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Imaginary Diets, Edible Masculinities

Volker Bach

ABSTRACT: The diet of the buccaneers has been subject to a great deal of deliberate mythologising from their own era onward and to this day. This paper looks at contemporary accounts of buccaneer eating habits to reconstruct in broad lines what their actual everyday food would have looked like. The complex food web that emerges is both interesting and attractive, but was almost completely overshadowed by the myth of the ‘buccaneer diet’ of meat and liquor. This paper argues that this happened to avoid associations with unwanted racial, class, and gender identities as enslaved Africans, indentured servants, Native Americans, and women in general were written out of the conventional history.

‘What do Buccaneers Eat?’

Among the many things people are eager to learn about the pirates of the Caribbean, what they ate rarely features very prominently. Drink is usually a far more immediate concern. Unfortunately, most accounts in modern popular books tend to be rather bleak and influenced heavily by an earlier generation’s beliefs about pre-industrial shipboard food. One example reads:

Food was spoiled or infested with weevils. The water was foul, and to drink it would bring about stomach pains and much worse. One staple meal aboard was hardtack, a flour biscuit made to last months [...] The hardtack was soaked and boiled in rum and brown sugar to make it eatable. Pirates would restock their food supply at sea by stealing from other ships. [...] One popular dish was Solomon Grundy, which is like a chef’s salad. The Solomon Gundy contained fish, turtle and meat combined with hearts of palm, herbs and oils. [...] Pirates ate yams, plantains, papayas, pineapples, fruits and vegetables of the tropics. The problem was that food could not be kept on board for long periods before spoilage.

None of this is demonstrably false; water could go off, spoilage was a problem, and there is mention of Solomon Gundy (aka salmagundi) being eaten by no less than the real Dread Pirate (Bartholomew) Roberts. But very little of it bears any relation to the food experience of seventeenth-century Caribbean buccaneers we can reconstruct from contemporary sources. If we delve into these accounts a little deeper, the first voice we encounter is that

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of Alexandre Olivier Exquemelin, a Huguenot who spent years in the Caribbean and, by his own account, took part in Henry Morgan's raid on Panama before writing the first and by far the most successful history of the buccaneers. His report of their eating habits in the Dutch and German editions is more detailed than in the 1684 English translation. It reads:

When they have salted as much meat as they think right, they take it onto their ship and store it in a room above the ballast. Of this, they cook twice a day. When the meat is cooked, the fat is skimmed off the top of the cauldron and taken into as many small calabashes to dip as there are wooden platters. And thus they take their meal of just one dish which often tastes better than the most delicious fare at a lord's table. The captain may not have a better dish than the least among them, or if they notice it is so, they take theirs and put it in the captain's place.

2 To modern readers, boiled salt pork dipped in pork fat is not a very appealing diet. For the readers of his time, though, it had aspects of wish fulfilment. Europe in the mid-17th century was suffering from what we know today as the 'Little Ice Age', a dip in overall temperatures that brought crop failure, famine and disease. At the same time, the continent's population was rising almost everywhere. This was the tail end of the demographic recovery that followed the Black Death, the plague years of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the convergence of worsening climate and rising populations caused a long-lasting food crisis. To the common people of Western Europe, the post-plague years of labour shortage and open land were a distant, but strong memory that still shaped expectations of what a proper life entailed. At that time, meat was commonly served to servants and labourers and wages could buy ample portions in most years. By the end of the 17th century, this state of affairs had ended. Land was in short supply, made worse by enclosures and appropriations. Forestry laws tightened, increasingly banning the poor from hunting, fishing, cutting or even collecting wood. Work, if it could be had, paid poor wages, nominally often set at reasonably high levels by tradition, but relentlessly devalued by inflationary pressures. And the response of government was often enough draconian, penalizing vagrancy, locking the destitute in poorhouses, or expelling them. These were the people who were brought to the Americas as indentured servants, and their sensibilities coloured the views on food both among the colonists and in Europe outside of a small upper class insulated from poverty and dearth.

In the world of Europe's poor, meat was a highly desirable food. It is not coincidental that around this time, upper-class cuisine moves from conspicuously consuming spices and aromatics to a focus on meat, dairy, sugar, and high-status fruit and vegetables (these, too, will feature in the imagined pirate diet). Meat was also associated with status and with masculinity. Soldiers and sailors received daily meat rations even when common workers did not eat meat regularly. The 'roast beef of England' was proverbial not necessarily for its

real ubiquity – it was always a middle-class tradition – but for its implications about the national character. Englishmen were meat-eaters, strong, masculine, and rugged. It is in this context we must understand the image of the buccaneer diet.

And it is not just Exquemelin who transports this view. Jean Baptiste Labat, Dominican monk, polymath, and keen observer of all matters culinary, took part in a festivity organized by *flibustiers* in 1698 and describes it in his *Nouvelle Voyage*. The main course is a roasted feral pig, prepared by enslaved African servants over an open fire. Meanwhile, the *flibustiers* go out to hunt on their own until they are summoned back to the beach by musket shots. The least successful hunter is then punished by having to drink as many glasses of alcohol as the most successful one brought in animals. The only accompaniment to the meat is plantains, and not many because ‘...the fat and the lean of the pig serve them for meat and bread’.

These descriptions are not purely fictional. Exquemelin and Labat both tell the by now familiar story of the *boucaniers*, hunters who went after feral cattle and pigs in the northern highlands of Santo Domingo in the early decades of the 17th century. Cattle were prized for their hides, pigs for their meat which they salted and hot-smoked on a *boucan*, a wooden platform erected over a firepit. They spent months in the forest, in small groups living in temporary camps, before they carried their takings to the coast to sell it to planters and merchants. This vision of free hunting, ready access to the bountiful resources of a rich, empty land, also would have contrasted strongly with the limits that Europe’s poor faced at every step.

It is telling that Exquemelin places his account of meals in the context of a wider description of buccaneer society. He describes their egalitarian ethos, the way they elect their leaders, jealously guard their independence, and keep order among themselves by a set of mutually agreed-upon rules. This, too, would have been familiar to anyone who lived among the artisans and labourers of Europe who organized in self-governing associations and celebrated their community in shared feasts. Many ordinances regulating these festivities survive. They focus on keeping the peace, defining what food and drink was to be provided, and ensuring everyone had equal or appropriate shares. Buccaneer culture as Exquemelin knows it is the culture of the working class along Europe’s Atlantic seaboard, released from the constraints of state and church. The fact that, as he freely admits, the buccaneers keep indentured servants and slaves would not have detracted from that in their eyes.

Though Exquemelin’s description was very influential in shaping perceptions of the ‘pirate diet’ in general, it is contradicted not only by other authors, but also by his own eyewitness account of the 1671 expedition against Panama. He lists provisions taken from ships, bought from Native Americans, or plundered or extorted from Spanish settlements, and almost always lists cassava and maize. This matches what William Dampier writes of a later, ultimately unsuccessful 1679 raid on Panama, though he also mentions plantains as a frequent item in the diet ashore. Jean-Baptiste Labat, a Dominican friar and naturalist who

visited the French Antilles in the 1690s, even states that French *flibustiers* subsisted almost entirely on maize that they cooked 'like rice' with meat or fish and counted themselves lucky to have anything to go with it. Interestingly, in his description of an unfortunate expedition to Costa Rica, Exquemelin describes how buccaneers prepare manatee with maize cooked as *gruit* (groats i.e. porridge). Perhaps most tellingly, among the descriptions of food preparation that Exquemelin provides, the only recipe that he states with some pride that he prepared himself is roasted shoe leather. How must we imagine their daily fare then?

Food Webs and Food Resources

In order to try and reconstruct the actual diet of the buccaneers, we need to look at the environment they lived in. This was very different from the natural paradise that pirate romance imagined from very early on. The Caribbean after Columbus experienced one of the few events in history that can rightly be described as apocalyptic. Contact with alien cultures, animals, plants and diseases had a far-reaching impact throughout the world, but in the Americas, it was devastating. The population losses through disease, enslavement and war are estimated as high as 95%, something very few societies were able to survive. Invasive species, some introduced deliberately by European colonizers, spread across islands and continents, often with destructive results. Social fabrics frayed and established cultural patterns collapsed under the weight of conquest and mass death. The island home of the buccaneer resembled prelapsarian Eden less than it did Mad Max.

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What made buccaneering possible was first of all the extremely low population in much of America at the time. The Caribbean is roughly comparable in size with the Mediterranean, but in this world, the 700 men Henry Morgan led against Porto Bello were a military force capable of crushing everything in their path. Cities were few, surrounded by large areas of almost empty land. Native communities were small, often reduced to a precarious existence at the margins of the new European-dominated order after the loss of their established relations and resources. Only the territories of the old Pre-Columbian civilizations – Peru and New Spain, especially the highlands around Mexico City – continued to support dense populations. The economy of the Spanish Main was dominated by export-oriented activities that went for low-hanging fruit, resources that could be exploited at relatively low capital cost or yielded high returns.

The business of the *boucaniers* depended on yet another aspect of this environment: feral animals. The deliberate release of European livestock into the American environment had been Spanish policy from the earliest days of colonization. As they entered formerly cultivated, now empty lands with few predators and no parasites or diseases to reduce their numbers, the result was a population explosion. Spanish settlers often managed these populations in a semi-feral state, but across much of the Caribbean, feral cattle and *cochons marons* could be had for the taking. *Boucanier* hunters prowled the forests of Hispaniola,

providing dried cattle hides and the preserved meat of wild pigs as trade goods to settled communities in the Americas and passing merchant ships. This background – though in the cases of many individuals, it was a case of fictional shared ancestry – likely goes some way toward explaining the buccaneer diet’s emphasis on meat.

Contrary to the assertion made by Exquemelin, the sources agree that buccaneers relied on plant foods for a large part of their calorie intake. They were able to draw on a wide variety of food resources, an emerging ‘tropical’ crop package that resulted from a number of successful exchanges across oceans. While cassava, sweet potatoes and maize were native to the Americas (and especially cassava bread is described and remarked on in almost every travel account), plaintains, another important food resource, were recent imports from Eurasia, likely via the Canary Islands or West Africa. Coconuts, interestingly, may even have crossed the Atlantic by natural means and arrived in the Caribbean before Columbus. A large number of other fruit and vegetables, too, were European or African imports, a fact that contemporary travel accounts are usually aware of, though they are not always correct on the details.

The sources suggest buccaneers relied on Native Americans to supply the majority of their plant foods. This, too, was not an anomaly. In fact, the focus of many European settlers on cash crops and exportable commodities meant that Native American communities could fill a market niche trading food for European goods. Merchant vessels coming to the Caribbean had relied on this trade as early as the 1550s, and Spanish colonial cities often fed themselves through tributary relationships with surrounding Native communities. There were even established meeting points where ships could signal their interest in bartering for provisions. The degree to which the seemingly primeval village agriculture of the Caribbean was actually an adaptation to this new market is unclear, but it is obvious that a surplus existed, and compensation was expected.

A further resource that records mention regularly was seafood. Ship’s crews fished and gathered shellfish when ashore, but buccaneer crews – and this appears to have been specific to them – took aboard Native Americans who specialized in fishing, hunting turtles, and harpooning manatees for food. Exquemelin describes them as enslaved abductees while Ringrose and William Dampier describe more cordial relations. Their ‘Mosquito strikers’, recruited among the Miskito with whom English colonists had entered into an alliance, move with ease between the two cultures, adopting and shedding English names, clothing and language at will. These men would go into action whenever crews put into anchorages, providing fresh fish and meat. As part of a diet, this was not unusual; turtles, fish and shellfish were commonly eaten by Natives and colonists alike across the Caribbean.

Buccaneers were in the habit of taking things by force and that applied to food as much as anything else. When we take the trouble to develop a timeline of the expeditions we have records of, it becomes evident that a good deal of their time was spent robbing the supplies

they needed to stay afloat. The frequency with which Spanish colonists would approach landing parties to offer maize, cassava, and cattle as ransom to prevent the destruction of valuable property ashore suggests this was as integral to buccaneering as protection rackets are to the Mob. Ships and coastal settlements were also routinely searched for victuals, a practice Ringrose refers to as ‘rummaging’. This kind of behaviour was not limited to pirates, either.

With these data points, the question how victuals thus obtained were prepared needs answering next. The imaginary pirate diet is strongly coloured by the unhelpful fact that fiction’s most famous buccaneer, Long John Silver, is a peg-legged ship’s cook lording it over a fully equipped galley. In reality, it is unlikely either was found on buccaneer vessels. Many raiding expeditions were carried out in small, lightly armed craft, sometimes little more than dugout canoes, and cooking equipment was at best rudimentary. Large cauldrons were the most prominent piece of kitchen gear, and when Dampier’s crew found themselves underequipped on their South Sea raid, they casually took some from a sugarmill. Cooks, too, are in short supply in our sources. The enslaved Native American cook serving the Spanish commander Manoel Rivera Perdal was taken captive by buccaneers in 1670 and served them in the same capacity afterwards, but that incident has more to do with humiliating an enemy than the usual composition of ships’ companies. We know from casual references in our sources that crews often travelled with enslaved African servants whose duties may have extended to food preparation. More likely, the buccaneers themselves, coming from what we would call the food processing business, would have done much of the cooking themselves. By all accounts they were skilled at preparing meat, and very likely their abilities extended to less symbolically charged foodstuffs.

Dietary Distancing

The diet we can reconstruct from a careful reading of the sources – a broad-based, multifarious food web based on a thorough familiarity with the natural environment, cordial relations with its native inhabitants, and a good dose of defiance in the face of established power looks very attractive to moderns. It seems to have appeared much less so to writers of the time, or of subsequent two and a half centuries. The imaginary diet of pork and turtle, rum and salmagundi all but completely displaced the more complex historical reality, and it very likely already did so in the image buccaneers sought to project to the outside world. To try and answer why that was, we should look at another part of Father Labat’s work.

In volume 4 of his *Nouvelle Voyage*, Labat describes the habits of a group of people living in the French Antilles. Their primary diet was maize, cassava, and sweet potatoes served with salt meat or fish. They enjoyed shellfish and relished fruit. For their festivities, they roasted whole pigs and gathered for long nights of dancing, drinking and merriment. Liquor was their particular delight, something they were prone to stealing and consuming in copious quantities. Though normally dressed in coarse linen clothes for work, they

would turn out in ruffled shirts for special occasions, wearing fine hats, gaudy vests, and short, belted jackets made of light, colourful cloth and, if they were rich enough, adorned with buttons of precious metal and gems. These people were the enslaved Africans.

Anyone the least bit familiar with the reality of slavery in the Caribbean will appreciate that this description bears little resemblance to reality. As with the writings of Exquemelin on buccaneering, the details of personal observation give the lie to a generalized tropical idyll. What is striking, though, is to what extent this picture agrees with that of the *flibustier*, the buccaneer, the pirate. This is not entirely surprising since they inhabited the same environment, relied on the same natural resources, and even inhabited a similar social space, remote from the rarefied circles of the ruling class. But for precisely this reason, it is obvious why it would have felt important for the buccaneers – and even more so, for their chroniclers – to emphasize the distance between them.

To the buccaneers themselves, at least initially, the matter may not have been race as much as class. Exquemelin's Dutch original text uses the same word to describe indentured Europeans and enslaved Africans, seeing no distinction in principle between their states. His accounts of the cruelty that especially English masters visited on their inferiors are hair-raising, and starvation features prominently. Meat, eggs and wine are among the things that they lacked, and that a particularly cruel master on St. Christopher would always place by the body of a deceased servant in order to prove he had been well provisioned.

Real-life buccaneer society reflected these differences – *boucanier* hunters and logwood cutters used indentured servants for labour, and ships' companies kept slaves. Such social distinctions appear to have mattered less among them than in settler colonies, but they were hardly insignificant. An indentured servant brought from Europe represented significant investment that a *boucanier* needed to recoup, and a slave valuable property. European servants joining their ranks could expect to rise to full membership if they survived the ordeal – and poor food does not appear to have featured much in that – but the fate of an African fallen among buccaneers seems to have depended on spur-of-the-moment decisions. Some ex-slaves of African ancestry became buccaneers, especially early on. A former Spanish slave known as Diego Lucifer captained a Dutch raiding vessel in the 1630s. At other times, and especially once a ready market existed, slaves were treated as loot. After their victorious return to English waters, Ringrose's account mentions that the crew voted to liberate one slave and gift another to their captain as an extra bonus. The rest were sold off and the cash distributed.

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Imagining a Pirate Diet – Wealth, Masculinity and Independence

All the elements of the imagined buccaneer diet that contemporary descriptions and later fiction immortalize owe their symbolic significance to this particular situation. It is important to stress here that imagined is not the same thing as imaginary. All its

elements really existed, and doubtlessly buccaneers hoped and possibly sought to eat this way. This is not uncommon for the food habits of heavily fictionalized people in general. Police officers on patrol are likely to eat at fast food outlets more often than most of us, and much military food is genuinely bad. Neither coffee-and-donuts nor ‘shit-on-a-shingle’ adequately represent a more complex reality, but they evoke group identification inside and outside. Buccaneer food very likely functioned in much the same way.

Meat, as was already pointed out, had a powerful symbolic pull for Europeans at the time. Interestingly, the same probably was not true for Native Americans in the region whose intake of animal foods depended far more on seafood. Buccaneers identified as hunters and skill at processing meat was common enough among their ranks to make not just butchering cattle, but competently preserving all manner of meat something any crew was readily expected to manage. Festivities like that described by Labat had roasted meat as their centerpiece – a turtle might do, but a buccaneer feast of fish and crab, however sumptuous, would be incomplete. Meat, of course, was not just rare and coveted in Europe, but also a foodstuff that was rationed to everyone who had to depend on social superiors to provide it. Slaves, indentured servants, apprentices and soldiers might have had more of it than the average European peasant, but they did not enjoy the surfeit that Exquemelin paints.

8 Alcohol was another issue, though one that plays a more prominent role as time progresses. It is interesting that Exquemelin, Dampier and Wafer devote significant space to the various alcoholic beverages prepared from manioc roots, plantains, sugarcane, palm juice, honey and fruit, they almost never mention distilled liquor. Labat describes the production of rum – he refers to it as *guildive*, probably the origin of the English slang term kill-devil – but mainly mentions it as a slave drink. Imported European brandy probably held significant status among the buccaneers – Exquemelin writes that they named the ritualistic drink of warm marrow from a kill was known as ‘taking brandy’ – but it was an expensive treat, not daily fare.

The most important aspect of the buccaneer diet, though, is the deliberate absence of power relationships. They were, Exquemelin writes, allowed to take away the captain’s portion if they perceived him having better food than the least among them. Every man was entitled to eat and drink as much as he wanted, with rationing allowed only in times of shortage. Hunting, an endeavour viewed as depending on individual skill and marksmanship, provided meat for the table and proved the individual resourcefulness of these men. They were beholden to no master, dependent on no community, and reliant on their own courage, skill and tools only. It is probably not a surprise that the legend of the pirate was most influential in liberal, capitalist societies that celebrated a ‘bootstrap’ myth. It belongs firmly with the trapper and the cowboy among the archetypes of white manliness that tell how the west was won.

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Notes

1. 'Pirate' here is shorthand for armed combatants of mainly French, English and Dutch origin who carried out seaborne raids on Spanish colonial possessions from bases in the Caribbean and colonial North America in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It may need saying at this point that actual pirates in the Roman law sense probably never existed, and that these men (and occasionally women) certainly were no such thing.
2. Rodriguez, Julio: *Cooking Columbus: A History of Cooking in the Caribbean*, XLibris 2018, chapter 9
3. Quoted after: Exquemelin, Olivier Alexandre: *Piraten der Karibik* (reprint of *Die Amerikanischen Seeräuber*), Königswinter 2007, 1.7 English translation mine.
4. Rogers, Ben: *Beef and Liberty. Roast Beef, John Bull and the English Nation*, London 2003
5. Labat, Jean Baptiste: *Nouvelle Voyage aux Iles d'Amerique*, Paris 1722, vol IV, p. 216 ff.
6. It is interesting that while English derived its word for seaborne looters, buccaneer, from the French *boucanier*, the French adopted the term *flibustier*, probably derived from the Dutch *vrijbuitter*, for the same profession. In French, a *boucanier* was always and only a hunter.
7. The long and bitter conflict between peasant poachers and forestry authorities as it played out in Southwestern Germany is studied in Ott, Wilfried: *Ich bin ein freier Wildbretschütz... Geschichte und Geschichten um die Wilderei, Leinefeld* 2000. It was not fundamentally different in other parts of the continent.
8. Labat, Jean Baptiste: *Nouvelle Voyage aux Isles de l'Amerique*, Paris 1722, vol 2, p. 330
9. Exquemelin II.7
10. Exquemelin II.5
11. Charles Kingsley's 19th-century poem *The Last Buccaneer* describes golden fruit and tall palms, colibris and parrots, hammocks by the beach, and submissive 'negro lasses', all tropes that were by then already well established. We find much the same imagery used to recruit colonists for early Caribbean ventures, and it still serves to attract tourists to these islands. Poem at <https://www.bartleby.com/246/576.html> (last accessed 11 May 2021)
12. This field is still contentious in detail and research continues to advance, but the most influential descriptions are found in Diamond, Jared: *Guns, Germs and Steel*, New York 1997, Mann, Charles C.: 1491. *The Americas before Columbus*, London 2006, and Crosby, Alfred W: *Ecological Imperialism. The Biological Expansion of Europe 900-1900*, Cambridge 1986.
13. Camus, Michel Christian: *l'Île de la Tortue au coeur de la Flibuste Caraïbe*, Paris 1997, p. 79 This was not limited to the latecoming colonists: When the Spanish took Tortuga from the first French colonists, they left behind a garrison of 100 men to hold it.
14. The concept of 'maron' – a return to the wilderness – is central to many aspects of Caribbean reality in the seventeenth century. Livestock were 'marons' if they went feral, escaped African slaves formed communities referred to as 'marrons' or 'cimarrones' beyond the reach of Europeans, and 'marooning' – abandoning in the wilderness – was a punishment used among the buccaneers. The buccaneers themselves can be seen as semi-feral Europeans, and the Caribbean was probably closer to Hobbes' conception of the state of nature than anywhere else on the planet at the time – though still not very.
15. Camus, p. 49. This business should not be imagined as primitive. Some *boucaniers* entered contractual relationships with correspondents in European ports who purchased their goods, provided them with arms, powder, and tools, and contracted for indentured servants to support them. They were part of a monetized, global economy well before they turned to privateering.
16. As early as the sixteenth century, de Lery mentions as a stereotype that Europeans going to America used to accustom themselves to eating bread made from roots. Lery, Jean de: *Unter Menschenfressern am Amazonas. Brasilianisches Tagebuch 1556-1558*, Horst Erdmann Verlag, Tübingen 1968, p. 58 (original: *Histoire d'une Voyage fait en la terre du Bresil... pour Antoine Chuppin*, Paris 1578)
17. Both de Lery and Andreas Ultzheimer, surgeon on a number of Dutch ships trading in the West Indies around 1600, describe Natives coming to the shore to meet incoming ships with deliveries of fruit and cassava bread to trade for „fish hooks, mouth organs, combs and such'. Ultzheimer, Andreas: *Beschreibung etlicher Reisen*, Gütersloh 1971, p.72
18. The Ringrose journal attached to the 1684 English edition of Exquemelin records that buccaneers were welcomed with a gift of two plantains and a piece of sugarcane each, but „when these were consumed, if

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- we would not truck (i.e. barter), we must have starved'. Exquemelin, A.O.: *Bucaniers of America...* London 1684, part IV page 7
19. Especially in Dampier, William: *A New Voyage around the Terrestrial Globe...*, London 1698, p. 84 f. Exquemelin (ch. 8) writes that two 'strikers' could supply a thousand men in four hours of fishing. He also describes buccaneers entering into temporary marriages with Native American women and living in their communities for months or years, so the barrier appears to have been porous both ways.
 20. A prominent case of this was 4000 hanegas of maize given as ransom for Morgan sparing Rio de la Hacha (Exquemelin III.1) and 500 head of cattle as part of the ransom paid to L'Olonois' crews for Maracaibo (ibid. 2, 2). Quotidian reality is more likely reflected in the 80 cattle promised (but not delivered) to Captain Sharp's crew for a sugar mill (*Bucaniers IV*, p 95).
 21. De Lery, p. 61, recounts the looting of food supplies from English merchants in times of peace with the flippant dismissal 'c'est la guerre et la coutume'.
 22. The inspiration for this figure likely came at least in part from a famous etching by Thomas Rowlandson. Navy ship's cooks were often invalids in need of a job that did not require the use of all limbs. While buccaneer crews had rules for compensating the loss of limbs, there is no record of them hiring on invalid comrades – or anyone else – as cooks.
 23. Dampier, *New Voyage* p. 200
 24. Latimer, Jon: *Buccaneers of the Caribbean. How Piracy Forged an Empire*, Harvard UP, Cambridge MA 2009, p. 200
 25. Exquemelin 3, 7 mentions two slave women killed as they were sent ashore to fetch water. Ringrose (*Bucaniers IV* p. 141) records the rare data point that a crew of 47 travelled with 5 enslaved African servants. We do not know how representative this number is.
 26. Labat vol. IV, p. 151 ff passim
 27. Exquemelin 1, 7
 28. Latimer p. 54
 29. *Bucaniers IV* p. 280
 30. The descriptions given by Exquemelin and Dampier suggest actual commercial hunts were a collective operation.

Chaat: Why India's Beloved Snack is Also a Feat of the Imagination

Vidya Balachander

Until the COVID-19 pandemic caused a widespread disruption of urban lives, here is a scene that played out in almost identical fashion across Indian cities. Shortly before dusk, as offices closed for the day, hungry professionals and students disgorged from buildings and huddled at street corners in small groups. Usually, they could be found surrounding a street food vendor with a pushcart.

From a distance, it would seem as if the vendor held their rapt attention like a conductor overseeing an orchestra. His quicksilver hands chopped, tossed, mixed, squeezed, and muddled ingredients with a practised ease. In just a few moments, the famished onlookers would have been handed different kinds of *chaat* – sweet-sour-spicy plates of snacks, crowned with a flourish of crunchy toppings. For a few minutes, the clamour of waiting would be replaced with the complete sensory pleasure of eating a plate (or several) of *chaat*.

Widely believed to have been derived from the Hindi / Urdu word *chaatna*, which means to devour or lick clean with one's fingers, *chaat* refers to a genre of savoury snacks that are popular both in India, and in neighbouring countries such as Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh.¹ There are several theories regarding its origins, including a widely cited story that Mughal emperor Shah Jahan's chief physician ordered the royal cooks to create foods laden with spices to counter a cholera outbreak.² Another popular story suggests that *chaat* may have been created as safeguard against the highly polluted waters of the River Yamuna.

Even though there is little definitive proof that either of these stories has a factual basis, there is evidence to suggest that *chaat* – or at least early versions of it – have been a part of the Indian diet since at least the eleventh century. Colleen Taylor Sen writes about some of the recipes mentioned in the *Manasollasa*, a Sanskrit composition in verse by King Somesvara III, a twelfth-century ruler of southwest India.³ Even though they are now known by different names, some of the dishes mentioned in the *Manasollasa* could be considered forerunners of ingredients used in modern-day *chaat*.

Sen writes:

Lentil or chickpea flour mixed with asafoetida, salt, sugar, ground black pepper, cardamom and water was ground into a paste, formed

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into little discs and deep-fried to make *purika*, a forerunner of modern papdi (round crispy wafers used in the popular street food papdi chaat). A fermented paste of ground urad dal and black pepper was shaped into balls and deep-fried to make *vadika*, which was soaked in milk or yoghurt. A modern incarnation of this is the popular Indian street food dahi vada – fried spicy lentil balls smothered with fresh yoghurt and topped with ground cumin, other spices and a sweet-and-sour chutney.⁴

Like other time honoured Indian culinary traditions, *chaat* has not just survived but also extended far beyond its traditionally defined contours to become a nationwide phenomenon. Through this paper, I assert that even though *chaat* is often subsumed within the larger and more generic category of street food, it should also be seen as – and its popularity attributed to – a feat of the imagination.

Although it may seem like a random assortment of ingredients, thrown together by the experienced hand of a *chaatwallah* (or purveyor of *chaat*), a good plate of *chaat* demands an imaginative yet intuitive understanding of colours, flavours, temperatures, and textures, and how they can be stacked and interplayed to create a memorable mouthful.

I also argue that imagination, as it pertains to *chaat*, should not just be interpreted literally. With a multitude of iterations of the same dish, made with similar ingredients but distinguished by regional inflections, *chaat* challenges the reductive notion of a pan-Indian uniformity when it comes to cuisine and taste preferences. At the same time, it also serves as a link that demonstrates the elemental appeal of the trifecta of sweet-sour-spicy flavours and the ways in which they are expressed in different parts of the country (and the subcontinent).

Disguise or design?

Although there are simply too many types of *chaat* to list, the most popular kinds usually follow a 'formula' of sorts. This includes a crunchy, deep-fried element, such as hollow spherical *puris* made of semolina, atta or refined flour, *papdis* or thin, wafer-like discs, or samosas; a tangy-sweet chutney made of dates or tamarind; a spicy chutney made of fresh coriander leaves and mint leaves; and flavouring agents such as *chaat masala*, a blend of freshly roasted and powdered spices that adds an earthy kick. Apart from these, *chaat* also calls for ingredients that lend heft and body, such as boiled chickpeas, potatoes and dried peas, diced onions and tomatoes, crisp *sev* (or thin, deep-fried noodles made of gram flour) and unsweetened yoghurt.

The predilection for deep-fried, carb-heavy ingredients as building blocks for *chaat* has given it a reputation of being unwholesome 'fast food'. But if you are willing to temporarily put aside questions of how these individual elements are prepared, it becomes clear that *chaat* was never meant to be a pure vehicle for indulgence. Traditionally, it was an imaginative and carefully calibrated way to soothe stomachs and aid digestion, especially during the

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change of seasons. Food writer Anoothi Vishal notes how it is not a mere coincidence that the *pani* (or flavoured water) used in *golgappas* (hollow *puris* filled with potatoes, chickpeas or stewed dried peas and fiery *pani*) is laden with coriander and mint leaves, and spices such as *zeera* (cumin) and *hing* (or asafoetida).

‘Long thought to have curative powers, the cumin-laced water (without bolder spices like chillies but often with other therapeutic ingredients like *hing* was given to lactating mothers and those whose digestion needed a kick, especially as the weather turned warm in the Indo-Gangetic plain. (It is more than a coincidence that the *chaat* season began with Holi in spring and continued through the long summer.) Because *pudina* (mint) was thought to be cooling, a fistful of dried, crushed leaves would be added to the therapeutic *jal zeera*?⁵

Chaat – at least in its most elemental form – was created with an eye on good health. Its clever packaging of health-giving properties in patently delicious disguise is among its most imaginative feats.

One *chaat*, many iterations

Chaat is often believed to have originated in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh.⁶ Cities in UP such as the state capital Lucknow, Varanasi and Prayagraj boast a robust *chaat* culture furthered equally by entrepreneurs who have been in the trade for generations, and customers who are discerning about quality and flavour.

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Here, in what we can be considered the heartland of traditional *chaat*, it is often made to an exacting standard. The *aloo tikkis* (round or heart-shaped potato patties, sometimes stuffed with *matara* or white peas or fresh green peas) I tried in Lucknow during a visit in early 2020, were unlike those I had eaten anywhere else. Fried in ghee, they were shatter crisp yet far from stodgy, offering the unalloyed pleasure of creamy, well-cooked potatoes, topped with a dollop of yoghurt and *saunth*, or a sweet chutney flavoured with dried ginger.

But the versatility of *chaat* means that *aloo tikki* has long crossed state lines and acquired nationwide popularity. (The scope of this paper doesn't extend to northeastern India, which has significantly different dietary habits from the rest of the country). The complexion of the dish varies depending on where you eat it. For instance, in the Chembur locality of Mumbai with a significant population of the Sindhi community, the same potato patties are likely to be stuffed with *chana dal* and served with tamarind and coriander chutneys.

Perhaps the best example of *chaat*'s shape-shifting adaptability is *pani puri*. The dish goes by different names across the country; the change in geography also translates to subtle differences in its flavour profile. To illustrate, *pani ke batashe* in Delhi means flatter

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puris made of *atta* or semolina stuffed with spiced potatoes and sour-spicy water whereas in Mumbai, *pani puri* implies semolina or refined flour *puris* stuffed with boiled peas or sprouts and a balanced mix of sweet and spicy chutneys. In Bangarpet in South India, which boasts its own unique spin-offs of *chaat*, *pani puri* may come with hearty boiled, dried peas and the heady kick of garlic-scented water.

Bengaluru resident Ajit Bhaskar, a physicist with an avid interest in food and cooking, told me about the nuances that separate the city's *chaat* scene from that of other cities. He mentioned that the name Bengaluru is in fact derived from the Kannada phrase, 'bendha kaala ooru' (or the town of boiled beans). 'Traditionally, the weather in Bengaluru used to be cool all year round. So boiled beans provided comfort food.'⁷ True to its name, dried and stewed beans and peas feature in many versions of the city's *chaat*, including *masaal puri*, an iconic regional dish that features spicy peas stuffed into *puris*, topped with finely chopped onions, tomatoes and coriander leaves.

In this way, *chaat* resists narrow definitions of ownership to any state or community. Even when it is tempting to pin it down to a place, such as the world-famous *bhel puri* to the city of Mumbai, one is reminded that *bhel puri*, too, came about from a *mélange* of cultural influences. As the well-known food writer Vikram Doctor was quoted as saying:

14 'It's rooted in the mixing together of two culinary trends...the puffed rice snacks that are popular in the south and east, such as Kolkata's *jhal muri*, and the chaat ingredients from the country's north'.⁸

The street and the showman

Imaginative not just in its physical expression, *chaat* also necessitates a certain rhythm and quality of interaction between the *chaatwallah* and his customers. Often bearers of a legacy that has been passed down from generation to generation, *chaatwallahs* learn the nuances of the trade through observation and experience. But ultimately, even though carefully calibrated and an eye on quality can ensure a degree of success, the *chaatwallah* also needs to sharpen an equally – if not more – important prerequisite for success. Constantly vying with other vendors, attractions and distractions on the streets, *chaatwallahs* must have a flair for showmanship.

