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Pizza is a vegetable

Sr. Rose Pacatte | Nov. 21, 2011 NCR Today

In the ongoing debate about food in the United States, Congress outdid itself Thursday by siding with the french fry and pizza industries and declaring, or reaffirming, pizza as a vegetable because it has two tablespoons of tomato paste per slice, thereby securing its place on the school lunch menu.

Here is Anne Thompson's report on NBC Nightly News on Nov. 18. [1]

Norman Wirzba's book "Food & Faith: A Theology of Eating" (2011; Cambridge University Press, New York) [2], is filled with ideas and quotes that I would love to send members of Congress, especially as we approach our national religious holiday of Thanksgiving. In chapter six , titled "Saying Grace," Wirzba writes of God's intention that food delight us and that to offer thanks "defines people as creatures who not only ingest and digest their food but relish it as a medium of life and love."

Wirzba then goes on to promote a culture of slow food and to excoriate the "fast food" way of life promoted in the media and supported by government structures.

He quotes Eric Schlosser ("Fast Food nation; 2001): "Fast food does not facilitate or encourage contemplation, nor does it promote an affectionate regard for what is eaten. Fast food is an industrial product in which ingredients are chosen because they can be efficiently and profitably grown, readily manipulated and recombined, easily transported and stored, and then mindlessly prepared. It is food that has been cheapened and made as uniform and ubiquitous as possible. In it there is little respect for eaters, food providers, cooks, or the animals and plants eaten."

Then Friday, on the way home from seeing "Twilight" and "Happy Feet 2," I was listening to a commentary on NPR's "All Things Considered" [3] about a new hybrid apple, the "Sweet Tango." To grow this new apple, farmers must apply for a license from a consortium (if they don't like you they will deny your application) and then only sell back to the consortium.

The patenting of life continues, as does the commoditization of food and the objectification of those persons who consume it.
Pizza can taste very good, but not even the U.S. Congress can redefine it as a vegetable.

Yet as Wirzba says on page 5: "The way we think about food depends on how we name and narrate the world in which we eat."

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Links:
[1] http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3032619/#45347175
[2] http://www.amazon.com/Food-Faith-Theology-Norman-

Wirzba/dp/0521146240/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1321665648&sr=8-1
[3] http://www.npr.org/2011/11/18/142518957/managed-apple-creates-a-buzz