

## The Maxwell Market

In March, HTM Associate Professor Charles Baker-Clark presented a paper on Chicago's Maxwell Market at the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Conference on the Americas held at Grand Valley State University. The theme of this year's conference was the politics of immigration.

Charlie's presentation at the conference was dedicated to the phenomenon of culinary tourism that is a facet of Chicago's Maxwell Market. The Maxwell Market, located on the near west side of Chicago represents what remains from Chicago's Maxwell Street. Maxwell Street, once called the Ellis Island of America's Midwest, was settled in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Jews from Eastern Europe. Its market, established in 1912, was originally populated by Jewish pushcart vendors. Through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the market became a prominent feature of Chicago's culture. It was a place where, on every Sunday morning, a person could buy nearly anything including items that had been stolen on Saturday night. It was also a place that featured some of Chicago's best street food, including Chicago-style hot dogs and Italian beef sandwiches, and the Maxwell Polish.

Through the years, Maxwell Street faded from existence. Evicted from its original neighborhood by gentrification and expansion of the campus of the University of Illinois, Chicago, the original market found a home on Canal Street and was moved back to Roosevelt Road in 2008. Long gone are the Jewish and Polish vendors. The market's food vendors are now nearly all Latino. However, the food remains strictly that of the Chicago streets. The Maxwell Polish can still be purchased a few blocks away, but the fare of the current Maxwell Market includes flautas, gorditas and chile relleno. And people from across the Chicago metropolitan area travel to visit this market and experience its unique foods.

In his presentation, Charlie suggested that the Maxwell Market and its adjacent neighborhoods represent a potential destination for culinary tourists. The potential of culinary tourism for the neighborhood is substantial, and has the capacity to support local businesses while preserving the identity of the neighborhood.