Chaiwallahs cannot be aloof or distant if they expect to hold their audience in rapt attention. This is why some of the country's most famous *chaatwallahs* have an almost theatrical quality, calling out to customers with distinct tunes or juggling plates of *dahi vada* overhead, as the proprietor of Indore's Joshi Dahi Vada (also called the 'Flying Vada House') is famous for doing. In this way, a *chaatwallah* bridges the artistic distance that

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often separates a chef from his clients, even in the most intimate of settings. The *chaatwallah* draws you into his periphery as you await your turn. In turn, the feedback is provided in real time and the tweaks to the dish made accordingly.

In this interaction between a showman and his audience, the street also has a significant part to play. On the one hand, the spectacle of *chaat* effectively converts a shared experience in a public space to a private one. On the other hand, the public nature of the process in turn contributes an air of liveliness to the street. As Harris Solomon notes:

‘If the street is both the substance and site of food processing, as I argue here, then it cannot only be understood as a location for food’s consumption... Studies of street food tend to cast the street as the bit part, with food as the charismatic lead. This approach leaves the street’s transformative potential underexamined’.

I argue that *chaat* is the conduit for a more joyful experience of the streets, especially against the backdrop of the deep socioeconomic divides of the subcontinent. In that moment when one waits in a tight circle around a *chaatwallah*, awaiting the next round of *pani puri* or *phuchka* on our plates, the street is a powerful equalizing force. In this way, *chaat* becomes imperative to the democratic experience of street life, particularly in the Indian context.

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Notes

1. Laura Siciliano Rosen, ‘Chaat’, Britannica, 2014 <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/chaat> >
2. Roshni Subramaniam, ‘Chaats From Around India You Cannot Miss!’, *Outlook Traveller*, September 5 2019 <<https://www.outlookindia.com/outlooktraveller/explore/story/69834/chaats-from-around-india-that-you-cannot-miss>>
3. Colleen Taylor Sen, *Feasts and Fasts: A History of Food in India* (India: Speaking Tiger, 2016, p 139-141)
4. Colleen Taylor Sen, p 139-141)
5. Anoothi Vishal, ‘Chaat is not a competitive sport, though like any sport, it is dense with nuanced history’, Scroll.in, Feb 02, 2021 <<https://scroll.in/magazine/984636/is-golgappa-better-than-paani-puri-and-phuchka-that-is-the-wrong-question-to-ask>>
6. Anoothi Vishal.
7. Interview conducted by author, May 2021
8. Dan Packel, ‘Inside India’s Street Food Paradise’, AFAR, Oct 20, 2011 <<https://www.afar.com/magazine/indias-street-food-paradise--2>>

Eat, Lose, Imagine

Janet Beizer

ABSTRACT: The first half of my paper takes the form of a diptych that juxtaposes a personal alimentary story of the 1950s and 60s lived within my secularized, Jewish-tinged American family of origin, and a collectively experienced story about food recounted originally through recipes surreptitiously gathered in Eastern European concentration camps during the Holocaust, and retold through film. My motivation for considering together a series of private anecdotes and a much weightier and darker communal documentation was to think, through these very different narratives and on two very disparate scales, about the relationships among food, absence, and imagination that bear on both. In the process of writing, I came to see that the two initial panels of the paper were imbricated in ways I had not foreseen. The second half of the paper, divided into two sections and a coda, provides the space to reflect on this process.

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for Ross Chambers, in memory

Imagination, says the O.E.D., is either an action, that of ‘forming a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses,’ or a mental faculty ‘by which are formed images... of external objects not present to the senses’. In other words, fundamental both to the act of imagining and to the function of the imagination is the notion of absence. This leaning on lack or loss is at once so basic and so essential to the work of the imagination that I start my meditation on culinary imagining right there, even at the risk of underlining the obvious. But my implicit underriding question is what eating and food, whose materiality is patent and which belong to a very distinct province of imagined activity, have specifically to do with loss, lack, and non-presence.

Though I have, for the sake of clarity and concision, introduced my paper with a definition, and will later call upon the work of theory, the heart of my reflection is lodged in a recurrent childhood memory about the unexpected and inexplicable absence of a very particular food-giver, my grandmother, her imaginary reappearance, and the significance of the event in my early consciousness. This memory and its associative threads furnish the matter of the first part of my paper, which is a short memoir about alimentary pleasure, loss, fantasy, excess, and oppression: in short, a meditation on the peculiarities of eating in my family of origin.

The second part of the paper turns to French filmmaker and journalist Anne Georget's documentary films, *Mina's Recipe Book* (2007) and *Imaginary Feasts* (2015), both inspired by the re-emergence of collected recipes that had been rehearsed in whispers by starved prisoners (at Terezín, or Theresienstadt, for the first film, and in diverse locations, for the second) and then transcribed at great risk on cloth or paper scraps.¹ I bring into the conversation also the posthumous publication of the eponymous Mina's cookbook, introduced by Cara De Silva, as *In Memory's Kitchen*. These extreme conjurations of food trace a nexus of nourishment, absence, and imagination in contexts sharply divergent from my own childhood memories. They expose a culinary imagination generated by scenarios of almost unimaginable loss: deprivation of food, family, heritage, dignity, liberty, and life.

In the subsequent sections, I grapple with what it means to think about stories of such different scope, scale, and genre together, and I consider the unexpected revelations of the process of writing the juxtaposition as well as the ethical stakes and intentions of the project. In this second half of the paper, I suggest intersections and rapprochements of the two initial diptych panels, without fully articulating them, in order to pose questions that cannot have clear and tidy answers.

Twisting the Grandmother Trope

One Christmas morning I woke early as a child of four or five, brimming with the expectancy of revelation. No religious expectation was involved; we were Jewish, and recently would have lit the menorah candles, but like many assimilated Jews in 1950s America, we also celebrated Santa Claus in our idiosyncratic way, with tangerines and walnuts left for him on the eve. In return, on the morn we harvested gifts overflowing our literally interpreted Christmas stockings. From the foil-wrapped nuts and bright citrus globes glinting through the toes of my mother's rent nylons which had been pinned before bedtime to the couch upholstery--one leg per child--up through the bulging calves and widening thighs, an enticing array of eclectic hues and shapes spilled out onto the living room carpet. My excitement looks rather materialistic, in retrospect, though it was backlit by the homeliness of family ritual and the anticipation of joining cousins and grandparents for dinner. So, it is not entirely odd that in the first moments of awakening on that particular Christmas morning, I heard the bidding tones of my grandmother's voice calling out, wraithlike, drawing me into the day: 'Jaaaaa-net,' she said, and then again, 'Jaaaaa-net'... The summoning was quiet but insistent. I slid out of bed to find her. My infant sister and parents were still asleep; I quickly made the tour of our small apartment but found no one afoot. I looked down the stairwell, under the dining room table, beneath the chairs and couch; no one. But her voice lingered with its come-hither command in the elongated syllables of my whispered name: 'Jaaaaa-net'...

I loved my grandmother. She didn't live with us, but she and my similarly adored grandfather joined us Friday evenings for dinner, riding from the far shores of Manhattan out to Queens and then back again a few hours later. My grandfather arrived in the evening, after work, his oversized coat pockets distended with sour pickles filched from the constantly replenished bowl in the diner where he ate lunch. They were duly plated and found their way to the table to join the feast my mother and grandmother would have spent the day preparing. It is possible that Shabbat was the distant avatar of these Friday night dinners, but not a candle or prayer remained as token of such rituals, only the copious table, replete with challah, but also milk for me, whether the meat was chicken, beef, or pork. My grandmother came early in the day; from our double-parked car, my mother and I trained our eyes to find who would first see her emerge from the mouth of the subway at the 179th Street Station in Jamaica for a day punctuated by forays to various supermarkets and finally, Adrian's, the special occasion bakery. There we got golden-crust ed buttery challah and an extravagant dessert for dinner: chocolate babka or banana cream pie or cheesecake with chocolatey ripples running through, and thick chocolate squiggles threading through dense buttery crumbs on top. These upper layers could be lifted off and enjoyed, sometimes well before dinner, if I was quiet and careful enough. The meal would be three courses: first an appetizer of cantaloupe crescents or a grapefruit half, then a roast chicken or beef or pot roast, occasionally leg of lamb or pork loin, roasted till crackly with garlic, bedded down in onions, potatoes, carrots, and gravy. And a Bird's Eye brand green vegetable on the side, because it was the '50s. Accompanied by my grandfather's pocket pickles, as we called them, and followed by the bakery cake, however diminished.

In telling this story, I realize that if I am to recall with any measure of fidelity how my past was constructed, I cannot *not* fall back on what Helen Rosner has called 'the grandmother trope' of food narratives: the assumption that 'our elders are the keepers of domestic wisdom'-- and most crucially, the guardians of the recipes that preserve home cooking and tradition.² But the inexorable deviation of this trope from its standard cocooning of home, hearth, forebears, and food, might already begin to be clear in the quirky details of its spinning out, even without any elaboration of its later evolution into a trail of roast chickens--sent by U.S. Postal mail--to grandchildren dispersed across the country, relegated to bunking in college dorm rooms and consigned to subsist, on other nights, on cafeteria fare.

But to close the parenthesis that risks precipitously circumnavigating childhood: we are still, in fact, many years before the college chicken years, on a Christmas morning in Queens when a small child hears her grandmother's whisper in her ear. Christmas morning was not part of the grandparent ritual, though, and even after the entire household--mother, father, baby sister--had been wakened, and the underside of every bed checked, no grandmother was in attendance. Despite parental assurances that she could not be found because she was

simply not there, I insisted. I knew her voice, and I'd heard my name called. I remember my mother dialing her phone number so I could speak to her in Manhattan and have her whereabouts directly confirmed: yes, she was home in her apartment and even if she had called out to me, because of course she was thinking about me, she always was, I could not have heard her voice so far away.

This memory today stays with me as a watershed of sorts; it is probably my earliest remembrance and certainly the most powerful. The sharpness of the combined sense of loss and awe has not dulled, the wonder tempering the absence by a glimmer of something not quite understood but vast in its openness, almost magical in its portent. For the adult looking back, the moment has come to suggest itself--but this only after many, many years of playback and pondering--as the dawning consciousness of imagination: the inchoate almost-awareness that something can exist in the mind or the heart that is as clear as a sound that falls right into an open ear, and yet not be physically at hand.

That the advent of imagination--or at least my coming to awareness of it--was coupled for me not only with wanting or lack but more precisely with the absence of the figure most identified with culinary pleasures in my life seems indicative of a potent connection among the workings of eating, suffering loss, and imagining.³ And yet, and at the same time, this triad flickering at the brink of mourning was connected too with an enthralling sense of discovery and even power, as if I now fathomed that I had within me an arcane faculty that could potentially summon what was lost or too far to reach. The graven acoustic image that has held me in its thrall for as long as I remember and continues to haunt me is, I suppose, a variation of the grandmother trope. Yet it seems important to note that the scene that brands my memory is not one where my pot-stirring grandmother is reassuringly ensconced in her own aromatic kitchen, nor in ours, though in fact she often *was* to be found in these places. Instead, I am marked by the instance of her unfathomable physical absence belied by the sound of her voice, disembodied, resonant only within me. I hear it still.

However worn the grandmother trope may be in the collective unconscious, it appears to be more stubbornly unconventional in its actual unwinding: in my experience and, I suspect, more generally, it binds eating, losing, and imagining in a weave that can be as formally irregular as it is mythically familiar. The slipping of my mother's mother from my childhood clasp and the decentering of her voice, the work of a few passing moments that reassigned her to a phantom presence, inaugurates a file of culinary eccentricities that further destabilize everyday kitchen narratives. At what point in family history did eccentric food practices veer into oppressive feedings? Where do I locate the warm light shading into a darkening chill? When does memory effect a transition from the first to the second? Or were they always already one and the same? I cannot forget the urging to eat everything on my plate, and to replenish if I already had, and the reminder, if I protested that I was no longer hungry, to think about all the starving children in India. I remember a

young cousin of seven or eight who cried through the better part of a Thanksgiving dinner when the copious turkey, carved into neatly separated joints and slices, was placed on the crowded table, coincidentally, no doubt, right before him. 'Grandma,' he sobbed, 'I can't eat that much!' A funny story savoured by all the adults and older cousins. In retrospect it ushers in a pattern of excess and glut: my grandmother's impressively large purse packed full of plastic bags ready for stashing away the surplus food she helped herself to from restaurant buffets; my grandfather's liberal and unabashed grazing on olives and tomatoes from self-serve barrels at the supermarket; the systematic family use of M&M candies as potty training rewards for successive generations of toddlers, as if the bodily parting with food waste needed somehow to be compensated and sweetened in a never-ending cycle.

As they grew older, my grandparents' feeding behaviours intensified. Every communication with grandchildren at college began and ended with the question: 'Are you eating?' – and the postal roast chicken deliveries peppered these queries with emphatic force. What had once been an offering of plenty evolved into an overwhelming surfeit whose effects were only heightened by age and my grandfather's death. In every telephone conversation with my grandmother, a veritable verbal bombardment of daily menus served at the Senior Centre, a litany of reported meals and their evaluations: 'ham sandwiches with swiss on rye, but the bread was stale,' 'lasagne, not bad but not hot,' 'rice pudding, good but the portions were so small,' 'roast turkey with gravy and mashed potatoes; they gave us so much, I brought half of it home.' On every passing visit to her apartment, an insistence that whatever was in the fridge be placed on the table and consumed. Plied with the leftovers of the past week's meals, some from my grandmother's kitchen but the larger part increasingly retrieved from her lunches at the Senior Centre or various neighbourhood restaurants, overcome by an existential and often physiological nausea, I could only resist the escalating exhortations to take, and take in, and take some more, and more again.

Cooking with the Mouth

Imaginary Feasts opens with the off-camera sound of dogs barking sharply in short ominous bursts. Then we hear hushed murmurs against the harsh canine blasts, whispers of initially inaudible speech, women's voices at first, intoning words that we can begin to make out only when they are paired on screen with images of handwriting on scraps of paper and tatters of cloth.⁴ Scattered words gradually become audible and then recognizable as a litany of recipe titles: 'profiteroles au chocolat...riz à l'impératrice...flan au fromage...sauce au vin blanc...charlotte au rhum...coq au vin...croquettes de pommes de terre...blanquette de veau...flan breton...fruits confits...marrons glacés'.... These incorporeal voices breathe lists in our ears without origin or context; they make ghosts of food and usher in cooking as a dematerialized concept. Against this background, we are introduced to the clandestine culinary conversations that punctuated women's concentration camp existence and

sometimes led to the cobbling together and smuggling away of written recipes, scribbled on found or scrounged surfaces and bound pell-mell. Holocaust cookbooks bear witness to human captives barely subsisting on rations of bread, and water thinly flavoured with coffee grounds or vegetable peels; they fed their minds and nourished their communality with scraps of food memories recomposed into lavish feasts. Here is a terrible illustration of the generation of imagination through the combustion of food and loss.

In *Imaginary Feasts* as in Georget's earlier film, *Mina's Recipe Book*, the shocking contrast of the prisoners' stark alimentary reality with their elaborately detailed food fantasies is foregrounded, along with the reactions such disparities elicit from participating and onlooking captives and (in *Imaginary Feasts*), from latter-day theorists as well, ranging from anthropologists to psychologists, Holocaust scholars, food studies specialists, and chefs.⁵ Many of the interviewees, survivors and theorists alike, seek to explain the detailed reconstructions of recipes as a distraction from or compensation for the absolute desert of nourishment. Christiane Hinguoët remembers 'a different kind of hunger--not what you have when you wake in the morning but the hunger you have after two years of not eating, when you see yourself wasting away, so thin that your bones are poking out, when you have no strength...,' and she explains the recipe recitations as a moment of respite, 'our fantasy cooking behind barbed wire'.⁶ For her as for many of the survivors, the words of the recipes are bred from 'empty stomachs and desperate starvation,' as Edith Combust puts it.⁷ Another deportee, André Bessière, sums up the phenomenon as a 'gorging on dreams' in which words take the place of sustenance: 'They stuffed themselves with word feasts because they were dying of hunger,' he says, adding that he himself refrained from thinking about food because it was too painful. For others, the transformation of rations sourced in the diluted garbage of SS officers' meals into the verbal facsimile of familiar comfort foods could only be alchemical or magical, or, in the minds of those who were offended by what they experienced as absurdity and escapist mania, simply delusional and even obscene.⁸

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Ascriptions of obscenity crop up periodically in discussions of imaginary feasting. I suspect that such charges stem not simply from the stark nature of the oppositions that are put into play by the elaborate culinary rehearsals of those interned in extermination camps, but also, especially, from the fact that they echo the fundamental polarity of death and life. Obscenity, from the French 'obscène,' which some etymologies derive in turn from the Greek *ob skene*, 'offstage,' originally alluded to acts and events that could not or should not be shown directly on stage, prime among which was death. Paradoxically, the activity dubbed 'cooking with the mouth' by those who performed it or observed it has often been explained as a *defiance* of death, an act of life in the face of death.⁹ Resistance inevitably also acknowledges what it refuses, and so perhaps the perceptions of obscenity have to do with the very blatant staging of the contradiction of life and death, a *life-in-death* asserted and sustained to the end. Holocaust Museum Director Yehudit Inbar, Director

of the Holocaust Museum at Yad Vashem, tells of another phenomenon deemed obscene: children's games. When organizing an exhibition on children's toys in the Holocaust she initially met with shocked refusal. Yet children played on their way to the gas chambers, she confirms, much like women recited recipes, telling them, like stories, to each other.¹⁰

In both cases there is a clinging to life from the edge of death; a holding on that is almost a flaunting. For writer and literary scholar Jérôme Thélot, 'meals are a synonym of life'.¹¹ The evocation of aromatic cakes baking on hearths counters the smoke rising from crematorium chimneys; the remembrance of the intricacies of a recipe (the combining of distinct, pungent spices, the successive steps, the order) restores detail to a landscape of indeterminacy and chaos. As Holocaust historian and Rabbi Michael Berenbaum explains, 'We all presume the world makes some sense. That's why when the world does not make sense, it's frightening to us, it's chaos... Primo Levi said: "Here there is no why." It's absurd. And absurdity... doesn't allow you a sense of orientation'.¹²

Food scenarios in the death camps did not escape the generalized reign of absurdity. Bianca Steiner Brown recalls that at Terezín, shelves would be used one day for loaves of bread and the next, for corpses; Berenbaum reports that children rewarded with sweets one day would be killed the day after.¹³ Slavic Studies professor Luba Jurgenson proposes that imagining recipes defied such a loss of definition and meaning: 'Cooking... involves categorization: there's meat, there's fish, there's dessert. Food organizes our life and our time: morning food differs from evening food'.¹⁴ We might say, too, that recipes impose order and system through their narrative form: there is a beginning, a progression, and an end, each instruction unfolding in relation to the others. Recipes have an internal microstructure, and they imply a macrostructure by emerging from a past and opening onto a future.¹⁵

What we know about 'Holocaust recipes' today has a double dimension. There is the oral practice, in which capacity the recipes were performative, parsing time, creating social communicative space and pockets of meaning within madness. But the fact that the sessions of 'cooking with the mouth' were also transcribed, at great risk to the scribes and to anyone involved with spiriting out the manuscripts, adds another layer of significance to the phenomenon. The written form of recipe-telling in the death camps, the recording, compiling, and rough binding of what would otherwise have remained fragmentary food stories told in passing, indicates that they were meant to reach external eyes and ears, to communicate belatedly with a broader audience, and to be preserved over time. Such collections make recipes into books, whether they exist in manuscript or print form, and they should be read as such.¹⁶

Generically speaking, the cookbook is rarely accorded the status of literature or art, for much the same reason, I suggest, that hunger has been neglected as a philosophical subject; it has been devalued 'as empirical and as a lowly sign of human animality'. With

these words Jérôme Thélot explains the scholarly void that inspired his essay on hunger, *Au Commencement était la faim: Traité de l'intraversable* (*In the Beginning there was Hunger: Treatise on the Intractable*). Striving to join literature (and language) to its alimentary sources, he reminds us that many languages use the same word for speech and for the organ that participates in manipulating food as well as words, partaking of the pleasure of both.¹⁷ The tongue--or more broadly the mouth--is the junction of speaking and chewing, and the site of an overdetermined need. Hunger leads to language, says Thélot, our language comes from our hunger; from infancy forward, it defines both our subjectivity and our intersubjectivity, our need to receive from and to give to the Other.¹⁸ Leaning on Thélot's reinsertion of hunger into the philosophical and the poetic canon, I want to consider cookbooks--and Holocaust recipe collections prime among them--as texts: literary objects, art, writing, even Scripture.¹⁹ This makes a difference in how we read them; it suggests that we pay attention to their wording, their details, and also to what is omitted, as we do with the language of poetry, prose, and dreams. Chef Olivier Roellinger marvels, in Georget's film, at the degree of precision of the ingredient list in many of the recipes, the careful distinction, for example, between mace and nutmeg, two similar spices (neither of which, of course, would have been materially accessible to the deportees). And there are other aesthetic elements to be noted beyond the level of detail--most readily in Mina Pächter's published cookbook. The recipe writer often remarks on the appearance of the finished product, well beyond practical considerations such as signs of doneness. Plum Strudel, for example, should be 'high *and beautiful*,' while Chicken Galantine is 'plentiful *and pretty*'. There is also a nod toward the pleasures of culinary creation (and perhaps a touch of ironic humour as well) in the instruction for garnishing 'Cold Stuffed Eggs Pächter' to 'let fantasy run free,' or in the claim, for a basic dough that is tempered in water, called 'Waterbed Dough,' that 'one can do anything with it'.²⁰

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As in most texts, there are slips of the tongue recorded by the pen in these recipes, blunders or inaccuracies that might have gone unnoticed in the recitation but are conserved in writing. If for Freud a lapsus linguae betrays a psychic truth, here there are truths of mind and body; the tongue slips, so to speak, when it is unoccupied, stupefied, unable to perform its normal work of tasting and facilitating the mechanics of ingestion; it slips on an excess of saliva in the absence of food, it trips in the fog of a malnourished head. There are oversights or errors in recipes that give a glimpse of the state of the mind and the conditions of the body and its environment, even reaching back to the ghetto scarcities of pre-Holocaust cooking models. Hirsch makes the case dramatically: 'We cannot cook from these recipes (most leave out ingredients or reflect wartime rationing by calling for substitutions or making eggs optional)' while De Silva details the kind of mistakes consistently made, and survivor André Bessière calls to our attention the impossibly disproportionate amounts of chocolate or sugar, for example, prescribed in certain recipes.²¹

But the most powerful textual element of the recipe books created during the Shoah may well be that of transmission, of connecting the present to the past and to the future. Whatever we can learn from the pages of cookbooks from the Holocaust about the role recipes played in the everyday lives of prisoners confronting probable death, whatever we can intuit from a turn of phrase, an affect-tinged instruction or comment, a detail, or a gap, is amplified by the implications of the written format in the context of its historical reality. It is true, as *Imaginary Feasts* relates, that similar culinary artifacts have surfaced from the Russian Gulag and from Japanese prisoner of war camps: captives in other extreme situations have had similar instincts to rehearse and record culinary memories in moments of extreme crisis. What distinguishes the Holocaust cookbooks, as Michael Berenbaum points out in this film, is the propelling sense of an annihilation extending beyond the individual: ‘These people understood they were being destroyed. There would be nothing left.’²² The recipe compilations were more than an escape, or a therapy, or a catharsis; they were the diffusion of a culinary tradition with all that it might communicate of a disappearing culture, a cancelled way of life. As art historian Marni Reva Kessler reminds us, ‘Food has the capacity to tie us...to our memories, our families, our traditions... to reveal how the present is always steeped in an enduring past.’²³ These recipes rememorated a perhaps vanished past and recorded it for the future.

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When we think about what a legacy is conventionally considered to be (children, money, art--either made or collected--, the fruits of whatever bit of earth one has planted and tended), this one is rather extraordinary. It must have been clear to most concentration camp detainees that their offspring could neither receive their inheritance nor be it. Prodigious efforts were made to do whatever was possible to preserve the lives of the interned children: at Terezín, for example, the group compelled by the Nazis to administer the internal business of the camp, the Council of Jewish Elders, decided that children had to be fed more than others, since they represented the future.²⁴ Yet as Berenbaum explains, the young were usually siphoned off to die very quickly, for that very reason. Of the European Jews who were children in 1939, only 11 percent were alive at the end of the war.²⁵ Only rarely would the books of the Holocaust dead pass on to surviving children or grandchildren; the heirs were more likely to be anonymous and collective.²⁶

A Digest of Trivia and Other Essentials

Bellyaching: The activity attributed to my grandmother by my grandfather when she nagged at him to do something, or to not do something that annoyed her. ‘Stop bellyaching!’ was the refrain of their quarrels, which consisted largely of her complaints or grumbings and his rumbling protests of her complaints.

Borborygm: A rumbling or growling sound made in the stomach and intestines by moving fluid and gas, especially when one is hungry. Jérôme Thélot refers to the monosyllabic

repetitions – ‘Dinn! dinn! dinn! dinn!’ – of Arthur Rimbaud’s poem ‘Fêtes de la faim’ (‘Feasts of Hunger’) as ‘borborygms or mumblings... the first sounds of hunger speaking’ (‘[des] borborygmes ou bredouillements, ...[des] premiers bruits de la faim parlante’).²⁷

Breakfast/Cemeteries: In Mitzi Goldstein’s 1996 documentary film *Hatred*, the Australian Jewish filmmaker accompanies her German-born father, Bernard Goldstein, back to his East German hometown of Dessau from which he fled in 1939.²⁸ Combing through streets which have all changed name, searching for the house in which he lived fifty years earlier, disoriented, he lapses from English back into German and confuses two words, telling his daughter that they will later go ‘to the Jewish breakfast’ (*Frühstuck*) when he means to say ‘to the Jewish cemetery’ (*Friedhof*); realizing his slip of the tongue, he begins to laugh uncontrollably, attributing his mistake in turn to feeling frozen, drunk, in a fog. See *Frühstuck/Friedhof*.

Concentration Camp Survivor: The metaphor used in my family and others to describe the skinny profile of adolescent American girls flirting with anorexia. Used as a scare tactic, it usually did not have the intended result of bringing them back to a full fat diet.

Frühstuck/Friedhof: See *Breakfast/Cemeteries*.

Grandma Cookies: The name we gave to my grandmother’s recipe for a confection she often made with her young grandchildren, and later made herself, mailing them in brown paper wrapping to college dorms, alternating with roast chickens. The dough was made of flour, sugar, Crisco, an egg, baking powder, and vanilla, then divided into small balls depressed in the middle with a thumb in whose place a spoonful of jelly was dropped. Mina Pächter’s book has a similar recipe (albeit a healthier version, with oatmeal added) for such cookies, there called ‘Kisses’.²⁹

Robert Jay Lifton: An American psychiatrist and author whose work centres on the psycho-history of war, political violence and other extreme situations. I worked part time for him in Paris as a translator-assistant when I was a graduate student. We interviewed a number of French-speaking medical survivors of concentration camps, many of them pressed into service under Mengele, for his book *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*. The work consisted largely of simultaneous translation of the witnesses’ testimony; as I repeated their words to him, changed into English but retaining the first person, there was an uncanny sense of momentarily taking on the experience with the pronoun. See *Mengele*.

M&Ms: Inspired by a candy given to British volunteers fighting in the Spanish Civil War, they were first produced in the United States in 1941 by Forrest Mars, scion of the Mars candy empire. After the U.S. entered the war, the small pill-shaped chocolates encased in hard, coloured shells were sold exclusively to the military for the duration. Distributed as snacks for soldiers, they were prized for their heat-resistant and easily transportable

characteristics. Later used in some households as aids to potty training, these tiny remnants of World War II were fed to at least a few post-war babies to reward their early losses.

Mengele: Josef Mengele, SS captain and chief physician at Auschwitz, called 'the Angel of Death' for his cool and implacable demeanour during 'selections' that decided which prisoners would be sent to the gas chambers and which retained for work. He was known too for his cruel and often lethal medical experiments on Jewish and Roma twins. Mengele was infamous for his ability to flip imperturbably from acts of apparent kindness to murder: one day he would give candy to children and the next he would send them to be gassed.³⁰ See *Robert Jay Lifton*.

Recette: The French word for 'recipe'; same derivation. See *Recipe*.

Recipe: Derived from the past participle, *recepta*, of the Latin verb *recipere*, 'to receive'. A culinary recipe, notes Thélot, is 'what is received. The person who gives us a recipe received it from someone else. And those who invent a new recipe must do so on the basis of a tradition that has no beginning'.³¹ See *Recette*.

Starving Children in ... [Place Name]: A common rhetorical device used by food-secure post-war American families in the 50s and 60s to encourage recalcitrant children to finish their meals. The full utterance runs something like: 'Think of all the starving children in [Place Name];' with the bracket filled in with the proper name of a non-first world country or continent (India, China, Africa) or a historical referent, such as 'the Holocaust,' or 'the concentration camps'. In American Jewish families, the latter terms are frequent, though in my own family, they were not used; India was the comparand of choice.

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Stella: The given name of a first cousin once removed, referred to infrequently now and only in lowered voices; the skeleton in the family closet (which here takes the form of a seventh-storey stairwell accessed by a rarely used and barricaded rear door). Stella was my grandmother's niece, the daughter of a much younger sister, close to the grandchildren in age, though since childhood inhabiting a closed and impenetrable world. In her late forties she began living in my grandmother's apartment with her. Stella disappeared after my grandmother's death. Some weeks later the building superintendent discovered her emaciated body along with her clothes and a note on the landing. She had starved herself to death.

Talking with the Belly

What was the place of the Shoah in my family of origin? The facile answer is that it lay somewhere outside, distant in space and time. Like film director Mitzi Goldman, an Australian of Eastern European heritage, I am tempted to say that for me growing up in 1950s and 60s New York, the Holocaust was 'ancient history, not my life'.³² I might even add that it had fairy-tale aspects for me; horrific stories of people shoved in ovens coalesced in my child's mind with Hansel and Gretel, and I had terrifying visions of ogres making

lampshades of human skin. But they were stories that did not touch my immediate family and their friends. I was born third and second generation American on my mother and father's respective sides. No relatives or friends, to my knowledge, had lived or died in concentration camps. I was educated about the Holocaust from an age I cannot pinpoint, beginning perhaps with the diary of Anne Frank, who was for me a legendary heroine, like Joan of Arc --one of a handful of exceptional women whose biographies my mother brought home to me.

But I wonder, now, as I think back through my family's food stories, if my Holocaust education took place also, less officially, and even in subtle, unintended ways, around the dinner table and its proxies. Were the de-ritualized Friday family dinners simply end-of-the-work-week celebrations ushering in the weekend, or were they also shadows of ceremonial religious dinners? Was the culinary bounty on the table and in the mail a way of staving off indirect experiences of hunger and malnutrition? How did the alimentary barrage respond to what my family must have known about starvation and other killing regimes in transit barracks and death camps? What did I absorb from my family about the repercussions of famishment during the Shoah, wordlessly, or from ill-chosen metaphors displaced to the effects of weight loss, or from names of sites of famine diverted from Eastern Europe to the farther shores of India and China? Or were the culinary idiosyncracies of home distantly tied to much older traditions that might also have had associations with the recipe recitations of the interned Jewish population of the Shoah?

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The author/son in Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus* takes in his parents' Holocaust trauma from his survivor father at the table, with his meals, in a familial space where the past can be transferred, 'internalized without fully being understood,' in Marianne Hirsch's words.³³ In her book about the work of 'postmemory' (which other writers have alternatively called 'absent memory,' 'vicarious witnessing,' 'received history,' 'haunting legacy') Hirsch explores 'the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before--to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grow up'. But their parents' experiences 'were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right'.³⁴ What is at stake is not a legacy of literal memory, but the transmission of affects and psychic effects that attach to such memories.

In borrowing from Hirsch's pathbreaking work on postmemory, I want to take great care not to make any claims for my own or my family's reception of Holocaust history that would imply an arrogation of memories we do not own or experiences that are not ours. As a daughter of survivors, Hirsch voices a caveat for herself and others, asking 'how can we best carry [the victims'] stories forward, without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves, and without, in turn, having our own stories displaced by them?'³⁵ So let me be clear. I am not the daughter of survivors, and I have no postmemories

of experiences my parents and grandparents never lived. But as I try to understand the heritage of my grandparents' life in food I keep returning to the possibility of the reverberations of trauma within our family, like a lateral psychic force pressing upon the table and transmitted across generations.

Ross Chambers introduces the concept of cultural hauntedness in his re-reading of the scandal created by the so-called 'Wilkomirski Affair': the revelation that Binjamin Wilkomirski's alleged Holocaust memoir of 1995 had in fact been written by a man named Bruno Dössekker who did not personally live the events he describes in the book (including internment in Majdanek and Auschwitz-Birkenau).³⁶ *Bruchstücke* (translated in English as *Fragments: Memoirs of a Wartime Childhood*) takes its title from the notion of memory scraps, but also, Chambers argues, from an episode in the book in which the interned child is covertly led through the camp to see his dying mother, who gifts him a piece of stale bread.³⁷ In all likelihood Dössekker was suffering from personal delusions, yet his book and its reception bear witness, suggests Chambers, to the 'hauntedness of a culture of aftermath': one in which 'an individual can mistake the collective consciousness of a painful past for a personal memory.'³⁸

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After the discovery of the hoax, the book was quickly withdrawn from circulation in the U.S. as in Germany, and its publication suspended in the U.S. despite widespread early acclamation as an extraordinary childhood memoir, a masterpiece of Holocaust literature. Chambers proposes that the (fictive) child orphan Wilkomirski, the child who could not speak, stands in symbolically for all the non-survivors, for all the testimony that did not survive. He posits that the Wilkomirskis, or orphaned memories, haunting the collective consciousness 'need a Dössekker--a "host" --to be made vivid and to be heard and acknowledged as the ghosts of our culture who cannot be laid to rest.'³⁹ Through Dössekker's pathological self-identification with Wilkomirski (who apparently never existed as such) he takes on 'his' memories derived from collective memory and fosters them in writing. 'Foster writing,' for Chambers, both offers a surrogate home to what is homeless, and ushers the culturally homeless into culture, making recognizable, through the pain of reading, the memories that collective culture would rather forget, in a broken, fragmented form that lies somewhere between imagining and remembering.⁴⁰

Might there be such a thing as fostered postmemory? Tapping the broad lines of Chambers's brilliant and subtly limned analysis, I want to submit the possibility of an unintentional handing down of indirectly transferred traumatic experience; that is, a lateral acquisition, through identification, of the extreme suffering of others that would then be transmitted generationally. I think of this process as it might have played out in my family and perhaps in others, *mutatis mutandis*, as a foster feeding rather than a foster writing: a nurturing of ghosts who have lost their place and their sustenance, through the more quotidian scenes and modes of nourishment that are set in childhood around a family

table. Of these, only fragments of memory later remain, as small as M&Ms or as broken as *Bruchstücke*, the shards of memory or crusts of bread that Wilkomirski/Dössekker writes into being. These crumbs of remembrance retrieved or reimagined break the fast of oblivion, like the early morning morsel, *Frühstück*, that a slip of the tongue calls back from the grave, *Friedhof*, in the mouth of German refugee Bernard Goldstein, reminding us that although life and meals may be synonyms (as Thélot contends), death and meals cannot necessarily be kept apart.

