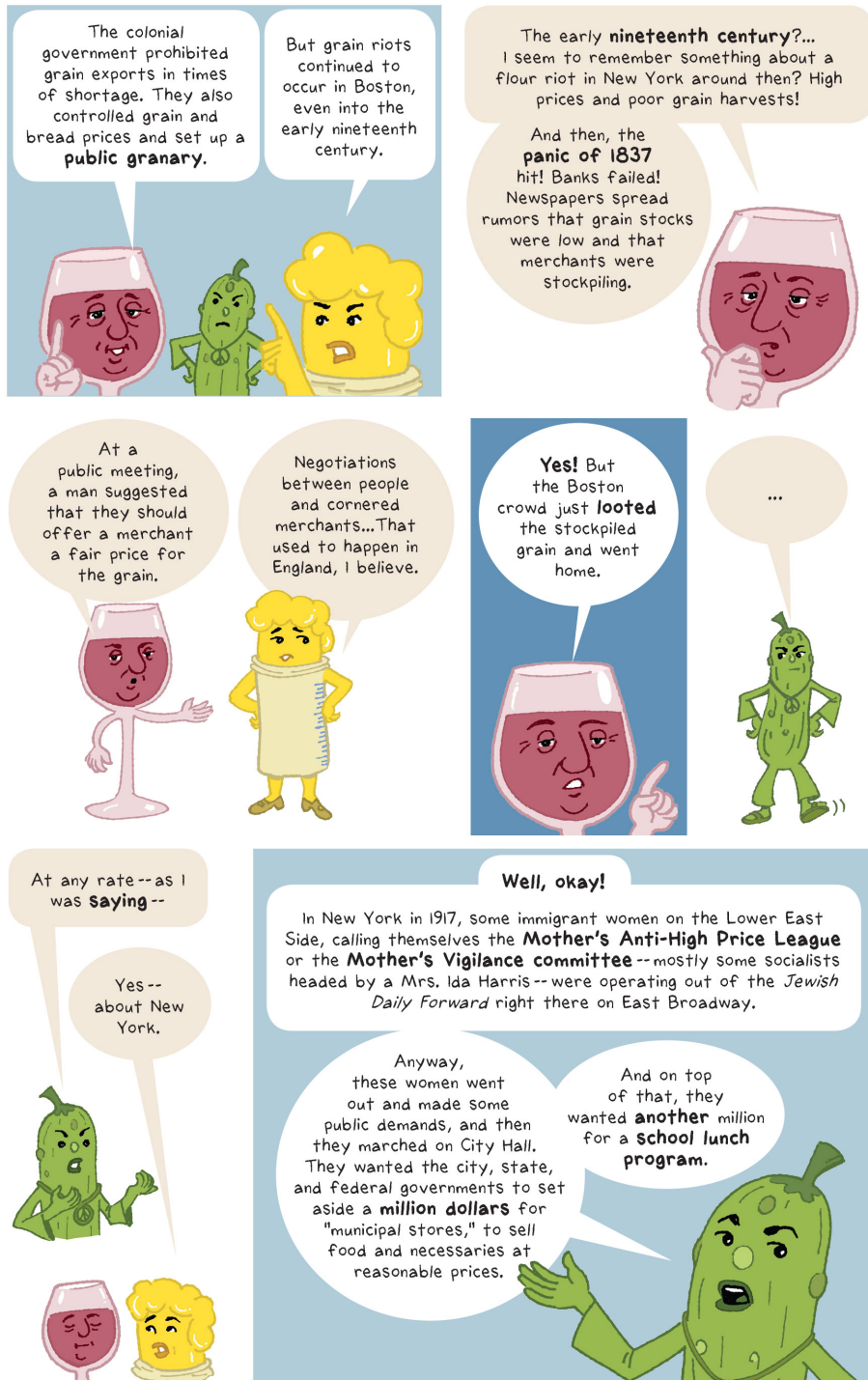
The role of **THE WOMAN**  
will be played by  
a **PICKLE**

