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History Center's Smithsonian Lecture to Explore New Orleans Food Culture Ahead of Mardi Gras

-Dr. Ashley Rose Young, a Pittsburgher and member of the McGinnis Sisters Special Food Stores family, will share insights from her new book-

PITTSBURGH, Jan. 20, 2026 – The Smithsonian-affiliated Senator John Heinz History Center will host the Smithsonian Lecture Series: The Culture of Food on Thursday, Feb. 5, from 6-7:30 p.m. to explore the vibrant story of New Orleans food culture.

The History Center will welcome Pittsburgh native and public historian Dr. Ashley Rose Young to discuss how food shapes cultures and community, bringing insights from her work as a Smithsonian research associate and former historian of the Smithsonian Food History Project.

In the spirit of Mardi Gras, this program invites audiences to revel in the mystery and magic of New Orleans while reflecting on its deeper struggles to feed a diverse city safely and affordably. Dr. Young will also highlight similarities between New Orleans and Pittsburgh—two river cities with rich food traditions and resilient communities shaped by migration, labor, and local enterprise.

Dr. Young brings a local perspective to the topic. She grew up in the Pittsburgh region working alongside her family at McGinnis Sisters Special Food Stores, the beloved specialty markets founded by her mother and aunts and long recognized as a cornerstone of the region's food culture.

For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit heinzhistorycenter.org/events.

The **Senator John Heinz History Center**, an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution and the largest history museum in Pennsylvania, presents American history with a Western Pennsylvania connection. The History Center was voted as the #1 history museum in America by readers of USA TODAY (2024, 2025) and "Pittsburgh's Best Museum" by Pittsburgh Magazine (2022, 2023, 2024). The History Center and Sports Museum are located at 1212 Smallman Street in the Pittsburgh's Strip District. The History Center's family of museums includes the Sports Museum; Fort Pitt Museum in historic Point State Park; and Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Historic Village, a National Historic Landmark located in Avella, Pa., in Washington County. More information is available at heinzhistorycenter.org.

**SMITHSONIAN
LECTURE SERIES**



THE CULTURE OF FOOD
with Ashley Rose Young

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