**Season 1, Episode 15: Sweet Potato Fries x Food Imperialism**

**SPEAKERS**
Marcelle Kosman, Hannah McGregor

**[*Material Girls* Theme plays: "Shopping Mall" by Jay Arner and Jessica Delisle]**

**Marcelle Kosman** 0:30
Hello and welcome to *Material Girls*, a pop culture podcast that uses critical theory to understand the zeitgeist. I'm Marcelle Kosman.

**Hannah McGregor** 0:39
And I'm Hannah McGregor. And today we are talking about a side dish food fad that took the world by storm: sweet potato fries. Marcelle, I love when you come up with topics. **[Marcelle laughs]**

**Marcelle Kosman** 0:54
Hannah, do you remember when sweet potato fries became, like, the biggest thing ever?

**Hannah McGregor** 0:59
Marcelle? Here's the thing about having been a fat person my entire life. I remember every single diet trend.

**Marcelle Kosman** 1:06
Oh man.

**Hannah McGregor** 1:08
The thing that I think people have been thin for most of their lives maybe don't know is that fat people have exhaustive knowledge of diet trends.

**Marcelle Kosman** 1:17
Jesus Christ. I believe you.

**Hannah McGregor** 1:19
I can tell you all about the supposed glycemic index and the way in which different carbohydrates are apparently digested by your body in different ways and why regular potatoes are basically the same as eating sugar. But sweet potatoes, no, no.

**Marcelle Kosman** 1:38
Oh. Oh boy. Have I got an episode for you, Hannah. **[Laughs]**

**Hannah McGregor** 1:45
Oh, man. I do more generally love the way that vegetables enter and exit the zeitgeist. And like, you know, the moment like the brussel sprouts moment of the early 2010s. When we all really decided we were back into brussel sprouts. **[Marcelle laughs]** Which, by the way, we're not doing an episode about this, but that is because they re-engineered brussel sprouts, because they're a different food than they were when we were kids. That's why they taste better now. They're actually just different.

**Marcelle Kosman** 2:15
That's horrifying. Everything about this episode is gonna be horrifying. **[Hannah laughs]** I just—I really need people to know.

**[Upbeat musical interlude]**

**Hannah McGregor** 2:25
It's time for "Why this, why now?", the segment where we dig deep—ooh, is that a root vegetable joke?— where we dig deep to consider the material conditions that allow our objective study to become zeitgeisty, or in this case, zeit-tasty. **[Marcelle laughs]** It's incredible that I can hold so much love and so much hate in my body.

**Marcelle Kosman** 2:50
We contain multitudes, do we not?

**Hannah McGregor** 2:53
We sure do.

**Marcelle Kosman** 2:54
Okay, so what I have today is a straightforward happy story about how the humble sweet potato became a global saviour in health and nutrition. Here's the timeline. It's the early 1990s. Generally speaking, white people are not interested in sweet potatoes, except as an occasional side dish at Thanksgiving. Also in the 1990s, studies are showing that vitamin A supplements can reduce child mortality by 20 to 30%. So world health and food research organizations are thinking about easier ways to get more vitamin A into little kids. One of those international food research organizations is called—get ready, we're going to use this phrase a lot—the International Potato Center, more commonly known by its Spanish acronym, the CIP, and it focuses on—get ready—potatoes. **[Laughs]**

That includes sweet potatoes and other tubers. But as we're going to learn, sweet potatoes are kind of its whole identity. Okay? So the CIP gets big into researching and breeding sweet potato varieties to increase vitamin A. There are a lot of sweet potato varieties, like literally hundreds, like so many, and with the biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato," the CIP finds itself a winner.

**Hannah McGregor** 4:17
Oh, okay. Wait, no, I have a question about that.

**Marcelle Kosman** 4:21
No, no, no, no, shhhh. Don't worry about it. We're just gonna blow right past it. The only problem is that this biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato" variety is not native to Africa and the colour and moisture level make it a hard sell to the locals. Just going to take a quick moment to add here, I gotta be specific because I'm going to use this phrase similar to CIP, gonna use this phrase constantly throughout this episode, when I say biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato", you need to know that "orange-fleshed sweetpotato" is in scare quotes because it is the literal name of the thing.

**Hannah McGregor** 4:58
It's not the label in the grocery store.

**Marcelle Kosman** 5:01
No, no, it's not.

**Hannah McGregor** 5:02
I wish it was, though.

**Marcelle Kosman** 5:03
**[In silly voice]** "Orange-fleshed sweetpotato." **[In normal voice]** Also "sweetpotato" is one word. It's confusing. Okay. All right, so we are entering the mid-1990s to late-1990s. The CIP and its partners are basically, functionally peer-pressuring Kenyans and Ugandans to get on the biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato" train. They are, and I'm not joking, putting on plays. They're using the color orange in marketing materials. They're using the word "sweet" in marketing materials. They are distributing pamphlets, t-shirts, hats, anything to convince the locals that orange is *cool* so they'll eat biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes". This process takes years, funding is scarce, and this program is still fairly localized to Uganda, Kenya, and eventually, Mozambique.

**Hannah McGregor** 5:57
Okay, Marcelle. I've really got to ask, at this point—

**Marcelle Kosman** 5:59
No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Just wait, you're gonna love it. You're gonna love it. We're gonna fast forward to 2007–2008, okay? I don't know if you remember, but during this period, grain prices were in a state of global crisis. Wheat prices literally doubled. Nobody could afford to eat food. It was chaos. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which had just started investing in agriculture the previous year, all of a sudden gets really into sweet potatoes. Turns out, white people love sweet potatoes. Who knew?

In fact, by 2009, the biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato" research was so successful that the CIP "mainstreamed breeding for orange-fleshed sweetpotato as its flagship product, and orange-fleshed sweetpotato became a dominant component in their communication strategy." In other words, the health benefits of biofortified "orange-fleshed

sweetpotato" was now a globally accepted fact.

**Hannah McGregor** 7:09
Okay, but like, when we talk about—

**Marcelle Kosman** 7:13
No, no, no, it's a happy ending, it's a happy ending. Just listen, you're gonna love it. Between 2010 and 2013, a bunch of American and European nutrition organizations—more white people!—start funding the incorporation of biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato" into their own national nutrition programs. So like, Ooh, test studies in Africa show that this is successful, so now white people will use it.