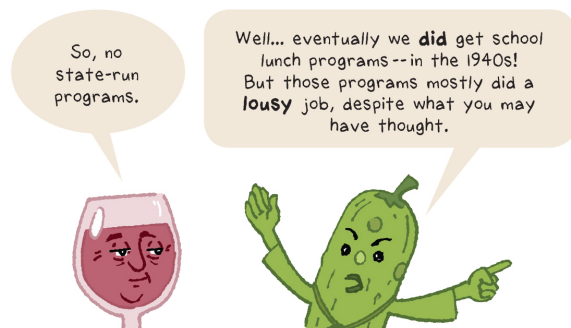
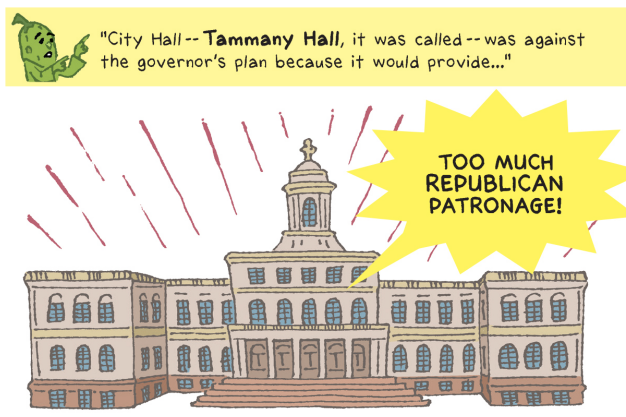
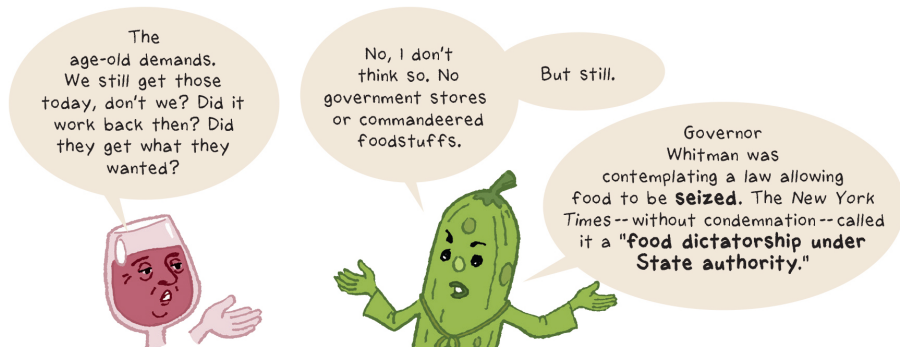












Yes, yes, but then the **Black Panthers** set up a Breakfast for Children program for school kids starting in 1968. It was part of their programs for survival-- "**survival pending revolution.**"



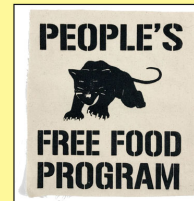
The first food donation came from **Emmett Grogan**, one of the **San Francisco Diggers**--you know, the people who are giving away free food...



"The Panthers' school breakfast program? It spread to more than **forty** Panther chapters in the U.S. And they didn't look for any support from charities or government.

They fed **fifty thousand** or so kids. The meals aimed for nutritional balance, too. Because they were so successful, they also provided some kind of model or pointers for government policy.

**Not kidding."**



But, to get back to my story... Back in 1917, a couple of days after those Lower East Side women made their demands, hundreds of them rushed to City Hall and created **havoc**.



The demonstration--which definitely turned into a **riot**--was led by an anarchist agitator, **Marie Ganz**, along with members of the Mothers' League.

