Introduction
Food is a product of culture which aids in shaping one’s identity. While it might be hard to imagine what kind of flavor profile defines a country as vast and diverse as the United States, this becomes easier when considering that flavor may not be a contributing factor at all. Rather, modern day Americans often find their food choices revolving around convenience.

What is Convenience Food?
Three main components define convenience food as it is understood in this project:

- Minimal preparation
- Ease of consumption
- Relative affordability

A Working Class Innovation
In the late 1800s and early 1900s, convenience food was introduced to Americans as a working class necessity, usually in the form of immigrant-run food carts and saloons.

The 1930s saw a convenience food boom through commercialization with the widespread availability of freezers in the average American household.

Forging an American Identity
In the United States, access to convenience food offers a sense of integration into society. For groups with certain dietary habits or restrictions, this requires being taken seriously as a consumer base in order to influence decisions regarding accommodations.

Key Example: Kosher Certification
Lack of knowledge about ingredients and production methods caused the exclusion of many Jewish consumers from convenience food options. Advocacy in the early 1910s led to the formation of the kosher certification system, which became widespread and set a precedent for other certification systems such as fair trade.

Modern Sustainability Concerns
Food Insecurity
While convenience foods pose health concerns for all consumers due to various additives, low income individuals needing to budget both money and time are particularly at risk, with most affordable options often lacking nutritional balance.

Environment
Packaging technology offers sanitary, long-term storage methods, but generates vast amounts of waste. Even modern day recyclable and compostable solutions often require hard-to-access industrial processing in order to break down the material.

Conclusion
Over the past several generations, convenience food has become cemented as a part of the American identity thanks to modern day preservation technology and commercialization. However, while convenience food embodies human innovation in many ways, this has led to the exploitation of both consumer and environmental health.