Around the same time, local governments, NGOs and other investors in Sub-Saharan Africa start taking seriously the industry advantages of biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes," things like, ooh, agroprocessing the biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato" roots to make flour and starch products and other processed food additives. Families are healthier, new jobs are popping up, everybody wins. And that, my friends, is the straightforward, totally not complicated, happy-ending story of why sweet potato fries got super zeitgeisty.

**Hannah McGregor** 8:20
Marcelle?

**Marcelle Kosman** 8:21
Hannah.

**Hannah McGregor** 8:22
Can I ask some questions now?

**Marcelle Kosman** 8:23
Okay. Yes. Thank you. Thank you for your patience. I appreciate it.

**Hannah McGregor** 8:27
Yeah, no worries. I loved your tidy narrative. But I want to maybe poke

a couple holes in it. Let's start with biofortification. Is that, like, genetic engineering? **[Marcelle and Hannah laugh]** Are you being paid by Big Sweet Potato? What's going on?

**Marcelle Kosman** 8:50
The CIP has currently got me in shackles over here.

**Hannah McGregor** 8:54
Big "orange-fleshed sweetpotato"?

**Marcelle Kosman** 8:57
Big *biofortified* "orange-fleshed sweetpotato". Yeah, yeah.

**Hannah McGregor** 9:04
I mean, it sounds like genetic engineering and genetic modification. So are we looking at the popularity of sweet potato fries being a product of genetic engineering being reframed as socially acceptable among health-conscious demographics who don't like genetically-modified organisms?

**Marcelle Kosman** 9:25
So because biofortification came up a lot in my research, I had to do some digging to really make sure I understood what the term means, because you're right, it sounds exactly like genetic engineering.

**Hannah McGregor** 9:38
I'm not against genetic modification, I gotta say. **[Marcelle laughs]**

**Marcelle Kosman** 9:44
Yeah.

**Hannah McGregor** 9:45
I'm not looking for things to say "no GMOs." Because human, genetically modify crops.

**Marcelle Kosman** 9:53
That's right.

**Hannah McGregor** 9:53
We always have. That's how we got edible corn. So there's lots of kinds of genetic modification, but then there's sinister corporate genetic modification.

**Marcelle Kosman** 10:03
Yes. So the thing about biofortification is that it is possible to do it using selective breeding, and that's the kind of genetic modification that you're talking about, that over centuries, we selectively breed plant varieties to enhance certain characteristics. It's not unlike dog breeding, which we've talked about before. Creepy; however, it's a thing that humans do. We like to splice and move things together. Okay?

**Hannah McGregor** 10:34
Yeah, we like to do science. It's like one of our main things.

**Marcelle Kosman** 10:36
It's true. We love science. Big content warning, this episode is about science. Let me also add that part of why biofortification is particularly useful when it comes to improving and enriching food items is that it's easier for humans to get the vitamins they need from food than from supplements, especially if you're looking at rural areas. And especially if you're looking at exploited areas that say are "still developing" because a colonialism happened and totally ruined their economy and their standards of living—

**Hannah McGregor** 11:15
Traditional foodways.

**Marcelle Kosman** 11:16
—traditional farming and agricultural practices. So when it comes to biofortification, the term doesn't necessarily refer to genetic engineering done with evil intention.

**Hannah McGregor** 11:28
Okay. Yeah.

**Marcelle Kosman** 11:29
Although it might be done with splicing and breeding.

**Hannah McGregor** 11:32
But you can do things in a lab that are useful, I think?

**Marcelle Kosman** 11:35
Not that I'm aware of. But you know, I hear you. **[Hannah laughs]** Now, whether the biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato" itself was biofortified using conventional breeding methods, like genetic engineering in a lab, is a bit unclear, because until around 2005, all of the breeding research and development of the biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato" was conducted by the CIP, the International Potato Center.

**Hannah McGregor** 12:04
**[Laughing]** And their shadowy cabal.

**Marcelle Kosman** 12:05
And while the CIP doesn't have clear ties to biotech corporations, like say, Monsanto, some of its research partners do. It's sort of commonly known that Monsanto funds food and seed research development in universities all over the world.

**Hannah McGregor** 12:24
Mm hmm.

**Marcelle Kosman** 12:24
And it is also true that in 2014, the CIP appointed Dr. Barbara Wells as its Director General, and she used to work for Monsanto. It's like part of her CV.

**Hannah McGregor** 12:37
This sounds very suspicious.

**Marcelle Kosman** 12:39
Yeah. So I haven't found any CIP publications that say the biofortified

“orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes” are [not] genetically engineered. But I did find two publications that suggest that they were conventionally developed. Okay, I’m gonna give you one—

**Hannah McGregor** 13:01
So like, via crop—

**Marcelle Kosman** 13:03
Via breeding.

**Hannah McGregor** 13:04
—manipulation, rather than...yeah, okay.

**Marcelle Kosman** 13:06
Yes, crop manipulation, selective breeding. So according to an article called—man, science people know how to write article titles. According to an article called “Patterns of Political Response to Biofortified Varieties of Crops Produced with Different Breeding Techniques and Agronomic Traits,” published in 2007, there was a genuine reluctance among consumers in Mozambique to eat genetically-modified varieties of sweet potato. And so the organization HarvestPlus had to launch “a public relations campaign to convince officials and consumers that the orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes were not genetically modified.”

**Hannah McGregor** 13:51
Sorry, Harvest *plus*?.

**Marcelle Kosman** 13:54
That’s right. And it’s one word: HarvestPlus.

**Hannah McGregor** 13:56
Cool. So there’s no way an organization called HarvestPlus isn’t into genetic engineering, right? **[Marcelle laughs]**

**Marcelle Kosman** 14:03
So similar to the International Potato Center, the CIP, HarvestPlus is a food

science organization. Where the CIP's whole deal is potatoes and tubers, HarvestPlus's whole deal seems to just be biofortification.

**Hannah McGregor** 14:23
Oh my god, a match made in heaven

**Marcelle Kosman** 14:25
Truly.

**Hannah McGregor** 14:25
and their biofortification might be done in a lab.

**Marcelle Kosman** 14:30
Yeah, so they're explicitly pro-genetic engineering. Hannah, I'm gonna get you to read—so I went to the FAQ, because I was like, "Somebody tell me if this is genetic engineering because it sounds sus." So I went to the FAQ; HarvestPlus has an FAQ about genetic modification because, you know, savvy readers like you and I, Hannah, we are not alone. Could you please read the FAQ about genetic modification from HarvestPlus's website?