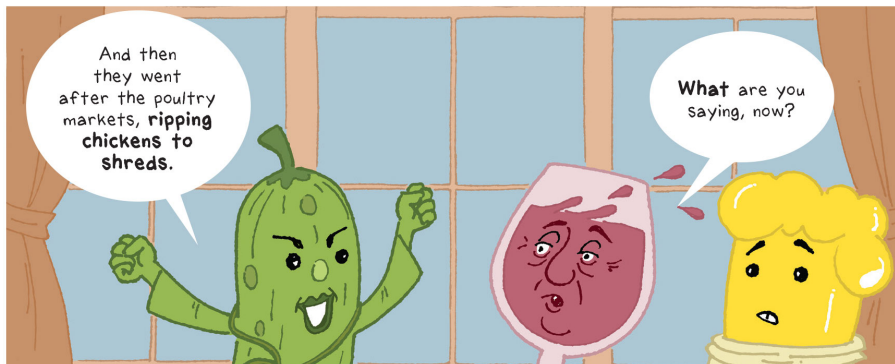
A **proper** riot then!



The women wanted a **boycott** of certain foods with high prices. Rioting spread to other Jewish immigrant areas, and soon women were **overturning** produce pushcarts and **pelting** vendors and cops with vegetables.

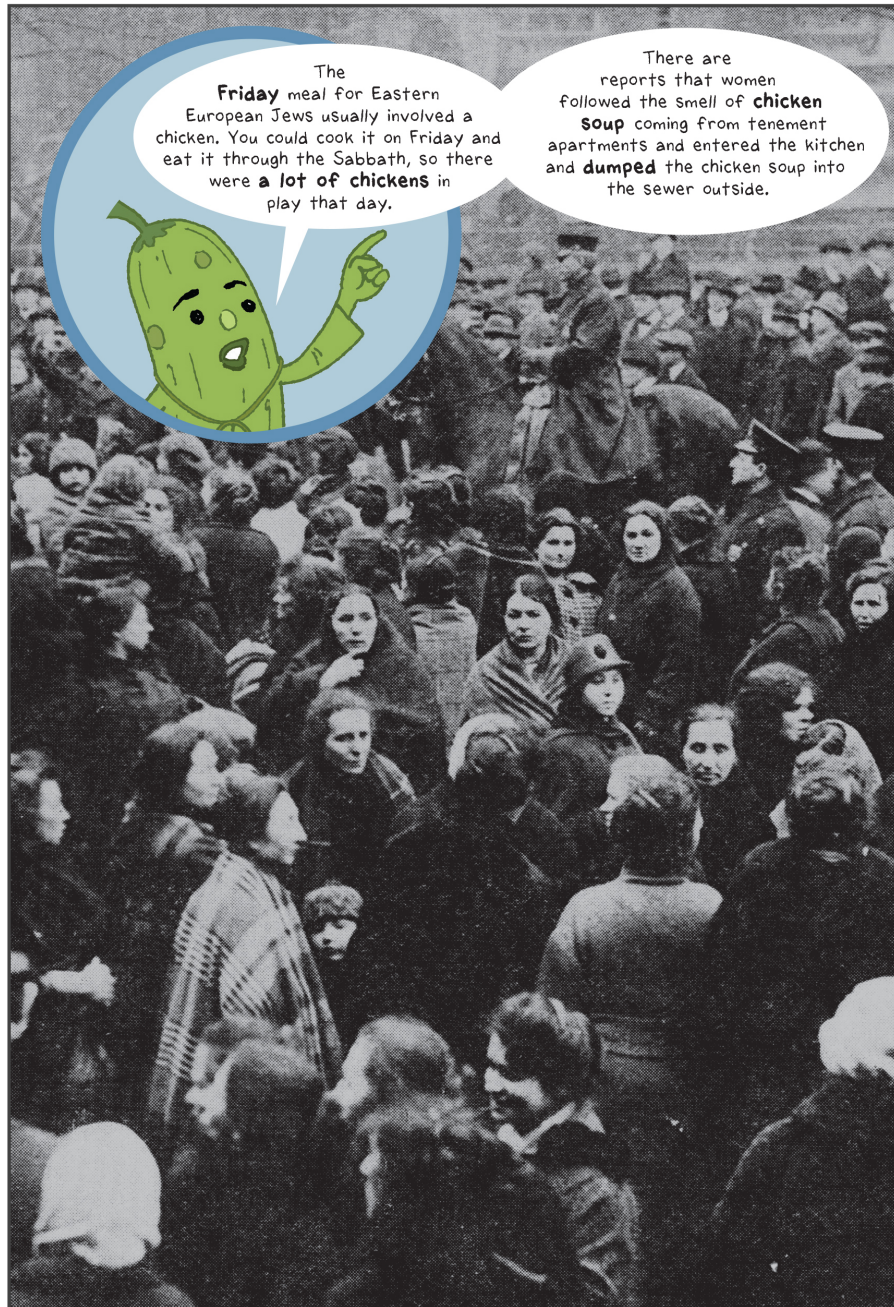


And then they went after the poultry markets, **ripping chickens to shreds**.



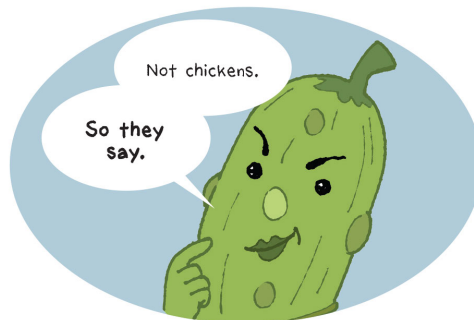
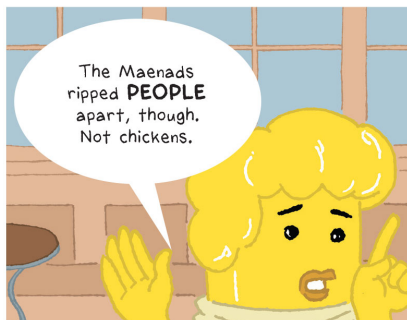
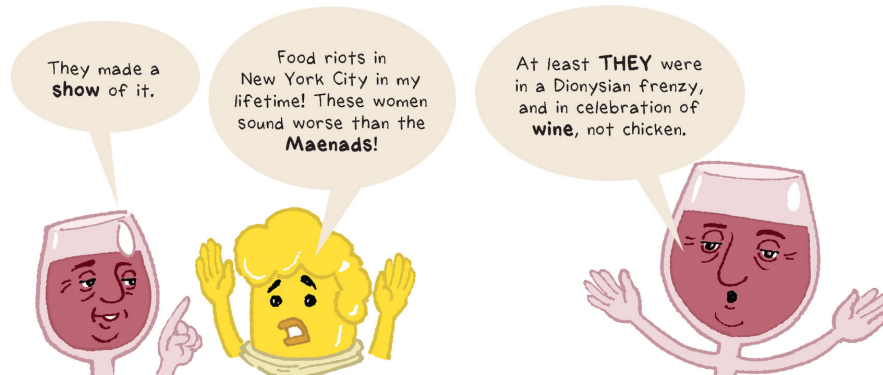
**What** are you saying, now?





The **Friday** meal for Eastern European Jews usually involved a chicken. You could cook it on Friday and eat it through the Sabbath, so there were **a lot of chickens** in play that day.

There are reports that women followed the smell of **chicken soup** coming from tenement apartments and entered the kitchen and **dumped** the chicken soup into the sewer outside.





With her work on food and cuisine; on housing, the built environment, and the right to the city; on sex and gender roles; and on militarism and the national security state – as well as on art, media, and representation – **martha rosler** is intent on tracing the naturalized systems of law, valuation, and belief that structure our world and shape our daily experiences, persistently rewarding members of some groups while constraining others. She hopes that her work, in whatever form and by whatever media, is part of the effort to understand and dismantle these systems of control and cooptation.

**Josh Neufeld** is a Brooklyn-based cartoonist known for his nonfiction narratives of political and social upheaval, told through the voices of witnesses. Neufeld has been a Knight-Wallace Fellow in journalism, an Atlantic Center for the Arts Master Artist, and a Xeric Award winner. His works include *A.D: New Orleans After the Deluge* and *The Influencing Machine*.

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