

to the Indo-European identification of cattle . . . with virility." Even if beef is somehow a sexier meat than its rivals, its status as an item of consumption has proved to be extremely variable among the Indo-European family of nations which, after all, includes Hindu India, where, as we saw, it is prohibited, not preferred. Another heavy blow to this explanation is that Americans were not primarily beef eaters during Colonial times nor during the last century. In fact, as we'll see, beef consumption in the United States substantially surpassed pork consumption for the first time only in the 1950s. The challenge which must be met is not merely why Americans think beef is good to eat but why there is an order of preference for beef, pork, lamb, mutton, and goat which has changed considerably from Colonial times to the present.

In 1623, Plymouth Colony had six goats, fifty pigs, and many hens. The first cows provided milk, not beef, and did not arrive until the next year. Pigs, goats, and sheep were a more important source of meat then cattle at most of the earliest settlements. William Wood, writing in the year 1633 about Massachusetts Bay Colony, asked, "Can they be very poor, where for four thousand souls there are fifteen hundred cattle, four thousands goats, and swine innumerable?" In 1634 in Jamestown, pork and kid were the only "red meats" eaten by the "better houses."

Goat was the first "red meat" to be knocked off the Colonial dinner table. It faded into the gastronomic great beyond as soon as there were enough dairy cattle to keep the colonies well supplied with milk. Since the colonists used goats primarily as a source of milk, goat meat was a by-product. In competition with cattle, goats can win out as a source of milk and meat only in lands with small farms and scant pasture, the opposite of the conditions which existed in Colonial America. With plenty of land and pasture, American farmers quite reasonably preferred to own one cow rather than four or five goats to get an equal amount of milk. As soon as dairy cattle began to multiply, goats virtually disappeared. To this day the majority of Americans have never tasted goat meat. In fact one can search through a stack of

American cookbooks from the *Joy of Cooking* to the *James Beard Cookbook* without encountering a single recipe for it. The few Americans who consume goat tend to be low-income southerners, especially blacks, with rural sharecropping or slave ancestry, whose parents never owned enough land to keep a cow. Goats are also in favor among the generation of back-to-the-land ex-hippies whose small farms are better served by one or two small animals rather than one large expensive cow. And not surprisingly, Hispanic Americans who live in the arid scrublands of the Southwest and whose ancestors were small-scale farmers and herders also like goat meat. The association between goat meat and impoverished and exploited racial and cultural minorities has been bad for the goat's gustatory image and helps, I think, to explain why goat meat actively repels the average American almost as much as horse or dog meat.

What about sheep? Sheep—especially lamb—ranks considerably higher in terms of gustatory prestige than goat, but far below cattle and pigs. Per capita consumption of mutton and lamb—mostly lamb—in the United States is tiny compared with the amount of mutton and lamb consumed in other countries. Sheep became bad to eat and bad to think for reasons similar to those which brought about the downfall of the goat. Sheep can only be an efficient large-scale producer of animal flesh if lamb and mutton are by-products. This explains the prominence of lamb and mutton in traditional British cookery; they were by-products of the raising of sheep for wool. The British ate sheep culled from the flocks which provided wool for England's woolens industry. In their haste to shear more sheep, big landowners destroyed the forests of northern England and Scotland and forced the peasants to stop farming and take up herding. Intensive grazing prevented the regrowth of trees, and the peasants went hungry for lack of crops. Sheep thereby acquired a central place in British cuisine as well as a reputation for being an animal that metaphorically ate both trees and people (unlike goats, which literally eat trees).

A curious side effect to the reign of the sheep in Scotland was