**Hannah McGregor** 15:00
Oh, god, I'm so ready. It's three paragraphs. Here we go. "Biofortification of staple crops can be done through conventional crop breeding, agronomic practices (such as through application of fertilizers), or genetic modification (GM). So far, only one GM biofortified crop, Golden Rice, has been approved for commercial propagation, in the Philippines. To date, all biofortified crops developed and released through the efforts of HarvestPlus and its partners has been through conventional plant breeding. However, HarvestPlus, as a part of the CGIAR, does not oppose the use of GM methods to develop biofortified crops.

We recognize the strong potential of GM and other novel approaches, which offer innovative and efficient ways to improve the nutrient content and nutrient bioavailability of crops. Our biofortification work is always demand-lead, it is guided by the stated preferences, policies, regulations and legislation of the countries in which we operate." Doesn't sound true.

“We respect the right of governments to determine the best interests of their countries and citizens based on the available evidence.” Marcelle, there’s some complex entanglement of technoculture and imperialism at work here, huh?

**Marcelle Kosman** 16:21
Oh, you just hold on to that thought, Hannah. We are gonna get into it, don’t you worry. For readers who maybe their eyes glazed over a little bit during that three-paragraph explanation of HarvestPlus’s relationship to GM, genetic modification: they’re basically saying, “Oh, we’re totally doing genetic engineering. We’re just not doing it commercially. What goes on in the lab stays in the lab. For now.”

**Hannah McGregor** 16:51
Yeah, yeah. But part of what makes this all so complicated is that the premise that they’re laying out here, that sometimes in labs we make food more nutritional because there’s widespread vitamin A deficiency—I don’t have a problem with people doing science to my food. I eat food that’s mostly made out of science. What’s an Impossible Burger? I couldn’t impossibly tell you.

**Marcelle Kosman** 17:15
Sure, sure.

**Hannah McGregor** 17:16
Science, it’s made out of science. My understanding, though, is that a lot of this genetic engineering in food creates these mono crops that then are really, really bad for soil, deplete soil really quickly, create patterns of dependence of developing nations or historically colonized nations on imperial powers. It is pretty impossible to disentangle genetic modification of food from the really complex capitalist and imperialist logics of food access on a global scale.

**Marcelle Kosman** 17:16
Yes.

**Hannah McGregor** 17:18
I just want to make it clear that even though we don't believe in time, we are inherently anti-science.

**Marcelle Kosman** 18:11
No. **[Hannah laughs]** I'm not anti-science, but I am tremendously suspicious of the application of science.

**Hannah McGregor** 18:19
What are they doing?

**Marcelle Kosman** 18:20
What are they doing in those labs? That's what I want to know. **[Hannah laughs]** So to follow up on your position, which I think hopefully clarifies what the suspiciousness of the genetic modification is, or what it boils down to. Like, agribusiness, as a major private sector stakeholder, plays a huge role in shaping global food management. It has a huge role in shaping and altering longstanding farming practices. As we mentioned earlier, companies like Monsanto literally fund academic research into food, and it's weird when a business pays you to do research that it then has a stake in what you say about it. Like, it's not—

**Hannah McGregor** 19:10
No, it's not weird, it's a demonstration of the impact of your research and its ability to produce new trademarks.

**Marcelle Kosman** 19:17
Oh, Jesus Christ.

**Hannah McGregor** 19:17
That's what our universities want us to do.

**Marcelle Kosman** 19:20
That's where we're at, right? Because the university system has become a business model and not just a collegial, like, "let's all learn together." So it's not a secret that for-profit seed companies, for example, are invested

in the dependency of farmers by requiring them to repurchase their seeds every season or requiring them to repurchase the fertilizers every season. Farmers and grassroots organizations who talk about food and seed sovereignty, they're talking about the right to retain their seeds, the right to retain their planting materials from year to year so that they're not dependent on these businesses.

**Hannah McGregor** 19:58
Yeah.

**Marcelle Kosman** 19:59
However, the businesses have more power. Shockingly, in this capitalist world that we live in, they have more power than farmers and grassroots organizers.

**Hannah McGregor** 20:11
Yeah. And they've got the funding to do huge campaigns where they convince people that the colour orange is cool and sexy.

**Marcelle Kosman** 20:19
That's exactly right. So to your point about the sort of ambivalent nature of food research, "orange-fleshed sweetpotato" has one central characteristic that makes it very, very distinct from genetically-modified Golden Rice, or genetically-modified corn, any of these crops that require you to repurchase your seeds year after year. And that's the fact that sweet potatoes are what is called vegetatively propagated, which means that you can just leave your vines in the ground. You can even plant your garbage potatoes later, and your scraps and stuff, and they'll grow new plants.

**Hannah McGregor** 20:57
Okay. And you won't get sued by Monsanto for doing that.

**Marcelle Kosman** 21:02
No, well, not yet. Not yet. Let's not—we can't predict the future here. But the point is that sweet potatoes have not historically been a big sell for private sector agribusiness, because they don't make you dependent on

the company that researches and develops them, if that makes sense.

**Hannah McGregor** 21:20
Okay, so let's backtrack a little bit, because we are talking about specific geographical and geopolitical context as well. So you mentioned earlier that it took years for the International Potato Center to convince people in Kenya and Uganda to get on the "orange-fleshed sweetpotato" train. So were sweet potatoes new to that area of Africa entirely?

**Marcelle Kosman** 21:44
No, not at all. And we'll definitely—

**Hannah McGregor** 21:47
Just "orange-fleshed sweetpotato". Just biofortified—

**Marcelle Kosman** 21:50
Biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato". That's right. So we'll come back to why I think this is important, because sweet potatoes have been a global food staple for centuries, probably millennia. I have an example; one food science researcher named Adelia Bovell-Benjamin writes, "The sweet potato is a staple food source for many  indigenous populations in Central and South Americas, Ryukyu Island, Africa, the Caribbean, the Maori people, Hawaiians, and Papua New Guineans."