Coda

As I was finishing the body of this paper, I joined a remote session in the N.Y.U. 'Fast and Famine' series in which food writer Reem Kassis was interviewed by Food Studies Professor and writer Krishnendu Ray about her new book, *The Arabesque Table: Contemporary Recipes from the Arab World*.⁴¹ Asked by Ray for commentary on the appropriateness of discussing culinary culture in a time of catastrophic socio-political crisis (alluding to the near-coinciding breakout of the book and the latest Gaza war) Kassis responded vehemently in the positive, using arguments that uncannily echoed the analyses of the various experts called to witness in Georget's *Imaginary Feasts* of the Holocaust. She recounted personal communications from friends in Gaza who, amidst the bombings and destruction overlapping with Ramadan, had little access to ingredients called for in the traditional recipes for cakes heralding the end of the holy month. Nevertheless, they adamantly maintained these cultural-familial traditions, altering the recipes when necessary, but forging ahead with culinary ritual 'to retain a sense of normalcy.' Kassis called this persistence 'an act of resistance' in terms that strikingly repeat, almost word for word, the testimony of Georget's commentators about concentration camp recipes. The commentary of Georget's numerous interviewees about the relevance of the culinary imagination to surviving and chronicling the catastrophe of Shoah concentration camps, and the replies of this Palestinian author about the pertinence of culinary culture to the Palestinian crisis, concurred in their emphasis on the importance of protecting food traditions for generations to come. A member of the audience brought to bear on Kassis's remarks a reference to the new Netflix series, *High on the Hog*, and its witnessing of foodways in African-American history as 'a space of resistance, dignity, creativity, community,' even--and perhaps especially--in the case of extended oppression and crisis.⁴² In closing, then, I want to juxtapose these Palestinian and African-American examples of gastro-opposition with my own meditation on Holocaust recipes-as-resistance. I will invoke here too Marianne Hirsch's proposition that memory may be harnessed, even generations later, '*and affiliatively readopted across lines of difference...in a bold act of connective politics*,' to urge us to continue to think these parallel struggles together.⁴³

Notes

1. *Les Recettes de Mina (Mina's Recipe Book)*, dir. Anne Georget, France (2007); *Festins imaginaires (Imaginary Feasts)*, dir. Anne Georget, France (2015).
2. Helen Rosner, "The Best Cookbooks of 2020" in *The New Yorker*, December 15, 2020. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/2020-in-review/the-best-cookbooks-of-2020>. Accessed December 23, 2020.
3. In one of the few philosophies of hunger I know, its author, Jérôme Thélot, suggests that "hunger gives rise to consciousness, hunger is the origin of consciousness, and its affect is the foundation of verbalisation" ("La conscience tient à la faim. *La faim est l'origine de la conscience, l'affect fonde la verbalisation, l'épreuve affective de soi est la condition transcendantale du rapport symbolique à soi*" [Thélot's emphasis; translations here and throughout are mine unless otherwise indicated]). Jérôme Thélot, *Au Commencement était la faim: Traité de l'intraitable (In the Beginning there was Hunger: Treatise on the Intractable)*, (Fougères, La Versanne: Encre marine, 2005), p. 59.
4. There are a few men's voices heard as well, shortly after the beginning, and as the film unfolds it is clear that the activity of reconstructing recipes was not confined to women, though it was much more common among them, for the obvious reason that women have traditionally tended to the hearth and maintained culinary tradition.
5. Georget's *Mina's Recipe Book (Les Recettes de Mina)* documents the retrieval of a single Holocaust cookbook by the family of its deceased author, Mina Stein Pächter, some thirty years after her death, and traces its trajectory from the impulses that prompted it to its eventual emergence in print; her *Imaginary Feasts (Festins imaginaires)* is a longer and broader documentation of a group of such cookbooks, and secondarily, similar compendiums of recipes created in Japanese POW camps and Russian Gulag prisons, interspersed with interviews with survivors and with scholars.
6. *Imaginary Feasts*, Christiane Hinguët; her effort to explain a hunger unlike any most of us have known echoes Primo Levi's contention that "We say 'hunger,' we say 'tiredness,' 'fear,' 'pain,' 'winter,' and they are different things. They are free words, created and used by free men who lived in comfort and suffering in their homes. If the Lagers had lasted longer, a new, harsh language would have been born; and only this language could express what it means to toil the whole day in the wind, with the temperature below freezing, wearing only a shirt, underpants, cloth jacket and trousers, and in one's body nothing but weakness, hunger, and knowledge of the end drawing nearer." Primo Levi, quoted by Cara De Silva in *In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy from the Women of Terezín* ed. Cara De Silva, trans. Bianca Steiner Brown, foreword by Michael Berenbaum (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson Inc, 1996), p. xv.
7. English translations from Georget's films are based on the subtitles; in some cases I have altered the translations slightly to retain the literality or the flavor of the French, as needed.
8. *Imaginary Feasts*; Edith Combus speaks (in excerpted letters) of the women as "désespérément affamées" and having "[des] estomacs vides."
9. *Ibid.*, André Bessière. Bianca Steiner Brown, a survivor interviewed in *Mina's Recipe Book*, explains that when she was kept awake at night by the women talking, comparing, for example, how much sugar, how much chocolate went into a Sachertorte "I was furious. They lived in their own kind of a fantasy."
10. De Silva relates that Susan E. Cernyak-Spatz, a survivor of Terezín and Auschwitz, "describes people in both places as speaking of food so much that there was a camp expression for it. We called it 'cooking with the mouth,' she says. 'Everybody did it.'" De Silva, *In Memory's Kitchen*, xxviii-xxix.
11. *Imaginary Feasts*, Yehudit Inbar.
12. *Ibid.*, Jérôme Thélot.
13. *Ibid.*, Michael Berenbaum.
14. *Mina's Recipe Book*, Bianca Steiner Brown; *Imaginary Feasts*, Michael Berenbaum.
15. *Ibid.*, Luba Jurgenson.
16. An extreme example of a future orientation is pointed out by psychoanalyst Géraldine Cerf, who reads a recipe that advises canning extra portions of a seafood dish so it will be on hand to pop in the oven when someone drops in unexpectedly for a visit. *Imaginary Feasts*.
17. That most are not easily accessible does not change my argument, though it complicates our readings. Mina Pächter's book is the only published Holocaust cookbook I have been able to read, though I have seen facsimiles of the handbound manuscript cookbooks used in *Imaginary Feasts*, for which I am extremely grateful to Anne Georget and to her conversation in Paris in July 2015.

18. Thélot, *Au Commencement*, p. 86.
19. *Ibid.*, see especially pp. 25, 59, 63, 146.
20. In Georget's *Imaginary Feasts*, Yehudit Inbar compares the recipe recitations to prayers: "It was the women's prayer. They had no other." In her introduction to *Mina's Recipe Book in In Memory's Kitchen*, Cara De Silva calls the cookbook "forceful testimony to the power of food to sustain us, not just physically but spiritually," reminding us that gastronomic traditions, "the foods and foodways we associate with the rituals of childhood, marriage, and parenthood...are critical components of our identities" (p. xxvi). And chef Olivier Roellinger is so overcome with awe and emotion when unfurling a large piece of cloth inscribed with a jumbled mass of penned recipes that he compares it to a burial shroud. De Silva makes the case for considering Holocaust cookbooks as art: "half a century after the Holocaust, when we thought we were familiar with all the creative ways in which human beings expressed themselves during the long years of the horror, at least one small genre, the making of cookbooks, has gone largely unnoticed." *In Memory's Kitchen*, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.
21. De Silva, *Mina's Cookbook*, in *In Memory's Kitchen*, pp. 28, 51, 52, 32.
22. Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 178. De Silva gives some additional details: "Whether because of illness or disorientation, an unsettling interruption, or the discovery that a contributor's name was on a transport list, a number of the recipes are muddled or incomplete. In some an ingredient is left out (the bean torte, for instance, usually requires an egg; the cream strudel has no dough); in others a process is omitted (dumplings are made and sauced without ever being cooked). Steps are inverted, and punctuation, too, is often nonexistent or perplexing." *In Memory's Kitchen*, p. xli. André Bessière's remarks are from *Imaginary Feasts*.
23. *Imaginary Feasts*, Michael Berenbaum.
24. Marni Reva Kessler, *Discomfort Food: The Culinary Imagination in Late Nineteenth-Century French Art* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2021), p. xvi.
25. De Silva, *In Memory's Kitchen*, p. xxxviii.
26. *Ibid.* I owe the statistic to Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 181.
27. In Mina Pächter's case, what allowed the book to be transmitted to her daughter Anny (albeit three decades later) was that Anny had fled Prague with her family, reaching Palestine in the last transport out, (and later New York), while Mina had declined to leave, believing that her advanced age would protect her. In cases of surviving family members who received recipe books of deceased relatives, they usually donated them to museums. The credits following *Imaginary Feasts* identify the various museums to which families have donated inherited cookbooks.
28. Thélot, *Au Commencement*, p. 60.
29. *Hatred*, dir. Mitzi Goldman, Australia (1996). I am grateful to Hirsch, *Generation*, for bringing this film to my attention.
30. *Mina's Cookbook*, p.61.
31. For this anecdote, see Berenbaum in *Imaginary Feasts*. On Mengele, see Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 1986) or for a summary presentation, "Josef Mengele" in the *Holocaust Encyclopedia* (United States Holocaust Museum), <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/josef-mengele>. Consulted May 27, 2021.
32. *Imaginary Feasts*, Jérôme Thélot.
33. Mitzi Goldman, *Hatred*.
34. Art Spiegelman, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* vol. 1: *My Father Bleeds History* and vol. 2: *And Here my Troubles Began* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973; 1986); passim. Hirsch, *Generation*, p. 31. When Hirsch suggests that "*Maus* locates the scene of transmission in the bedtime connection between parent and child," she is referring to "the three-page first *Maus*, published in 1972, [that] begins as a bedtime story... [in] the child's bedroom...a seemingly safe scene in which the father can evoke for this son the most brutal stories of wartime violence and persecution, fear and terror" (p. 29). Here I am referring instead to the full-fledged graphic novels *Maus* I and II, which show the son collecting his father's narrative fragments for the most part at the table during meals (and occasionally when the father is on his exercise bike). But the point remains the same for childhood bedtime or for shared meals: in both

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- cases the space is familial, a place where “the language of family, the language of the body” (p. 34) can take place easily and the past can be transmitted across generations (p. 31).
35. Hirsch, *Generation*, p. 5.
 36. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
 37. Benjamin Wilkomirski, *Bruchstücke* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), Trans. Carol Brown Janeway as *Fragments: Memoirs of a Wartime Childhood* (New York: Schocken, 1997). Ross Chambers, *Untimely Interventions: Aids Writing, Testimonial, & the Rhetoric of Haunting*, Chapter 5, “Orphaned Memories, Phantom Pain: Toward a Hauntology of Discourse: 189-243 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), p. 194.
 38. Chambers, *Untimely Interventions*, p. 209.
 39. *Ibid.*, pp. 194-95.
 40. *Ibid.*, p. 197; Chambers’s emphasis.
 41. *Ibid.*, pp. 200--203.
 42. Reem Kassis and Krishnendu Ray, “The Arabesque Table: Exploring the History of Arab Cuisine,” *Feast and Famine* Series, NYU Steinhardt Department of Nutrition and Food Studies, May 26, 2021. All citations are from this program; Reem Kassis, *The Arabesque Table: Contemporary Recipes from the Arab World* (London: Phaidon, 2021).
 43. “The Arabesque Table,” Chat comment by Fabio Paresecoli, N.Y.U. professor of Food Studies and writer.
 44. Hirsch, *Generation*, pp. 248-249; my emphasis.

Delicacies Real and Imagined: Food and Drink as a Diplomatic Gift

Paul Brummell

ABSTRACT: The paper explores the changing use of food and drink as a diplomatic gift, comparing sixteenth-century Venice and the twenty-first century USA. Venice used diplomatic gifts of food in two contexts. First, as hosts, in entertaining and provisioning visiting diplomatic missions, its products advertising the wealth and sophistication of the republic. Second, as prestigious gifts to foreign rulers. Cheeses were gifted to Mamluk sultans alongside textiles and furs. Food and drink was offered in quantity, and intended to be consumed. Diplomatic gifts of food and drink received by US presidents George W Bush and Barack Obama were in contrast destined never to be consumed, but rather handled ‘pursuant to US Secret Service policy’. Such gifts are diplomatic signals, to showcase the prized foods of the gifting country, promote exports, and take advantage of the associations of food with friendship and conviviality to stress the warmth of the relationship between the leaders. Diplomatic gifts of food and drink to officials in the modern era are often made in small quantities, designed not to exceed the value at which they may be retained and enjoyed by the recipient, supporting strategies of gastrodiploamacy and developing the social relationships at the heart of diplomatic gifting. Twenty-first century diplomatic gifts of food are thus more symbolic gifts. In the case of gifts to US presidents, the taste of the food is left to the imagination.

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The giving and receiving of diplomatic gifts dates to prehistory, and is a part of diplomatic engagement across the world and across all eras. For French sociologist Marcel Mauss, whose 1925 study *The Gift* is a seminal text on gift exchange,¹ the gift economy had a social function. Mauss distinguishes between two forms of exchange. In gift exchange, a social relationship is created and maintained by gifting, an act binding giver and receiver together.² In commodity exchange, the relationship between buyer and seller generates no enduring link.³ The need for diplomacy arises when two geographically separated and distinct groups must conduct business. This is facilitated by an ongoing social relationship between the groups, and hence the importance of diplomatic gifts as a means of establishing and maintaining such a relationship.

Mauss identifies three obligations underpinning the gift exchanges he studied, from the Trobriand Islanders of Melanesia to indigenous peoples of the northwest coast of America. These are the obligation to give presents, that to receive them, and

that to repay gifts received.⁴ If these obligations are not met, the social relationship with the other party is repudiated.⁵ Gifts, then, require reciprocation, building a system of exchange that while voluntary in outward appearance is in fact obligatory.

The choice of gifted object is usually that of the giver, and serves their objectives. These are not necessarily benign. The citizens of Troy would have done better to look their gift horse in the mouth. Gifts may be used to underline authority and power, for example in lavish gifting to a recipient unable to match its beneficence. They may be offered in the expectation of a greater return. A gift offered as a bribe would fall into that category. Or they may reflect insecurity about a relationship, and be used as an attempt to fortify it.

An enormous range of objects have been deployed as diplomatic gifts, from armour to zebras. They tend to stand out from items of quotidian exchange, as objects intended to generate wonderment in the recipient. Islamic art expert Doris Behrens-Abouseif, in a study of gift exchange with the Mamluk Sultanate of medieval Egypt, identifies the Islamic concept of *tuhaf*, or ‘marvels’ as an essential attribute of the chosen gift.⁶ The use of exotic animals as diplomatic gifts, from the elephant gifted to Charlemagne by Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid to the ‘panda diplomacy’ of modern-day China, speaks to the capacity of such creatures to enrapture the recipient.

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A gift might also be chosen as a calling card of the gifting polity, highlighting its technological sophistication or cultural achievements. The gifting of Meissen porcelain by eighteenth-century Saxon rulers underlined that country’s success in uncovering the secrets of hard-paste porcelain manufacture where other European courts had failed.

Gifts might support export ambitions, by showcasing a product the gifting polity hopes to sell in the receiving one. This potentially jars with the objective that gifts should create a sense of wonder, and the export-promotion intent of diplomatic gifts tends to be limited to luxury items. Lord Macartney’s ill-fated mission to China of 1793 aimed to open the Chinese market to British exports. Believing that the mission’s gifts could be used to showcase the best British goods to the Chinese, manufacturer Matthew Boulton provided recommendations of fine examples of British wares, from buttons to candlesticks.⁷ Macartney wanted however to distinguish the king’s gifts to the emperor from simple trade goods, and items of this nature were sidelined in favour of gifts intended to speak to British achievements in science and technology.⁸ The most eye-catching gift was a glass-cased planetarium, incorporating three clocks and embellished with ormolu pineapples. Macartney presumably glossed over the fact that this remarkable object was not British, but the work of a pastor and clockmaker from Württemberg.

Food and drink play a distinctive role as diplomatic gifts. This arises in part from their necessary place in diplomacy. Visiting envoys must eat. Dining occasions provide informal settings for discussions, breaking down the barriers experienced in audience halls or across negotiating tables, the act of breaking bread together serving as a mark of friendship.⁹ Depending on the historical and cultural context, the host polity may be required to provide gifts of food and drink in various forms, whether providing a single meal or underwriting the full expenses of the visiting mission for the duration of its stay.

The role of food and drink as diplomatic gifts is not though restricted to their place as gifts necessary to the functioning of a diplomatic mission. They enjoy further specific advantages as gifts. Luxurious and unfamiliar food and drink products can inspire awe and wonder. They can be repositories of *tuhaf*. They can showcase the cuisine and agricultural wealth of the gifting country, their use as diplomatic gifts paralleling the current focus of many countries on gastrodiploamacy, in which a national cuisine is used as a form of soft power.¹⁰ Furthermore, because of the association of eating and drinking with friendship and conviviality, diplomatic gifts of food and drink may be intended to hint at a warmth in the relationship between the two polities.

One further quality of gifts of food and drink is worth comment. Since they are objects designed to be ingested, acceptance of a gift of food or drink requires trust. Gifts of food and drink may serve therefore not just as symbols of a warm relationship, but also as tests of it.

Has the use of food and drink as a diplomatic gift changed over time? To explore this question we will look at the examples of sixteenth-century Venice and the twenty-first century United States of America.

Diplomatic Gifts of Food and Drink in Sixteenth-Century Venice

Food and drink were used as a diplomatic gift by the Republic of Venice in the sixteenth century both to provide hospitality and sustenance for visiting diplomatic delegations, and as luxury gifts to foreign rulers. Cheese provides an example of its use in both contexts.

In common with many other powers at the time, the Venetian government viewed the provision of hospitality to visiting diplomatic delegations as its duty, covering accommodation, entertainment and food and drink. The latter in part took the form of elegant banquets. The hosts aimed to impress visitors with Venetian wealth and power through the sophistication and luxury of food and accompanying spectacle. The venue of the banquet also served this objective. Thus a banquet organised in honour of a Muscovite embassy visiting Venice in 1582 en route to Rome, was held in the Arsenal, a symbol of Venetian maritime power.¹¹

Food and drink also came in the form of a gift package provided to the visiting envoy on arrival, known as *refrescamenti*, or ‘refreshments’. Its contents were luxurious in character, with a strong showing of Venetian specialities. This would typically include, sugar, nuts, spices, including cinnamon and pepper, a range of fish or meat, fresh fruits and a barrel of Moscato wine, as well as sweet confections such as the sugar-coated fruits or nuts known as *confetti*.¹² The Venetians provided all the food required for the 23-day stay of the Muscovite delegation, and threw in the services of the doge’s chef to prepare it. This was no small undertaking: the hospitality given to the Muscovite delegation cost Venice some 589 ducats, with food the largest component.¹³ This sum rather pales though against the Venetian expenses for their spectacular reception for the future King Henri III of France in 1574, estimated at 100,000 ducats.¹⁴ Venetian records show that the *refrescamenti* provided to the Muscovite delegation included four cheeses: mozzarella; the soft *giuncata*; *marzolino*, a sheep’s cheese made from spring milk; and *piacentino*.¹⁵

Venice did not just deploy cheese in *refrescamenti* packages for visiting envoys. It was also a prestigious gift to foreign rulers. Turning back to the early sixteenth century, the relationship between Venice and the Mamluk Sultanate provides an example. The spice trade had long fuelled an interdependence between the two powers, though one always subject to stresses, such as over the policy introduced in the 1420s by Sultan Barsbay requiring Venice to buy some of the pepper at the heart of the trade from the sultan’s warehouses. This was offered, of course, at inflated prices.¹⁶ Despite such squalls, the lucrative nature of the trade meant that it had continued for centuries.

The landing in India in 1498 of Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama would change Venetian and Mamluk fortunes irreparably. Portugal could now bring spices to Lisbon by the new maritime route. This was not the only headache facing Egypt and Venice. The Ottoman threat loomed large, and indeed Venice was at war at the turn of the century. The response to these external challenges provoked further disputes between Venetians and Mamluks. Attempting to make up the declining income from the spice trade, the sultan sought to force Venetian merchants to buy more pepper at an even higher price from his warehouses.

To attempt both to agree a common response to the external threats and to sort out the bilateral squalls, Venice despatched a mission in 1502 led by Benedetto Sanudo to Sultan Qansuh al-Ghawri in Cairo. Sanudo had two principal aims. First to persuade the sultan that it was in the mutual interest of the two powers for Egypt to lower tariffs on spices and other goods imported from India, to improve Venetian competitiveness against Portugal. Second, to underline the seriousness of the Portuguese threat, and hint, in a way that did not however provoke charges of Portuguese conspiracy with

a Muslim power against a fellow Catholic one,¹⁷ that he should take direct action against the Portuguese.

Sanudo only reached Cairo in spring 1503 after a challenging journey. His gifts to the sultan including textiles, furs and, yes, cheese, and he was given gifts for the doge in return, including porcelain, incense, sugar and civet musk.¹⁸ The sultan did despatch a fleet against the Portuguese, but this did not have the desired effect, and ended with Mamluk defeat in 1509 in a naval battle at Diu. Portuguese maritime control was firmly established.¹⁹

Another Venetian mission, headed by Domenico Trevisan, thus arrived in Cairo in 1512 against a worsening backdrop. Trevisan was tasked with sorting out ongoing disputes over the pepper price, resolving an issue of access to the Holy Land and securing the release of Pietro Zen, Venice's consul in Damascus.²⁰ The latter had been detained in Cairo around suspicions related to contacts with the Safavids, Venice had cause to be pleased with the outcome of the visit, securing what would prove to be their final commercial treaty with the Mamluks. Zen was not only released, but even received a parting robe of honour from the sultan.²¹ This would all prove of little lasting benefit: the Mamluk sultanate had only five years left, before being swept aside by the Ottomans in 1517.

Paralleling the Venetian practice in respect of visiting envoys, the sultan was keen to impress, providing the Venetian party with fine lodgings in a palace that had belonged to a wife of the former sultan. On their arrival in the city, he sent them a gift of provisions including 20 geese, 44 sugar-loaves and five jugs of Indian honey.²² Trevisan's gifts for the sultan included 150 gowns, some velvet, some satin, others threaded with gold. He also presented a huge quantity of furs, including 4,500 squirrel furs, as well as sables and ermine, and, of particular interest to our study, 50 cheese blocks.²³

Present in the gift packages to the sultan from both Sanudo and Trevisan, cheese was clearly an important component of Venetian gifting to Mamluk sultans in the early sixteenth century. What were these distinguished cheeses? US historian Jesse Hysell proposes the cheese presented by Sanudo as *piacentinu*, a Sicilian cheese named for its pleasing taste.²⁴ With its golden hue created by the addition of expensive saffron, this cheese does appear to offer the quality of wonderment looked for in a prestigious diplomatic gift. It is also tempting to identify the peppercorns added to *piacentinu* cheese as a symbol of the pepper trade that underlined the close relationship between Venice and Egypt. Perhaps the cheese in question was however not *piacentinu* but *piacentino*, cheese from the Italian region of Piacenza. Historian Kenneth Meyer Setton identifies the gift made nine years later by Trevisan as 'cheeses from Piacenza'²⁵ and, as we have seen, these were among the cheeses given in 1582

to the visiting Muscovite embassy. Piacentine cheese was also gifted by Venice to the Ottoman court.²⁶

The cheese in question might have been a hard, crumbly, parmesan-like product, something like the Grana Padano produced in Piacenza province today. Parmesan-type cheeses were popular diplomatic gifts from various Italian courts. In gratitude for the support of the young King Henry VIII of England for his 'Holy League', Pope Julius II not only conferred on him a Golden Rose, the prestigious papal award to favoured sovereigns, but also gave him a hundred parmesan cheeses.²⁷ Parmesan was so highly prized in England that when, in 1666, the Great Fire of London threatened the property of diarist Samuel Pepys, his parmesan cheese was one of the items placed in a pit in a neighbouring garden for its protection.²⁸

Diplomatic Gifts of Food and Drink to Twenty-First Century US Presidents

Diplomatic gifts were viewed with concern by the founding fathers of the United States of America, built on the ideals of the Enlightenment. They seemed to represent the corrupting influence of the Old World and its absolute monarchies, a threat to the very survival of the new state.²⁹ In drawing up the US Constitution they built on Article VI of its forerunner, the Articles of Confederation, devising an Emoluments Clause providing that 'no Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust under them, shall, without the Consent of the Congress, accept of any present, Emolument, Office or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State.' These rules attempted to guard against corruption through an over-arching framework that, in embracing all gifts, did not require corrupt intent.³⁰

Such concerns were not unknown in the Old World, and indeed the Venetian Republic of the sixteenth century had rules in place preventing the acceptance by individuals of valuable diplomatic gifts from foreign powers. The gift to the doge of a diamond ring from the future Henri III at the end of his stay in 1574 occasioned much debate in the Venetian senate about what to do with it. The eventual decision was to mount it in a specially made gold lily, commemorating Henri's goodwill towards the republic, and place it in the treasury of St Mark's.³¹ Provisions as sweeping as those adopted by the United States were however uncommon. They had the effect of changing diplomatic gifts from personal to regulated transactions.³²

Congress is not of course required to deliberate on every foreign gift a US official would like to keep. Rather, the Foreign Gifts and Decorations Act of 1966, and subsequent amendments, give effect to the Emoluments Clause. This legislation allows officials to accept and keep gifts worth less than a statutorily defined 'minimal value' - \$375 in 2016.³³ Costlier gifts may be accepted if refusal would cause offence or embarrassment, or otherwise be harmful to US foreign relations, but such gifts

cannot be retained personally by the recipient. They are accepted on behalf of the USA, and passed to the National Archives and Records Administration,³⁴ unless the recipient pays the US government the appraisal value of the gift in order to keep it. They rarely do. Gifts to US presidents from foreign leaders will generally be transferred to the presidential library museum collection, itself under the purview of the National Archives and Records Administration, after they have left office.³⁵ Gifts of food, drink and other perishable items such as perfumes are ‘handled pursuant to US Secret Service policy’, which appears to mean that they are simply disposed of.³⁶

The rules around the acceptance of gifts by US officials give rise to the annual publication in the United States Federal Register by the Office of the Chief of Protocol of the US State Department of a list of the reported gifts from foreign government sources received by US federal employees. This serves as a useful source of information on the diplomatic gifts received by US presidents. This paper surveys the foreign gifts received by US presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, covering the sixteen years from 2001 to 2016, exploring the place of food and drink items in these gifts.

There are some limitations in the information set out in the annual list. It says nothing about the gifts given by the US president during the gift exchanges. Attempts to draw conclusions from the overall figures are challenged by the changing methodology used to compile the list. For example, presentations involving more than one gift are usually grouped as one entry, but in the Bush years of 2007 and 2008 are more often separated out. Most importantly, the list covers only gifts valued above the statutorily defined ‘minimal value’. This means that food and drink items on the list generally fall into one of three categories. Items gifted as part of larger presentations incorporating other gifts. Food or drink gifted in particularly large quantities, such as the 300lb of lamb gifted to President Bush in 2003 by Argentinean President Néstor Kirchner.³⁷ Or items presented in an expensive container, such as the wooden box incorporating an American flag and eagle design made of precious and semiprecious stones in which President Mahinda Rajapaska of Sri Lanka gifted six pouches of coffee to President Obama in 2011.³⁸

Over the sixteen-year period, 1099 gift packages received by the president, including gifts made jointly to the president and first lady, are listed in the returns. Eighty-seven include one or more items of food and drink, around eight per cent of the total. Food and drink are not then among the most common components of expensive gift packages to the president. Gifts involving food or drink come from 41 countries, with eight countries offering three or more food or drink-related gifts over the sixteen-year period: France (9), Algeria (8), Brunei (8), Tunisia (4), the United Kingdom (4), Italy (4), Morocco (3) and Poland (3). Wine is the most frequently gifted

food and drink item (mentioned in 31 gift packages), followed by spirits/liqueurs (15), chocolates (15), dates (11), biscuits (8) and fruit (7). Items mentioned just once include banana chips, beer, panettone, popcorn, peanut butter, and the sixteenth-century Venetian favourite, cheese.

What can be discerned from the State Department lists about the gift strategies underpinning the choice of food and drink items? Most obviously, items chosen as diplomatic gifts are generally products associated with pleasure and luxury, particularly wine, spirits and sweet food products, rather than sustenance. No gifts of vegetables are recorded.

The most consistent gift strategy in evidence is that of showcasing food and drink products for which the gifting country is particularly known. Haut-Médoc wine from France; ice wine from Canada; Turkish coffee; tequila from Mexico. In some cases, the gifts highlight the culture of the gifting country through its food and drink, as with a gift of maté to President Bush in 2006 from Tabaré Vázquez, President of Uruguay, gifted together with the traditional silver drinking straw and container.³⁹ Gifts may also highlight products for which a country would like to be better known internationally, supporting the export ambitions of local food and drink producers by associating the product, whether Angolan coffee or Croatian wine, with the president of the United States.

40 Gift packages offered to visiting heads of state and government attending international summit meetings often use food and drink items characteristic of the summit venue to convey a sense of ‘place’ that can otherwise prove elusive in tight-packed programmes of intensive negotiations in frequently windowless conference rooms. Gifts to President Obama from British Prime Minister David Cameron at the 2013 G8 summit held at the Lough Erne Resort in Northern Ireland included Co Couture chocolates, the work of a luxury Belfast producer, and a bottle of whiskey, alongside other gifts providing geographical markers, including books about Northern Ireland and a pair of porcelain cups decorated with shamrocks.⁴⁰

Not all food and drink gifts to US presidents have a specific association with the gifting country. A different gifting strategy is in evidence in respect of the Lady McDuffies lemon cheesecake, the work of a bakery in Clarence, New York, gifted in December 2003 to President Bush by the Sultan of Brunei. This was part of a package full of pleasant holiday-season gifts, from a mahogany jewellery box to a CD entitled ‘An Old English Christmas’, as well as two dozen McDuffies shortbread cookies in a glass jar.⁴¹ Such gifts of generic nice presents can convey an impression of a friendly, familiar relationship between the two leaders.⁴²

The presence of dates as the fourth most frequently gifted category of food and drink items to US presidents owes much to the holiness accorded to the date within

Islam, to the tradition of breaking Ramadan fasts with dates, and specifically that to distribute dates at Ramadan among friends and family. Regular gifts of dates to US presidents account for the prominent place of both Algeria and Tunisia in the breakdown of food and drink-related gifts by country. The importance placed on munificent gift-giving in Islamic societies may also lie at the root of the lavishness of some individual gifts. In 2013, King Mohammed VI of Morocco gifted President Obama a basket of Godiva chocolates valued at \$2,484, suggestive of a considerable quantity of chocolate.⁴³

Conclusion

Food and drink then were used as diplomatic gifts both in sixteenth-century Venice and as gifts to modern-day US presidents. There is however an important difference between these two contexts. In sixteenth-century Venice, the food and drink was intended to be consumed, whether as the *refrescamenti* provided to visiting delegations or as the large quantities of luxury cheeses presented to foreign courts. They were gifts of real food, notwithstanding the wariness of some rulers to partake, given fears of poisoning. It seems for example that Henri III refrained from eating at the lavish banquets held in his honour.⁴⁴

In the regulated environment surrounding gifts to twenty-first century US presidents, the recipient is destined never actually to consume the gifted item, which is instead handled 'pursuant to US Secret Service policy'. Rather than a gift intended to be enjoyed as a luxury food or drink product, its function is that of a diplomatic signal. It can serve to highlight the prized food and drink products of the gifting country and potentially to promote exports, as well as to take advantage of the specific qualities of food and drink as gifts: their associations with friendship and conviviality serving as a metaphor for the desired warmth of the relationship between the two leaders. A real gift in the sixteenth century has become an imagined one in the twenty-first.

Many countries around the world have, like the USA, adopted limits on the value of diplomatic gifts that may be accepted and retained by government officials. In this context, the relatively low cost of food and drink items means that small gifts of consumable products have become an attractive option as gifts that may be offered in the reasonable expectation that the recipient will be allowed to retain and enjoy them. These are then gifts of real food and drink, designed to be consumed, but much smaller in scale than their sixteenth-century Venetian equivalents. For the giver, they both underline a desire to continue a relationship and serve as a calling card for their country's luxury food and drink products, part of a wider strategy of gastrodplomacy.

Delicacies Real and Imagined: Food and Drink as a Diplomatic Gift

Diplomatic gifts of food in the twenty-first century are thus more symbolic gifts than were those made in sixteenth-century Venice. In the case of gifts to US presidents, the taste of the food is left to the imagination.

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Poetic Wisdom and Food for the ‘Savage Mind’: Greek *tamisos* and Provençal *toma* as Evidence of Ancient Celtic Cheesemaking

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ABSTRACT: When a new technology arises in a given culture, speakers of that culture’s language must draw upon their imagination to create words referring to the new items and processes. In this paper we examine western Indo-European words for cheesemaking, especially terms for rennet and aged cheese, originating in prehistoric times. The poetic imagination of the early namers of rennet seized upon different aspects of this new cheesemaking technology: describing the appearance of the contents of a ruminant’s stomach as akin to pus, focusing on the initial formation of a gel, on the subsequent separation of curds and whey, and on the final product of cheese made with rennet. Greek *tamisos* ‘rennet’ and Provençal *toma* ‘cheese’ are shown to be cognates, both reflecting the influence of a prehistoric Celtic cheesemaking culture in the Alps.

