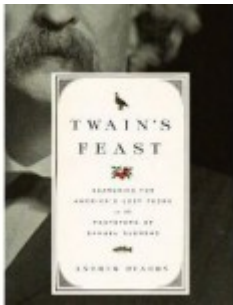


Book details Twain's 'eat local' mantra

By Stephanie Fosnight, OakPark-Leaves

If you thought the “eat local” mantra was just the latest foodie fad, then think again. While traveling Europe 131 years ago, Mark Twain pined from abroad for the local flavors of America, flavors that – thanks to the twin revolutions of industry and the railroads – were already on their way out.



“He talks about how the hotel food in Europe is dry, tasteless and stingy. When he talks about American food, it’s always this fresh, vibrant, alive food; things you could have from the garden, often things that were really local,” said Andrew Behrs, author of Twain’s *Feast: Searching for America’s Lost Foods in the Footsteps of Samuel Clemens*.

The idea for Twain’s *Feast* came when Behrs was reading Twain’s travelogue *A Tramp Abroad*, a memoir of the famous author’s 1879 travels through Europe. When Behrs stumbled upon a “fantasy menu,” an 80-item paean to American food that Twain created while abroad, Behrs knew he’d found a book that was not only historically interesting but also pertinent to the current food debates.

In his menu, Twain lovingly references such dishes as “Illinois prairie chicken” and “trout from Tahoe Lake.” These highly local references made Behrs, a food writer who also authors historical novels, sit up and take notice.

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