**Hannah McGregor** 22:22
Okay, so it's white people in the West to whom the sweet potatoes are new.

**Marcelle Kosman** 22:29
Yeah. Do I don't think it's a coincidence that until the orange-fleshed sweetpotato's recent popularity, sweet potatoes in general were a subsistence crop rather than, say, a big export crop. And, fun fact, I have textual evidence to show that chef and restauranteur Jamie Oliver only tried sweet potato fries for the first time in 2002.

**Hannah McGregor** 22:51
Well, that's airtight. Were they white flesh sweet potatoes before they were "orange-fleshed sweetpotatoes"? Is that the issue? Did the flesh color change?

**Marcelle Kosman** 22:59
So in the region of Sub-Saharan Africa where the biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato" is being introduced? Historically, they had been yellow- or white-fleshed, okay? But the orange flesh is not the biofortified orange flesh, but a more natural orange flesh, coral flesh, if you will, was indigenous to those regions that Adelia Bovell-Benjamin identified what we now call Central and South Americas in particular.

**Hannah McGregor** 23:32
Okay. All right. I think I do need to ask how the sweet potato fry comes into it, though. Like, sweet potato fries were trending— was the sweet potato fry what was solving vitamin A deficiency in children?

**Marcelle Kosman** 23:47
I wish. **[Laughs]** I wish, you wish, we all wish, but no.

**Hannah McGregor** 23:52
Biofortified french fries. If you could just biofortify french fries and chicken nuggets, you'd be set.

**Marcelle Kosman** 24:00
I'm willing to argue that they are biofortified. **[Laughs]**

**Hannah McGregor** 24:04
Oh no, they probably are.

**Marcelle Kosman** 24:07
But not in the way they want us to think they are. So in my research about the biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato," I came across a number of references to the fact that the vitamin -A-rich tater does make functional french fries and I thought that was funny.

**Hannah McGregor** 24:23
Okay, I mean, I love this. I love the way food science people talk about food. So are the journal articles commenting on the deepfryability of the biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato"? **[Marcelle laughs]**

**Marcelle Kosman** 24:38
Yes, they absolutely did, because now that white people are on the biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato" train, they're thinking about nutrition for white people. So Hannah, have you ever heard the term over nutrition?

**Hannah McGregor** 24:56
No. **[Marcelle laughs]**

**Marcelle Kosman** 24:57
I hadn't heard it either. **[Hannah laughs]** And it *smacks*]of euphemism, if you will. I bet you are a smart genius scholar. I bet you can guess what it refers to.

**Hannah McGregor** 25:12
Oh, no. Oh, no, overnutrition is just being fat! Oh no!

**Marcelle Kosman** 25:15
Yeah, so according to the National Library of Medicine, "overnutrition is a form of malnutrition, imbalanced nutrition, arising from excessive intake of nutrients, leading to accumulation of body fat that impairs health, i.e. overweight/obesity." So, here is where we transition from the, genetic engineering of the biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato" into the health fad that was associated with the popularity of sweet potato fries.

**Hannah McGregor** 25:53
**[Laughing]** Goddammit.

**Marcelle Kosman** 25:54
I know.

**Hannah McGregor** 25:55
Sorry. Overnutrition. **[Laughs]**

**Marcelle Kosman** 25:58
I know, I know.

**Hannah McGregor** 25:59
*Too* many nutrients. So how do we link that? If the idea is that the sweet potato is biofortified, is there a link there to the idea of overnutrition and then its movement into the West as a health food?

**Marcelle Kosman** 26:22
Yes, totally. So in 2007, this is the same time period—I think it's significant, but I don't have any solid evidence to make a causal link—the same time period when global grain prices were skyrocketing, and also when the International Potato Center was gaining major major traction with funding and donors with its sweet potato projects in Africa, American and European food scientists are publishing about how nutritious and versatile the sweet potato is. So Hannah, I have for you, could you please read this downright love letter to sweet potatoes, written by the food science researcher that we quoted above, Adelia Bovell Benjamin?

**Hannah McGregor** 27:04
Absolutely. "The sweet potato has immense potential to help prevent and reduce food insecurity and mal-, under-, and overnutrition in developing and developed countries because of its nutritional composition and unique agronomic features… It is because of these unique features and nutritional value of the sweet potato that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has selected it as a candidate crop to be grown and incorporated into the menus for astronauts on space missions." **[Laughs]**

**Marcelle Kosman** 27:43
Sweet potatoes in space!

**Hannah McGregor** 27:46
Okay. "The sweet potato has immense potential and has a major role to

play in human nutrition, food security, and poverty alleviation in developing countries." And also will make people in developing nations less fat, apparently.

**Marcelle Kosman** 28:02
Apparently, that's the subtext right? It's shitty. I have one more lengthy quotation from Bovell-Benjamin that I would love for you to read, please. This is the list of potential sweet potato products.

**Hannah McGregor** 28:17
I was a fan of their work before but now I'm turning against them. "Potential sweet potato products, some with limited commercialization, include sweet potato bread pudding, casserole, tart muffins, scalloped sweet potato, and refrigerated sweet potato pieces. Other value-added commercial sweet potato flour products sold in supermarkets in the United States include sweet potato pancake mixes and sweet potato chips. Some East Coast restaurants in the United States, especially in New York and Florida, now feature sweet potato fries."

**Marcelle Kosman** 28:55
We did it!!

**Hannah McGregor** 28:56
2007?

**Marcelle Kosman** 28:59
2007. I think so. Yeah, I think this is 2007.

**Hannah McGregor** 29:01
Okay.

**Marcelle Kosman** 29:01
Yeah, we did it. We made that transition. **[Laughs]** So a lot of this is just me piecing together material evidence for the causal relationship. I have nothing except for evidence. **[Laughs]** I don't have a thesis. I can't say that North Americans' sweet potato fries craze was caused by all of the

biofortified “orange-fleshed sweetpotato” research and development. But I can tell you that in the first decade of the 2000s, the per-capita production of sweet potatoes in the US rose by 30%. I can also tell you that during that same decade, the sweet potato market in the US grew so consistently that the American processed foods company Conagra Foods eventually invested $155 million to build a processing plant dedicated sweet potatoes.

**Hannah McGregor** 30:02
Because they hoped that while they would cure childhood malnutrition, they would also cure fat people.

**Marcelle Kosman** 30:11
Yeah, I mean, that’s the subtext/text.

**Hannah McGregor** 30:15
That’s the subtext.

**Marcelle Kosman** 30:16
Here’s a quote from the *Wall Street Journal*; it’s a piece about Conagra’s sweet potato enterprise.