44 An area of investigation of considerable importance in the West and still very much requiring elucidation is that of dairy products. Particularly at issue here are the technological innovations behind the transformation of milk into cheese, especially aged cheese. From extant early textual and pictorial evidence from the Near East, it is clear that cheesemaking and possibly also the use of rennet, which greatly facilitates the making of aged cheeses, had become a significant element in the alimentation of peoples in the Fertile Crescent already by the third millennium B.C., a development which is not surprising given that the three most important species for dairy production in the West – sheep, goats, and cattle – were all first brought under domestication in one or the other part of the region several thousand years earlier. It is also virtually universally accepted that agriculture came to Europe through a process of diffusion of both people and ideas from the Near East, starting with population movements from western Anatolia and the northern Levant to both the eastern Balkans and Greece circa 7000 B.C.; these agropastoralist groups brought with them their crops, domesticated animals, and their knowledge, which undoubtedly included at least rudimentary know-how of dairy processing. Remaining far less clear is, however, when and where the use of rennet arose and, indeed, if it is at all legitimate to assume, as many scholars do, that it arose but once, in the Near East, and gradually spread from there in several directions, including into Europe. Given that the discovery, presumed diffusion, and much of the early development of rennet-based cheesemaking occurred in pre-, proto-,

and parahistorical contexts, any attempt to understand this set of developments must include linguistic analysis of any relevant data available.

After the partial displacement of and partial merger with Europe's older foraging population by Neolithic farming groups, the process was in effect repeated with the arrival in the third millennium B.C. of new waves of immigrant groups from the Pontic-Caspian steppes of Ukraine and southern Russia, the bearers of the Indo-European dialects that developed into almost all of the well attested languages of Europe. Despite this thorough linguistic replacement, scholars generally agree that widespread population merger took place, and the attested Indo-European languages reflect to varying degrees the concomitant cultural influences in their lexicons. One semantic field in which we find numerous borrowings in the western Indo-European languages is agriculture, more specifically in the names of crops which had been exploited by the Neolithic farmers but were ostensibly unknown to the newcomers from the steppes (Iversen & Kroonen 2017:515)

In striking contrast to what we find with the vocabulary of domesticated (and wild) plants, where borrowings from the European Neolithic substrate population are numerous, the vocabulary of dairy production in western Indo-European languages shows no borrowings: In this semantic field, the words are of Indo-European origin, constructed from widely attested IE roots by means of IE derivational processes. This contrast appears to concord with what archaeologists and linguists have concluded about the mode of life of the Indo-Europeans in their homeland on the steppes, where they practiced only rudimentary agriculture, focussed on primitive grains, and relied to a great extent on pastoralism, exploiting for food and service cattle, sheep, and horses. To be sure, the Indo-European groups that emigrated into Europe brought with them their own knowledge of dairy production. Yet also striking is the fact that although words related to dairy production throughout the family are generally all of Indo-European origin, there is tremendous variety across the daughter languages with respect to the roots and derivations used to name various items, so much so that reconstruction of a unified vocabulary assignable to the IE proto-language is particularly difficult.

There are two general ways to account for this great diversity of dairy-related terminology in the Indo-European daughter languages: 1) we might conclude that exploitation of milk resources only became significant after the Proto-Indo-European period, developing in the subsequent time when the communities in which the various branches (Celtic, Italic, Greek, etc.) were increasingly linguistically isolated from one another, or 2) there is something about the nature of dairy production which leads to a high rate lexical innovation. It is my belief that both are true to a degree: Though Indo-Europeans exploited dairy products from earliest times, the innovation of rennet demanded the creation of a new vocabulary of cheesemaking in the period of dialectal diversification in the western branches.

Some Fundamental Aspects of Dairy Production

Speaking in very broad terms, it may suffice to make one basic division between dairy production without the use of rennet and dairy production with the use of rennet but for present purposes that is an unworkable simplification of matters. Beyond the consumption of fresh milk there lies an initial group of secondary products which depend largely upon the natural fermentation of milk. This fermentation occurs as microflora and especially *Lactococcus lactis*, already present in the milk, transform some of the complex carbohydrate *lactose* into *lactic acid*, which lowers the pH of the milk and thus inhibits the growth of harmful organisms; this acidic fermentation also causes partial precipitation or coagulation of milk solids – i.e. the fats and proteins suspended in water that constitute milk – and brings about a thickening of the substance while also producing a pleasant sour flavour. The controlled application of heat can accelerate the process, particularly in conjunction with the direct addition of an acid; with subsequent draining one obtains rudimentary cheese or cheese-like foods, such as the South Asian *paneer*, Middle Eastern *labneh*, or northern European *quark*. Though secondary products produced only by means of acidification or acidification together with controlled heating still contain high levels of moisture and are therefore subject to rapid spoilage, they are markedly more stable than raw milk left to its own devices.

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The use of rennet to produce secondary dairy products involves enzymic action on the milk proteins, especially the *caseins*. For a very long time, the most widespread means of inducing this enzymic action was the use of the abomasum – the fourth stomach – of immature ruminants (kids, lambs, calves) which contain the enzyme *chymosin*. This enzyme, when introduced into acidified milk, causes the milk solids, suspended as small particles in fresh milk, to form long strands that capture the water, transforming the whole into a gel; when this gel is cut with a tool, the strings are broken, releasing the liquid and, with draining, yield on the one hand the curdled milk solids, i.e. the curds, and the watery whey. With the addition of an acid or more rennet and the application of heat, the residual milk solids suspended in the whey can also be coagulated and drained, yielding whey-cheeses (e.g. ricotta) and secondary whey.

The speed and thoroughness of the separation of curds and whey brought about by enzymic action makes it far easier to reduce quickly the moisture level of the curd and prevent spoilage, which in turn allows for new possibilities in aging, most especially in conjunction with the addition of salt. The aging of cheese has multiple significant advantages: 1) it makes possible the development of products with a range of appealing flavours; 2) prolonged fermentation reduces greatly the residual lactose and thus creates a dairy food consumable by people who are lactose intolerant; 3) aging renders possible the conversion of the nutritional value of milk into a storable food, either for consumption within the producing community in times of scarcity or for trade outside the immediate

area of production; 4) the whey left over from cheesemaking can be used to produce further cheese-like products such as ricotta. In light of these advantages, the discovery of rennet must be considered one of the most important advances in food technology in the West.

This discovery of rennet, though often assumed to have been a sort of singular 'eureka-event', was surely not so simple. First, evidence for the use of rennet in the ancient Near East in the third and second millennia B.C. is obviously important but hardly excludes the possibility that rennet had been independently discovered elsewhere, in contexts where writing was not yet known and where the tools employed in cheesemaking would largely or wholly vanish from the potential archaeological record: It seems hard to imagine that pastoralists in all but one place failed to observe the curdled milk present in the stomachs of slaughtered young animals. Second, it must be recognised that there are multiple ways to make the abomasum of such animals useful. Surely the simplest and oldest method is to take the curdled milk together with the mucous (both containing the active enzymes) in the abomasum of a freshly slaughtered animal, and add it to milk; one can store the curds in the fresh abomasum as well, allowing for multiple uses over a period of a few weeks, as is still done for traditional cheesemaking in Egypt. It must be regarded as a further discovery that the abomasum itself can be preserved by cleaning, drying, and salting and kept for use for years; as needed, small pieces of the preserved stomach can be added directly to milk for coagulation or one can steep the cutting in water and add the 'juice' thus obtained to the milk. This method of preserving would be highly useful, facilitating cheesemaking by shepherding groups removed from their main settlement in order to exploit seasonal pasturage (transhumance).

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Finally, it is important to note that while the just discussed animal rennet has long been the mostly widely used coagulant in cheesemaking in the West, it is not the only one and by no means necessarily the oldest method of employing enzymic action to produce cheese. In both the Near East and throughout Europe, there are a number of plants which produce enzymes which work much like chymosin and their use in cheesemaking is explicitly discussed in Greco-Roman texts from Classical Antiquity; common sources are fig sap, cardoons, artichokes, thistles, and *Galium verum* (yellow bedstraw). Indeed, many cheeses are to this day made with vegetable rennet, particularly in mountainous parts of Portugal, Spain, France and Italy. In traditional pastoralist settings, vegetable rennet had the advantage of being readily available to herders away from home at summer pasturage. It seems to me likely that their use has over time steadily lost ground to the use of animal rennet. Early herders may have come upon enzymic coagulation with vegetable rennet accidentally when introducing parts of plants to already naturally acidified milk, with the intention of flavouring it or of giving it some medicinal quality. In any event, the discoveries of both animal and vegetable rennets lie further back in time than any historical records

and probably will never be clearly detected in the archaeological record, leaving us to turn to historical linguistics for at least some clues.

When a new technology arises in a given culture, speakers of that culture’s language must come up with words to refer to the new items and processes involved. If the new technology develops within that community, they will have to create new words or extend the meanings of existing words within their own language. If the technology is acquired through contact with another, alloglot culture, they might ‘borrow’ all or some of the needed vocabulary from that other culture’s language, or for various reasons they might eschew borrowings and create native terms, possibly on the model of the other language’s terminology. From this, it follows that borrowed terminology implies the borrowing of the technology but native terminology does not necessarily exclude the possibility of borrowed technology.

48 Living in an age when technological innovations that affect our daily lives arise at an astounding pace, we are all aware of the coining of neologisms, both of the learned/scientific sort and of the popular sort. One can easily see the processes involved, often rather poetic in nature, in, for example, the terminology surrounding the computer, where many existing words have been assigned new, metaphorical applications – *mouse*, *memory*, *cloud*, etc. – or surrounding electronic instruments, where we find such compounds as *pickup*, *fuzzbox*. When we examine the traditional terminology surrounding dairy production in the Indo-European languages, we are in many cases looking at ancient neologisms, created to refer to new things and processes linked to prehistoric technological advances. In general, the basic strategies for creating new words were then as they are now – compounding, affixation, and often rather poetic metaphorical extensions – but in Proto-Indo-European and in the early stages of the daughter languages the derivational morphology involved was far more complex than what we find in modern English. These complexities, together with related phonological complexities and gaps in our knowledge at all levels, render analyses of these old words difficult, but alongside all the technical linguistic issues there lies at the heart of the process the semantic considerations, the attempt to imagine the poetic imagination of the speakers of these ancient language stages.

Toma and τᾰμῖσος; Etymological Evidence for the Early History of Cheesemaking
From an historical perspective, the number of words in the national languages of western Europe with the generic meaning of ‘cheese’ are few but their distribution is rather striking, especially in contrast with their generic counterparts meaning ‘bread’. In this latter case, we find complete agreement within the two large language families, Romance and Germanic, which extends down to the level of regional dialects: all the Romance languages have a reflex of Latin *panis* and all Germanic languages (and their regional dialects) have direct cognates of English *bread*, all descended from a Proto- or Common Germanic word reconstructed

as **braudan-*. The picture of unity breaks down in the surviving Celtic languages where we have a split between the two branches: in Goidelic, Irish *arán*, Scots Gaelic *aran* vs. Brittonic, Welsh and Breton *bara*.

The contrast with the situation with words for ‘cheese’ is twofold. First, both Romance and Germanic are split. In Romance, some of the daughter languages show, as one might expect, reflexes of the Latin *caseus* – Spanish *queso*, Portuguese *queijo* – whereas French and Italian have *fromage* and *formaggio*. But here it is important to go beyond the national languages and note that at the level of regional dialects, Italian is split between the dialects of the north, which generally show forms related to *formaggio* and those of the centre and south, which generally show reflexes of *caseus*, as in Tuscan *cacio* and Neapolitan *caso*, which even in the dialects have been giving ground as the generic word to the intrusive *formaggio*. An analogous situation is found in France, where at the regional level we find that in the dialects of the old regional language Occitan/Provençal, there appears a local word – *toumo*, *touma*, etc., Old Provençal *toma* – which appears to have been the generic term in the past but, as in central and southern Italy, survives robustly but in a more restricted rôle alongside *fromage*. Surprisingly, clear cognates of *toma* exist throughout Sicily and in places in continental southern Italy (Calabria, Basilicata), where it exists alongside forms of both *caseus* and *formaggio*.

The second contrast to be drawn with the words for ‘bread’, which all over western Europe appear to be native, inherited words, is that with the words for ‘cheese’ we find unambiguous instances of borrowing. In Germanic, there is a neat split along dialect lines: the North Germanic languages all show *ost(-)* (e.g. Danish *ost*, Icelandic *ostur*) while the West Germanic languages (and their regional dialects) all show reflexes of a very early borrowing of Latin *caseus*: Eng. *cheese*, Ger. *Käse*, Du. *kaas*, etc. In addition, both surviving branches of Celtic also reflect this borrowing, as in Irish *cáis* and Welsh *caws*.

Though the term *fromage/formaggio* and the reflexes of *caseus* are not our central concern here, some brief comments about them are needed. To begin, the etymology of *caseus* has long been regarded as problematic in that this Latin word aligns nicely with some phonologically and semantically related forms in other branches of Indo-European but with some complications that demand explanation. For present purposes, let us simply assert that it is in fact a native Latin word and its coining must ultimately go back at least to the Proto-Italic stage and likely back to Late Indo-European. It was undoubtedly the generic word for ‘cheese’ in Latin and in my view originally had the specific meaning of ‘product made from drained(/pressed) curds’. That the word spread throughout the regions conquered and colonised by the Romans from the Republican period on is hardly surprising, particularly in those areas where Latin/Romance supplanted local languages (Oscan, Etruscan, etc.). Somewhat surprising is the success of the word beyond where Roman colonisation and influence was strong enough to lead to language-replacement, for it is clear that *caseus* was

borrowed by speakers of a still linguistically undifferentiated West Germanic, presumably along the Roman *limes* in the Low Countries, west-central and southern Germany, whence it spread throughout all West Germanic territory, most likely reaching the Angles, Saxons and Jutes on the continent before their departure for the greener pastures of Britain. The insular Celtic languages also clearly borrowed the word at an early date.

Scholars have long surmised that the reason for the success of Latin *caseus* among West Germanic peoples (and one should add Insular Celts) is that, although those peoples had long been intimately familiar with dairy products, they had been content with consuming only fresh, unformed kinds of cheeses. It was then perhaps the Romans who introduced them to aged, formed cheeses. The novel product, along with its name, could then be diffused into barbarian territory as a trade item by merchants, as Roman merchants did with a number of other things and their names. I suspect, however, that an important element in this diffusion may well have been the Roman army, which required their *caseus* and probably made arrangements to procure it from local people wherever they established outposts, thus diffusing not just the thing and its name but also the knowledge of its production.

50 While the word *caseus* spread quickly beyond the northern fringes of the western empire, it is not clear how deeply its use spread among the local population of Gaul itself, the region bordering much of West Germanic territory. Without doubt, the word must have been current among Roman administrators, merchants, soldiers and colonists but it is an overlooked oddity that reflexes of *caseus* are conspicuously absent from the Romance varieties of France, including almost all of the Romance varieties, north and south; only some derivatives can be found, e.g. *chasier/chaisier* etc. ‘basket for draining cheese’ (Wartburg 1928: v. 2, 456ff.). The same situation obtains by and large in the Romance dialects of neighbouring Switzerland and northwest Italy. Here the most widespread word for cheese is of the *fromage/formaggio* type and the origins of this word seem to be quite clear and to lie within historical times. This word derives from a process of making shaped, aged cheeses and can be literally rendered in English as *form-+-age*; the word first occurs in Late Latin as *formaticum*, derived from the Latin word *forma* and almost certainly refers to an innovatory method of pressing and shaping curds for their transformation into cheese – perhaps the specific innovation involved wooden forms. In any event, for several reasons, partly linguistic in nature, this word appears to have supplanted *caseus* in a large swathe of Romance territory and did so before the onset of textual transmission of the vernacular there.

What then of *toma*? This word for ‘cheese’ has been treated in relevant etymological dictionaries but otherwise has received little attention. The most recent treatment is a detailed study on cheesemaking in the West by Alinei (2010) which contains interesting data and insights into particular issues but is, alas, skewed by the author’s theoretical framework of the ‘Palaeolithic Continuity Paradigm’; in effect, Alinei sees tremendous

linguistic continuity in Europe which leads him to bizarrely project language developments – developments that for all other Romanists obviously belong to historical times – back into the Neolithic period. His results are unconvincing.

There are no traces of a word *toma* meaning ‘cheese’ in the entire corpus of Latin literature, which includes a number of discussions of cheesemaking and cheese types, leading scholars to conclude with good reason that it must be a borrowing into the Romance dialects in which it appears. For scholars focussing on its appearance in the dialects of southeastern France and neighbouring parts of Italy and Switzerland, Gaulish and the closely related Lepontic of northern Italy has seemed a possible source but the occurrence of the word in Sicily and southern Italy seems to speak against a Continental Celtic source. Rey et al. (2006:3749) suggests it is vaguely “prélatine” but then also mentions a possible connexion to Latin *tumere* ‘to swell’ without further discussion. Alinei (2010:101ff.) sees connexions between *toma* and Greek forms but rather than exploring them in a coherent way seeks to explain the relationship in terms of an archaeological culture (Bell Beaker) which might connect the Western Alps to Sicily in accordance with his particular theory. In accordance with more mainstream approaches, one might conclude from its dialectal distribution that *toma* could be Greek in origin, given the fact that there was a massive presence of Greeks in Sicily and southern Italy in Classical Antiquity and that Greek cultural influences in southeastern Gaul, emanating from the Greek colonies of the coast, most notably *Massilia* (Marseille, founded ca. 600 B.C.), are well attested in the archaeological and epigraphic records. But a Greek word resembling *toma* and meaning something akin to ‘cheese’ is attested no better in that language than in Latin, which is to say not at all. It is my firm belief that the presence of reflexes of *toma* in Sicily and southern Italy is a red herring. The word there is clearly intrusive, just as *furmaggiu* (*formaggio*) is, in areas where older reflexes of *caseus* still occur as relicts, and arrived in Sicily and the Mezzogiorno as a result of the establishment of ‘Gallo-Romance’ colonies, with settlers from southeastern France and northwestern Italy in the Middle Ages, a topic which I have addressed in different culinary contexts not long ago (e.g. Buccini 2015:58ff).

Consequently, the origins of *toma* must be sought in the context of the region of its pre-medieval homeland, namely, the area which I will refer to here as the Western Alps, bearing in mind that the Alps extend from Switzerland southward along the French/Italian frontier and within Provence, down to the Mediterranean. Though it is unlikely that *toma* was an otherwise unattested Greek word for ‘cheese’ borrowed into Gaulish and later surviving by being taken up in Latin/Romance varieties of the Western Alps as they eventually made the switch from their old Celtic language to the dominant language of the empire in which they lived, it is reasonable to think it may have been a local Gaulish word which survived the shift of language. In support of this claim is the fact that in the Romance dialects of the

Western Alps, there are other words in the semantic field of dairy production which can best be explained as abiding Gaulish-isms but nary a one that appears to be Greek.

Nevertheless, knowledge of ancient Greek dairy terminology can be of service here. In that language, the main word employed to express ‘rennet’ was *πυτία* (with variants *πυετία*, *πιτύα*), which has remained in use to modern times. In the *Geopontika* 18.19 (Dalby 2011:331), a 10th century Byzantine text based on much older sources, we are told that *πυτία*, especially from kids, was the mostly widely used coagulant for making cheese and this clear statement accords with what we can glean directly from classical sources. This word indicated in particular the curdled milk (and presumably the accompanying mucus) taken from the stomach of a suckling animal (mentioned above) and this sense fits well with the likely etymology. Beekes (2009:1259) sees *πυτία* as a straightforward derivative of *πυός* ‘beestings’, i.e. the rich milk produced by the mother immediately after giving birth, which makes good sense both semantically and morphologically. Yet the deeper etymology of the root, as noted by both Beekes and Chantraine (1968:956), most likely goes back to an IE root **pu(H)-* ‘to rot, decay’, represented in English *foul*, *filth* (Germanic), *putrid*, *pus* (from Latin) (Watkins 1985:53), and reflected clearly in Greek *πύδομαι* ‘to putrify’, *πύον/πύοσ* ‘pus’. To my mind, the derivation of ‘beestings’ directly from a root denoting ‘pus, rot’ makes little sense, but if we consider how the curdled beestings and especially the mucus – the *πυτία* – from the stomach of a just-born kid looks, we can see a reasonable association with pus. I therefore suggest that *πυτία* was derived from *πύον* ‘pus, putrification’ and that *πυός* ‘beestings’ was backformed from *πυτία*, given that the curdled milk (used as rennet) was often enough curdled beestings.

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There was another word in Classical Greek that meant ‘rennet’, namely, *τάμισος*, which is attested in a number of medical texts and is also included in Hesychius’s (fifth century A.D.) lexicon of unusual or obscure words, who glosses it simply as ‘*πυτία*’ (Schmidt 1867: v.4, 127). *Τάμισος* was identified as a Doric dialect word and one must wonder why it made its way into the usage of speakers of other Greek dialects, such as Theophrastus (from Lesbos) and Nicander (from Claros in Ionia). Though it may over time have come to be used as a synonym of *πυτία*, it most probably was originally distinct in some way.

A number of scholars have taken *τάμισος* as a possible native Greek word of IE origin and have posited a relationship with the Greek verb *τέμνω* (Attic)/*τάμνω* (Doric/Ionian) ‘to cut, split, destroy’, derived from an IE root **temH-*, usually glossed simply as ‘to cut’.¹ This root is widely attested in Indo-European (see Pokorny 2007:3076) and was particularly productive in Greek, yielding multiple derivatives in all three ablaut grades, e.g.: 1) e-grade: *τέμενος* ‘domain, sanctuary’; 2) o-grade: *τόμος* ‘section, piece’, *τομός* (adj.) ‘sharp’, *τομή* ‘cutting, thing cut off’; 3) Ø-grade: *τμήσις* ‘division’, *τάμνω* ‘to cut’.²

Proceeding from the sense ‘to cut’, some scholars have struggled with the semantics of certain reflexes of **temH-* in the daughter languages; for example, Beekes (2009: 1466)

suggests for Latin (*con-*)*temno* ‘despise’ (cf. Eng. *contempt*) a development via ‘cut up, mutilate’. A better explanation arises if we posit that **temH-* could mean ‘separate’ as well as ‘cut’, the distinction being one of aspectual views of one action, where ‘cut’ expresses a focus on the process and ‘separate’ on the intended achievement. Thus, the sense of (*con-*)*temno* would have been ‘separate (socially)/shun → scorn’ (cf. Walde 1910:768); the Greek *τέμενος* ‘land set off, separated (as domain or divine sanctuary)’ bears this sense and not the literal sense of ‘cut’ (cf. Lat. *templum* ‘temple’). If *τάμισος* contains the root **temH-*, it surely was formed with this sense of ‘separate’, referring to the stage after the application of rennet to milk resulting in gel-formation, when the gel is disturbed with a cutting action resulting crucially in the separation of the gel into two substances, curds and whey, with rennet here being imagined as ‘separator’.

Two oft cited pieces of evidence from Greek in connexion with *τάμισος* support our semantic analysis. First, in Hesychius there appears a word *γαλατμόν*, which very much appears to be a compound of *γάλα* ‘milk’ and *-τμόν*, probably a zero-grade derivative of the **IE* root **temH-*. Hesychius glosses this word as *λάχανον ἄγρον* ‘wild herb’, presumably a plant known as a vegetable rennet and called ‘milk-separator’. Second, in Dioscorides there appears the phrase *σχίζειν τὸ γάλα* (*σχίζω* ‘to cut, split, separate’).

From a formal standpoint, *τάμισος* looks to be a zero-grade built from **tmH-* plus a suffix **-is-*. The suffix **-is-* is not widespread in Greek, a fact which leads Beekes on this point alone to judge the word a borrowing from his non-Indo-European ‘Pre-Greek’ substrate, and, indeed, if the word were directly inherited from IE into Greek, the intervocalic *-s-* of **τάμισος* should have developed to *-h-* and thence lost some time in the second millennium B.C. That this word is a feminine thematic noun in *-os* is also somewhat odd and a possible indication that it may have been borrowed into Greek.

Whether *τάμισος* is native Greek (requiring explanation of the retained intervocalic *-s-*) or a borrowing from some other language, the links in form and sense to IE **temH-* speak against the word having its origins in Beekes’ Pre-Greek. Assuming for the moment that it is Indo-European in origin, we need to identify the suffix and I suggest that it might reflect the zero-grade **-is-* of IE **-yes-/yos-*, a widely attested formant in comparatives/superlatives around the family (Meillet 1964:270-271; Ringe 2006:64). This ‘elative’ **-is-* suffix yielded adjectives with a sense of ‘extremely X’ and in this case of the nominalised *τάμισος* I suggest the original sense was ‘strong separator’, a conceivably very apt description of a form of rennet.

To my knowledge, no one has hitherto seen a connexion between Grk *τάμισος* and a French word well known to professional cooks the world over, namely, *tamis* ‘sieve’. This word is attested since the twelfth century in Old French, as well as in Old Provençal, and has been recorded in dialects from Wallonia in Belgium to the far south of France; unambiguous cognates are also found in Switzerland and northern Italy (Wartburg 1928: v.13/1, 73ff.). Equally unambiguous cognates are found throughout West Germanic – Eng.

temse, Dutch *teems*, Frisian *têms*, German (dial.) *Zims* – leading some scholars to speculate that French borrowed the word from a West Germanic language at an early date. The word has, however, no clear etymology in Germanic, just as it has no clear etymology within Latin/Romance. That *tamis* might then be of Gaulish origin has been often suggested but never satisfactorily investigated.

Across the Romance dialects, the word occurs widely in two different forms, basically *tamis* and *tamise* (also *tamigio* in northern Italy); the latter accords with the Medieval Latin gloss *tamisium* ‘sieve’ from the Lyon region (Whatmough 1970:586) and appears to be an old form with a starting point in Gallo-Romance **tamisio*. The two-syllable form can most simply be reconstructed as GRom **tamiso*. There are further complexities in the Romance data that I will address elsewhere but for now let it suffice to indicate that we apparently have as our source a Gaulish **tamision/tamisios*, perhaps with a variant **tamison/tamisos*. Meaning ‘sieve’ everywhere, it is a thing that separates and given the success of the word, we might say it is ‘strong separator’.

54 In both Romance and Germanic territory, this kind of sieve has come to have a close association with the sifting of flour, but this association need hardly be original, as in parts of England it is also associated with beer-making and in France a *tamis* can also be used to separate solids from liquid. Interesting in this regard is that in a large swathe of Germanic territory, extending through the western dialects of Dutch northward into Frisian and Low German areas, the *teems* etc. is a traditional tool in cheese and butter making. I would suggest that this usage may well be relictal and that the use of sieves bearing cognate names may have been the rule in dairy production in early Latin/Romance varieties of Gaul. It seems quite possible that the early borrowing of the word *caseus* and spread of the knowledge of making aged cheese into West Germanic territory was the very context in which an effective tool of cheesemaking, a specialised sieve, was also diffused northward.

A sieve is not the same thing as rennet but the two are in effect both tools by which the separation of curds and whey is achieved. That an old name for rennet, supplanted by some new name, might have been reassigned to the kind of sieve that finished the task of separation, is not far-fetched. I suggest then that we must see a close connexion between our Gaulish word for ‘sieve’ and the Greek word *τάμιος*. From an Indo-European standpoint, the development would be as described above, a zero-grade of **temH-* + **-is-* but with either **-yo-s* or *-o(s)*: IE **t H-is-(y)o(s)* would have yielded Celtic/Gaulish **tamis(y)os*.

If *τάμιος* is a borrowed word in Greek, it is hard to imagine Greek-Celtic cultural contact at a time early enough for the word to be established in Classical Greek and not be known as foreign – the Celtic invasions of the southern Balkans and Greece only took place in the early third century B.C. It is, however, interesting that *τάμιος* was identified as a Doricism and the Doric dialect originated in the far northwest of Greek territory. We might imagine that *τάμιος*, either specifically as a borrowed Celtic word or possibly as a

regional Indo-European word belonging also to one or more of the little known Palaeo-Balkan languages (Illyrian?) may have made its way into the northwestern fringes of the Greek language area before the spread of the Dorians southward, ca. 1100 B.C. Again, if a borrowing, *τάμιος* could well have been originally a commodity, something that could travel, and as a form of rennet, we think not of the fresh stomach or its pus-like contents but rather of the salted, fermented and desiccated stomach of a young animal, an invention that has considerable advantages over *πυτία* in some situations. Might this technological advance have been made by the Celts living in and around the Alps? We know they practised dairying intensively, they had ample amounts of salt for making aged cheeses and for preserving kids’ bellies, and in addition they surely used transhumance to some degree, to take advantage of the summertime high pastures. It is hardly inconceivable that with the innovation of a new form of animal rennet, the thing and its name could have spread from the Swiss Alps, down the Carnic and Dinaric Alps to the edge of the Greek world.

Finally, the survival of the generic word for cheese *toma* in the Western Alps must be addressed. The success that *caseus* had in West Germanic territory as the name of a new thing contrasts strikingly with the lack of success it had in the Western Alps. There *toma* survived and judging from later attested reflexes, it had a broad range of meanings from rennet-produced curds to soft cheeses to formed, aged cheeses of modest size. In other words, it was largely synonymous with Latin *caseus*. Given the unlikelihood that it is a borrowing from Greek and in light of our discussion of *τάμιος/tamis(e)*, the probability is that it is of Gaulish origin. As such, it can be analysed as another derivative of IE **temH-* and probably a parallel formation to a Greek form cited above, *τομή* ‘cutting, thing cut off’, but then with the sense of ‘separation, thing separated’, i.e. rennet-produced curds, cheese made from such curds. In support of this etymology, one notes that other reflexes of **temH-* are attested in Celtic (e.g. Old Irish *temmaid* ‘to cut’) and, from a semantic standpoint, one notes further that the Irish word for rennet is *binit*, derived from another verb glossed as ‘cut (and ‘strike’) but here ‘separate’. The Celtic rennet words share this semantic sense, focussing on the achievement of the action, and in this regard contrast with rennet words in Germanic (*rennet* – run together), Romance (Fr. *présure* – *prendre* ‘to take’) and Latin (*coagulum* – *coagulare* ‘drive together’) which clearly focus on the initial stage of gel-formation.

Notes

1. A few notes on the IE forms discussed here are warranted. First, *-H-* is used to indicate any ‘laryngeal’ consonant, of which there were three, each indicated with a subscripted number; for this paper, the specific identity of the laryngeals is not essential and for typographical simplicity omitted. Laryngeals were lost in almost all the daughter languages, though they often left traces of their former presence on neighbouring sounds.

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Second, an important morphological element in IE is called ‘ablaut’, which refers to patterned (grammatically, derivationally) alternations of root vowels. Theoretically, a given root could appear under certain condition in the e-grade (with the vowel *-e-*, ‘full-grade’), o-grade (with *-o-*) or Ø-grade (with no vowel, ‘zero-grade’); there were also lengthened grades. Grammatical conditioning of ablaut can still be observed in, e.g., English *sing-sang-sung* (reflecting in order the three basic grades).

Third, in IE the glides *y, w* and resonants *l, r, m, n* could function as vowels in some environments. This change of rôle arose frequently in Ø-grades: *y, w* were realised as *i, u* and resonants as *l̥ m̥ n̥ r̥*.

2. The vowel in Doric/Ionian *τέμνο* is original, replaced analogically in Attic *τέμνο*. See Chantraine 1968:1104.

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The Infidels' Drink: Coffee Encounters and Transformations in Early Modern Malta

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ABSTRACT: The early modern Maltese archipelago provides an interesting background to explore the pioneering nature of coffee consumption in the Catholic world. The coffee experience in Malta is rather unique, especially since its introduction happened through the interests of slaves captured during corsairing activities rather than the interest of European merchantmen involved in Levantine trade. Furthermore, the brew was quickly adopted by the common people of the urban towns who visited the slaves' prisons regularly to have a taste of this novel drink. Against this background, this study attempts to explore what could have intrigued the imagination of the Maltese when the brew was still relatively unknown on mainland Europe. The discourse related to coffee experiences will be discussed through the concept of 'embodied imagination': sensory perceptions, socio meanings and material culture.

In 1633, Inquisitor Martino Alfieri (1631-1634) issued a search order for a slave who was eventually apprehended in a shop where Muslims regularly gathered to drink coffee.¹ The shop formed part of the slaves' prison complex, one of the earliest references to a coffee-house in the small Mediterranean archipelago of Malta.

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This lesser-known Maltese case-study presents several opportunities to explore interesting coffee-related trajectories. In order to gain further insight into the adoption of coffee in Malta, this study will provide a brief overview of the nature of coffee drinking during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This is followed by an exploratory attempt to understand better how the drink gained popularity among all sections of Maltese society at a time when the brew was relatively unknown to large parts of Europe. The concept of 'embodied imagination' is here adopted as an analytical tool to investigate three different but interrelated vectors that shed light on Malta's early modern coffee experiences: material culture, social meanings, and sensory perceptions.

The Context

The Maltese islands are strategically located in the narrow channel separating Sicily from North Africa. Prior to the sixteenth century, Malta's state of isolation characterized its archaic cultural behaviours, with its own unique language and customs.² A fortunate change in the rule of the archipelago ushered a period of sustained growth and progress.

In 1530, the Order of the Knights of St John took over the control of Malta. Until their sudden departure in 1798, the Hospitaller Knights transformed the geographical and cultural landscape of the islands, as Malta's domestic and foreign policy came to reflect the ebb and flow of Mediterranean affairs.

New urban settlements surrounding the Grand Harbour altered Malta and the life of its inhabitants. By the first half of the seventeenth century, the harbour towns became multifunctional and cosmopolitan. The urban conglomerate of fortified towns, constituted by Valletta, Vittoriosa, Senglea and Cospicua, represented almost a third of the island's population. The significant concentration of people in this condensed space generated a sense of claustrophobia. The Maltese, and several foreigners, including a considerable number of slaves, shared a common space as the narrow streets and the main thoroughfares became theatres of transcultural experiences.

The sea that defined the physical boundary of isolation was gradually transformed into a bridge, linking Malta to the rest of Europe. The Order's naval prowess, coupled with fantastic harbour facilities, relocated Malta within Mediterranean affairs. The role of Malta's maritime influence was further enhanced through a brisk investment in corsairing activity. Corsairs generated an important source of income, as goods and humans were captured and sold in the Valletta market.

58 Coffeeways: A brief historical overview

Inquisitor Alfieri introduces the researcher to the earliest reference to coffeeways in Malta. Apart from a clear marker of Arab and Ottoman identity, coffee offered an element of respite to a considerable Muslim slave community during their forced stay in Malta. Coffee smells and tastes generated a sense of home-away-from-home among the slave community, eventually even transforming the slaves' prison into a coffee destination for the Maltese.

