



# Feeding the City: Work and Food Culture of the Mumbai Dabbawalas

*Sara Roncaglia*

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Every day in Mumbai 5,000 dabbawalas (literally translated as "those who carry boxes") distribute a staggering 200,000 home-cooked lunchboxes to the city's workers and students. Giving employment and status to thousands of largely illiterate villagers from Mumbai's hinterland, this co-operative has been in operation since the late nineteenth century. It provides one of the most efficient delivery networks in the world: only one lunch in six million goes astray. *Feeding the City* is an ethnographic study of the fascinating inner workings of Mumbai's dabbawalas. Cultural anthropologist Sara Roncaglia explains how they cater to the various dietary requirements of a diverse and increasingly global city, where the preparation and consumption of food is pervaded with religious and cultural significance. Developing the idea of "gastrosemantics" - a language with which to discuss the broader implications of cooking and eating - Roncaglia's study helps us to rethink our relationship to food at a local and global level.

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