**Hannah McGregor** 30:22
Conagra ismost sinister name yet, of all of the sinister names.

**Marcelle Kosman** 30:26
Conagra was also at the same time working with a university to genetically engineer sweet potatoes to grow like bricks. The goal was to make them grow in the shape of bricks so that they would be easier to turn into fries. But you know what? **[Hannah laughs]** That is just a fun fact. So here’s the quotation from the *Wall Street Journal* piece about Conagra sweet potato enterprise.

“Conagra’s Lamb Weston division began offering sweet potato products to restaurants in 2001. Sales took off, growing about 50% a year in the last five years. The national trend to eating healthier helped; sweet potatoes,

packed with vitamin A and high in fibre, are widely perceived as healthier, though when fried, it's debatable whether they are healthier than regular potatoes." So during the mid-aughts, there were—you need to know this—when I did my newspaper database search for sweet potato fries, there were tons of newspaper articles talking about sweet potatoes as a cool new feature on restaurant menus. And I wish we could read them all; alas, we can't. But Hannah, would you be so kind as to read this excerpt from a 2005 *Toronto Star* article?

**Hannah McGregor** 31:46
Absolutely."It couldn't have happened to a nicer tuber. Sweet potatoes are being cut into fries and served at Pizza Pizza's new family eatery, Chicken Chicken. **[Marcelle laughs]** We've watched sweet potato fries evolve from a vegetarian restaurant staple to a trendy cafe offering to an upscale alternative to regular fries, and now, finally, a ubiquitous fast food offering. These perfectly tasty fries are the good news about Canada's first Chicken Chicken. **[Hannah and Marcelle laugh]** The bad news is that the fledgling chain serves fried chicken à la KFC, not the healthier rotisserie chicken à la Swiss Chalet." Wow, what a shame. We could have had it all.

**Marcelle Kosman** 32:45
We could have had it all. But unfortunately... **[Laughs]**

**Hannah McGregor** 32:49
I was in Ontario in 2005, I have never heard of Chicken Chicken.

**Marcelle Kosman** 32:54
Really? You, as a vegan in Ontario in 2005, hadn't heard of Canada's first Chicken Chicken? **[Laughs]**

**Hannah McGregor** 33:03
I missed that. Okay, all right, Marcelle, you know that I just fought to make fun of news coverage of sweet potatoes for the rest of our lives. But I do think—

**Marcelle Kosman** 33:16
Couldn't have happened to a nicer tuber. I picked that one just for you.

**Hannah McGregor** 33:24
Damn shame about the fried chicken, though.

**Marcelle Kosman** 33:25
Damn shame.

**Hannah McGregor** 33:26
But, you know, keeping in mind is that this is ostensibly a podcast where we talk about critical theory—

**Marcelle Kosman** 33:38
Yes.

**Hannah McGregor** 33:38
—do you think we could talk a little bit more about the imperialist undertones of all of this?

**Marcelle Kosman** 33:50
Yes, Hannah. Yes, I think we could. I think we should. And I think we shall.

**Hannah McGregor** 33:55
Great.

**[Upbeat musical interlude]**

**Marcelle Kosman** 34:02
All right, it's time for the theory we need, a nutrient-rich blend of sources clinically proven to improve your brain power.

**Hannah McGregor** 34:10
Okay. Would you say that the theory that we're about to engage with us both biofortified and orange-fleshed?

**Marcelle Kosman** 34:16
Yes.

**Hannah McGregor** 34:16
Yum.

**Marcelle Kosman** 34:17
So in order to get at the nuances of the sweet potato fries moment, we're going to talk about food imperialism.

**Hannah McGregor** 34:25
Great.

**Marcelle Kosman** 34:25
Hannah, I feel like you know a little bit about imperialism. What do you know that this particular flavour of imperialism?

**Hannah McGregor** 34:33
Yeah, I have encountered conversations about food imperialism primarily in the context of Indigenous scholars working in so-called Canada. So primarily folks who have talked about the way that the Canadian government, like, the settler colonial government intentionally disrupted Indigenous food practices as a tool of colonial governance and land theft. So the really sustainable ways in which Indigenous nations engaged with land, like through hunting and moving around at different times of year and rotated crops and wild crops.

All of these really complex and profoundly sustainable food practices got interrupted by the appropriation of land for settlers by the outlawing of a lot of like fishing and hunting practices, by the limiting of nations that have used a huge amount of territory down to very small reserves. And that profound interruption of traditional agriculture and hunting and food practices not only was a tool of material dispossession, but also was a way—because our food practices are deeply embedded in our cultures and our languages and our histories and our kinship structures—so it's also a way of disrupting culture, and it has also made a lot of Indigenous

people very sick. Like, there's very limited food access on a lot of reserves, so there's a lot of nutrition-related illness. Particularly in remote northern communities, food is really, really hard to access and people don't have access to their traditional forms of food, and food imperialism has been a major tool of colonialism.

**Marcelle Kosman** 36:43
Yes, absolutely. I think some listeners might also be familiar with forms of food imperialism like the appropriation of a people's food, and so that's also a big thing.

**Hannah McGregor** 36:54
The fucking quinoa trend? Where white people got into quinoa and fucking broke whole country's economies?

**Marcelle Kosman** 37:02
So all of these nuances of food imperialism are at work when it comes to our conversation about sweet potato fries. But I think the key thing that I want to bring home is exactly this version that you're describing, Hannah, of colonization, disrupting traditional farming practices and traditional food growing practices, and replacing them, basically.

**Hannah McGregor** 37:27
Gotcha.

**Marcelle Kosman** 37:27
So I want to start with just a very short piece by a columnist for the travel guide company Fodors, named Payal Dhar. Dhar writes, "Food culture, including acceptable levels of what is authentic or exotic, is heavily informed by the existing white supremacist, capitalist, hetero-patriarchal framework of today's world." They write specifically that "in a world where the lens belongs to the white western commentator, food to is experienced with an Orientalist bias, whether it's the 'discovery' of a centuries-old superfood like quinoa on social media, or misrepresenting a long-standing regional staple."

