**Food Topics for Research**

**Overview:** These are broad suggestions that came up in workshops of one or more of my four classes. To become a good topic for a researched argument, they need to be refined in a rhetorical context. Read as much as you can before you decide where you want to come into the conversation, and choose your audience/focus/forum carefully. Remember: this is supposed to be an *argument*, not just a data dump. I had to cut some topics that just didn’t seem connected to any argument.

**Food and Technology**

* **Food to fuel**: biofuels from fryer oil. Describe the technology and evaluate the environmental and/or business angle.
* **GMOs**: Describe a specific technology and evaluate on the grounds of pragmatics/ethics/aesthetics
* **Cloning** livestock, other ag products
* **Urban farms/Vertical Farms/Edible Landscaping**: describe trend, evaluate impacts, possibilities
* **Food in outer space**: I don’t know if this would work in an argument, but it’s a fun idea

**Food and Ethics/Law/Politics**

* **Food label regulations**: do we need better laws to prevent deception?
* **Vegetarian/Vegan ethics**: discuss reasons for/against
* **Ethics of restaurants** (fraud in labeling, exploitation of workers)
* **Farmworker rights** (fair pay, safe working conditions, immigration issues, slavery)
* **Humane treatment of livestock** (e.g. laws banning foie gras, shark fin soup, pig gestation confinement, chicken cages, de-beaking, Hiding bad treatment of livestock, etc.)
* **Fair Trade Foods:** pick a product (coffee, chocolate, etc) and evaluate its fair trade programs and/or companies; or evaluate a program that aims to ensure compliance.
* **Overly sexual advertising** of food: Is it a problem? If so, solutions?

**Food & Development (local or global)**: Describe/ evaluate/propose—best to pick just one organization.

* **US national and Local food charities**: Food programs exist that offer job training, prisoner rehabilitation, entrepreneur development, alternative schooling, etc. Pick a program and evaluate its impact. Examples: The Pie Ranch; The Homeless Garden Project; Insight Garden Program, The Garden Project (prisons); Farmer Veteran Coalition, Refugee Gardens, La Cocina (helps food entrepreneurs)
* **International Food**-**related NGOs**: the Peace Corps, Heifer International, World Vision, etc

**Food and nutrition**

* **Gluten-free diets**: Overblown food fad, genuine response to new scientific knowledge, both?
* **Sports nutrition:** evaluate beliefs about what works (products and/or regimens). Choose a particular sport.
* **Fad diets:** Pick a particular one, evaluate.
* **Food and psychology:** This is very broad, but it might lead you to a particular insight on a food disorder or a discovery of marketers. Remember to look for an argument, not just data.

**Food and Education**

* **Classes in nutrition/food systems**: Evaluate an existing program and/or propose a new one. (Sample: “Get It” or “Read to Feed” programs of Heifer International)
* **School gardens**: evaluate and/or propose a program
* **Food quality in cafeterias**: evaluate current program and/or propose new one. Best to focus on a particular school or other institution, public or private. Best to choose one you can visit.
* **High school/college food options**: this includes cafeterias and other food within reach of students, including vending machines and restaurants they can get to near campus. Evaluate.

**Food and Culture**

* **Media and food choices**: examine and evaluate, propose rules for media? (e.g. ban advertising junk food on children’s shows)
* **Religious/Cultural rules for food**: explain/defend a culture’s food rules to non-believers, or argue for a change within the faith community (or argue against a change). This could be in a business context (e.g. why fast-food in India should ban lard in the French fryer machines)
* **Geographic spread of foods**: Discuss and evaluate impact or possible impact (e.g. quinoa in America, acai berry, shea butter, eating bugs)
* **American food’s cultural influence abroad**: focus on a particular kind of food or food-related custom that we export; describe it and evaluate. (a more specific example of the geographic food topic)

**Food and Business**

* **Investing** in food corporations: If you have this kind of expertise, evaluate a particular company or industry for investment opportunities. Be creative! How about Grease Lightning Biofuel?
* **Food and business regulations** (e.g. labels for BST in milk, labels for GMOs in food, tax on soda)
* **Boycotting food businesses**: evaluate a current boycott (e.g. on Driscoll’s berries) or propose one
* **Food marketing**: pick a particular campaign, evaluate on pragmatic or ethical grounds. Propose a “rebranding” for an unpopular product.
* **Global food system**: evaluate the impact on our economy (pick a particular product), or consider the role of American food being exported to other countries, e.g. excess milk powder being sent as a charity staple.
* **Monopolies** in food companies: should there be laws against it?
* **Michelin stars**, an outdated system?
* **Ancient foods revived**: e.g. bring back acorn flour in CA?

Stray Topics

* **The “Locavore” movement**: Motivations? Strategies? Problems? Prospects?
* **Food Innovation**: Pick a new product or trend, evaluate as a business prospect, social impact. (caffeinated alcohol, Cupuaçu, acai, nutmeg, etc.)
* **Food pioneers, Leading Voices**: Urban Farmers Novella Carpenter, Will Allen; food writers Michael Pollan, Eric Schlosser, Barbara Kingsolver. What did he/she accomplish? What can we all learn from him/her?