A sense of this transcultural experience is immediately elicited from the statement of inquisitor Alfieri, '*... in apotheca ubi Infideles solent bibere herba vulgo dicta café*' (a shop where Muslim slaves regularly go to drink an herb popularly known as coffee). Although Alfieri knew where the coffeeshop was located, he appears to be less informed about the infidels' brew since he describes it as an herb rather than a bean. However, he informs us of how the word *café* had already become part of the common vernacular by 1633. What remains certain is that the drink of the slaves seduced the spirits and the imagination of the working class, the knights, and other people of rank.

While coffee was still an exotic curiosity throughout Europe, the slaves' prison became a destination for the knights and persons of quality too. Travellers experiencing Malta as part of their Grand Tour visited the slaves' *bagnos* for a taste of the exotic brew. One distinguished guest was Baron Georg Friedrich zu Eulnberg, who in 1663 was accompanied by some knights to watch a slave prepare the ingredients for the brew which he then enjoyed.³ It

appears that some slaves excelled in the art of preparing coffee and possibly had an element of control over the supply of the coffee drink.⁴ Amid the sparse evidence, one could discern that the earliest coffee experience in Malta knows no high-class noble setting. The first coffee-house recorded in the documents was no centre of enlightened thought and lacked any form of exquisite setting normally associated with other contemporary coffee-houses located in some of the leading European cities such as Paris, London, Rome or Vienna.

Another important source was published in 1665 by the Maltese cleric, erudite scholar and traveller, Domenico Magri. The lesser-known scientific treatise *Virtu del Kafè* was published again in 1671 with a special dedication to Cardinal Francesco Maria Brancaccio.⁵ The latter is better known for the assigned responsibility to provide the Pope with all the necessary information about another novel stimulant in Europe – chocolate. On the cover of the pamphlet, Magri indicates how coffee had just been recently introduced in Italy. However, when referring to Malta, Magri states how the brew was a ‘...*bevanda molto praticata in questa mia Patria*’ (a drink commonly consumed in my country).⁶

By the closing decades of the seventeenth century, coffee-houses became the new destination within Malta’s urban fabric. Privately owned coffee-houses gradually substituted the service offered by the slaves’ prisons. In 1663, the Frenchmen Albert Jouvin de Rochefort noted how some Greeks sold coffee in the harbour towns. Thirty years following this observation, the experienced French traveller Françoise Deseine again remarks how the coffeshops of Vittoriosa and Valletta were serviced mainly by Greeks.⁷ By the second half of the eighteenth century, coffee became an interesting business venture for several coffee-house owners. In 1784, coffee drinkers could taste the brew from one of the fifty-two licensed shops in the harbour towns.⁸ Valletta alone had 25 coffee shops, an average of one shop for every seven hundred inhabitants in an area of 0.61km². This probably explains why the Norwegian priest Pavels, the Danish secretary of the Frigate Tetis, and the young sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen were sipping on coffee as soon as they entered the Grand Harbour in 1796, claiming how ‘the coffee-houses in Valletta are easy to find.’⁹

Evidence of popular consumption was also reflected through the regular importation of the coffee bean to Malta. During the second half of the seventeenth century, coffee became a common occurrence among the wares that reached Malta.¹⁰ The availability of the bean becomes more pronounced during the eighteenth century. In 1791, captain Gaetano Cini imported 800Kg of coffee from Castellammare di Stabia within the city of Naples.¹¹ Apart from brisk supplies of coffee beans reaching the island, a 1776 Chamber of Commerce report indicates how Malta exported coffee to other destinations including Sicily and Calabria.¹²

Coffee also enters the realm of sophistication around aristocratic tables.¹³ The Grand Master employed a *garzone di caffè* [lit. coffee maker] among his Palace retinue.¹⁴ Receipts of the Magisterial Palace contain references to payments for quantities of coffee beans

supplied through specific contracted merchantmen.¹⁵ This attitude justifies the observation of the traveller De Bray who described Grand Master Emanuel de Rohan [1775-1797] as a coffee addict.¹⁶ A series of recipes, probably penned by a Sicilian chef who served the Knights, includes coffee as the main ingredient. Apart from the *Modo di fare café in café* (a type of mousse) and *Biscotti di café* (lit. coffee biscuits), the 1748 *Libro di Secreti per fare cose dolce di varii modi* caters for those refined tastes interested to indulge in a coffee sorbet and a coffee ice-cream.¹⁷

Coffee was more than a drink. Coffee was also an idea.

Embodied Imagination

Food is intense. The need for food is so compelling that we are often 'consumed' by what we eat. In fact, cooking and eating could be viewed as a series of mental processes. Food is loaded with many abstractions, confirming Clifford Geertz's statement, 'man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun.'¹⁸

The main aim of this study is to attempt to unpack aspects of these 'webs of significance' through the manifestation of 'embodied imagination'. Robert Bosnak coined the term to explain how people experienced their dreams both in the mind and their entire body.¹⁹ Research in the field of neurogastronomy compliments Bosnak's theory since the perception of taste is a culmination of complex interactions of sensory and cognitive experiences. This aligns again with Geertz's understanding of how culture is 'a system of meanings embodied in symbols', providing people with opportunities to understand reality and animate their behaviour.

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In search for novel experiences, humans become inspired by their need to satiate their curiosity, the need to discover and invent new experiences, the urge to imagine new ideas and translate these aspirations into realities. With every moment that a food is experienced, human imagination invariably influences those cultural meanings that generally aggregate food as prominent or despised. The need to imagine, forms part of the restless human psyche, the need to know the unknown, while seeking ways of perfecting the known. Against this background, an attempt is made to explore aspects of that process by which new products, in this case coffee, become what Mintz considered as, 'transformed into the ritual of daily necessity and even into the images of daily decency'.²⁰

Material Culture

During the past decades, a renewed interest in material culture became evident in European food studies, with a focus on human behaviours and relationships with the material world. Along with the shift of focus to everyday practices, the kitchen has gained prominence as a topic of analysis. When objects are contextualised within their existing environment, these provide a confluence of meanings and shared values between the object, the person, and

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the food prepared for consumption. Understanding the meanings behind the 'ecosystem of goods' highlights another aspect of the pronounced transition of Malta's coffee culture from the infidels' prisons into the broader public and private realm.

The transformation of a coffee bean into a drink does not necessarily require any specialised tools, although specific equipment was developed in association with the roasting, boiling and serving of coffee. Early seventeenth century descriptions of coffeeways by Westerners visiting Ottoman territories often limit their references to coffee pots and drinking receptacles, the latter generally described as China dishes or porcelain cups.²¹ Probably, these early encounters with coffee receptacles refer to fine Turkish fritware.²² Fine Turkish fritware travelled beyond the confines of the Ottoman empire, including Malta. In 2017, fragments of a coffee cup of a Kutahya origin were discovered within an unstratified layer of earth in the Inquisitor's Palace. A similar fragment was also found in a sealed archaeological context in a Valletta residence.²³ Another interesting find from the Inquisitor's Palace includes various fragments of a coffee drinking set delicately painted with a scatter of strawberries and sprigs. The set consists of cylindrical coffee cups and two types of saucers – possibly a *sous-tasse* and a dessert plate.²⁴

Trying to understand how such objects travelled to eighteenth century Malta remains quite obscure due to the relative absence of archival evidence. The island's maritime activity, especially corsairing, served as a modicum for such products to reach the Maltese market. Such objects, possibly destined for other countries, were redirected to Malta through the activities of ship captains, such as Giuseppe Briffa. In 1793, at the helm of a corsairing vessel that has just returned to Malta following operations in the Levant, Briffa listed all the goods plundered from a Russian passenger sailing on a Greek ship. The list of confiscated items included two cups and two coffee pots.²⁵

There is a strong connection, almost inseparable, between culinary objects and culture. 'The importance of any kitchen technology', argues Bee Wilson, 'goes beyond function and enters the realm of symbol.'²⁶ Therefore, any personal interest to own coffee utensils should also be viewed through the consumer's ability to imagine and recognise novel experiences.²⁷ According to Pietro Verri, those seeking the newest trends were also harbingers of the 'science of *savoir vivre*'.²⁸ Malta's aristocratic settings immediately introduces the researcher to those embodied meanings associated with coffee as an intangible form of culture through the tangibility of kitchen equipment. A 1759 inventory of the Inquisitor's Palace in Malta includes references to several coffeepots, a coffee grinder affixed to the kitchen wall and a coffee roaster. The Inquisitor also owned four *cuccumelli*, a maiolica receptacle that introduced a novel way of how to prepare coffee.²⁹ The eighteenth-century Neapolitan novelty poured the boiling water on the coffee powder resting on a fine sieve. The filtered liquid collected at the bottom of the *cuccumella* was then served, reducing the gritty feeling

one experienced when drinking coffee. Similar to the Ottoman fritware, the recipe book, and the porcelain cups and saucers, these culinary objects became symbols of sophistication.

The utensils used to prepare and serve coffee are characterised both by their utilitarian, as well as their symbolic meanings. Beauty and finesse enhanced the consumption experience. The glamorous objects reflected the socio-political position of their owners. The quality of the coffee service transcended beyond the practical purpose of containing the dark liquid. Even the aesthetic nature of the equipment, especially the coffee service, stressed the importance of the host. In the case of Malta, the refined utensils became a means that overshadowed the origins of coffee in Malta. The drink of the enemy was poor, drab, cheap and within the reach of many. Sophisticated tastes elevated the drink to a unique experience. Indeed, the 'ecosystem of goods' within the private realm of an aristocratic setting became another symbol of distinction.

Social meanings

Coffeeways provide interesting avenues to analyse the development of discourse, revealing how coffee could generate both a sense of conviviality as well as a weapon in power relations, a medium of social distinction. Understanding the social dynamics associated with the novelty of the infidels' drink in Malta is a great place to start looking into those connections between coffee and the politics of identity.³⁰

62 An important component of Malta's urban society was formed by a considerable slave community, the most valuable item seized during corsairing activity. Slaves in Malta either belonged to the Order of the Knights of St John or to private individuals. Slaves could reside in one of the three *bagnos*, each found in Valletta, Vittoriosa and Senglea. Within these spaces, slaves could build their own little refuge supported by their own mosques and priests.³¹

The presence of slaves within the harbour towns could be easily discerned. The Maltese working class constantly found themselves sharing the same urban spaces. Dumont observed how by the end of the seventeenth century slaves roamed the streets of the city freely from sunrise to sunset.³² Slaves were even permitted to earn some money of their own, including the selling of coffee as a drink.³³

During the first half of the seventeenth century, the *bagnos* became a destination for those interested in experiencing a drink not readily available on the market. In this case, to what extent did the *bagno's* coffee experience resemble the social experience of equality among the coffee drinkers in the coffeehouses of Constantinople? It is possible that during those fleeting moments of coffee drinking, the prison became a site of social and political rapprochement when the knight and the aristocrat was briefly decentred. However, one should approach such arguments with caution, especially since the rituals of the coffee-house culture of Constantinople must have contrasted sharply with the visitors' experience of the coffee service offered at the slaves' prison in Malta.³⁴

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Social distinction was much less clearly defined when considering the urban commoners. Many Maltese coffee drinkers existed on the fringes of urban society. Especially for the deserving poor, the coffee drink was less of a sensory experience and more of a temporary relief from hunger pangs. However, the popularity of the drink among the lower classes provided the slaves with some possible sense of belonging. When considered in combination with other opportunities toward 'integration', sharing coffeeways with the Maltese lower class provided an element of temporary relief from the hardships associated with slavery. This argument aligns with Sidney Mintz's conclusion with regards to slave societies in the Caribbean where the choice of culturally meaningful foods afforded slaves an element of human dignity and some sense of freedom.³⁵

Nevertheless, the sale of coffee by members of the slave community was fraught with challenges. The prisons' coffee makers operated in an environment open for haggling with potential coffee drinkers trying to strike a good business transaction. To a certain extent, this behaviour represented a ritualised exchange. An accord had to be achieved between the coffee makers themselves, but also between the coffee maker and the customer. Potential coffee drinkers could go through several price negotiating sessions. These challenges were further accentuated when privately owned coffeeshops started to increase in the harbour towns. Thus, the slave coffee maker was exposed to situations which were rather different from those generated by licensed coffeeshops. The coffeeshop owner had a better sense of privacy, enjoyed the confidence and support of a regular clientele. The slave coffee vendor was more open to public scrutiny especially by the customers who sought any opportunity to take advantage of the social distinction. With little sense of 'social bonding', any business minded coffee drinker could have posed a threat to any slave using coffee as a means of generating some money. This also means that while coffee had generated some opportunity for identities to be blurred, socio-cultural meanings were constantly checked, used and possibly abused especially when contracting business with slaves.

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The primacy of the slaves' prison as the main supplier of coffee grows significantly weaker by the end of the seventeenth century. The coffeeshop becomes another distinct feature of the urban streetscape. After that the slaves' prison democratized coffee drinking in Malta, coffee would start to lose its identity as the drink of the infidel. Slaves even met in the public coffee-houses rather than the *bagnos* during the eighteenth century.³⁶ Gradually, coffee became a daily fare, a transcultural experience for the cosmopolitan population of Malta's urban towns.

Sensory perceptions

When the natural philosopher Leonhard Rauwolf travelled to Aleppo in 1573, he described his first encounter with the drink 'as black as ink'.³⁷ For the English traveller George Sandys, coffee 'does not taste better than soot: burnt, bitter and gritty'.³⁸ There was no good smell to

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the drink, argued diplomat George Manwaring, although he admitted its wholesomeness. According to William Parry, coffee tasted like medicine.³⁹ The English preacher William Biddulph held a similar opinion, concluding how the drink was not adequate to the tastes of his fellow countrymen.

Although taste is highly subjective, discourse employed in archival documents shed interesting light on the physical sensation of flavour and how this impinges on our food likes and dislikes. Sensory perceptions are culturally determined, interesting sites of study that inform another aspect of 'embodied imagination'.

Elisabeth and Paul Rozin adopted a psychological perspective when exploring the concept of acquired taste.⁴⁰ Flavour, according to the Rozins, is influenced by the familiarity of a community to a particular combination of ingredients found in the cuisine of a locality. The Familiar tastes, argued the Rozins, facilitated the historical introduction of exotic crops. Based on this reflection, it is here suggested that there were several culturally determined sensory perceptions that facilitated the adoption of coffee drinking among the Maltese lower classes.

64 Black appears as an unwelcome sight when related to food among early modern society. The colour has been associated with soot, ink, mould and burnt food. Black has also formed an integral part of contemporary discourse as another marker of social hierarchy. Food products, such as black honey or black bread, produced from poor and unrefined processes have been associated with the world of the lower classes. These culturally determined meanings must have also influenced the food-choice decision making process when presented with the dark drink. In the imagination of the lower classes, the colour of the brew appears less of a determining factor in the consumption of the infidel's drink.

The gritty feeling when drinking coffee seems to have produced an unwelcome sensation among all coffee drinkers. Magri informs the reader how after pouring the hot brew in a cup, one had to recite the Apostles' Creed before sipping the drink to allow any particles suspended in the liquid to settle at the bottom of the cup. This appears to have been important for the refined tastes of the elite. In fact, the preparation of coffee in the Neapolitan manner was less driven by the exploration of new tastes and more by the need to eliminate the gritty feeling experienced by coffee drinkers while sipping on unsettled coffee particles in the cup. The development of the *cuccumelli*, similar to those which were found in the kitchen of the Inquisitors' Palace in Vittoriosa, provide another clear example of how acquired tastes influence food-related behaviour among various consumers.

The addition of sugar and spices to imported stimulants, especially coffee and chocolate, generated an interesting debate among researchers. Anthropologist Ross Jamieson argues how any attempts by Europeans to exactly emulate indigenous practices was primarily a reminder of European colonial greatness.⁴¹ Marcy Northern claims that such additives were not a process adopted by the Europeans to domesticate the bitter taste, but rather an attempt

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to emulate indigenous consumption and as a substitute to ingredients that were unavailable to the consumer in Europe.⁴² Both observations, amid their contrasting nature, cannot really fit the Maltese case-study. First, the Maltese have always been part of a foreign system and thus, any claims for colonial greatness are impossible to put forward. Secondly, Malta's culinary experience was primarily a product of the Mediterranean context, especially since the island depended on significant amounts of imported food products. The limited nature of the local varieties in coffee preparation is again clearly evinced in *Virtu del Kafè*. In fact, Magri suggests to anyone about to be initiated to the drink to consider the addition of sugar as a sweetener and coriander to improve the smell of the drink. Both products were available for coffee consumers, mainly those with refined tastes.

It appears that the Maltese urban working class had a favourable sensory perception, positioning them as better consumers of the unadulterated brew. There is consensus on the nature of food consumed by the majority of the urban populace, considered as drab and monotonous, limited in imagination and unrelated to the refined tastes and culinary interests of the more sophisticated classes. The availability of an additional means of sustenance was important for any urban community, where many invariably experienced hunger on a regular basis. Even though we have no evidence to indicate the cost of a cup of coffee brewed by a slave, the likelihood was that the cost was low. Any service offered by an infidel carried with it an amount of stigma and the potential to engage in lucrative business was simply made impossible. Evidence indicates how the sale of food and drink involved cheap products, mainly catering for the needs of the working society.

Even if the product was devalued because of the service provider, it appears that the lower classes enjoyed an acquired taste that explains why they did not question the qualities of the drink. First, the lower classes often consumed foods with textures that generated a similar feeling to the grittiness one experienced when drinking coffee. Bread made from mixed, poorly milled grains, already generated a semblance of a gritty sensation among the bread eaters. Such sensations were further neutralised when considering a diet that depended almost exclusively on coarse wholemeal bread. The second aspect was related to colour. As stated earlier, several dark food textures were associated with the lower classes. For instance, the colour of bread was an important marker of a person's social and economic standing. In Malta's early modern hospital, the lower classes were served brown bread, while black bread was exclusively reserved for the infidels. Consequently, the sight of the drink and its gritty sensation did not necessarily detract from the utilitarian primacy of the brew. The drink was wholesome, and thus it was considered as another cheap and filling experience, serving well the purchasing power of Malta's urban working class. These observations, coupled with the daily interaction between the slave community and the working class, provide a possible explanation to Domenico Magri's 1665 observation that the Maltese were already avid drinkers of coffee when the rest of Europe was still introducing the drink among a selected few.

Conclusion

Coffee drinking became a phenomenon of consumption in Malta at a time when large parts of Europe associated coffee with the 'Turkey merchants' of the Levant. When the medical properties of coffee were being considered as an effective marketing tool, the Maltese had already acquired a taste for the drink that transcended beyond their humoral needs.

The bottom-up approach transformed the exotic beverage into a normal dietary practise. The slave community introduced the experience, willingly sharing the brew with the many people with whom they commonly co-existed. Having their personhood and even their identity as human beings largely denied because of their social and political standing within a catholic community, Muslim slaves inevitably tended to seek any possible opportunity to relate to their owners. The early years of coffee drinking could be seen as a reaction and a self-affirmation in itself. This was especially the case for coffee makers since they played an emotional in the lives of their masters.

66 On the contrary, the knights would gradually continue to enjoy the stimulant mainly in a private setting. While emulating European trends, the Maltese nobility sought ways of how to establish distinction through material culture. The private ownership of coffee utensils continued to re-affirm the aristocracy's sense of its own cultural and biological superiority. This cultural mindset screened a rather ambivalent attitude: one wonders to what extent was coffee seen as an exclusivity of the enemy. Irrespective, apart from a means of distinction from the rest of society, it was as another form of perpetuating the social stigma against the slave.

Similar to the rest of Europe, coffee-houses popularised the brew as a public affair. This development transformed the coffee experience from the drink of the Muslim slaves into a drink that was defaced of any culture, religion, social standing, or identity. By the end of the eighteenth century, the direct association of coffee with the Muslim world in Malta fades away.

Notes

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Edibly Ever After: The Foods of Seventeenth Century French Fairy Tales

Mary Margaret Chappell

ABSTRACT: This paper explores the ways food first appeared in seventeenth century fairy tales and how it has been used ever since to capture readers' (and listeners' and viewers') imaginations. It takes foods mentioned in the original texts of several well-known fairy tales, places them in their historical context, then examines their tenacity. Why a pumpkin in 'Cinderella? Why have some fairy tale foods captivated our collective imagination and survived in adaptations that span hundreds of years? Why have others faded away? How have the foods been embellished and reimagined in subsequent adaptations?

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Once upon a time, a French writer named Charles Perrault included a pumpkin in his version of a well-known folk tale. It was a clever addition, sure to delight the savants and socialites that frequented seventeenth century Parisian literary salons, where fairy tales were all the rage. Little could Perrault have known that his pumpkin would grow so huge in readers' imaginations that it would define all versions of *Cinderella* ever after.

'Princes and queens, palaces and castles dominate the foreground of a fairy tale, but through the gold and glitter, the depth of the scene is filled with vivid and familiar circumstances,' writes Marina Warner in *Once Upon a Time: A Short History of Fairy Tales*¹. *Cinderella* is not the only fairy tale to use food as a 'vivid and familiar' element to enhance the story. Bitter greens, baskets of goodies, cakes with hidden surprises, banquets that magically appear – to name a few of the delectable details to be found in the tales by Perrault and his contemporaries. Certain particulars have vanished from all but the original versions. Others, like Perrault's pumpkin, have captivated our collective imagination and survived in adaptations that span hundreds of years.

The French fairy tales of the seventeenth century represent the genesis of the genre and their authors – Charles Perrault, Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, Charlotte-Rose de Caumont la Force, Marie-Jeanne L'Heritier and Henriette-Julie de Murat were literary trailblazers. Angela Carter calls Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (*Stories or Fairy Tales from Past Times*) 'one of the first self-conscious collections of European fairy tales,'² essentially establishing him and his contemporaries as the very first European folklorists. Madame d'Aulnoy is credited with coining the term 'fairy tale' (*conte de fée*) when she published a collection of her stories under that title in 1697.³ All the authors were famous, well-

educated, famous-in-their time writers and members of the French bourgeoisie and aristocracy. And they knew their craft.

J.R.R. Tolkien alludes to the importance of craft in ‘fairy-stories’ when he describes the essence of the genre. ‘We may say that the Pot of Soup, the Cauldron of Story, has always been boiling, and ...If we speak of a Cauldron, we must not wholly forget the Cooks. There are many things in the Cauldron, but the Cooks do not dip in the ladle quite blindly.’⁴ The 300-year-old stories recounted by these seventeenth century French authors had staying power and remain some of the best known fairy tales of all time: *Cinderella*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Puss-In-Boots*, *Rapunzel (Persinette)*, *Donkeyskin*, *The White Cat*, *Sleeping Beauty*. They remain the subject of countless iterations. In one form or another – a bedtime story, an animated film, a TV series, a musical theater production, a blockbuster movie or an art film – they and the foods they include have infiltrated our own, individual imaginations.

That Pumpkin

Charles Perrault may have conjured a pumpkin from his imagination for *Cinderella*, but that pumpkin did not magically appear out of nowhere. Its source can be traced to one enchanted garden: *Le Potager du Roi*, Louis XIV’s fruit and vegetable garden at Versailles. Designed by Jean-Baptiste de la Quintinie, the *Potager du Roi* took five years to complete (1678 to 1683) and remains to this day a marvel of form and function.⁵ Within the 29 enclosed gardens, La Quintinie developed ways to ripen fruits five to six weeks ahead of time so the king could enjoy asparagus and lettuce in January, strawberries in March, and peas as early as April.⁶

Madame d’Aulnoy invokes this astonishing bounty in her fairy tale, ‘The White Cat’. She enumerates the fruits a coven of wicked fairies conjure from their garden for a hungry queen: ‘apricots, peaches, nectarines, cherries, plums, pears, melons, grapes, apples, oranges, lemons, redcurrants, strawberries, raspberries’. The queen, perplexed, notes that all the fruits mentioned are harvested in different seasons. ‘Not so in our garden,’ the fairies explain. ‘We grow every fruit in the world and they are always ripe, always delicious, and never go bad’.⁷

Charles Perrault would have known La Quintinie’s garden even better than Madame d’Aulnoy. As Premier Commis des Batiments (Minister for Building Works) under Louis XIV he actively participated in the garden’s creation. Perrault was a mega-fan of the *Potager du Roi*, devoting a full page of verse to the garden’s wonders in his poetic ode to Louis XIV, *Le Siecle de Louis-Le-Grand*.⁸ And what lay at the heart of the garden in one of the 16 plots that make up Le Grand Carré? Pumpkins. La Quintinie made a point of including the relatively new vegetable in both the *Potager du Roi* and in his treatise on gardening, *Instruction pour les jardins fruitiers et potagers*.⁹

A pumpkin patch must have seemed even more magical in the seventeenth century than it does today, especially one in a palace garden. Is it any wonder that Perrault would seize on the image for his Cinderella? He tempers the magic, though, and draws his audience deeper into the scene by putting that pumpkin into an everyday context. Cinderella's Fairy Godmother doesn't just turn a pumpkin into a coach with a wave of her wand. First, she hollows it out herself – as any cook would. Perrault prefaces the magical with something real and tangible – the act of prepping a pumpkin for soup. (Soup being the most common way to cook pumpkin in the seventeenth century.)¹⁰

Over the centuries, Cinderella's pumpkin has endured and evolved. Gone is the hands-on hollowing-out step, however. In its place, and indeed, in most of our imaginations, you will find a magic wand which Cinderella's Fairy Godmother waves over the bright orange gourd in 1950 Disney animated feature as she sings, 'Bibbidi Bobbidi Boo'. The animation sequence, said to be one of Walt Disney's favourites, is so sublime that it has become a touchstone for all generations since. The omission of any culinary context is perhaps due to the animation process, which was artistic and technical, and involved using a wood-and-wire pumpkin model instead of the real thing.¹¹ The shift could also be due to the also be due to the changing perceptions of pumpkins in 1950's America, when children were far more familiar with pumpkins as Halloween decorations than as recipe ingredients.

70 'The fairy tale is in a perpetual state of becoming and alteration,' explains Philip Pullman in his introduction to *Fairy Tales from the Brothers Grimm*, adding, 'To keep to one version or one translation alone is to put a robin redbreast in a cage'.¹² The Walt Disney Studios certainly adhere to that belief as they remake their animated fairy tales as live-action feature films. In Disney's 2015 *Cinderella*, the Bibbidi Bobbidi Boo scene is replaced by this exchange between Cinderella (Lily James and her Fairy Godmother (Helena Bonham Carter):

Fairy Godmother: 'What we need is something that sort of says "coach". ... I'm liking fruit and veg. Do you grow watermelon?

Cinderella: No.

FG: Canteloupe?

C: I don't even know what that is.

FG: Artichoke? Kumquat? Beef tomato?

C: We do have pumpkins.

FG: Pumpkins...this will be a first for me. I don't usually work with squashes. Too mushy. ...Hello my strangely orange vegetable friend...¹³

And just like that, with a flourish from a humor-seeking screenwriter, Cinderella's pumpkin is firmly replanted in the kitchen garden once more.

Food Fit for a King

For the 20 years that Perrault was the Minister of Building Works, his whole world orbited around Louis XIV and Versailles.¹⁴ He got to watch the magic unfold as pavilions were built, gardens were dug and decorated, and the Sun King's court was installed in the palace. It is only natural that he should season his stories with all he saw there. Perrault's biographer Patricia Bouchenot-Déchin confirms this and points out that the castle the prince enters in *Sleeping Beauty* 'looks exactly like Versailles would have the day after a great ball that Perrault would be on hand to help to orchestrate.'¹⁵

Louis XIV's passions and preferences were well documented by courtiers at the time, which makes it easy to connect the dots between life at his court in Versailles and the fairy tales written during his reign. So, when a king is renowned for loving the game served at his table almost as much as he enjoys the act of pursuing it (hunting), and when his palace (Versailles) was originally his father's hunting lodge, what better way to curry favor with him (or his fairy tale counterpart) than by presenting him with gifts of fresh-snared rabbit and a brace of partridges? And is that just what Puss-in-Boots does in Perrault's tale.¹⁶

Game – and a cat's hunting prowess – appear at the table in Madame d'Aulnoy's 'The White Cat' as well.¹⁷ When the prince first dines with the White Cat, he is served squab bisque, a dish that just so happens to have been on one of the King's menus at Versailles¹⁸. (His hostess, ever the cat, enjoys a bisque of her own, laced with big, fat mice.)

King's cake (*gâteau des rois*) was another of Louis XIV's favorite dishes, and he was a particular fan of the merriment that surrounded finding the prize (*la fève*) baked inside it. At the time, king's cakes were served at baptisms and other special occasions, not just for Epiphany. An article in *Le Mercure galant* (a magazine devoted to the goings-on in court) reported in 1684 that at one king's cake fête held by Louis XIV, 'The King enjoyed himself so much that he wanted to hold another one the following week'.¹⁹

In Perrault's tale, 'Donkeyskin,' the ring that slips off Donkeyskin's finger as she's preparing a cake for her prince is reminiscent of the dessert game. All at court – and elsewhere – would have understood the significance of finding the prize.

'Donkeyskin' offers an example of a seventeenth century food reference that has stood the test of time. Indeed, the hidden ring has become the best-known element of the tale, thanks 'Le Cake d'amour,' a song-recipe composed by Michel Legrand for filmmaker Jacques Demy's musical adaptation of the tale. The princess (Catherine Deneuve) sings as she prepares the cake, and to this day, many French people, young and old, know the tune and most of the words. There is one notable difference in Demy's adaptation of 'Donkeyskin' however; the princess places the ring in the cake herself. (It was the seventies, after all!)²⁰

In other instances, the specificity of food details has lost all meaning as times changed and the tales' audience shifted from educated adults to innocent children. The hunted game references in 'Puss-in-Boots and 'The White Cat' have been simplified so that all that remains are Puss-in-Boots clever skills and the White Cat's penchant for mice.

A similar phenomenon occurs with a '*sauce Robert*' mention that pops up in Perrault's 'Sleeping Beauty'. His version of the tale does not end happily ever after with a Prince's awakening kiss. Instead, Sleeping Beauty goes on to be a married mother-of-two who must contend with a child-eating ogress of a mother-in-law. At one point, the Ogress-Queen Mother tells her chef she wants to eat her granddaughter, and she wants her served '*à la sauce Robert*,'²¹ Few children would get the reference to a white wine-vinegar- sauce traditionally served with grilled meat; most would quail at the grisly turn of events. This is perhaps why the Grimm's version and subsequent adaptations have been truncated to omit the plot twist entirely.²²

Greens, Greens and Nothing But Greens

Whenever a fairy tale is retold, its food specifics are embellished and reimagined to suit the tastes and trends of a given audience and time. Nowhere is this more apparent than in 'Persinette,' Mademoiselle La Force's precursor to 'Rapunzel'. Mademoiselle La Force reimagines a 'a 16th century Italian tale by Giambattista Basile where a pregnant young woman parsley from the garden of a fairy who lives next door. The narrator explains, 'At the time, parsley was rare; the fairy had imported it from India and the only place it was found in the country was her garden...Back then, the taste of parsley must have been excellent'.²³

Excellent-tasting or no, parsley had another reputation: as an abortifacient.²⁴ Mademoiselle La Force's readers would have understood the inference, for, in addition to being a love story about a maiden in a tower, 'Persinette' is all about pregnancy. The tale begins with a pregnant woman's cravings that lead to the abduction of her newborn daughter. It continues on to the fairy's relentless sequestration of the girl the fairy names Persinette. But in Mademoiselle La Force's version, the fairy is not evil, just misguided. All she wants to do is protect the girl from a foretold (and assumed unwanted) out-of-wedlock pregnancy, which happens comes to pass anyhow when she's visited by the prince.

Over 100 years later, the Brothers Grimm published their version of *Persinette* as Rapunzel. There, parsley is replaced by *rapunzeln* (rampion), a blue-flowered bitter green (*Campanula rapunculus*) that was popular at the time. Once the implication of pregnancy and potential abortion were eliminated along with the parsley, the herbs stolen from the fairy's/ witch's garden are wide open to interpretation, as is the entire tale itself. Philip Pullman points out, 'Wilhelm Grimm bowdlerized the exchanges between Rapunzel and the witch that had existed in all previous versions, and indeed in the Grimm's own first

edition of 1812. Instead of revealing her pregnancy by saying that her clothes no longer fit, Rapunzel asks the witch why she is so much harder to pull up than the young prince'.²⁵

Fast-forward to modern times, when *rapunzeln* (the herb) has faded from common memory and use and storytellers must modify its description. In *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, Jack Zipes translates it as rapunzel lettuce, for clarity.²⁶ Philip Pullman calls it lamb's lettuce in his adaptation. Author Kate Forsyth refers to the plant as 'bitter greens' in the title of her fantasy novel. But the award for the most evocative of all the Rapunzel/Persinette greens references is to be found in the lyrics of 'The Witch's Rap' a song written by Stephen Sondheim for the musical *Into the Woods*. The Witch tells the baker how his pregnant mother craved

Greens, greens, and nothing but greens:
Parsley, peppers, cabbages and celery,
Asparagus and watercress and
Fiddleferns and lettuce!
He said 'all right,'
But it wasn't, quite,
'Cause I caught him in the autumn
In my garden one night!
He was robbing me,
Raping me,
Rooting through my rutabaga,
Raiding my arugula and
Ripping up the rampion
(My champion! My favourite!)²⁷

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The sophistication of Sondheim's reference is right up there with those of the seventeenth century French writers. It's all there – the seventeenth century parsley, the nineteenth century rampion (Rapunzel), the sexual innuendo, plus two very twentieth century culinary allusions to arugula and fiddleferns. For when *Into the Woods* was first staged in 1986, both arugula and fiddlehead ferns were new, hot-ticket items in New York restaurants.²⁸

Something Lost, Something Gained

The story arc of food in fairy tales is akin to that of fairy tales themselves. Whenever a reference is lost, a new one is gained. Perrault's Cinderella shares oranges and lemons with her stepsisters at the ball (citrus was another favourite of Louis XIV); these become 'sugared oranges and lemons' in a 1971 British version retold by Jane Carruth.²⁹ By then, oranges and lemons were available year-round, in every supermarket and the gift needed to be sweetened up, so to speak. In the same collection, Little Red Riding Hood's basket is

filled with ‘eggs, jam tarts, thick honey, and a pound of fresh creamy butter’³⁰ rather than the more meagre ‘cake and pot of butter’ Perrault described in his original.³¹

When Jean Cocteau reimagines ‘Beauty and the Beast,’ in his 1946 film, he borrows the magical, disembodied hands from the similarly-themed ‘The White Cat’. Those hands will in turn become the animated serving ware in Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast*. Lumière, Mrs. Potts, Chip, and the others invite Beauty to the table with the musical number, ‘Be Our Guest’:

Be our guest! Be our guest!
Put our service to the test
Tie your napkin ‘round your neck, chérie
And we’ll provide the rest
Soupe du jour, hot hors d’œuvres
Why, we only live to serve
Try the grey stuff, it’s delicious
Don’t believe me? Ask the dishes...
Beef ragout, cheese soufflé,
Pie and pudding ‘en flambé’
We’ll prepare and serve with flair
A culinary cabaret!³²

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A Neverending Story

And so, the French fairy tale food tradition goes on. This paper is by no means a definitive overview. Even if it were, even if it covered every food reference in every tale written by Perrault et al. along with every modification to those tales made ever since, it would already be obsolete. Somewhere, at this very moment, someone, somewhere in the world is retelling one of them and incorporating his/her own delectable take on the food. It could be a father adding peas to a fairy tale banquet to get his daughter to eat them. Two friends reenacting ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ and filling her basket with candy. A novelist tapping into the stories of her childhood. A young girl singing along to ‘Le Cake d’amour’ and making up some of the words. Or the venerable Andrew Lloyd Weber adding a coda to the Cinderella Bake-Off he YouTubed at the end of 2020.³³

Fairy tales, French or otherwise, are in a constant state of flux and reimagination with, as Marina Warner says, ‘scores of storytellers and inventors gathering, interpreting, revising the material... losing themselves in the forests of fairy tale in order to come back with baskets of strawberries picked in the snow’.