**Hannah McGregor** 38:13
And for folks who are not familiar with Orientalism, may I refer you back to the second episode of the reboot of *Witch, Please*—

**Marcelle Kosman** 38:22
That's right.

**Hannah McGregor** 38:22
—in which we engage extensively with Palestinian scholar Edward Said.

**Marcelle Kosman** 38:28
That's right. So then the second piece that I want to spend a little bit more time with is an article by a writer named Joe Kobuthi for the digital publication, *The Elephant*. And I'd never heard of the elephant before, but it's an African-based, Pan-African research and advocacy and scholarship publication full of good content. Okay.

**Hannah McGregor** 38:52
Love to hear it.

**Marcelle Kosman** 38:53
So I'm going to start with just a quick quotation here from Kobuthi that says, "Food has always been a fundamental tool in the process of colonization. Through food, social and cultural norms are conveyed and also violated. Indeed, one cannot properly understand colonization without taking into account the issue of food and eating." So in his article, he really starts by giving us a helpful and straightforward context about the common practice that British Imperial soldiers engaged in to burn crops and kill livestock as a means of controlling locals.

**Hannah McGregor** 39:33
Yeah, because if you can control people's access to food, you can control everything.

**Marcelle Kosman** 39:38
Exactly. So, Hannah, would you kindly read this next quotation? It's about

Kenya specifically.

**Hannah McGregor** 39:44
"The colonial state used white settlers to introduce commercial agricultural production as the mainstay of the colonial economy. The state forcibly seized land, livestock, and other indigenous assets from certain communities and households on behalf of the settlers and the colonial administration, systematically marginalizing and subordinating indigenous African agriculture."

Can I just say, this is really reminding me of the way that colonialism is also this complex practice of—like colonial governments will practice a structure closer to home and then export it. So if you look at, say, Ireland and Scotland and their subdivision into English-owned land parcels that were then farmed in profoundly unsustainable ways at odds with the traditional food practices and those regions, they then, like, once you've dispossessed the people there, then you send Irish people and Scottish people out to England's other colonies to practice the exact things that stripped them of their land and culture in those places. So it's this sort of cascading effect. And it's really reminding me that we can see these same practices being used in different places on different scales as these technologies of imperial violence, right?

**Marcelle Kosman** 41:21
That's right. It's a really useful reminder that in this way, we're all fighting the same battle. But by implying that these are somehow distinct or unrelated national concerns really erases the role of the single colonial metropole in shaping, ultimately, our global food system, for example.

**Hannah McGregor** 41:45
Yeah.

**Marcelle Kosman** 41:46
So in the process of colonizing, in this example, Kenya, cash cropping became the technique used by the settlers, because the settlers were not interested in subsistence farming, they were interested in using

farmland to make money.

**Hannah McGregor** 42:01
Of course.

**Marcelle Kosman** 42:02
And also, because of all of the dispossessed, indigenous Africans who had been pushed off of their land and had their livelihoods stolen from them, now you have a cheap source of labour. So it's, I think, essential to realize that in—again, we're talking about Kenya here—but in Sub-Saharan Africa in general, traditional farming practices which had meant, say, growing millet and tubers, and legumes and kale, like a diverse and rich—

**Hannah McGregor** 42:32
And those practices, farming in a waywhere you plant a lot more different kinds of crops, and rotate them seasonally, and rotate things that have different needs in the soil and stuff. It is more labor intensive, and it's harder to produce cash crops that way, right? Like, it's really appropriate for subsistence farming, but it's really hard to make a shit ton of money doing it. And also, mono-crops are unbelievably bad for soil.

**Marcelle Kosman** 43:11
Yes.

**Hannah McGregor** 43:12
I remember I read a book called *Dirt*. I can't remember the name of the author. But it's basically a history of empires ultimately collapsing under the weight of their own agricultural needs, because the agricultural practices of empires are so incredibly destructive. And that we can see this from the area in the Near East that used to be called the Fertile Crescent, and is now all desert. And the Dust Bowl in the US in the 1930s. Like, these are crises that are created by non-sustainable imperial food practices. So ultimately what these practices do is strip all of the nutrients out of the soil, until ultimately, those places become places that literally can't feed the people who live there.

**Marcelle Kosman** 44:10
That's right. So traditional farming practices require an intimate knowledge of the land and intimate knowledge of the types of nutrients that are returned to the land when you, say, you have what we now call often bumper crops, so you have a crop that you grow, not to harvest, but to plow back into the field. And that fortifies, if you will, fortifies the soil to get ready for the next crop that you put in. And so traditional farming practices that had a variety of different crops coming in and rotating, those were subsistence practices, because they were not designed for export; they were designed to feed your local community.

And I don't know if you remember this, Hannah, but I remember when I was first a hot young thing learning about international development and hearing the term subsistence farming and associating it with starvation, like, "Oh, subsistence farming is bad because it means that you can't make money." And that is capitalism, baby. That is an ideology imposed on the world where people used to subsistence farm to feed their communities.

**Hannah McGregor** 45:25
Yeah, it's literally a sustainable form of food production.

**Marcelle Kosman** 45:31
That's right.

**Hannah McGregor** 45:32
And we're like, no, no, no, there's no growth.

**Marcelle Kosman** 45:35
That's right. You can grow kale but you can't grow your GDP.

**Hannah McGregor** 45:37
What about your goddamn produce? That's what I say every day. That's what GDP stands for.

**Marcelle Kosman** 45:42
Yes.

**Hannah McGregor** 45:42
Goddamn produce. Thank you.

**Marcelle Kosman** 45:44
Okay, I've got one last big old quotation from Kobuthi. "Today, there has been growing interest in the battle for control over land, food, and even seeds in Kenya. Under the guise of improving food security in Kenya, a new wave of food imperialism is taking shape. A series of public-private partnerships are aggressively shaping a food policy geared towards helping corporations access prime resources and markets within Kenya's food systems. Farmers are being forced to change from low-cost sustainable traditional agriculture to intensive industrial farming, with intensive application of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and corporate owned seeds. This domineering framework to control what food people grow, how they grow and consume it is in contrast to what many are calling food sovereignty."

**Hannah McGregor** 46:42
So was Kobuthi specifically referring here to the biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato"?

**Marcelle Kosman** 46:48
Not specifically, no, but we simply cannot ignore Kobuthi's description of food imperialism and the massive campaign to get Sub-Saharan African farmers growing this specific variety of biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato".

