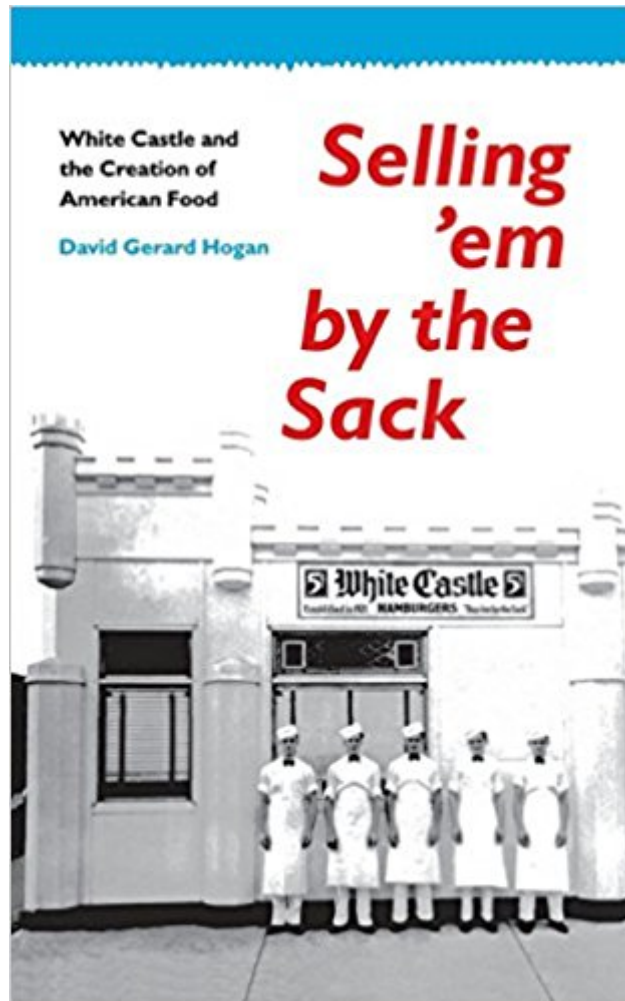


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Selling 'em By The Sack: White Castle And The Creation Of American Food



Synopsis

In the wake of World War I, the hamburger was still considered a disreputable and undesirable food. Yet by 1930 Americans in every corner of the country accepted the hamburger as a mainstream meal and eventually made it a staple of their diet. The quintessential "American" food, hamburgers have by now spread to almost every country and culture in the world. But how did this fast food icon come to occupy so quickly such a singular role in American mass culture? In *Selling 'em By the Sack*, David Gerard Hogan traces the history of the hamburger's rise as a distinctive American culinary and ethnic symbol through the prism of one of its earliest promoters. The first to market both the hamburger and the "to go" carry-out style to American consumers, White Castle quickly established itself as a cornerstone of the fast food industry. Its founder, Billy Ingram, shrewdly marketed his hamburgers in large quantities at five cents a piece, telling his customers to "Buy 'em by the Sack." The years following World War II saw the rise of great franchised chains such as McDonald's, which challenged and ultimately overshadowed the company that Billy Ingram founded. Yet White Castle stands as a charismatic pioneer in one of America's most formidable industries, a company that drastically changed American eating patterns, and hence, American life. It could be argued that what Henry Ford did for the car and transportation, Billy Ingram did for the hamburger and eating.

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Customer Reviews

SELLING `EM BY THE SACK can be perceived and read for any one or more of several reasons. As an informal textbook on business management, or maybe marketing. As a social commentary on

the rise of fast food, or possibly what defines America to the rest of the world. Or, as just a history of the hamburger from a culinary standpoint. The author, David Hogan, effectively makes the case that White Castle and its founders, Billy Ingram and Walt Anderson (especially the former), were the originators of the fast food "carryout" concept, and that they established the humble hamburger as the distinctive ethnic cuisine of the USA. The evolutionary history of White Castle from the early part of the 20th century to the present is described, from its founding in Wichita in 1921, through the Depression and two wars (W.W.II and Korea), to the era of the big chains (like McDonald's and Burger King), which, miraculously, have not brought about its demise. Along the way, Billy Ingram and his successors have successfully coped with an endless series of challenges, the first of which was to make the hamburger perceived as a sanitary and healthy food at all. Then came standardization of the product, national expansion, gaining credibility with and acceptance from the middle class, coping with war rationing, the hiring of women, surviving the rise of the superchains, adapting to suburbanization of the cities, defending against rising urban crime, facing increasing government regulations, and answering the health-conscious critics' attacks on the fast food lifestyle. Today, White Castle survives as a barely medium-sized chain in the north-central and northeast regions of the United States.

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