Even fairy tale scholars cannot resist the urge to embellish their narrative with food imagery. From Tolkien describing Cooks who dip their ladles in the Cauldron of Story to Angela Carter saying determining the true source of a fairy tale is like asking, ‘Who first

invented meatballs?’³⁴ food is imagery that continues to speak to us all and offer endless possibilities where storytelling is concerned.

The only thing to do then, is accept and join in. Revisit the stories. Invent, embellish, add to, omit. See where your imagination takes you when you imagine the foods in French fairy tales for yourself. For as Philip Pullman concludes in the introduction to his version of Grimm’s fairy tales, ‘You are at perfect liberty to invent other details than the ones I have passed on, or invented, here. In fact you’re not only at liberty to do so: you have a positive duty to make the story your own.’³⁵

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Waterloo Porridge and Plentiful Yorkshire Teas: food and the creation of northern English identities in mid-nineteenth century novels

Gill Eastabrook

ABSTRACT: This paper takes as its starting point the proposition that just as nations are imagined communities, so are regions within nations. It uses works of the imagination to examine three aspects of the part played by food, and lack of food, in the creation of northern English identities in the mid-nineteenth century. Oats as the historic staple grain of the area signalled a homely North. The North was constructed as a place of hunger. In tension with this it was also depicted as a place of traditional plenty and of extravagance by new money.

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Benedict Anderson's ideas of *Imagined Communities* are crucial to our understanding of national identity but they are equally relevant to other place-based identities.¹ In this paper I look through the lens of food at the way northern English identities were understood in the mid-nineteenth century and seek to bridge a gap between three areas of the existing historiography. Social and cultural historians have increasingly recognized the significance of food in the construction of national identity and the intersection of this with other facets of identity including class. At the same time, northern regional identities have been examined in relation to aspects of elite and popular culture such as sport, music and literature. In addition, there is much descriptive writing about food in and of the North ranging from locally focused material on specific towns to discussion of regional differences in work with a broader canvas. However, relatively little has been written about the way food has been used to imagine northernness or indeed other regional identities in England.

With this in mind, I explore three themes showing how food contributed to the construction and reflection of northern identity in the period. First, although by the mid-nineteenth century wheat had largely replaced oats as the staple grain of most people in the North, oatcake and porridge still symbolized a homely and wholesome North. Second, in what subsequently became known as the Hungry Forties, there was a perceived link between the North and hunger despite probably equal rural poverty in the south of England and urban squalor in London. Third, there was a converse trope in the national discourse: the North as a place of plenty and extravagance. So the idea of the North holds three very different characteristics in tension.

These can be seen in some non-fiction of the time but in keeping with the Symposium theme I will concentrate here on how works of the imagination played both a reflective and a constitutive role, looking particularly at five novels by archetypal northern writers: *North and South*, *Mary Barton*, and *Sylvia's Lovers* by Elizabeth Gaskell; *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë; and *Shirley* by Charlotte Brontë.² All these were published between 1840 and 1870, so reflecting the attitudes of that period but several are set earlier. *Wuthering Heights*, is narrated as if from the early nineteenth century but the much of the action dates back to the 1770s. *Sylvia's Lovers* takes place during the late-eighteenth century French Revolutionary Wars. *Shirley* is set in 1811-12 a period of further war with France, bad harvests and social unrest suggesting suggests there may be an element of nostalgia for an earlier, rural, imagined northern community in these Victorian depictions. I will also make occasional reference to other novels and to non-fiction writing of the period.

Before looking in detail at my three themes I need to say what I mean by 'the North'. The idea of an English North/South divide resonates in the contemporary political discourse but has deep roots. One can link it to geological time with fertile lowlands to the south and east of a line from the Tees to the Exe and pastoral higher lands to the north and west. Quite when the term came to have more than purely geographical meaning is contested. It arguably predates the Norman conquest but some see it as a nineteenth or even twentieth century construction.³ Although the North is bounded on three sides, by other countries or the sea, the southern edge is not well defined; indeed some scholars see this elusiveness as attractive.⁴ Where definition is needed I follow that of the journal *Northern History* in taking 'the seven historic northern counties' of Cumberland, Westmoreland, Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire.⁵

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The Homely North

First I will consider how mid-nineteenth century novels use oatcakes and porridge to construct and reflect an image of the North as a homely and wholesome place. Climate and elevation affect what cereals can be grown in different parts of England. As early as the Norman Conquest differences in staple grains influenced the way people saw the north south divide.⁶ John Burnett suggests that by 1815 wheat had become the universal bread corn of England but other writers imply that while oats may no longer have dominated across the North in the nineteenth century they did survive as an important component of the diet in some areas.⁷ So we might expect them to play a part in the expression of northern identity.

In *Sylvia's Lovers* Elizabeth Gaskell uses oatcakes as a representation of plain wholesome northern food at several points. The novel is set on the North Yorkshire coast where Sylvia is the daughter of local farmer Daniel Robson and his Cumberland-born wife Bell. An account of the autumn tasks of good housewives on bleak northern farmsteads refers to

‘great racks of oatcakes’. At one level this is a simple description of food and of the lived experience of northern farmers’ wives as Gaskell believes they had been at the time she is writing about – during the French Revolutionary Wars. But it is also an account of how half a century on, in the mid-nineteenth century, a middle-class urban woman saw a distinctive northern identity reflected in food. Later references to a great chest for oatcakes and to cold bacon and coarse oatcake bought by the recruiting sergeant carry the same implication. The specifically ‘plain’ nature of oatcakes is reinforced by Daniel’s comment to Sylvia that they (unlike Bell and her nephew Philip Hepburn, whose family were socially superior) are ‘oatcake folk, while they’s pie-crust’.⁸

Emily Brontë’s first mention of oatcakes in *Wuthering Heights* is similar to many of Gaskell’s. When Lockwood, the framing narrator of the tale, visits Heathcliff, his new landlord, at Wuthering Heights on the Pennine moors for the first time, he sees in the family sitting room a ‘frame of wood laden with oatcakes’ along with legs of beef, mutton and lamb, noting these would have been ‘nothing extraordinary as belonging to a homely northern farmer’. On another visit, later in the book but earlier in time, Nelly Dean accompanies young Catherine to Wuthering Heights to see her estranged cousin. They find the servant ‘Joseph [...] in a sort of Elysium alone, beside a roaring fire; a quart of ale on a table near him, bristling with large pieces of toasted oat cake; and his black, short pipe in his mouth’ – a slightly different more rugged and masculine picture of northern homeliness, perhaps with plainness dominating.⁹

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In *Shirley*, set in a Yorkshire mill town during the Luddite disturbances but again reflecting its author’s mid-century perspectives, Charlotte Brontë’s symbolism of oatcakes is more directly about simplicity and wholesomeness with northernness coming partly from the location of the story but also from the reactions of those involved. Shirley is toasting oatcakes for her young semi-invalid cousin Henry when Mr Hall, the rector, and Louis Moore, Henry’s half-Belgian tutor, return from a walk and are invited to join them for this schoolroom lunch with the warning they ‘will be restricted to new milk and Yorkshire oatcakes’. Louis rejects oatcake, speaking partly in French. As Henry explains ‘He cannot eat it [...] thinks it is like bran, raised with sour yeast’. Here northern (or to be more precise in this case Yorkshire) identity is being reinforced by the ‘otherness’ of the foreign tutor – who is socially of ambiguous status. At the same time he is asserting his own identity, coming from a nation that prides itself on its cuisine, and his right to reject strange food.

In these examples we have seen specific Yorkshire settings stand for the North as a whole but Mrs Gaskell also uses oatcakes to highlight intra-regional differences, in particular between what is now Cumbria and more southerly parts. She links these to feelings of home and homesickness. In *Mary Barton*, set in Manchester, Alice Wilson offers her precious ‘oatbread of the north, the clap-bread of Cumberland and Westmoreland’ (that is the two traditional counties forming most of modern Cumbria) as a special treat, taken from her old deal box, when she introduces

Mary Barton to Margaret Jennings.¹⁰ The two girls' enjoyment of this dainty provides the prompt for Alice's account of how she left home further north and moved to Manchester in search of work. Although her migration, initially in service, was a relatively short distance in modern terms, she had never been able to return home while her mother was still alive, or even go to her funeral, but she now hankered after one last visit to her birthplace while she herself still lived. So for her it was county, or even more local, roots that had the emotional pull. Bell Robson, in *Sylvia's Lovers*, had also moved from her Cumbrian birthplace, but in this case to marry a Yorkshireman and settle on a farm near the east coast. She too attaches importance to the clap-bread of her youth. In this case she has a 'great rack of clap-bread' hung in her house symbolising how she thinks she is a better housekeeper than – and generally superior to – the Yorkshire women among whom she now lives and who make the 'leavened and partly sour kind' of oatcake. Later in the novel, while waiting for news of her husband Daniel's trial for attacking press gang collaborators, she encourages Sylvia to make clap-bread 'for him', thus demonstrating a bond within the family but also asserting her Cumbrian identity.¹¹

So far I have focussed on oatcakes but porridge too appears several times in *Sylvia's Lovers* to reinforce a picture of domestic peace and comfort in a northern farmhouse, often implicitly contrasted with the wild northern outdoors. When Daniel Robson is confined to the house, by a combination of weather and his resulting rheumatism, he interferes in 'boiling potatoes, the making of porridge, all work on which [his wife] specially piqued herself'. At a different time, Robson shares a supper of porridge and milk with Kester, his farm servant, after returning from a tough day's work pasturing sheep on distant moors – in contrast to the more urban, and perhaps urbane, cousin Philip who is trying to teach the young Sylvia to read after a day working indoors at Fosters' shop. Later in the story, the first two men again share porridge, this time for breakfast, as Robson recovers from his encounter with the press gang.¹² So, although it represents comfort and domesticity, this can be seen as a rugged masculine form of domesticity, chiming with the male and working-class characterisation of northernness noted by, for example, Dave Russell.¹³

So I would argue that, although by the mid-nineteenth century wheat had largely replaced oats as the staple grain of most people in the North, oatcake and porridge held a symbolic association with northern identities in a variety of ways. Oatcakes offered an image of northern simplicity and wholesomeness that was often tinged with nostalgia. Closely related to this were the ideas of northern homeliness and domestic peace. While this included an element of 'good housewifery' it also had a masculine aspect. The local variation underpinning northern identities could be seen in different types of oatcake for different districts. This difference could have real emotional charge for people who had migrated within the north. Porridge could carry a similar message of comfort often implicitly contrasted with the wild northern outdoors. However, especially in an urban setting, porridge was sometimes related not to comfort but to poverty and hunger.

The Hungry North

This takes us on my second theme: the construction of the North as a place of hunger. The period 1840 to 1870, and in particular what later became known as ‘The Hungry Forties’, was one in which food, or perhaps more usually the lack of food, was prominent in public and political discourse. Two contrasting political campaigns of the period were relevant to food and hunger. The Anti-Corn Law League (ACLL) opposed laws preventing imports of wheat until its home-grown price reached a very high level. For many of its adherents repeal was not simply a matter of cheaper and more plentiful food. That was clearly a direct concern both for working-class supporters and for manufacturing employers who saw low food costs as helping keep wages low. But for many it was part of a wider issue of free trade – an almost religious enthusiasm.¹⁴ The Chartists’ specific demands were concerned with electoral reform but the movement as a whole had economic and cultural aspects. For some Chartists the suffrage was ‘a knife and fork question [...] a bread and cheese question’ and they drew on partly invented tradition to describe their vision of a ‘moral economy’ where basic necessities such as food were not left entirely to an unregulated market.¹⁵ Both these campaigns had links with northern cities that may have fed into the trope of northern hunger.¹⁶ It is however far from clear that people in the North were in general worse fed than in other parts of the country. When Jane Cobden Unwin, brought together accounts of how people remembered the years before Corn Law repeal in her 1904 book *The Hungry Forties*, she saw a nationwide issue.¹⁷ Modern analyses of data from slightly earlier periods suggest northerners may even have been better fed.¹⁸

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In the largely urban setting of Gaskell’s *Mary Barton*, porridge (or in some cases the type of or want of porridge) is not related to comfort as described above but to poverty or hunger. When Alice Wilson invited Mary Barton and Margaret Jennings to a small tea party, Margaret entertained them by singing the ‘Oldham Weaver’ – a dialect song about the weaver’s hard lot. He had to live on nettles and ‘Waterloo porridge the best o’awr food, Oi’m tellin’ yo’ true’. Waterloo porridge is a dialect term for oatmeal porridge made with water only. None of the three women were well off so this ties in with their own experience. In a more direct reference to porridge as subsistence food, a widow who cannot afford to send her son to school, regretted that he was not allowed to work under the Factory Act complaining ‘this law o’ theirs, keeping childer fra’ factory work, whether they be weakly or strong, There is our Ben; why, porridge seems to go no way wi’ him, he eats so much’.¹⁹ The way this is expressed in dialect reinforces an overall picture of northern urban poverty. Charlotte Brontë makes some similar use of porridge (and its lack) as a sign of poverty. In *Shirley*, the family of William Farren who has been thrown out of work by mechanisation, have ‘only porridge, and too little of that’.²⁰

Porridge was not the only way to depict the North as a place of poverty and hunger. Frances Trollope’s 1840 *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, The Factory Boy* is probably the first ‘industrial’ novel – defined as one which attempts to depict the great transformation of the industrial revolution or to grapple with its significant social

dislocations.²¹ In a factory near a fictionalized Manchester, pauper apprentices exhibit ‘the frightful spectacle of young features pinched by famine’ and suffer the ‘misery of incessant labour, with strength daily failing for want of pure air and sufficient food’. These hungry apprentices are archetypal figures of the industrial North.²²

Gaskell portrays a close relationship between hunger and the North in *Mary Barton*. John Barton and a friend visit a family who are even worse off than they are. The father is laid off from the mill but he is ill too and they have had ‘no money fra’ th’ town’ because they fear that claiming relief under the Poor Law would risk them being sent back to Buckinghamshire where he was born.²³ The two men have taken some food they can ill spare and after giving some to the children Barton offers some to the mother.

She took the bread [...] but could not eat. She was past hunger. She fell down on the floor with a heavy unresisting bang. The men looked puzzled. ‘She’s well-nigh clemmed,’ said Barton. ‘Folk so say one mustn’t give clemmed people much to eat; but bless us she’ll eat nought’.²⁴

The dialect word ‘clemmed’, meaning starving, reinforced the northern context and is in stark contrast with the mill owner’s house. There his wife has ordered ‘breakfast upstairs [...] the cold partridge as was left from yesterday, and put plenty of cream in her coffee’. Meanwhile ‘at the well spread breakfast-table, sat [...] father and son’.²⁵ In this vignette the North is a place of hunger but of hunger made all the worse by the plenty alongside.

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So we can see, in what subsequently became known as the ‘Hungry Forties’, there was an implicit association between the North and hunger, despite probably equal rural poverty in the south of England and urban squalor in London. Sometimes this was portrayed via the traditional northern food of porridge but at other time more directly as a simple lack of food. Sometimes the relationship between northernness and hunger was explicit but at other times it appears implicitly via the northern location of the tale. The intersection with class is unavoidable but sometimes they are so intertwined as to be hard to distinguish.

Before moving on to my third theme I would like to mention that this interest shown by writers and readers of fiction in northern hunger appears to have worked its way out after the 1840s. There were periods of economic downturns or food shortages during the 1850s but it was the Lancashire ‘Cotton Famine’ of the early 1860s that next gave hunger in northern England the same traction in the national discourse as it has had in the 1840s. This was reflected in the press and also in ‘Cotton Famine Poems’ but I have found little reference in the novels of the time.²⁶ Clare Pettitt suggests that *Sylvia’s Lovers* (written during the Cotton Famine but set around 1800 and on the coast of Yorkshire well away from the textile areas) was influenced by Gaskell’s experience of the way a distant war impacted on life in Manchester.²⁷ However the famine of 1800 described by Gaskell does not seem to have any regional dimension. It is attributed explicitly to harvest failure, war (with France) and the Corn Laws.²⁸

Conspicuous Consumption and Wholesome Plenty

The last theme challenges the idea of a hungry North. Elsewhere in these novels the North, perhaps particularly the industrial North, was associated with extravagance of various kinds. It was a place where money was being made, and specifically 'new money', the successful mill owners were often self-made men. At the same time factories and mines provided some relatively highly paid work. There was also more work for women and children meaning that, whatever the downsides, some families had higher incomes than if they had only one breadwinner's wage. The combination of social mobility and inequality provided the opportunity both for conspicuous consumption and for the disapproval of its showiness.

In Gaskell's *North and South*, Mrs Thornton (the mill owner's mother) gave a sumptuous dinner party, attended by Margaret Hale and her father who had moved to Milton from the south of England.

Margaret, with her London cultivated taste, felt the number of delicacies to be oppressive; one half of the quantity would have been enough, and the effect lighter and more elegant. But it was one of Mrs Thornton's rigorous laws of hospitality, that of each separate dainty enough should be provided for all the guests to partake, if they felt inclined.²⁹

82 A rather different contrast, though again suggesting northern extravagance, is provided by Mr Hale's comment after he visited the house of a striker earlier in the same day.

I hardly know how to compare one of these houses with our Helstone cottages. I see [...] food commonly used which they would consider luxuries; yet for these very families there seems to be no other resource [...] One needs to learn a different language and measure by a different standard, up here in Milton.³⁰

For both middle and working classes we are presented with a more extravagant lifestyle in the North. However in neither case is the 'delicacy' or 'luxury' named, still less described. Despite this coyness about detail we can recognize a version of conspicuous consumption that is not only extravagant but demonstrates a lack of sophistication verging on the uncivilized.

A more flamboyant version of Mr Hale's view appears in Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*. Bounderby the banker and manufacturer claims that "There is not a Hand in this town, sir, man, women, or child, but has one ultimate objective in life [...] to be fed on turtle soup and venison with a golden spoon".³¹ Bounderby is asserting that the mill workers of Coketown had unreasonably extravagant dietary expectations and, while Dickens may not have agreed, he presented it as an extreme expression of a common view.

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A simpler plenty sits between this extravagance and the homeliness described earlier in the paper and is linked to traditions of hospitality. In one scene in *Shirley* young Caroline Helstone, who lives with her uncle at the Rectory, finds herself obliged, by the conventions of Yorkshire hospitality, to give an impromptu tea party for an uncomfortably mixed group of guests. The three curates (who follow each other round the neighbourhood in search of hospitality throughout the book) have called to see the Rector. She is hoping that they will not stay for tea when Mrs Sykes and three Misses Sykes arrive to ‘see her “in a friendly way”, as the custom of that neighbourhood’. So Caroline has to cope with the twin challenges of keeping conversation going with this ill-assorted group and the practicalities of feeding them when the cook had ‘put off the baking today because [...] there would be bread plenty [...] while morning’. The evening is indeed a social trial for her but after hurried consultation and the despatch of the maid to buy baked goods from the village a suitable spread is provided:

Yorkshire people, in those days, took their tea round the table; [...] essential to have a multitude of plates of bread and butter, varied in sorts and plentiful in quantity: [...] the tea was spread forth in handsome style, and neither ham, tarts, nor marmalade were wanting [...] The curates, summoned to this bounteous repast, entered joyous;³²

While this scene of simple but generous hospitality is framed as specifically Yorkshire (if not even more local) it can be seen as standing for the North in general. By placing the scene ‘in those days’ Brontë brings in an element of nostalgia, although as Laura Mason points out it is not clear how much she was influenced by her own childhood memories of the 1820s. While the specific foods offered are not uniquely northern, both ham and curd tarts had some Yorkshire associations by this time.³³

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In these examples different sorts of culinary extravagance and plenty are associated with the North. Some, such as from the self-made mill owner, or the factory worker who is now relatively well-paid, can be seen as associated with a lack of sophistication, or even a lack of prudence. Others however seem to have been rooted in nostalgia for a North where traditional English hospitality thrived.

Conclusion

The treatment of food, its consumption, and its lack, in mid-nineteenth century novels contributed to the construction and reflection of an English North and northernness in several ways. First, although by then wheat had largely replaced oats as the staple grain of most people in the North, oatcakes and porridge held symbolic associations with northern identities. Overall they offered an image of northern simplicity and wholesomeness that was often tinged with nostalgia and the way different types of oatcake were favoured in

different districts could have real emotional charge for people who had migrated within the north. Second, in what subsequently became known as the Hungry Forties, there was an implicit association between the North and hunger despite probably equal rural poverty in the south of England and urban squalor in London. However during the Lancashire Cotton Famine of the early 1860s, fiction offered little to reflect the association in the public imagination between hunger and the distressed areas that could be seen in the contemporary press. Third, there was a converse trope in the national discourse: the North as a place of extravagance verging on vulgarity and/or imprudence, often associated with new money, whether the riches of mill owners or the good wages, by the standards of the time, of factory operatives. A different aspect of plenty can be seen in simple northern hospitality. So we have an emerging northern identity characterized by a three way tension between homeliness, hunger and extravagance. This is often linked to more specific place-identities within the North and there is some ambiguity about whether counties took the primary place-identities themselves or were standing for the North as a whole.

Notes

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Imaginary Feasts: Virtual Meals in a Second World War Prison Camp and in COVID Times

Suzanne Evans

ABSTRACT: This paper compares aspects of the imaginary feasts produced by starving women interned by the Japanese in Changi Jail, Singapore during the Second World War with a series of virtual dishes discussed over Zoom during the COVID pandemic in November and December, 2020. Themes that arose out of this comparison include: traditional roles in the kitchen, food and conflict, the prominence of comfort food and brand-named foods, pain and politics, and the influence of fiction.

86 During the Second World War in the spring of 1942, small groups of ravenous women began gathering each afternoon in the notorious Changi Jail, Singapore where they had been imprisoned by the Japanese since March of that year. They talked of food, of all the sweet and savoury dishes they could only dream of eating and sharing. The words seemed to quell their hunger, if only briefly. While a majority of the women were British there was one very bossy Canadian in the group, Ethel Mulvany. Mul, as she was known, organized these gatherings and in time, insisted the women keep a written record of their food dreams. She collected their recipes and brought them back to Canada after the war. Over the next year she had 20,000 copies of the resulting cookbook printed up which she sold, raising money to send food to former prisoners of war hospitalized in England where rationing was still in effect.

In 2010, while working at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, I discovered a copy of Mulvany's *Prisoners of War Cook Book* in the museum's library.¹ Her collection of prison camp recipes is fascinating, but not unique. In the Second World War starving prisoners around the world, men and women, were dreaming and writing about food.² In fact, at this Symposium, twenty-one years ago, two papers were presented on the subject of prisoners of war and their food memories.³

Compelled to find out more about Mulvany, I burrowed down into years of research about prison camp life. The written result of my work is a biography, *The Taste of Longing: Ethel Mulvany and Her Starving Prisoners of War Cookbook* (2020). However, not quite sated on the subject, I decided to further explore the stories that arise when we talk about food that is meaningful to us. In the spring of 2019 I joined Alchemy, an Art Residency program on Toronto Island that focuses on the intersections between food, art and

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community. For my project, I invited the artists in residence to an Imaginary Feast and asked them to describe a dish or meal they would want if they were painfully hungry.

The results were poignant and led to a second Alchemy Imaginary Feast four months later. The latter became the subject of a CBC radio documentary aired on Thanksgiving Sunday, October 2019.⁴ These Alchemy dinners provided the groundwork to a subsequent series of six Imaginary Feasts conducted over Zoom during the pandemic. Ranging in groups of six to thirteen people, aged twenty-something to seventy plus, the guests came from diverse backgrounds and genders. They joined in from Newfoundland to California and as far afield as Brunei, each eager to share a story of a meaningful meal or dish.⁵ Some were funny, others intimate and painfully tender. A few grappled with the pandemic, but most served, as did the recipes for the women in Changi Jail, as an escape hatch leading away from a world unravelling. I will compare a selection of the more than 50 stories collected with the recipes and experiences of the women from Changi Jail and explore their overlapping themes.

Tradition

Our invitation to consider 'Food and the Imagination' for this year's Symposium stated that 'imagination implies challenges to tradition'. Certainly in the food the Changi Jail prisoners found to augment their rations, they were very inventive. They ground up eggshells for calcium, dined on slugs and live baby mice. They even tried snacking on talcum powder. However, for their imaginary meals, what Ethel Mulvany called their tea parties, the women relied on the comfort foods of home. In much the same way, the attendees of the pandemic feasts mostly focused on very simple or traditional dishes. The challenge to tradition in both cases was the use to which the virtual meals were put, instead of broadening the belly, they fed the mind and the heart.

Let me begin with the early days of hunger in Changi Jail. The women gathered in the hot, crowded cement courtyard and began their imaginings by conjuring chairs to sit on and a dining table, covered with linen, decorated with flowers and set with cutlery. Ethel Mulvany claimed that these parties usually began with someone serving up the food they came to yearn for most, bread. After this, the mainly British women turned to the plain dishes of home: colcannon, pork pies, kidneys on toast, and steamed puddings galore. They recorded over 450 recipes, some repeated, all loved.⁶

Few of the POW recipes incorporated elements of the cuisine of Singapore and Malaya where the women had lived, some for years. Instead, their dream foods reflected their mainly British backgrounds.⁷ A majority of the approximately 63 contributors to Ethel Mulvany's POW recipe collection identified as housewives, a role intimately tied to food.⁸ In this role women are often weighted with the responsibility of maintaining traditions, culinary and otherwise, across generations. While many of the prisoners were bereft of

family members to whom they could pass on their recipes, they shared stories of food and loved ones with their prison family.

During the virtual feasts, a number of stories described dishes that had been passed on by mothers and grandmothers. In the case of Adrian though, she had to reconstruct a culinary tradition after the death of her family's matriarchs.⁹ Adrian's family had immigrated to Canada from Iceland four generations ago. They brought with them a cherished recipe for vinarterta, a multi-layered cake filled with spiced plum jam. The cake had held great status in Iceland at the time, having migrated from the pastry capital of Vienna, hence the name Vienna Torte, to Copenhagen and from there to the Danish colony of Iceland. The dessert was reserved for celebrations and the Icelandic communities of Manitoba held tight to that tradition.¹⁰

88 Each year at Christmas Adrian's family drove eight hours north from Winnipeg to Flin Flon knowing that the vinarterta would be served at the climax of the feast. She remembered the flavour from when she was very young, but was never taught the recipe because unlike the girls in her family she had grown up as a boy. After the death of both her mother and grandmother in quick succession, Adrian came out as transgendered. With that transition she became the eldest daughter of the eldest daughter, a position which for her meant taking on the mantle of family matriarch. She felt it her duty to strengthen the family ties that had loosened while her mother and grandmother had been sick and was convinced that this process had to begin with hosting Christmas dinner and serving the symbolic vinarterta. With a recipe saved by a cousin and a memory of what the final product tasted like, she forged ahead. Each step of the process was new to her, never having been instructed to stir the jam or pull the cake layers out of the oven as a young girl might have been asked to do. The vinarterta was a success and with it Adrian took on a new role.

The pandemic feasts were held in November and December so it is not surprising that there were a number of Christmas foods, particularly desserts that were discussed. They were rooted in British, Norwegian, Icelandic, Swedish, even Chinese-fusion dishes. Even if these events had been held at a different time of year, aspects of the Christmas feast would likely have arisen. It is, after all, an annual affair often attended by many family members and requiring concentrated effort in the kitchen. Certainly the Changi prisoners discussed a number of Christmas fruit cakes that were eventually included in Mulvaney's cookbook.

Wartime

Not surprisingly, another prominent category that emerged in the modern stories dealt with war, during which any experience is intensified and is thus made more memorable. This was true of the Christmas pudding that Karen's British grandfather wrote about in a letter to his mother when he was at the front in World War One. He missed it terribly. After the war, he immigrated to Canada and took the recipe with him. He never cooked it, but made sure to give it to his Canadian wife. In time she passed it on to her new daughter-in-law just

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before she headed off to live on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia with her husband. That young woman, Karen's mother, set up house on a Royal Canadian Mounted Police outpost, miles from any store. Unable to buy dried fruit to make the pudding, she improvised. The surrounding cranberry bogs provided her with a plentiful harvest and from then on the pudding has been made with dried cranberries. It is still served with a moment of silence in respect for the young man who fought in the trenches and yearned for the taste of home.

War circumscribed the heart-shaped Norwegian waffles that Fay held up to show us via her Zoom screen. She makes them every year in November in memory of her Norwegian grandmother. During the Second World War when German-occupied Oslo was being bombed by the allies, civilians were asked to shelter in basements. Over time, when Fay's grandmother realized that her neighbourhood was not being directly targeted, she invited her normally reserved neighbours into her windowless front hall where they could safely wait out errant explosions without fear of shattering glass. Being the consummate hostess, she went into her kitchen, braving the dangers of a big window. There she cooked up waffles and brewed coffee. Over the months, when stores of coffee beans ran out, she roasted peas and made ersatz coffee. Carrying on these coffee klatches became a form of resistance supported by imagining the flavours and settings of former peaceful times in the company of new friends.

During the same war, farther south, a young Canadian RCAF flight engineer had his plane shot down on July 8, 1944 near Beauvais, France. A farmer in the area noticed the allied pilot walking along the road in front of his farm. He hurried over to him, explained the danger he was in, and rushed him into his barn. For three weeks the whole family took care of the young man, feeding him and keeping him hidden until he was able to escape to England with the help of the French Resistance. Many decades later, in 2000, the engineer, now too old to travel, gave his daughter Pauline and her family the airfare to go to France. He wanted them to meet the French family and thank them properly for what they had done. The two families had a week-long visit which culminated in a grand meal. A casserole brimming with ratatouille was served outdoors at a table just long enough to seat the assembled crowd. Pauline cherished her hosts' respect for the food, their delight in sharing it and the time they took to savour what had brought them together.

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Brands and Convenience

Many of the Changi recipes and the pandemic stories included brand named and convenience foods. The products of Misterys Lea & Perrins, Heinz, Kraft, Campbell, Libby and Nestlé were summoned into the land of make-believe dining by the prisoners. Specific brands of salmon, evaporated milk, beans, and soups were incorporated into recipes. For both groups, the products acted as landmarks of another time and place. The pandemic feast stories that referred to mothers' use of tinned soups were a great source of laughter

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and memories shared by people who had never met. The products most enjoyed were Campbell's tomato soup and cream of mushroom soup. In John's Irish Catholic family of nine his mother's cooking was all about stretching resources. The great unifier of all her meals was Campbell's cream of mushroom soup. It spread over and thickened everything from tinned green beans to meatloaf and any left in the can, she was told by a neighbour, could be used as face cream.

The anonymous woman who contributed a recipe to the POW cook book for 'Chili Con Carne with Spaghetti' was definite that it required a tin of Libby's Con Carne. Mike, on the other hand, in one of the modern Imaginary Feasts, did not remember the brand of the most important canned chili that he ever ate. He was 12 years old at the time, the eldest of six children being raised by a single mother in San Jose, California. His mother's new boyfriend, Ken, a biker and ex-convict, took Mike to visit his old neighbourhood, a shanty town in a drought-dry river bed in an industrial part of town. Mike thought this would be a place of freedom with no rules, but was quickly disenchanted with this impoverished world. Tarped rooves protected make-shift furniture and TVs powered by a web of cords siphoning electricity off a local street lamp. Ken took the young Mike straight to Sugar, the matriarch of this enclave, who presided over inhabitants of all ages and backgrounds. She welcomed them, as she did everyone, with hugs and a glass of cool, clean water.

90 It was not long before Mike started grumbling to Ken. He was hungry and had his heart set on having two Burger King cheese burgers. Overhearing him, Sugar offered him something from her pantry instead. Half-heartedly he chose a can of chili from her metal utility shelf stacked with tinned goods. She opened it and directed him to put it on the fire, handing him a pair of vice-grips for the job. When it bubbled, he clamped onto the tin and dipped his spoon in. Ken leaned over and asked how it tasted.

'It isn't cheese burgers'.

'You'll get your burgers', Ken replied, 'but now the kids here won't get any chili'.

Those words left a permanent mark on Mike, 'hit[ting] my heart harder than anything else had before'. For the first time he was able to imagine the hunger of others.

Pain and Politics

The near-starvation rations in Changi exacted a physical and emotional toll on the prisoners. The hunger they experienced during the war was painful. In her unique way, Ethel Mulvany described it as 'a going down the valley one by one pain'. She asserted, 'There is nothing stronger. There is nothing where the body is more vulnerable to absolute capitulation, to any vice'.¹¹ Hunger caused some to sell their bodies for food while others stole to alleviate the pain.

Food and pain can be united by more than hunger. This was the case for Seema when she was growing up in Calgary, Alberta in the 1980s. She was the only child of East Indian

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origins in her class and neither her teachers nor her fellow students had ever seen the dal and roti she brought for lunch. Told she was dirty because her fingers were yellowed, it took years before she realized that the stain was from turmeric. Inside her home she felt equally pressured to fit in, in this case to be a traditional Indian daughter. The weight of that pressure followed her even after she left home to live in Montreal. She felt it with each package of homemade roti her mother sent her. Seema wonders, “If you can taste the love in food, can you taste the manipulation and guilt?”

