



Sounds Delicious For nearly two decades, I've collected gastronomic vinyl—albums that play with food and drink themes in song, spoken-word, and cover imagery. I'm fascinated by what these midcentury artifacts tell us about the evolution of postwar American cuisine. International foods that we take for granted today needed demystifying 60 years ago: albums like *Chop Suey Polka* and *Bagels and Bongos* exploited new dining discoveries, and LPs had such mainstream reach in their 1950s-to-'70s heyday that advertisers—KFC, Taco Bell, Schweppes—flocked to promote their foods with jingles and easy-listening music on albums. How-to records flourished, too: PSAs on food safety, Vincent Price on wine. Columbia released a series of Music for Gracious Living LPs: the cover of *After the Dance* featured a dinner party amid an idealized depiction of the then-burgeoning suburbs, with recipes on the back for late-night dishes like the “beanwich” (burger buns filled with bacon, beans, catsup, celery, green onions, and horseradish). RCA Victor proffered food-focused LPs such as *Chile Con Cugie*, whose cover shows Spanish-American bandleader Xavier Cugat helping a buxom woman season a spicy dish while holding a chicken under one arm. Though the genre died out with the LP itself in the 1980s, there are lots of these records in thrift shops and on eBay today. One of my favorite finds is *Music to Sell Bread By*, which features a man who sounds a lot like Dean Martin literally singing the praises of Taystee bread: “Twenty-two slices of bread, a crust on either end, Taystee’s the name of this bread, baked while you sleep, my friend.” Every time I listen to it, I get hungry for a sandwich. —James Oliver Cury

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