



WWII

## Examining Methods of Visual Persuasion: Historic War Posters as Harbingers of Today's Food Debates

### *When Beans Were Bullets: War-Era Food Posters*

2010 Exhibit dates:  
at NAL: June 21 - Sept 10  
at USDA: Oct 6 - Nov 10

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**W**hat can war posters tell us about our nation's attempts to modify food consumption habits? *When Beans Were Bullets* is an exhibit of posters from World War I & II currently on display at the National Agricultural Library (NAL). The exhibit examines the evolution of poster styles, propaganda messages and advertising history from the two time periods.

Viewers will recognize familiar wartime messages about food conservation, rationing, and home canning. But today's audience will be surprised by government messaging during World War I encouraging home front populations to eat locally, healthfully, and conscientiously in order to put the nation's interest first and contribute to distant war efforts. The exhibit also retraces the advent of modern consumer culture, including the far-reaching influence of both the Advertising Council of World War II and the dawn of the advertising industry in the 1920s and '30s.

Combining the eye of a graphic designer with the research skills of a historian, curator Cory Bernat highlights the dramatic differences in style and content that emerged between the two wars. She displays copies of over seventy posters on fence panels instead of in frames to highlight their mass-produced quality. She uncovered the posters over the last two years within NAL's Special Collections, where the originals are still held.

A ready reference for researchers and educators, an expanded, online version of the exhibit [[www.good-potato.com/beans\\_are\\_bullets](http://www.good-potato.com/beans_are_bullets)] serves as a preview of the physical exhibit, open June 21 - September 10 at NAL, and October 6 - November 10, 2010 at the USDA South building in downtown Washington, D.C.

Cory Bernat researched and created *When Beans Were Bullets* in collaboration with the National Agricultural Library. Bernat is a designer, curator and public historian living in Washington, D.C.