Erin might well have asked the same question. She had been living in India with her husband in a marriage that was coming apart under the weight of the emotional abuse he exerted upon her. Since their early days together food exploration had always been a shared source of delight for them. As their relationship fractured that joy slipped away from Erin to the point where she lost her sense of taste. The texture was there but not the flavour. That changed when she escaped from her husband and flew back home to the United States. Once settled in her seat on a Korean airlines flight, she felt safe. The dish of bibimbap she was served of rice, vegetable and meat was something she had come to love while living overseas and it was served with her favourite condiment, gochujang red chili paste. With joy she squeezed the whole tube over her meal in the shape of a heart and then took a bite. All the flavour she used to relish in her food returned at that moment. It was only an airline meal, but it was spiced with freedom.

In a gentle but clear act of resistance, one of the women imprisoned in Changi Jail shared a recipe for mint humbugs with her fellow prisoners. Her list of ingredients specifically states that the peppermint oil to be used must be English not Japanese. When even the smallest defiance could result in punishment by the Japanese, this modest request stands out and surely would have been much appreciated by the other women in the jail.

A similar note of resistance came to the fore in a pandemic story that Namitha, a woman of colour, told about the bake-off conducted by her two roommates for her 21st birthday. Knowing her well, they both baked cakes that reflected her tastes and character. One made a three-tiered cake, each layer representing a favourite book with *The Catcher in the Rye* on top. The other roommate baked a cheese cake decorated with blueberries and strawberries depicting a police car on fire. While she chose the book cake as the winner, she noted that at the moment, ‘most of my identity is hating cops’.

A story of hatred in remission was told by Jeanette, a Canadian diplomat. She was on posting in Zagreb, Croatia early in her career in 1996 just after the Bosnian war had ended. It was a delicate time in statecraft when tensions were running high. When she and her husband, who loved to cook, had been there long enough to take a measure of the atmosphere, they hosted a brunch. With hutzpah and diplomacy they invited a selection of people from across the political spectrum. All accepted and came with their young children. Jeanette made sure the guests had plenty on their plates and in their glasses while

her husband did the cooking. Tension was palpable at the outset, but gradually subsided as the talk continued, which it did for twelve whole hours. Jeanette cannot remember anything about all the dishes they served over that time span. She acknowledged, ‘The food is super important, but the conversations are also what makes a feast a feast’.

Fiction Coming to Life

The characters who add to those conversations are also important, even if they are fictional, as happened in the prisoners’ recipes. Dicken’s character Oliver Twist, who had the temerity to ask for more food, made it into the cookbook in the guise of a cake named in his honour. The inhabitants of J.M. Barrie’s Never Never Land lingered around the biscuit recipe for Peter Pans. The recipe for Mikado Pudding came with memories of the then-popular Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera. In one of the pandemic feasts, Uma, a writer of children’s books, described how fiction became real. One of her books features a cook who makes a delicious curry puff with a secret ingredient. After the book’s publication Uma was asked to talk to a group of children and share the recipe with the secret ingredient. Having only imagined the curry puffs, Uma had to spend days in her kitchen experimenting with possible secret ingredients. It would have to somehow appeal to the funny bone and the taste buds of children. In the end, a little bit of cocoa did the trick. Uma summed up her experience saying, ‘When you make stuff up it can sometimes turn real in ways you didn’t expect’. Surely this was true for the hungry prisoners of war who felt nourished just by imagining their favourite foods.

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Like Uma, Ken shared a fanciful world drawing on the culture of his island home. He did what Newfoundlanders are famous for, he told a very tall tale. This one was about an old woman named Nan from the outport town of Raison Arm. Nan was famous for her Christmas cakes and decided to make a really big one that year to feed the community. None of her pans were big enough so she took out the seats of the old tin boat stored in her shed. She lined the boat with grease paper and poured in the batter. There wasn’t an oven on the island that could handle a cake that size so she left it where it was and lit the shed on fire. Soon the fire brigade arrived, but when they saw there was no need for hoses, they set up their chairs and put on a kettle. The local accordion player arrived not long after and then others turned up, drawn to the music and aroma. When the shed finished burning the tea was poured and Nan served the warm fruit cake to all assembled.

Cassie, another virtual Zoom participant, found her community expanded and her culinary imagination inspired by the hunger of a fictional character. Her story was one of the few that dealt head-on with the pandemic. Seattle, Washington, where Cassie lives, was ground zero for the pandemic in the United States. Just before COVID hit she anxiously stocked up her cupboards and freezer. Thereafter she limited herself to one grocery shop a month. As her social life shrank away she increasingly spent time reading. She was deep

into a novel set in Victorian England, when she came to a part where a desperately hungry character was eating a ploughman's sandwich. Instantly she was struck with a craving for that sandwich. Her well-stocked kitchen had all the ingredients except for apply chutney. Never mind, she would make it, except that she didn't have an apple. It was 10 pm and the stores were closed. Her only recourse was to make a request online to her *Buy Nothing* neighbourhood group. She was messaged back immediately, 'We are a symptom-free household. I can put it outside on the box which has been disinfected. Do you need it now'? She felt embarrassed but admitted that she did. The house was just three blocks away. She didn't know the owners but had passed it almost daily while going for her pandemic walks and talking on her phone. It was one of the few streets in her neighbourhood where she could get cell reception. That night Cassie ran, picked up the apple, and made the chutney. She ate her sandwich at midnight, taking joy in its flavour and feeling grateful for her pandemic community.

Great pleasure comes from feeding a community whether that be with imagined food or with the real thing. Amanda found this to be true when she and her mother decided to throw a party for friends and neighbours. Amanda, an only child, and her single mother moved from New York City to Toronto in the early 1970s. Soon after, these self-described 'scrap and scrabble city girls' bought a farm in Perth County near Stratford, Ontario and called it Flat Broke Farm. The house was old, droopy and had no indoor plumbing. The wealth of the place was found in the soil of the kitchen garden. 'All we had to do was wave a packet of seeds over it', said Amanda, 'and it would produce'! Based on the garden's powers they decided to host a party and call it 'The First Annual Perth County Slumgullian Festival'. Understanding slumgullian to be a gold rush term for a stew with anything and everything in it, in their case, whatever the garden could provide, they thought the name fit.

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City friends arrived in jeans and t-shirts and Dutch immigrant neighbours came in their Sunday best. Then strangers began turning up. They had heard in town that there was going to be a Perth County Festival. Being fans of the then-famous rock group, Perth County Conspiracy, they mistakenly thought this was going to be Canada's answer to Woodstock. It wasn't another rock festival for the ages, but no one was disappointed. Guests brought food and many took turns cooking in the big farm kitchen. The party went on all night and somehow unplanned-for breakfast foods appeared the next morning. 'It was,' said Amanda, 'a case of the loaves and the fishes'. For her, the event was a turning point, where she went from poverty and loneliness to abundance and friendship.

Conclusion

The women of Changi were deprived of both food and family but it was their hunger that was most immediate. For those who came to the virtual table in the pandemic, it was the absence of family and friends that was felt most acutely. While the prisoners focused on the

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intense savouring of culinary delights, both groups viewed particular dishes as signposts leading to a world inhabited by unreachable friends and family. The imaginary feasts held during the pandemic were shaped by memories of simple and traditional foods, much like the recipes that Ethel Mulvany collected in Changi. Women and housewives as keepers of the family traditions dominated the stories. Brand named convenience foods, and the nostalgia that they carried with them, played a part during both time periods. While war, pain and politics were the backdrop to the POW recipe collection, they also featured in the stories told during the Imaginary Feasts. Food, the lack of it, the production of it, and the sharing of it, has become a major topic of interest during this pandemic. It seems that in a world divided 80 years ago by war and now by disease, talking about what we eat can help shrink divisions.

Notes

1. A digital copy of Ethel Mulvany's *Prisoners of War Cook Book* is available at the Canadian War Museum <<https://collections.historymuseum.ca/public/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=5523402>>
2. For a selection of other POW recipe collections see Suzanne Evans, 'Culinary Imagination as a Survival Tool Ethel Mulvany and the Changi Jail Prisoners of War Cookbook, Singapore, 1942-1945', *Canadian Military History* 22, 1 (2013), 48.
3. Sue Shephard, 'A Slice of the Moon', in *Food and the Memory Proceeds of the Oxford Symposium of Food and Cookery* 2000, ed. by Harlan Walker (Totnes, Devon UK: Prospect Books, 2001), pp. 223-227; Jan Thompson, 'Prisoners of the Rising Sun: Food Memories of American POWs in the Far East During World War II', in *Food and the Memory*, pp. 273-286.
4. 'How a Canadian Woman's Imaginary Feasts helped starving World War II Prisoners', *Sunday Edition*, CBC, 14 October 2019.
5. With the help of a publicist, open invitations were sent out via word of mouth, local newspapers, email contacts and Facebook.
6. The original log books with the handwritten recipes are held in the Pioneer Museum, Mindemoya, Manitoulin Island, Ontario.
7. The men on the other side of Changi Jail also discussed food. Intriguingly, a collection of their recipes published after the war in Malaya did include many Asian recipes. This may be due in part to the fact that the cooking facilities were all on the men's side of the jail, hence they learned how to cook with local ingredients. See P.C.B. Newington, *Good Food*, (Ipoh, Malaya: Charles Grenier & Co., Ltd. 1947).
8. Changi Museum Civilian Internee Database <<https://www.changimuseum.sg/civilian-internees-database/>>
9. The participants are presented by first names only to preserve their privacy.
10. For a fascinating discussion on the symbolism and fractious history of vinarterta in North America see Laurie K Bertram, 'Icelandic Cake Fight: History of an Immigrant Recipe', *Gastronomica*, Winter (2019), pp.28-41.
11. Ethel Mulvany to Sidney Katz of *Maclean's* magazine, tape #10 interview, April 1961. Pioneer Museum, Mindemoya, Manitoulin Island, Ontario.

Celebrating the Franco-Russian Alliance: French chefs, purveyors of influence and creators of culinary imagination

Caroline Favre

ABSTRACT: This contribution aims to shed light on the world of nineteenth century French chefs and their involvement in the Franco-Russian Alliance that lasted from 1891 to 1917. This period of great enthusiasm and curiosity towards Russia witnessed the birth of new hybrid recipes that sometimes mixed Russian and French cuisine or gave the illusion that it was. Through their creation chefs engaged with the imagination of the eater and toyed with the stereotype surrounding Russia to make their dishes more appealing. Ultimately, at the junction of two culinary traditions, these chefs with their ingenuity made a significant contribution to the culinary exchanges between France and the Russian Empire.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, an unexpected alliance was formed between two political regimes which seemed irreconcilable in their essence. In 1891, the French Republic and the Russian autocrat Alexander III signed an agreement that recognised their rapprochement. The following year, a Franco-Russian military convention was established and in early 1894 the two countries finally ratified the Franco-Russian Alliance which lasted until the Russian Revolution in 1917. This alliance of two nations with diametrically opposed interests and ideological differences can be understood by the political situation in Europe. France was experiencing heightened isolation since the defeat in 1871 against Prussia. As their enmity towards the new German Empire grew, the need to regain its place on the European stage only increased. Russia suffered also from isolation when the Three Emperors' League failed and the Triple Alliance composed of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy was renewed for a third time. Furthermore, the Russian government was particularly concerned with the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Balkans. Eventually, France and Russia were drawn together over the threat of Great Britain and the rampant rumour that it would be joining the Triple Alliance¹. Thus, Alexander III's aversion for republicanism and France's dislike for autocracy were overlooked to enable the two states to end their isolation and gain some sort of security.

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If the announcement of the Alliance was welcomed as a whole, with opened arms by both societies, many people denounced the formation of this abnormal alliance and its political consequences². In order to render the Alliance popular and gain the support of public opinion, the two states mobilised culture through the festivities and the artefacts produced for these occasions. Independently from the authorities, numerous men and

women in favour of the alliance became unofficial mediators between Russia and France and consequently helped to mobilise both societies. Among them, chefs and cooks were at the forefront. They felt concerned by the events, mostly because of the ties they had with Russia. Since the 18th century, the Empire was a land full of opportunities for these men. The elite had pledged allegiance to the Western perceptions of refinement which included cuisine. French chefs were considered the primary theorists and instructors in the *haute cuisine* and their skills were in demand³. However, most Russian aristocrats took pride in reaffirming their national character through food. Therefore, French chefs had to take into consideration many cultural specificities in their daily practice. As such, many expanded their culinary knowledge, creating new perspectives creation-wise⁴. With the Franco-Russian alliance, chefs explored the realm of imagination and stereotypes surrounding Russia and created recipes that appealed to the audience of the late nineteenth century. This article not only seeks to determine the role of these chefs in these celebrations but also to highlight how these men proved to be formidable intermediaries at the crossroad of two culinary cultures.

French chefs: “the very first to define the alliance”⁵

96 Cooking flourished as a profession during the nineteenth century. However, the status of cooks and chefs remained ambiguous throughout the period. If certain chefs were regarded as culinary artists, most in the profession were still considered as household staff by society. From Carême to Escoffier, many chefs over the years expressed their disappointment over the lack of consideration for their profession in France⁶. The Franco-Russian alliance exacerbated these sentiments of disaffection. There had been no mention of the significant role the chefs and French cuisine played in forging ties between France and Russia. Chefs took upon themselves to make their voices heard and they reiterated their grievances through the culinary press. In 1892, the food journalist Barthemely wrote in the newspaper *La Cuisine Française et Étrangère*:

So far, we have invoked all the reasons more or less plausible that could have prepared the ground to this Franco-Russian Union. Only the influence of French gastronomy, that has continued to exert in Russia, has been overlooked or ignored. As a journalist, I must claim, in favour of the French culinary art, its rightful part in the formation of this brotherhood.⁷

In October 1896, chef Besnard published in the same newspaper an article celebrating the official visit in France of Nicholas II and the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna of Russia. In an exalted poem, he praised the Imperial family for recognising the talents of French chefs and having made them the masters of their kitchens. For many years already, the food served at the Russian court was a clever mix of Russian and French cuisine. French chefs occupied, more often than not, the highest charge in the imperial kitchens, the rank of *karmar-fourrier*⁸. Besnard concludes that the rapprochement between the two nations had begun years before, when chefs had gone to Russia and brought together the two cuisines. It was only natural

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that professionals be given the credits they deserved. The newspaper in which the two men expressed their regrets was an important tool of expression for the profession. *La Cuisine Française et Etrangère* was part of a larger culinary press that thrived in nineteenth-century France. It is a wonderful material to study how the chefs perceived themselves, and how they shaped the various narratives around French cuisine: how it should be prepared, consumed and thought of. It also gives us the chance to assess the role of French chefs in the culinary exchanges between France and Russia in those particular years of the alliance.

The culinary press of the period could be divided into several categories: there were newspapers devoted to a public of gastronomes, others addressed to women and finally, the press written by and for the professionals. This culinary press as a whole is characterised by a relatively short lifespan. Most of the newspapers ran for a year or two and then stopped. However, it is not the case for *La Cuisine Française et Etrangère*, which falls in the last category. Published monthly from 1891 to 1927 with occasional interruptions, it was the official newspaper of the Culinary Philanthropic Union. Its successive editors were all members of the *Académie de Cuisine de Paris*. This newspaper stands out as well by its aim of making gastronomy more accessible. Everyone who wished to learn *haute cuisine* was welcomed to subscribe.⁹ Chefs wanted to broaden their readership in order to regain their place at the forefront on all culinary matters. According to them, the general press had arrogated the right to publish vague culinary articles which were poor in their contents.¹⁰ The only path to culinary excellence was theirs to follow. In other words, it was a way to assert their authority, have their work acknowledged by as many people as possible and gain public appreciation. The Franco-Russian alliance gave them the opportunity to honour their profession. Therefore, *La Cuisine Française et Etrangère* followed closely the festivities of the alliance. As soon as the two nations gathered around a table, the newspaper shared with its readers the menu served on this occasion. Sometimes, an entire article was dedicated to detailing the course of the party which allowed the writers to highlight the author of the feast. For instance, on 31 January 1894, a reception was offered by the Russian nobility to the Count of Montebello, Ambassador of France. The newspaper reported that the food for the 460 guests had been provided by the French restaurant *Contant*, one of the most prestigious establishments in Saint-Petersburg: ‘Mr Contant is one of the men who have contributed most to maintaining the prestige of our national art in Russia.’¹¹ After the festivities, the chef Contant received from the organisers a pin shaped as a pansy made with a sapphire surmounted by two diamonds. The article implied that the success of the evening was partly due to Contant who managed to serve a delicious dinner. These type of articles emphasised cuisine as a powerful diplomatic tool but also enhanced the figure of the chef. The culinary press in celebrating the rapprochement was in fact honouring the chefs and the work they had accomplished in Russia.

Imagining the Franco-Russian alliance

The Franco-Russian alliance proved to be a creative catalyst for the chefs who used this political moment to invent or reinvent dishes. From the food they used, down to the design and names given to their creation, chefs called upon the imagination of the eater. Early on, *La Cuisine Française et Etrangère* began to publish new recipes celebrating the rapprochement, such as the cake ‘*Cronstadt*’ published on 15 November 1891. This dessert was made from blanched almonds, mandarin peel and a hint of Maraschino.¹² Its name evoked one of the most significant events that led to the formation of the alliance: the visit of the French squadron under Admiral Gervais to Kronstadt in July 1891. French sailors had received a warm welcome from the Russian authorities and population. The celebrations organised on this occasion lasted almost two weeks. In memory of this visit to Kronstadt, other recipes bearing the name of the imperial town were created in the following years. In 1893, pastry chefs Pierre Lacam and Antoine Charabot introduced in their baking cookbook their creation named ‘*Bombe Cronstad*’.¹³ (Figure 1) The next year, the recipe was published in *La Cuisine Française et Etrangère*. Shaped from several culinary influences, the ‘*Bombe*’ consisted of an ice cream made up of ten egg yolks, cream, sugar and Russian kummel. It was then put into a mould in the shape of a savarin cake. The latter had been invented in 1845 by Arthur and Auguste Julien in honour of the gastronome Brillat-Savarin. The next step in the preparation was to put on top of the savarin a zabaglione made with champagne. The zabaglione was a Napolitan dessert which dated back to the fifteenth century. French chefs had incorporated this *entremets*, made of egg yolks, sugar, and marsala in their daily practise and called it *sabayon*. Following the recipe, the ice cream and the zabaglione were placed on a sculpted block of ice that gave the impression of an explosion. To complete the effect, a candle was put in a small hollow carved into the base of the sculpture. Finally, some pistachio ice cream and small tricolor bouquets adorned the bottom of the impressive piece. These bouquets were made with fresh flowers as well as leaves, a welcomed change to the traditional flowers made of sugar that accompanied ice-cream.¹⁴ For the authors of this dessert the decoration was far from superfluous, it was crucial that the practitioners: ‘vary the scents and colors, so as to delight the eye before the palate.’¹⁵ This ‘*Bombe Cronstadt*’, which celebrated the union between France and Russia, was a combination of French and Italian cuisine with the alcohol being the only Russian ingredient. The recipe was representative of the culinary

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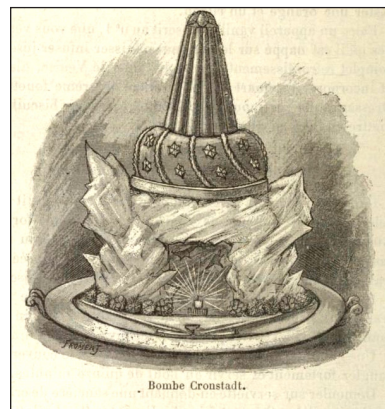


FIGURE 1. Illustration of the cake ‘*Bombe Cronstadt*’ from *Le glacier classique et artistique en France et en Italie* by Pierre Lacam and Antoine Charabot, 1893.

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melding that was a common occurrence in the kitchen. Chefs constantly borrowed and reinvented to produce new dishes. Thus, imagining dishes for the Franco-Russian Alliance didn't necessarily mean incorporating aspects or ingredients from Russian cuisine.

The theme of the alliance was also exploited by French bakeries through various products. Multiple cakes and pastries called '*Franco-Russe*' were invented. In 1897, the newspaper, *Pâtissiers-cuisiniers*, announced the creation of the first Franco-Russian cake (Figure 2). While it was in fact far from the first, it was invented 'as a token of the Franco-Russian alliance'¹⁶ on the occasion of the visit of the President Félix Faure to Nicholas II in Russia. The pyramid-shaped cake was made with buttered pineapple and strawberry cream. The decoration conveyed the expression of patriotic gratitude with the initials of the two nations adorning the top of the cake. Many other recipes bearing the name of 'Franco-Russian cake' followed. In 1905, *La Cuisine Française et étrangère* published for the fifth time a cake's recipe called 'Franco-Russian'. The previous year, in 1904, the editors of the newspaper had issued a special pattern to decorate any desserts. The form could be bought from any Parisian mould maker and was made in zinc representing the double-headed eagle, emblem of the Russian state. It was frequent for bakeries to decorate or create their desserts in connection with popular political and cultural events. Not to be outdone, confectioners

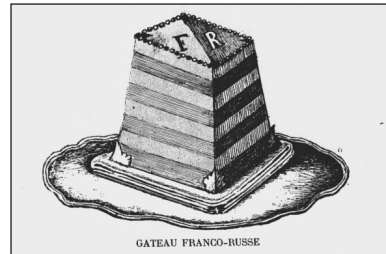


FIGURE 2. Illustration of the 'Franco-Russian' cake from *Pâtissiers-cuisiniers, biscuitiers, fabricants de pains d'épices, gaufres, petits fours secs, pains de luxe*, n°7, July 1897.

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in France as well as in Russia, invented a lot of sweets on the theme of the alliance.¹⁷ In light of the growing enthusiasm over the alliance, some even changed the name of their shops. It is the case of Emile Cornillot, founder in 1860 of a confectionery in the city of Lille in Northern France, in 1896 he decided to convert its name to '*Confiserie Franco-russe*'. In these shops, every detail was thought through to make the wrapping of the candies as attractive as possible. The boxes in which they were sold appealed to the imagination with decorative scenes depicting troikas, women in traditional costumes, Orthodox churches and the like. Stereotypical Russian imagery was used to charm the Western customers. It also emphasised the difference between Russia and the West making the Russian Empire a captivating land for the consumers in search of new horizons.

Naming dishes: unlocking the imagination

Another interesting culinary aspect created by the Franco-Russian alliance is the rise of new recipes named *à la Russe*. However, these recipes were frequently more French in their craftsmanship. In *La Cuisine Française et Etrangère* readers could find recipes such as:

'Langoustine à la Russe'; 'Fricandeau à la Russe', a fricandeau being either a speciality from Switzerland or the French region of Aveyron, 'Filet de canard à la Russe'; and 'Rissolés de volailles à la Russe', which according to the author should be served with a Béarnaise sauce. One can wonder what was Russian about these dishes. The habit of baptising dishes with *à la russe*, *à l'anglaise*, *à l'italienne* or *à la grec* wasn't recent. Along honorific and historical names, it was part of the French pantheon of names given to gastronomy. Nonetheless, the extensive use of this custom divided the profession for many years. In 1828, Antoine Carême, the father of French gastronomy, complained about the chefs that named French dishes with foreign names and insisted on using appropriate language.¹⁸ Even though he himself used these turns of phrases, he was primarily preoccupied with maintaining French culinary standards. In 1815, he criticized the people that had taken the habit of naming his famous dessert *Charlotte à la russe* when in fact he had created it in Paris and named it *Charlotte à la Parisienne*.¹⁹ His protest did little and his dessert is still known as *Charlotte russe*, although there is nothing Russian about it. Early in 1890 Eugène Krantz, French chef of the tsar Alexander III, expressed the same disagreements:

These fantasies are no longer appropriate, in my opinion, and it is naturally almost impossible that we keep dishes known to everyone as in the past. Does this mean that the practitioner should not innovate? No, of course, far from it! But he should be parsimonious

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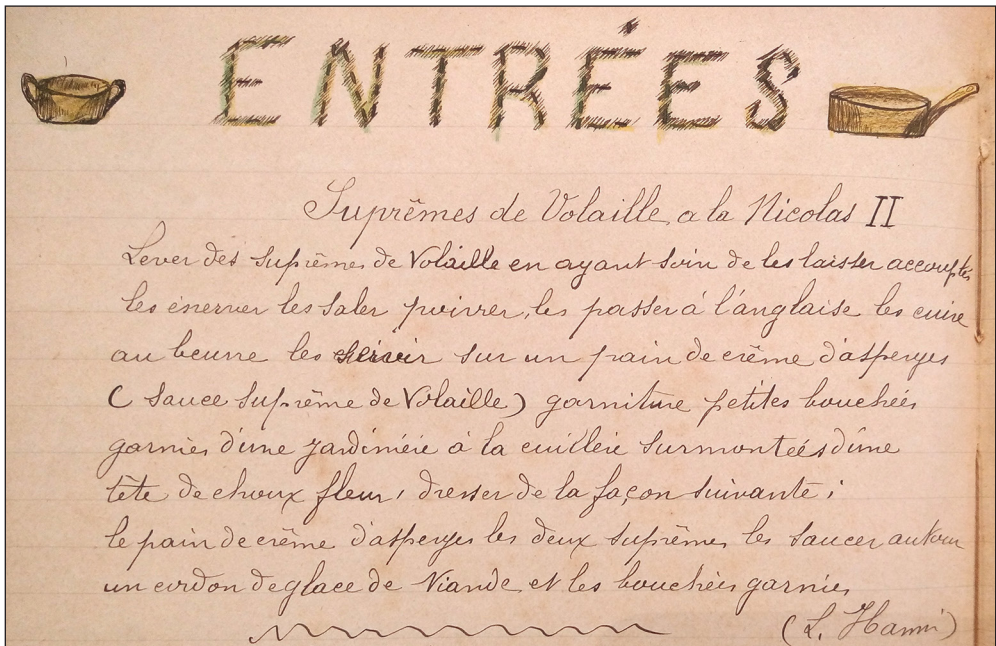


FIGURE 3. Photograph of Maniel's personal cookbook, recipe 'Suprêmes de Volaille à la Nicholas II', Departmental Archives Aude

Celebrating the Franco-Russian Alliance

and only use a name if he is sure that the dish he wants to present has not already appeared in another form bearing the name he gives it.²⁰

Krantz words confirm the growth in the number of recipes in the nineteenth century which was the direct consequence of the massive culinary textualization. Through cookbooks, gastronomic journalism and philosophical treatises, French cuisine was codified and intellectualised. In the sea of new recipes some yearned for more organisation and clarity. Yet, the custom of naming dishes geographically persisted long after the First World War, especially in royal courts and some fine restaurants²¹. One of the reasons French chefs tended to overuse these appellations *à la russe* or *à la grec* comes from the fact that it called upon the imagination of the eater. The simple evocation of a particular place could either arouse the appetite of the consumer or repulse him. Chefs were well aware of the attraction a name could have. For it all begins when the guests or the clients sit down and open the menu. While carefully choosing the names of their dishes, chefs conjured images and sensations that played with the imagination of the eater. The increasing recipes *à la russe* testifies to the growing interest in Russia. It alluded to a distant and exotic land, even dangerous. The personal cookbook of François Maniel from the 1890s tells us a lot about how these stereotypes prompted curiosity and interests. This precious textual archive allows us as well the opportunity to shift from the usual Parisian focus since Maniel was a cook from the city of Carcassonne in Southern France. He recorded various Russian or Russian-sounding recipes in his cookbook but he had never been to Russia. However, he was a subscriber to *La Cuisine Française et Etrangère* and he wrote down recipes that piqued his interest, among them we can find: '*Potage à la Czarine*', '*Tapioca à la Czarine*', '*Omelette franco-russe*', '*Cœufs de foie gras à la Néva*', '*Hors-d'œuvre*' which were the zakouski, '*Truite de rivière à l'Ermitage*', '*Ours à la Sibérienne*', '*Filet d'ours à la russe*' and '*Suprêmes de Volaille à la Nicolas II*'.²² In addition to these recipes, he also wrote three menus from the various Franco-Russian festivities that the newspaper had printed. These pages from his personal cookbook attest to his curiosity for the alliance but, most importantly, the choices he made while selecting the recipes reveals a lot about how Russia was perceived at the time. Four of them are around the theme of the Russian Sovereigns: '*Potage Czarine*', '*Tapioca à la Czarine*', '*Suprêmes de Volaille à la Nicholas II*' (Figure 3), '*Truite de rivière à l'Ermitage*'. The visit in France of Nicholas II and the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna in 1896 had been a great success. Despite representing an autocratic power, the young imperial couple had captivated the French. Monarchs were political actors as well as symbolic ones, they could enthral collective emotions and as such the Russian sovereigns embodied the Franco-Russian Alliance. Hence the many recipes named after the imperial couple until 1917. Two other recipes in Maniel's cookbook are particularly interesting, '*Ours à la Sibérienne*' (Figure 4) and '*Filet d'ours à la russe*'. Bear meat was far from being a component of the Russian diet and yet the words bear and Siberia evoked images of exoticism and danger.

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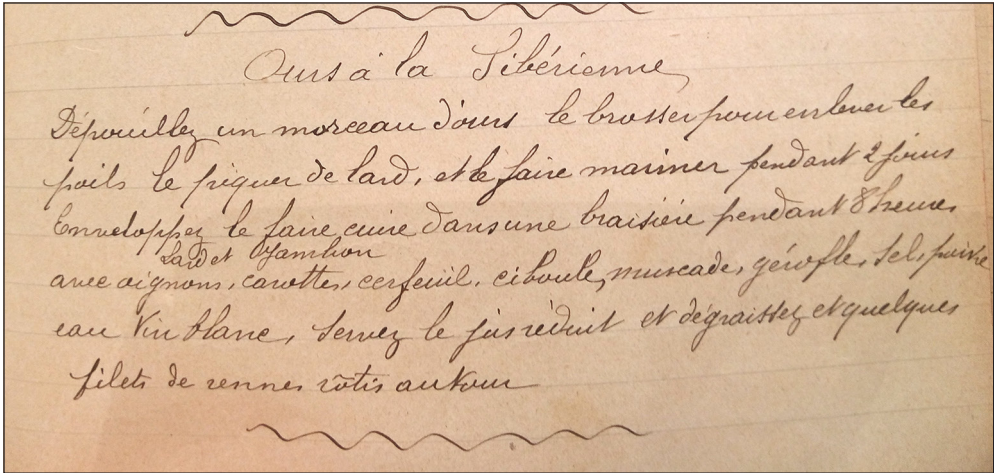


FIGURE 4. Photograph of Maniel's personal cookbook, recipe 'Ours à la Sibérienne',
Departmental Archives Aude.

The fact that Maniel chose to compile these two from the many other 'Russian' recipes the newspapers had greatly bespeaks how Russia was seen in the late nineteenth century. The appeal came from this Empire far away and its many hazards. An enthralling land that couldn't have been more different from France. Chefs took an active part in shaping and vivifying the imagination around Russia. Even if geographical dishes often did not have a connection to the country they referred to, they were telling a tale and an audience was eagerly listening and consuming it.

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Between imagination and conservatism

The Russo-French rapprochement, was thus a period that witnessed the birth of new or reinvented dishes. It also created a favourable climate to start new ventures such as the Franco-Russian restaurant that Pierre Cubat opened in 1893 in Paris. Cubat illustrates perfectly the role of mediators that certain chefs assumed during that period. He was a keen entrepreneur that saw in the excitement over the alliance an opportunity to open a new establishment. Cubat had spent many years in Russia, he had worked in the imperial kitchens under Alexander II and Alexander III. A few years after leaving the Russian Court, he took over in 1887 one of the most popular establishments in Saint-Petersburg: the restaurant *Borel*, which he renamed *Café de Paris*. It was in a luxurious décor that high society could savour the best of French gastronomy. However, in 1893 he decided to hand over the restaurant to his brother André and left for Paris to open his Franco-Russian restaurant. Located on the Champs-Élysées in the flamboyant Hôtel de la Païva, it had been built under the Second French Empire by Esther Lachmann, a famous Russian courtesan. Early on, the restaurant became the new fashionable place for Slavs residing in Paris or passing through the French capital. The menu changed

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regularly, depending on the seasonal products and new arrivals from Russia. Only three menus, as far as I know, still exist. On December 15, 1895, the menu for lunch had among other things: the traditional zakouski, a coulibiac, a Pozharsky cutlet, and on the French side, an *omelette Parmentier*, a filet of sole Colbert or green asparagus with hollandaise sauce.²³ Another menu from a formal dinner given on 5 February 1895, shows: *Huitres Whitstable, Caviar, Potage Pierre le Grand, Petite croustades Montglas, Saumon sauces génoise et hollandaise, Selle de chevreuil grand veneur, Suprême de volaille aux truffes, Punch à la Romaine, Bécasses et Grives, Salade à la Russe, Mousseline de foie gras, Asperges vertes en branches, Mazarin à l'ananas, Pouding Nesslerode glacé, Fruits*²⁴. In order to dazzle his wealthiest customers, Cubat invested a great deal in his restaurant. Chef Deland, who worked in the establishment, remembered how during one of the extravagant parties that King Milan I of Serbia gave at the restaurant, Cubat served a sturgeon measuring nearly three meters long. He had to make a fish poacher and a plate especially for this impressive piece.²⁵ To help him on a daily basis, Cubat had enlisted an elite brigade composed of thirty cooks, including eight Russian cooks. In 1896, when Nicholas II came to Paris, he asked Cubat to return to the imperial kitchens. At the Emperor's request, the chef went back to work in Russia until his retirement in 1914. The Franco-Russian restaurant was entrusted to his other brother, Louis, but its doors closed definitively in 1901. The establishment is said to have been too ambitious, while another source mentions a non-renewal of the lease to explain its closure²⁶.

