

**Food Culture, Globalization, and Nationalism: Zeppelins in the Lithuanian Imagination**

*Diana Mincyte, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*

**Abstract**

This project focuses on a Lithuanian national dish--a potato dumpling--known as the "zeppelin". What is peculiar about zeppelins is that neither its key ingredient (the potato) nor its name (originating from the German airship built in the early 20th century) have much to do with what one expects to constitute "authentic" Lithuanian foods and traditions. Through this project, I examine the contradictions implicit in the construction of zeppelin as a national dish by exploring the construction and consumption of Lithuania's national food at two different historical moments--the turn of the 20th and the 21st centuries. This research exposes nation building as an everyday practice that is embedded in global cultural, economic, and technological transformations. In analyzing national meals in Lithuania, I pursue two arguments.

First, I argue that the birth of national food in the 1920s and 1930s was deeply embedded in the experiences of modernization that allowed new ways to imagine and experience the world outside of local settings. Second, my research demonstrates that in today's Lithuania, the zeppelin serves as a conduit between global markets and local economies, which are in turn dominated by the small-scale semi-subsistence farms and informal distribution systems. The proliferation of this national dish in a globalizing Lithuania reveals on-going negotiations in regards to national identities, and also reveals contradictions between these economic systems and market rationalities.