**Hannah McGregor** 47:06
Okay, Marcelle, because I, at this point in our collaboration, kind of live inside your brain—

**Marcelle Kosman** 47:14
Ooh.

**Hannah McGregor** 47:14
—I think I know what your thesis is. [Marcelle laughs] But why don't we say the quiet part out loud for the people?

**Marcelle Kosman** 47:20
What a good idea, Hannah. Let's do that.

**[Upbeat musical interlude]**

**Hannah McGregor** 47:26
Marcelle, is it wrong after all that to suggest that you might have a tasty thesis on the tip of your tongue?

**Marcelle Kosman** 47:35
Ooh, no, that is exactly correct. My goodness. Okay. The "orange-fleshed sweetpotato" is by all accounts a wonder tuber. It's a starch, but also contains protein and beta carotene. It's super versatile in terms of food preparation and uses. You can eat the roots, shoots and leaves. In the mid aughts, there were hundreds of sweet potato varieties grown around the world. It's also apparently, "high-yielding and drought-tolerant," which in our current climate crisis is no small potatoes. The aggressive campaign to solve Sub-Saharan African malnutrition by mono-cropping the biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato", however, seems to complicate rather than fortify the region's efforts towards reestablishing food sovereignty. While it is true that the introduction of this vitamin-A-rich tater was central to successfully reducing hunger and increasing economic prosperity, none of the organizations involved in sweet potato research, development, scaling, or public relations seem willing or able to acknowledge that the cause of that malnutrition and economic insecurity was colonialism.

Moreover, little attention or recognition seems to have been paid to the culinary or cultural roots of the OG orange sweet potato indigenous to the regions we now call Central and South America. This gap in history implies that the miracle spud was simply invented through modern science. The miraculous biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato" has thus been scooped out of its pre-colonial roots and deployed in a neo-colonial

measure to control food security in post-colonial states. Meanwhile, for North American foodies, the biofortified “orange-fleshed sweetpotato” isn’t simply a tasty addition to fast food menus. Misrepresentation of the tuber’s well documented health benefits have been generously coated over the bright orange side dish like a crispy batter sustaining its structural integrity. The illusion of a healthy deep fried side dish has been too sweet to ignore. In this essay, I will argue...

**Hannah McGregor** 49:57
I mean, I feel like we have to really name the elephant in the room which is that sweet potato fries are not very good.

**Marcelle Kosman** 50:02
Whoaaaa hot take!

**Hannah McGregor** 50:07
I love the sweet potato. Orange-fleshed, yellow-fleshed, white-fleshed...

**Marcelle Kosman** 50:13
Purple?

**Hannah McGregor** 50:13
All of its fleshes. I have on occasion had a purple fluffy potato. It’s beautiful. I love a tuber, I love a root vegetable, I love it in a stew, I love it in a peanut sweet potato kale stew situation. Yes, please. Thank you. I will never choose a sweet potato fry over a—

**Marcelle Kosman** 50:36
A russet potato fry.

**Hannah McGregor** 50:40
A russet potato fry.

**Marcelle Kosman** 50:41
Never.

**Hannah McGregor** 50:42
Never, never in a million years.

**Marcelle Kosman** 50:46
So I wonder whether or not sweet potato fries are equivalent to pineapple on pizza, because I feel like people who love them—

**Hannah McGregor** 50:55
That's also disgusting.

**Marcelle Kosman** 50:56
Hannah, I will end this collaboration, I will end it. Pineapple on pizza is delicious and so are sweet potato fries. However, I think that people who love sweet potato fries, like, I think that they truly-deeply-madly-Savage-Garden love them. And I think that people who dislike sweet potato fries are like, "fuck sweet potato fries." You know what I mean? I don't think there's a happy medium there. I think you either—

**Hannah McGregor** 51:22
I like roasted sweet potato.

**Marcelle Kosman** 51:23
Yeah, but we're talking about fries, baby.

**Hannah McGregor** 51:25
We're talking about fries. I just, you know, it's just not my cup of tuber.

**Marcelle Kosman** 51:33
Cup of tuber.

**Hannah McGregor** 51:33
But it is so evocative for me to start building these connections between Western diet culture, and food imperialism, which is not a connection I think that I have consciously made before. Like, this idea that a lot of food science emerges from food imperialism is about creating cash crops in exploited areas of the world, about extracting as much value from land

as you humanly can in these profoundly unsustainable and fundamentally capitalist ways.

And that there is this flipside, this anxiety in the West, that the hyperavailability of nutritionally-dense food has ironically the same science that is being used to address malnutrition and famine on a global scale is also manifesting via an anxiety about obesity. “Obesity,” which is a word I hate, but also the words that these people use in the West in particular, because it is a concern primarily of developed nations. And so this idea that these systems—I mean, of course they are, but that these systems are all connected. And that there is this desire, in a context in which food is plentiful and available, there’s this sense of moral obligation to eat less, that is actually entangled with the loss of sustainable food practices on a global scale.

**Marcelle Kosman** 53:42
And we have to think, too, about the fact that we’re living in a climate crisis, like, it’s not gonna get any better than it is right now. It’s only gonna get scarier. And so developing— I know, I’m sorry, I’m sorry.

**Hannah McGregor** 54:00
Maybe not forever, maybe not forever, but for the next while, for sure.

**Marcelle Kosman** 54:05
And so when I was researching for this episode, I was like, okay, but also, people are literally starving. Like, colonialism did so much damage that people are literally starving. And if a single root vegetable can alleviate hunger and starvation, I I don’t want to say that that’s bad. If a single root vegetable can thrive in our plus two degrees warmer climate, especially in the regions that are not responsible for those outrageous greenhouse gas emissions, like Sub-Saharan Africa, I don’t want to say that that’s bad. But I think what is useful and helpful to remember is that on-the-ground grassroots activists, particularly around food and seed sovereignty, they are saying that it’s bad.

**Hannah McGregor** 55:07
That's the thing. I can't remember where I read this, but I did read it relatively recently, that every famine is human created. That major famines are almost always the product of war and/or colonialism. And the entanglement thereof and that there's enough food to feed everyone.

