"Eye appeal is buy appeal": business creates the color of foods, 1870-1970

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Abstract: This dissertation examines the American food industry’s persistent attention to color from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. In the late nineteenth century, producers, retailers, and intermediate suppliers began devoting enormous resources to determine and create the “right” color of foods, which many consumers would recognize and in time take for granted. This initiative to manipulate the color of foods involved large sectors of the U.S. economy, creating new business partners and networks among different industries. The management of food color also transformed merchandising systems and the ways products were presented to consumers. The dissertation illustrates these complex – and colorful – processes, implemented by various agents, including dye makers, food processors, farmers, grocers, advertising agents, and government agencies. While firms influenced and propagated public perception about the “natural” color of foods, consumers’ strong, sometimes stubborn, notions about how food should look in turn affected corporate activities. Government policies on food safety stimulated the integration of color manipulation into food businesses by regulating, and encouraging, the industry’s color control practices. The dissertation explores how administrators, scientists, and corporate managers, across the realms of politics and business, constructed and conceptualized the color of foods. I trace the place of color in the discussion of food purity and adulteration, the development of food engineering, and the transformation of food marketing and merchandising systems from the Progressive era to the Post-World War II period. At the turn of the twentieth century, the invention of synthetic dyes and innovations in packaging and retailing technology transformed the function of color for food businesses. Color-controlling technologies afforded manufacturers and retailers new ways of coloring foods economically, consistently, and conveniently, allowing for a new level of control and standardization. As the labor and technology involved in manipulating food color changed, food companies utilized color as a marker of consistent quality and brand identity that would appeal to consumers’ eyes in the market transaction. To assess how color became the dominant means of presenting and understanding food quality, the dissertation analyzes how various agents manipulated the color of foods at different stages of food chains from production, transportation, and retailing to home consumption. By examining the color of agricultural produce as an indicator of naturalness, freshness, and ripeness, I demonstrate that dynamic relations between culture, ecology, and economy created the color of foods, which many consumers considered “natural.” I also investigate how firms created and presented, as well as constructed the mass market for, processed foods, including canned and frozen foods, that consumers had never before seen or eaten. As massproduced foods flooded into the American kitchen in the mid-twentieth century, food companies promoted colorful dishes, such as Jell-O and decorated cakes, as a way for women to express their aesthetic tastes. In highlighting ideologies about gender and industrialization embedded in narratives about food coloring in the household, I examine how ideas about purity and artificiality became closely intertwined in mass consumer culture.

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This coin has eye appeal that's somewhat below average for what you would expect of the grade. The luster could be a little dull. Perhaps the coin was dipped one too many times or the toning is a little dull and dampens the luster. The color could be a little splotchy or the toning a little embedded. The contrast on a proof or proof-like might be a little off. The depth of mirror on a proof might be below average. This is a coin with toning that is downright ugly for the grade. The color could be very splotchy in a very unattractive way, or the toning very dark and very deeply embedded. Totally Ugly toning can subtract up to two points from the "technical" grade, or be so bad that the coin is a "no-grade" for "environmental damage." 

Ai Hisano, "Eye Appeal is Buy Appeal: Business Creates the Color of Foods, 1870-1970," 2016. Stephanie Lampkin, "It Is Supposed They Went through the Indian Nation: The Intersections of Black and Native Struggles for Freedom and Sovereignty in the Floridas, 1763-1803," 2016. Kimberly Nath, "The British are Coming, Again: Loyalists, Property Confiscation, and Reintegration in the Mid-Atlantic, 1777-1800," 2016. Toni Pitock, "Commerce and Connection: Jewish Merchants, Philadelphia, and the Atlantic World, 1736-1822," 2016. Sally Stocksdale, "In the Midst of Liberation: A Comparison of a Russ The business of advertising is an aspect of commerce that is an integrated part of industrialized and affluent societies that can afford to purchase goods. Source for information on Advertising of Food: Encyclopedia of Food and Culture dictionary. In the 1920s daily newspapers were best suited to advertise foods and other products that were bought on a regular basis. Magazines that were to be read by a particular social class or group carried advertisements for foods and other products that would likely be consumed by them. Advertising Targets. Much food advertising is targeted at women, the main buyers of food in the household. Food advertisements use a range of appeals to promote a product. Rational appeals tend to be used for healthy foods.