Culinary Imagine - Nation

images in this post from exhibition's promotional materials, heritage photograph therein by TopFoto, Credit: John Topham/ TopFoto. 1951.



Culinary Imagine - Nation is the final outcome of a multifaceted action, following on work with a student group of KU Leuven Cultural Studies in collaboration with the Centre for Agricultural History (CAG) in Leuven: the theme on food culture is par excellence a subject that leans itself to Citizen Science initiatives. The activities include a physical exhibition and a seminar, organized at KU Leuven.



The exhibition is on display at KU Leuven University Library for a month, opening on 3 March 2023. The exhibition is organized by KU Leuven with collaboration and support of TopFoto UK, Photoconsortium, CAG, Roger Viollet of Paris, and is linked to the project CitizenHeritage.

"Culinary Imagine - Nation" explores the building of a French gastronomic identity through the lens of images and material culture spanning from the end of the 19th century to today. Focusing on four inter-related themes, savoir-faire, terroir, patrimoine culinaire, and francité, this exhibition examines aspects of nation-building rooted in food products and practices.

From showcasing the economic and cultural role of local products, to highlighting the significance of 'intangible' concepts such as savoir-faire, to tracing the influence of politics and policies in shaping global trends in culinary heritage, in this exhibition we question the construction of heritage, the relativity of history, and the concept of authenticity with an eye towards uprooting national narratives and looking towards hybridity. Among the reproductions, we are pleased to include exceptional works such as the photographs of Harold Chapman, Janine Niepce, Jean Roubier, and Jacques Boyer (to name a few), alongside collections from the National Library of France (BnF).