

*Pumpkin: The Curious History of an American Icon.* By Cindy Ott. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012. xvi, 323 pp. \$26.95.)

Cindy Ott digs deeply and creatively in furrowing a few familiar and many elusive sources in this major contribution to American agricultural and sociocultural history. The subject may be homely and massively fecund (hundreds of pumpkins from one seed) but the book is elegant and erudite in spanning the sixteenth century to the present. Ott traces the pumpkin's place in Indian creation stories; for the European settlers the pumpkin became "a sign of human nature, . . . embodied unbounded lust or lack of civility; as a symbol of a place, it represented the untamed natural bounties of North America; and as an emblem of a way of life, it stood for a rustic peasant existence" (p. 25). The colonists made it a marker of their identity because it grew effortlessly and produced plentiful yields. The consumption rate of pumpkins by humans remained high well into the eighteenth century, after which pumpkins became cheap fodder for cows, pigs, and slaves. Yet it was never the primary symbolic core of the colonial harvest; that would always be corn and grain.

We learn that Amelia Simmons's publication of *American Cookery* in 1796 marked the pumpkin's transition from bland side dish to fine dessert. Simmons helped make the irregular orange sphere an emblem of national culture very different from squash. She cataloged winter squash as a vegetable and pumpkin as a treat to follow the meal. Ott carefully traces its iconic role in the writing of Washington Irving, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Sarah Josepha Hale, Lydia Maria Child, John Greenleaf Whittier, and others.

The pumpkin's association with Thanksgiving comes later than most of us might guess, not until the 1820s and 1830s, while the jack-o-lantern emerges a generation beyond. During the later nineteenth century the pumpkin acquired panache as an important marker of the ever-popular agricultural fairs—emblems of peace and plenty in America. The secular popularity of Halloween surged at about the same time though its roots go way back.

Ott skillfully traces changes in the pumpkin's commercial value, ranging from canning it for pies by 1910 (the key locus being Illinois)

to its role in rural farming as a supplement to family income to its florid emergence at the well-adorned rustic farm stand after World War II. Although the pumpkin began to be emblematic of American nostalgia as early as 1850, that role would be greatly magnified in the later twentieth century, especially as pumpkin festivals sprang up from Keene, New Hampshire, to Half Moon Bay, California. Chapters 6 and 7 are expansive on the subject of the pumpkin's status as a symbol of rural affiliation, especially for urbanites and suburbanites. Ott writes that the pumpkin's emblematic role "has become so much more important than its meat that many varieties, such as those sold by Burpee's, have become eye-catching [gigantic] wonders at the expense of fertility and palatability" (p. 139).

Speaking of highly charged symbols, Ott ends with microfilmed documentation of Alger Hiss's alleged espionage for the Soviets, concealed in a pumpkin patch on Whittaker Chambers's Maryland farm. A bizarre finale to a fine book—it clearly required considerable fieldwork—as mature as it is meticulous. Pitch-perfect monographs expanded from dissertations are not so common. This one is prime, standing as a model for graduate students seeking a creative template for longitudinal dissertation topics.

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*Rethinking Anti-Americanism: The History of an Exceptional Concept in American Foreign Relations.* By Max Paul Friedman. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. xiv, 358 pp. Cloth, \$95.00. Paper, \$32.99.)

Anti-Americanism, as Max Paul Friedman asserts in the conclusion to his second chapter, "seems not to be a useful category for understanding foreign behavior" (p. 86). Yet in his book-length argument he highlights the ways anti-Americanism has historically informed U.S. foreign policy. He does so by looking at it not through the lens of conceptual realism but rather, taking his cue from speech-act theory, by looking at how and by whom the term has been used over time. This brings one crucial aspect of anti-Americanism to the fore: its use as a debater's