**Marcelle Kosman** 55:07
Mm hmm. That's right.

**Hannah McGregor** 55:15
And what we've done is create the systems of both artificial scarcity and unsustainable excess, which is the trademark of capitalism, right? That the flipside of the unsustainable excess of the system that creates billionaires is a system that creates poverty. Like, poverty is not the natural state, nor is wealth. Famine is not the natural state, nor is cash crop farming. What we're looking for is something that is in between these extremes, and it is fully possible. And so there's this way that when we try to solve problems on the same ideological terms as the problems were created in the first place, we ultimately—we might solve the problem in the short term, but we ultimately reinforced the structures that created the problem in the first place.

**Marcelle Kosman** 56:42
Right.

**Hannah McGregor** 56:43
And that's what makes food sovereignty different from a food science intervention that's just like, "We'll make you a sweet potato that has all the nutrients you need." Like that's not food sovereignty.

**Marcelle Kosman** 56:53
No, no, that's just introducing a new cash crop. Because in reading all of the benefits and the uptake for this biofortified "orange-fleshed sweetpotato," inevitably comes the second sentence, which is like, and we can use it for all of these other food additives, we can use it to mass market, we can create new jobs, that's great. People love jobs. Jobs!

**Hannah McGregor** 57:19
Yeah, here's a massive list of new products that we can create out of this thing.

**Marcelle Kosman** 57:25
So it's complicated, **[Hannah laughs]** and I don't think it's like—I know that at the at the outset, it was you, Hannah, who was like, "I'm not against genetic modification." And I'm like, "I am! Fuck genetic modification." Now that we've actually come to the end of the episode, I'll stop playing the self righteous 25-year-old that I was once and be like, it's complicated, like, shit is complicated. People are in fact starving, and it's the fault of globalization and imperialism, like, I don't know— this is not a hit piece on sweet potatoes. **[Hannah and Marcelle laugh]**

**Hannah McGregor** 58:00
It's not a hit piece on sweet potatoes because you're in the pocket of Big Sweet Potato.

**Marcelle Kosman** 58:03
I am in fact in the pocket of Big Sweet Potato. I fucking love sweet potatoes. I prefer sweet potatoes to russet potatoes except in potato leek soup. I've never tried to make a sweet potato leek soup; I bet it's gross. But here's the thing—

**Hannah McGregor** 58:19
This is an attack on my people.

**Marcelle Kosman** 58:21
I know, I'm sorry.

**Hannah McGregor** 58:22
White people from Great Britain.

**Marcelle Kosman** 58:25
I know. Which is also my people; just just in case there any listeners who have never seen us out there, I need you to know that we're

both white people.

**Hannah McGregor** 58:31
We come from potato people.

**Marcelle Kosman** 58:32
We come from a potato people, it's true. We come from a hearty stock of potato people. So anyway, sorry, this is really beating around the potato bush. So the thing is, my relationship to sweet potato fries, for example, is very complicated because nine times out of ten, sweet potato fries are coated in a coating that I cannot eat. So to begin with—

**Hannah McGregor** 58:32
Yeah, they're not gluten-free.

**Marcelle Kosman** 58:52
They're not gluten free to begin with. I can't eat most French fries because they're always deep fried in the same fryer as all the other deep fried foods which are battered in bread. And so they hurt my tummy. But when they are available and they are gluten free, I am fucking there, baby. I am there. Sweet potatoes showed up and I was there.

**Hannah McGregor** 59:18
Yeah. I'm really sorry, Marcelle, for you, that the mid-2000s promise of sweet potatoes in every fast food restaurant didn't end up yielding roots.

**Marcelle Kosman** 59:32
Yeah, they didn't yield roots, they didn't take root. It's true. It's true. Yeah.

**Hannah McGregor** 59:37
Yeah. And now you can only get them at health food restaurants.

**Marcelle Kosman** 59:41
Or, shockingly, A&W. **[Hannah laughs]**

**Hannah McGregor** 59:46
This episode brought to you by A&W.

**Marcelle Kosman** 59:49
Eliot loves sweet potato fries. She always gets them. No, you're right. Like, the fad of the sweet potato fry. We're left with none but scraps; potato peelings, if you will. **[Hannah laughs]**

**[Upbeat musical interlude]**

**Marcelle Kosman** 1:00:09
*Material Girls* is a Witch, Please production and is distributed by Acast. You can find the rest of our episodes and our other podcasts on Acast or at ohwitchplease.ca. The same website has a lots of other content, including links to sign up for our substack and our Patreon, as well as transcripts, reading lists, and merch!

**Hannah McGregor** 1:00:34
If you have questions or comments or praise you can find us on Instagram, Threads, and X @ohwitchplease and on TikTok at ohwitchpleasepod. And if you want to biofortify your support of the podcast, head over to patreon.com/ohwitchplease to find a smorgasbord of bonus content.

**Marcelle Kosman** 1:01:00
Delicious. Special thanks to the Witch, Please Productions team: our digital content coordinator Gaby Iori **[sound effect: BOING]**, our social media and marketing designer Zoe Mix **[sound effect: record player reversing]**, our audio engineer Malika Gumpangkum **[sound effect: laser]**, and our executive producer Hannah Rehak, aka COACH **[sound effect: sport whistle blowing]**!

**Hannah McGregor** 1:01:27
At the end of every episode we will thank everyone who has joined our Patreon or boosted their tier to help make our work possible. Our enormous gratitude goes out to: Kennedy B., Hope R., Emily S., Lynnea, Jenny S., Rachel H., Kristen C., Scathie (yes, don't know what that means

but I love it), Scathie, Rebecca D., Kelly H., Teofil C., Renee, Priscilla T., Linden C., MMM, Brianna, Ashley S., Erin C., Angela K., Katie, Megan L., Zala T., Trimon, Hannah M. (not me, no), Camille B., Amelia H., Catharine, Emelie DR, and Rowan B. What a list!

**Marcelle Kosman** 1:02:19
I wonder if it's because folks are excited about the late February launch of my podcast *Gender Playground*. Could that be it? Is that why? No? Or it could be your Patreon-only show *Making Worlds*? Or maybe it's because, like the sweet potato heyday, people are figuring out what's good for them. And it's us. **[Hannah laughs]** Thanks everybody.

**Hannah McGregor** 1:02:48
We are famously orange-fleshed. We'll be back in next episode to tackle another delicious mouthful of pop culture through a whole new theoretical lens. But until then...

**Marcelle Kosman** 1:03:01
Later, sweet potaters!

**[Outro music: "Shopping Mall" by Jay Arner and Jessica Delisle]**