The dishes listed above were typical ones for a gastronomic restaurant of the late nineteenth century. It is hard to judge with only three menus to which extent Cubat exerted his creativity in his restaurant. It also raises the question of the constraints of tradition faced with innovation and creation. French cuisine has established a very distinctive conception of food through its culinary customs. Chefs had to deal with the heavy heritage of gastronomy and many regarded themselves as the guardians of French cuisine itself. However, the masterstroke of French cuisine had been to create a cuisine that was seen as both national and cosmopolitan. In that regard the circulation of the chefs helped a great deal. Not only it allowed the French *savoir-faire* to spread in Europe but it broadened French cuisine. Most of these men remained in Russia for years, working in the richest households or opening restaurants in large cities²⁷. Others frequently went back and forth between the Empire and their homeland. The movement of these professional cooks created an intricate network and ensured the circulation of cuisine and culinary knowledge. Furthermore, the career of Cubat highlights how chefs helped stimulate the culinary exchanges between France and the Russian Empire. Cubat restaurants' kitchen in Petersburg and Paris were a place of learning. Many young French and Russian apprentices came to train with him, which again allowed the French *savoir-faire* to be spread throughout the Russian Empire. The other way round, with his Franco-Russian restaurant, Cubat introduced Russian dishes that were unknown or not well-known in France. Most importantly, he passed on a culture that was not originally his. Chefs appeared to have been formidable intermediaries, establishing a

bridge between France and Russia. Finally, if a certain culinary conservatism prevailed during the nineteenth century, the culinary press during the Alliance reveals how chefs played with the sense of sight and the imagination. Through its pages it's a profession concerned with new technologies that impacted their daily works, eager to share and learn new recipes and cooking innovation that appears. Chefs strived to maintain the culinary standards of French cuisine but they also were on the lookout for new methods and dishes. Creativity and imagination were essential aspects of their work. For through their art, they conjured up foreign lands and imaginary scenes igniting the imagination of the eater and most importantly his appetite.

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Imagination and Food in the Black Diaspora

Rebecca Fils-Aime

ABSTRACT: The phrase ‘Food unites us’ has been used to insinuate that food helps find commonality among different people. While I generally disagree, I think this phrase astutely describes the connection between Black people around the world. The tragedy of forced displacement has been reimagined through food and medicine using certain key ingredients that still tie us together as descendants of African people. New dishes with an old, familiar feel were created with the historical knowledge of slaves who were transported against their will, and with the introduction of new ingredients, environments and techniques learned through colonization. Using various articles and books as resources, this paper will delve into a comparison of how different Black ethnicities adapted their respective African cuisines and plant medicines after migrating to new places.

Approximately nineteen genera from fifteen botanical families moved from Africa to the Americas through slavery in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, including millet, tamarind, hibiscus, sesame, okra, sorghum, watermelon, and cowpeas. Consequently, new plant medicines and foods were created as enslaved Africans culturally exchanged with each other and indigenous peoples. With so few of their staple foods being available, enslaved Africans incorporated old and new crops to their old techniques. I will discuss some ingredients by highlighting the foodways by which they were introduced to different countries.

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This paper will track four plants and traditions and their migration from Africa through the food and medicines of several cuisines and countries. First, we will look at how the transportation of knowledge transformed dishes like ‘sauce feuilles’ from Guinea and ‘konotmire stew’ from Ghana by comparing how the dishes both changed and stayed the same in the Caribbean and Southern United States. We will also investigate how the transport of rice to the Americas to feed enslaved peoples developed into Black people all over the world preparing rice and beans in similar but different ways. We look at how okra was used for food and medicine similarly and differently across cultures as enslaved Africans engaged with Indigenous peoples. Lastly, we will discuss how watermelon, a valuable source of water in Africa, became a staple in African American history and food.

The knowledge that our ancestors transported across the Atlantic is strongly represented in foods known and loved across the world. This paper will present a compelling contribution to the Symposium’s examination of imagination in food by highlighting Africa’s contributions to other cuisines. Africa’s contributions to food history tends to be undersold and under

told, with plantain being the notable exception. Black food and people around the world are connected by traditions and, while imagination helped adapt dishes to new surroundings, the cultural and medicinal history of our food will continue to feed us for generations to come.

The transatlantic slave trade defined and shaped many of the foods we know and love today. Africans from various countries on the continent were enslaved and sent to other parts of the world. During the sixteenth and seventeenth century, consequently, approximately fifteen botanical families moved from the continent of Africa to the Americas¹. It is well documented that enslaved Africans and slave traders carried seeds and plants on the ships that took them from Africa. However, the transport of knowledge and traditions, and how they adapted to the foods of their new environment is less documented. In the past, Africans and people of the African diaspora were almost notorious for not writing things down for various reasons – not knowing how to write or speak in a language that everyone around them could understand, rules against sharing knowledge during colonization, and the intentional quelling of tradition to force assimilation.¹ As a result, new foods and botanical remedies developed as enslaved Africans exchanged with each other and Indigenous peoples. With so few of their staple foods and plants available, enslaved Africans were guided by tradition and imagination to create many African-inspired cuisines around the world. This paper will connect the dots between leafy greens, watermelon, rice and beans, and okra in Africa to various present-day cuisines around the world. All these countries have one thing in common; many of their present-day staples would not exist without the presence of descendants of African people.

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Leafy Greens

Boiling leafy greens is a central cooking technique in African cooking.² The evolution of the dishes '*sauce feuilles*' and '*kantomire stew*', from Guinea and Ghana respectively, can be seen in the Caribbean, Latin America, and the U.S. South.

Enslaved Africans were at the forefront of all cooking done in the home during the times of colonization. However, the foods they were not allowed to eat most of what they cooked for the plantation owners. For the enslaved people, meat was a rare occurrence. They were typically given meager pieces of meat scraps that slave owners did not want to consume or had to hunt for small wild game to supplement their meals. These small pieces of meat were then used to flavor the vegetables and vegetable-based stews that were made with the small number of plants they were able to grow for themselves.³

Sauce Feuilles - Guinea

'*Sauce feuilles*' literally translates to 'leaves sauce'. The dish is traditionally made with sweet potato leaves, red palm oil, aromatics, and cubed pieces of meat, or shrimp or crab for extra flavor. Vegetable stews popular in the Caribbean and Latin America can be seen as not-so-distant relatives to this dish.

When enslaved Africans were brought to what is now the country of Haiti, sweet potato leaves were not readily available. Instead, they used whatever leafy greens they could find, including a type of leaf called '*lalo*' or jute leaves, which is also found in present-day Guinea and every other country in tropical Africa.⁴ Due to French colonization, tomato paste was used instead of palm oil. The cubed pieces of meat and seafood used for the dish were usually crab with beef or smoked pork, although the dish was also served meatless.⁵ This is a perfect example of how a traditional dish from Guinea stayed the same in method and technique but changed due to descendants using substitutes that were readily available in their new location.

In the English and Spanish-speaking Caribbean, the dish is called '*callaloo*' and sweet potato leaves are replaced by a variety of indigenous leaves dependent on which country you are in. The green of choice used in the Jamaican and Guyanese versions of *callaloo* is amaranth, which is one of the most widely eaten boiled greens in Africa's humid lowlands. In Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, and the Dominican Republic, '*callaloo*' refers to a dish made with taro leaves, dasheen bush or water spinach. Like Haiti's *lalo* dish, pork and crab are common additions, but it can also be served as a meatless dish.⁶

Kontomire stew (Palava sauce) – Ghana

Another technique that originated in Africa is drinking the juices from the greens. In many West African countries, '*Kontomire stew*' is a dish made similarly to 'sauce feuilles' with additional ingredients. Cocoyam leaves are used instead of sweet potato leaves and the dish includes ground bitter melon seeds or '*egusi*', aromatics, red palm oil, and is usually flavored with smoked fish and/or dried shrimp, although beef or chicken can also be present. There is also more gravy in this dish compared to sauce feuilles and as a result, it is served with pounded yam or boiled plantain to sop up the flavorful and healthy sauce. Due to the technique of simmering the greens in water, water-soluble vitamins and minerals like potassium, B vitamins, vitamin C, calcium, folate, and iron are present in the liquid left from the cooked greens.⁷ Sopping up the meat-based sauce ensures that these nutrients are absorbed in addition to nutrients in the leaves themselves, a clear showing of how African peoples and their descendants used food as medicine. This method of sopping up vegetable sauce may sound familiar to those familiar with greens from the Deep South in the United States.

In the United States, the Deep South is a subregion with its own distinct culture. The term was originally used to describe the states that relied on plantations and slavery the most during the transatlantic slave trade – Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida, and Texas. For this paper, however, the Deep South does not include Texas and Florida, as the cuisines and cultures of large portions of these states have been heavily impacted by other peoples (Mexican/Indigenous and the Indigenous/Caribbean, respectively).

Most enslaved Africans brought by the slave trade and their descendants resided in these states from the time they were brought to the U.S. in the seventeenth century until the Great Migration of 1916 when six million African Americans moved out of the rural South to the urban Northeast, Midwest, and West. As a result, most African American 'soul food' is seen as inherently southern. Greens are a staple soul food dish in this region. In the Southern U.S., 'greens' usually referred to simmered collard greens, although kale, beet leaves, turnip leaves, and greens common in some Native American cuisines like milkweed and marsh marigold were also commonly used then. Smoked meat is used to flavor the greens in the same way smoked fish or dried shrimp is used in '*Kontomire stew*'. Since cooking greens for so long compromises some (not all) of the nutritional value, consuming the water-soluble vitamins in the remaining liquid is vital. In this region, that leftover liquid from cooking greens in water slowly for hours has a name – '*potlikker*'.⁸ Usually, cornbread is served with greens to dip into the potlikker – reminiscent of how West Africans serve pounded yam, also called 'fufu', or boiled plantain with '*Kontomire stew*' for the same reason. Potlikker is full of iron and vitamin C, showing one of the many ways Black people still intentionally and unintentionally use food as medicine. This is a drastic difference from how most food African in origin is portrayed in media; they are typically labeled as 'poor food choices', and foods that are inherently healthy are left out of national and international conversations about healthy foods and foods in general.

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Watermelon

Watermelons are large berries that originated in Africa. While the specific origins in Africa are hotly debated, a large amount of evidence points to it being from northeastern Africa. The original watermelon tasted much different than what we know now; they were less sweet, smaller and much harder, almost bitter. It was grown to be used as a portable water reservoir to provide relief from the heat and high temperatures in the area. Besides being high in water content, it is also full of vitamins like potlikker; Again, this shows how African descendants use food to support health. It is full of an amino acid called 'citrulline' that helps the body with heat-related stress. Through trade, the watermelon traveled to the Mediterranean, then India, China and later spread to Spain and the rest of Europe.

In 1576, Spanish settlers and enslaved Africans began growing watermelon in Florida and the plant spread across the eastern United States. The water content and nutritional makeup of watermelon made it very beneficial for the enslaved Africans to consume and cultivate. Naturally, African slaves were the ones who mostly cultivated watermelons back then.⁹ Today, watermelon is, unfortunately, associated with extremely racist tropes that have impacted African Americans, so much that many refuse to eat watermelon in public or at all.

How did we go from watermelon originating in Africa to watermelon being a racist trope in the U.S.?

Soon after the transatlantic slave trade ended, Black people were freed from slavery in the Americas. With racism still in full force, however, they had to find ways to make money on their own. As the main source of crop cultivation, they began to grow, eat, and sell watermelons – which became a symbol of their freedom. After the Southern U.S. lost the Civil War, which was fought over the freedom of slaves, to the northern U.S., many southern Whites felt that Black people were flaunting their newfound freedom in their faces. White people in the South who were threatened by this freedom responded by making watermelon a symbol of their various prejudices against Black people. Through plays, movies, minstrel shows, newspapers, and eventually television, they made watermelon a national symbol of uncleanness and laziness among Black people. This trope took over American popular culture with a vice grip, so much so that watermelons' origins are obscured.

Today, watermelon is still primarily grown in the Southern U.S. due to favorable weather conditions. Black people in the U.S. are underrepresented in watermelon consumption – we are approximately 13% of the population but only make up 11% of total watermelon consumption. Asian and Hispanic peoples, the two fastest-growing groups in the United States, eat the most watermelon.¹⁰ This demonstrates just how disconnected many of us in the African diaspora are from our heritage due to hatred and forced assimilation.

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Rice and beans

Beans and rice as a dish is common all over the world. However, there are thousands of different types of rice dishes specifically in the Western part of the world, and most are directly influenced by traditional African foods and techniques. The transatlantic slave trade played a big part in the history of rice and beans in the Caribbean, Latin America, and the United States. Not only did enslaved people bring a type of rice with them when they were brought from the continent, but when Spanish settlers brought another type of rice to various southern states in the U.S., the enslaved Africans were the only ones who knew how to cultivate it. Many of them came from regions that had been producing rice for hundreds of years and after this realization, slave traders went to African countries in this region specifically looking to take Africans who knew how to grow this crop. As a result, rice is extremely popular in countries that have heavy Spanish and African influences. In the United States, many rice dishes native to the country originated in the Deep South, where just over half of both African Americans and Black people from other countries currently reside.¹¹

Meat played a smaller role in traditional African diets; therefore, beans were used as a primary source of protein and additional nutrition. *'Waakye'* is Ghana's national dish, and it uses black-eyed peas in a method like the *'Hoppin' John'* dish from the U.S. South. The black-eyed pea came to the United States from the Caribbean by way of Central Africa.

Field peas or cowpeas – also native to Africa – were used in the original Hoppin John dish but over time, that changed to black-eyed peas due to cost and availability.¹² Some historians believe that the beginning of the successful cultivation of rice in the U.S. started when an enslaved African woman taught her owner how to grow the crop in the South Carolina Sea Islands. This area has a subculture of African Americans called the Gullah-Geechee, whose ancestors were some of the most proficient cultivators of rice in continental Africa. South Carolina was one of the richest colonies in the nineteenth century, due partly to the extensive rice cultivation being done by these enslaved Africans.¹³ In present-day, the Gullah-Geechee maintain strong ties to their West African roots, unlike many other African descendants in the United States. While they do speak English, they use similar words, ingredients, and spiritual traditions as their West African ancestors¹⁴. Rice remains an integral part of the Gullah-Geechee culture, which will be explained more in a later section of this paper.

110 A direct line can be drawn from West Africa to Haiti to New Orleans just by looking at a dish called ‘*red beans and rice*’, which is quintessential in New Orleans cuisine today. Haiti has at least a dozen variations of ‘*diri ak pwa*’, or rice with beans, using African techniques, and various beans that came from Africa or colonial influence. The kidney bean version went on to influence New Orleans’ red beans and rice after free Black people from the country emigrated to French-speaking Louisiana after the Haitian Revolution. Coupled with White slave-owners who also fled Haiti around this time with their enslaved, the Black population in the city doubled, which contributed to many of the foods and culture popular in New Orleans today.

The method of making rice and beans, sometimes flavored with small pieces of seafood or meat, is a perfect example of enslaved Africans incorporating foods they were exposed to due to forced colonization. In Puerto Rico, ‘*arroz con gandules*’ or rice and pigeon peas is the national dish. The pigeon pea also comes from Africa.¹⁵ The enslaved Africans in this new land of Puerto Rico had to reimagine their rice dishes and therefore used the meat that was most easily attainable in their new environments. In Puerto Rico, that meat was typically smoked or cured pork. This is one of Africa’s biggest impacts in the food world. Many, if not all, of these rice and beans dishes remain largely unchanged apart from subtle aromatics and choice of meat that again, vary by location and history of colonization. This re-imagining of old traditions by adapting to new environments is the crux of most Black cuisine throughout the Americas.

Okra

It is believed that okra was first cultivated in Ethiopia in the twelfth century BC. Okra was grown along the entire 3,500 miles of African coastland where most enslaved Africans were taken from. So, it was a common ingredient across tribes. As historian Michael W.

Imagination and Food in the Black Diaspora

Twitty states, “To the Wolof people it was “*kanja*”, to the Mandingo, “*kanjo*”, to the Akan it was “*nkruman*” and to the Fon, “*fevi*”.¹⁶ The English word ‘okra’ even comes from the Igbo language of Nigeria, where okra is referred to as ‘*okuru*’. It is also called ‘gombo’ in several West African languages and it is eaten across the continent of Africa, throughout the Caribbean, and the Americas. There were two historical preparations of okra, and both consisted of a peppery stew served with carbohydrate-heavy sides like rice, pounded yam, or millet. The difference was the addition of other ingredients – the stew was either made with onions and tomatoes in a sauce or boiled on its own.^{xvi} In present day, okra is still seldom cooked as a separate vegetable in cuisines impacted by enslaved Africans use of okra, with fried okra in the U.S. South and Guyana being notable and more recent exceptions.

Okra was first introduced to the Americas through Brazil in the 1500s, where approximately 5 million enslaved Africans were taken before the country abolished slavery in the late 1800s. Many of them came from West Africa and the Bantu region and they introduced okra to Brazil as a thickener and a vegetable. The Brazilian word for okra is ‘*quiabo*’, which comes from a Bantu language name for okra – ‘*kigombo*’. The oldest recorded African dish in Brazil, *caruru*, dates to the 1600s and describes a spicy stew made with okra, onions, peppers, palm oil (another ingredient introduced by Africans), and smoked fish or shrimp.¹⁷

Soon after being introduced to Brazil, okra was introduced to the West Indies by the same method in the 1600s where approximately 40% of all enslaved Africans were taken.¹⁸ Almost every Caribbean country uses okra in their cuisine, either in a soup or a stew as a thickener. In Haiti, okra is commonly boiled in its own peppery stew or boiled in a peppery stew with meat. The Haitian Kreyol word for okra is ‘*gombo*’, like the name in Angolan languages that call it ‘*ngumbo*’.¹⁹ The country of Barbados uses okra in its signature dish, ‘*coucou and flying fish*’ to help thicken cornmeal.²⁰ In Belize, okra, or ‘*okro*’, is commonly added to stewed beef or to oxtail. St. Martin, Trinidad, and St. Lucia each have variations of *callaloo* that use the boiled greens method referenced earlier in this paper and add okra to the dish. Both the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico prepare okra boiled in its own stew (‘*molondron guisado*’ and ‘*quimbombo guisado*’, respectively).^{vi} These examples show just a small piece of West Africa’s strong impact on the Caribbean cuisine so many of us know and love.

Historians guess that okra may have arrived in mainland North America in the eighteenth century. When okra recipes started showing up in the United States, the dishes were initially referred to as dishes from the West Indies. It is certain that Charleston and New Orleans were cooking okra early on due to their close relations with the Caribbean colonies. Many plantation owners moved from the West Indies to New Orleans and the coastal areas of South Carolina due to the similarities in weather.

South Carolina became one of the wealthiest states in North America in the late eighteenth century because of enslaved people who were cultivating rice in the area. In an area called Lowcountry in Eastern South Carolina and surrounding states, enslaved African

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cooks, who were cooking for their slave masters, made dishes that were strongly influenced by Senegambia. The plantation owners living there mostly came from the Caribbean and were generally used to that kind of fare, including okra.²¹ As time passed and these dishes were made and tweaked, they began making African-inspired dishes that the region could call their own. A unique population of African descendants began to grow in this area who ultimately became the Gullah-Geechee. Simultaneously, New Orleans went through a similar 'Africanization' as mentioned earlier in this paper.

Both cities developed cuisines in which okra was a huge part. In Lowcountry, okra is cooked in a peppery soup with tomatoes, onions, and meat and served with rice. This dish, known as '*okra soup*', can be seen as the cousin to New Orleans '*gumbo*', which means okra in French. Okra is the star ingredient in traditional gumbo, serving as both a vegetable and a thickener in the peppery stew. Okra appeared in other recipes too – okra and shrimp and '*limpin' Susan*' in Lowcountry, smothered okra in New Orleans, as well as other versions of gumbo in other cities. There are versions of Brunswick stew from the Southeastern coast and burgoo from Kentucky that include okra, tomatoes, onions, and peppers. There is a version of okra soup from Baltimore, Maryland that adds crab to the mix to create their 'crab gumbo'.^{xvi} Once okra began to appear in American cookbooks in the nineteenth century, it was clear that enslaved African cooks had a major impact on white American housewives and their food preferences.

112 The history of okra also demonstrates how enslaved Africans and Native Americans interacted and shared with one another. Gumbo was originally made with okra as the thickener until some Black cooks were introduced to file powder made by the local Choctaw Native Americans. File powder is a thickener made by grinding up sassafras plants, which are indigenous to the Southeastern United States. While okra was readily available in the West Indies and South America due to favorable weather conditions, the weather in parts of the Southern U.S. was not as tropical year-round. It is assumed file became popular as a stand-in in recipes when okra was out of season.²² Enslaved Africans began using sassafras in traditional healing methods when okra was out of reach – boiling the leaves in water to use for skin conditions,²³ encouraging diarrhea and vomiting,²⁴ and as an abortifacient.²⁵ Conversely, the Choctaw began using okra as a thickener in place of sassafras occasionally after okra was introduced to the United States.²⁶

The use of okra as medicine across the diaspora also shows how strong the connection is to the various countries of the African diaspora. Both West Africa and the greater Caribbean are tropical, and they share approximately 85 floral families as a result.²⁷ Enslaved Africans were just as foreign to the land as the Europeans who forcefully brought them there. However, many Africans were already familiar with tropical weather, tropical plants, and tropical diseases in a way that aligned with Amerindian knowledge. As a result, enslaved Africans used flora familiar to them, or to their forebearers, and became experts in

the use of new plants learned from the Amerindians.²⁷ Historically, Egyptians used okra to prevent kidney stones. It was also used in other African countries to soothe skin conditions and the seeds were ground and used in food and as a coffee substitute. There is evidence of okra seeds being used as a coffee replacement in Continental Africa, the Caribbean and the U.S. South.²⁸

Okra, along with watermelon, was one of the few plants of their homeland that enslaved Africans grew for themselves to make up for foods enslavers refused to provide.²⁹ Despite being surrounded by Africans from various tribes who didn't speak the same languages, okra became a unifying crop that went on to solidify Africa's historical role in world history.

Many foods that are central to various cuisines and cultures can be traced back to African foods, plants, and/or traditions. Despite this fact, Africa, particularly West and Central Africa, is largely unvalued in the Western mainstream culinary world. The spread of watermelon and okra across the world occurred because they were important to African diets and, as a result, they are now important to the diets of many others. Africans from the more tropical parts of the continent were accustomed to cultivated rice in similar weather, which made them invaluable during the transatlantic slave trade. Now, rice and beans is a staple dish across the world. The traditional methods of boiling/simmering leafy greens and consuming the remaining liquid/sauce and the methods of cooking okra have been passed down across generations, from ancestors who have been cooking this way much longer than had been documented.

Food historians and chefs who descend from these various countries are continuing to highlight traditional foods with African roots at the forefront. In the future, I hope to see more recipes and plants get their proper accreditation from culinary professionals outside of the global Black community. If we start treating all foods and recipes with value, we can ensure that certain regions and cultures receive the historical and societal respect that they deserve.

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Food and Foodways in Science Fiction

Len Fisher and Anders Sandberg

ABSTRACT: Science fiction writers are concerned with puzzles about the future. Here we examine some of the puzzles where food is a significant factor, and sometimes the major factor. Some are simply puzzles in their own right, from the frankly humorous to the seriously disturbing. Others highlight deep paradoxes and problems of human society and the human condition within a futuristic setting. We ask in both cases whether the solutions to these puzzles may have relevance for humanity's real-life present and potential future.

The imagination of science fiction writers has given us galactic travel and adventures, alien species and civilizations, unusual ethical dilemmas, and whole new worlds to explore. What might such creative minds have to offer when it comes to the subjects of food and drink?

The answer in the majority of cases is 'Not very much'. As with the characters in conventional fiction, those in science fiction seem seldom to eat and even more seldom to take an interest in their food. Even authors who have had a real-life involvement with food often seem to forget its existence when it comes to their novels. E.E. (Doc) Smith, the originator of the 'space opera' genre, was a food scientist who gave us bleached flour,¹ but food seldom appears in his space-devouring novels. Jason Sheehan, restaurant critic by day² and science fiction writer by night, produces novels of giant killer robots, radioactive mutants, mad scientists and rampant nanotechnology,³ but still steers clear of what or how his characters eat.

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Luckily for our present theme, some scifi authors have boldly faced the fact that their characters need to eat and drink. Here we explore where the authors' imaginations have led them, and ask whether their solutions may have relevance for our real-life present and future.

We divide our investigation into two parts:

- Types of food
- Food manners, etiquette and ethics

Types of Food

Normal Earth meals

We begin in 1865, when Jules Verne, considered by many to be the father of science fiction, wrote 'From the Earth to the Moon.'⁴ His heroes, housed inside a giant cannon shell (complete

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with sofas, windows and a kitchen!) have been shot out of an equally giant cannon towards the Moon. The journey will take them 97 hours and 20 minutes; plenty of time for breakfast.

‘The breakfast began with three bowls of excellent soup, thanks to the liquefaction in hot water of those precious cakes of Liebig, prepared from the best parts of the ruminants of the Pampas. To the soup succeeded some beefsteaks, compressed by an hydraulic press, as tender and succulent as if brought straight from the kitchen of an English eating-house. Michel, who was imaginative, maintained that they were even ‘red’. Preserved vegetables (‘fresher than nature,’ said the amiable Michel) succeeded the dish of meat; and was followed by some cups of tea with bread and butter, after the American fashion. The beverage was declared exquisite, and was due to the infusion of the choicest leaves, of which the emperor of Russia had given some chests for the benefit of the travelers. And lastly, to crown the repast, Ardan had brought out a fine bottle of Nuits, which was found ‘by chance’ in the provision-box’.

The ‘precious cakes of Liebig’ (an extract of meat) were a real thing. Liebig was a well-known chemist, responsible for the modern science of organic chemistry, and also for promoting the myth that searing the outside of meat ‘seals in’ the juices. His ‘extract of meat’ was ‘a thick, dark syrupy beef extract paste,’ sold in glass bottles, and later rebranded as OXO.

Question: Verne had his characters eating what was essentially a normal Earth meal. To what extent is this possible in the real environs of space? One answer lies in this menu from the 1965 Gemini 7 space mission:⁶

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Gemini 7 Space Flight Menus			
<i>Menu I (Calories: 2,315)</i>	<i>Menu II (Calories: 2,304)</i>	<i>Menu III (Calories: 2,322)</i>	<i>Menu IV (Calories: 2,297)</i>
Days 1, 5, 9, 13.*	Days 2, 6, 10, 14.	Days 3, † 7, 11.	Days 4, 8, § 12.
Meal A: Grapefruit drink. Sausage patties. Banana pudding. Fruit cocktail.	Meal A: Chicken and gravy. Beef sandwiches. † Applesauce. Peanut cubes. †	Meal A: Salmon salad. Pea bar. Gingerbread. † Cocoa.	Meal A: Bacon squares. † Ham and applesauce. Chocolate pudding. Orange drink.
Meal B: Beef and vegetables. Potato salad. Cheese sandwiches. † Strawberry cubes. † Orange drink.	Meal B: Orange-grapefruit drink. Beef pot roast. Bacon and egg bites. † Chocolate pudding.	Meal B: Grapefruit drink. Bacon squares. † Chicken and vegetables. Apricot cubes. † Pineapple fruitcake. †	Meal B: Beef and gravy. Corn chowder. Brownies. † Peaches.
Meal C: Orange-grapefruit drink. Tuna salad. Apricot pudding. Date fruitcake. †	Meal C: Potato soup. Shrimp cocktail. Date fruitcake. † Orange drink.	Meal C: Spaghetti and meat. Cheese sandwiches. † Butterscotch pudding. Orange drink.	Meal C: Coconut cubes. † Cinnamon toast. † Chicken salad. Applesauce. Grapefruit drink.
*Meal A also includes apricot cereal cubes, total Calories: 2,429.	†Nondehydrated, others are rehydratable.	‡Meal A also includes toasted bread cubes, total Calories: 2,429.	§Meal A also includes strawberry cereal cubes, total Calories: 2,411.

The menu offers familiar foods that one might equally find offered by a less-than-high-class restaurant back on Earth. The same stricture applies to the food on more recent missions.⁷ It seems that, just like most science fiction authors, the planners of real space

missions (or perhaps the astronauts themselves) were simply not interested in applying their imaginations to the problem of food. More likely, perhaps, plain and familiar foods would have provided comfort in an environment that was otherwise startlingly unfamiliar.

The meal of beef with vegetables, pork and potatoes and bacon and apple sauce reputedly consumed by Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin during the 1969 moon landings (<https://www.thesun.co.uk/tech/9522962/astronaut-food-history-moon-landing/>) fits into the same category. Admittedly, the components would have been reconstituted, and there was also the undoubtedly unfamiliar fact that they had spare meals stuck to the inside of their helmets in case of emergencies.

Familiar foods continue to be a theme in science fiction and in real life. In Smith's *Lensman* series, the hero Kimball Kinnison at one stage grills himself a thick, juicy steak while on his intergalactic travels.⁸ Reality trumped fiction when, in 2001, the Pizza Hut chain delivered a pizza to the Russian cosmonaut Yuri Usachov on the International Space Station.⁹ NASA is now working to grow fruit and vegetables in space.¹⁰ So 'normal' Earth meals may also become normal in space – at least for vegetarians.

Food pills and blocks

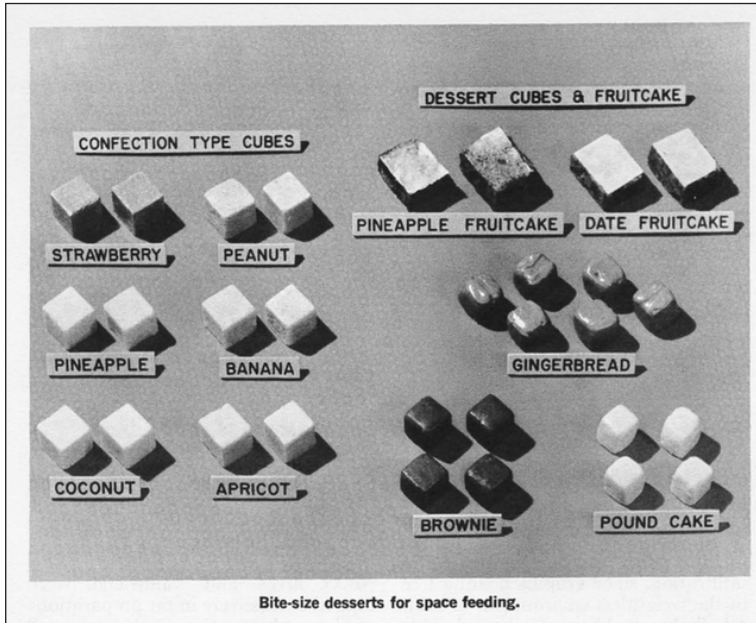
Isaac Asimov in *Prelude to Foundation* had 'flavor spheres,' which were raw dainties, flavoured for the outside market, but eaten unflavoured ('slightly sweet and ... a faintly bitter aftertaste' with a 'main sensation that eluded [description]') by the natives of the planet Mycogen.¹¹ Nat Schachner, in *Redmask of the Outlands*, produced a follow-up to these rather chunky objects, about the size of a table-tennis ball, with tiny rose-red cubical wine pellets, which brought 'a sparkle into the eyes with the coursing of concentrated stimulant through the veins'.¹²

Cubical pellets of various types and sizes are a mainstay of science fictional food. The first mention of such 'food tablets' was probably in an 1879 novel called *The Senator's Daughter*,¹³ where just a small box full, scarcely larger than a watch, could sustain a person for more than twenty years (J.R.R. Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings* would later ascribe similar properties to the fictional elvish *lembas*, or 'waybread').

Among the advantages of the tablets in *The Senator's Daughter* were 'an end to the evils of gluttony ... and ... the brutal murdering of fellow animals and brother vegetables'. Presumably also an end to the Oxford Symposium as we know it.

More recently, the wonderful *Bistro in Vitro* offers us something that is really in tune with the times: 'Celebrity Cubes', made from celebrities' stem cells.¹⁴ Eat your favourite star. The fictional bistro offers them dipped in a whiskey glaze, and describes them as 'deliciously addictive'.

Question: Are there real-life equivalents of these space-saving space foods? Yes of course. Even on Earth we have Oxo cubes and the like, designed to pack in a space-filling way. And have a look at these space treats for the 1965 Gemini 7 space mission:



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One may, in fact, count in any dried food, since cubes or rectangular prisms (as in Kendall mint cake!) are the most efficient way to pack the material. The advantage that the fiction writer has is that water may be collected from any passing planet. In real life, it has to be carried along with the dried food.

Yeast, algae, bacteria, plankton etc

Here we come to a point where fiction and reality become difficult to distinguish. Yeast, algae, bacteria and plankton etc were being discussed as foods of the future by science fiction writers at around the same time as their use was being seriously considered by earth-bound food scientists. Arthur C. Clarke's *The Deep Range*,¹⁵ for example, tells of a world where plankton is farmed for human food, although in his fictional scenario whales are herded and used as farmers.

Isaac Asimov, on the other hand, is one of a number of authors who favour yeast as a source, with yeast farmers being distinguishable by their distinctive aromas.¹⁶ Algae, being considered for today's space programme,¹⁰ feature in James Blish's *Cities in Flight*¹⁷ – the successor, perhaps, to today's seaweed-based gastronomic delicacies.

Unfortunately, the algae in one of Blish's tanks mutates when they pass too close to a source of radiation. 'There's been another mutation in the Chlorella tanks; must have started when we passed through that radiation field near Sigma Draconis. We're getting a yield of about twenty-two hundred kilograms per acre in terms of fats'.

'That's not bad'.

‘Not bad, but it’s dropping steadily, and the rate of decrease is accelerating. If it’s not arrested, we won’t have any algae crops at all in a year or so. And there’s not enough crude-oil reserve to tide us over to the next star’.

The one fungal food to avoid is mushrooms. As Ray Bradbury points out,¹⁸ aliens may disguise themselves as mushrooms. Eat one at your peril.

Question: Are algae, yeasts etc a viable source of food for intrepid space travelers?

The clear answer is ‘yes,’ and many experiments have already been carried out along these lines.¹⁰ Some of the results have been serendipitous, including the discovery of previously unknown bacterial strains aboard the International Space Station.¹⁹ The bacteria concerned were a strain of *Methylobacteria*, which can help to promote plant growth and to fight off infections in food plants growing under stressful conditions.

Food in television series

With television series such as *Red Dwarf* and *Star Trek*, we finally come to some truly imaginative ideas about food in science fiction.

Star Trek began conventionally enough with the routine concentrated food blocks, but the franchise progressively introduced so many unusual foods and food ideas²⁰ that there is now a whole cookbook devoted to them.²¹ Perhaps the most unusual is the onomatopoeic Klingon delicacy *gagh* (live worms): ‘the actual taste of *gagh* is revolting and it is eaten solely for the unique sensation of the *gagh* spasming in one’s mouth and stomach in their death throes’.²² Heston Blumenthal, beat that.

Star Trek also solves the food problem in a more general way with its iconic food replicator, which can synthesize from scratch any food that your heart desires (<https://foodreplicator.tumblr.com/recipesbyseries>), including stewed bok rat liver. Fred Pohl²³ takes us one step further with the Oort Cloud Processor, which processes icy pieces of space debris into food.

Red Dwarf features food extensively,²⁴ including a whole episode where food occupies centre stage.²⁵ The food situation is dire. ‘We’ve no meat, no pulse and hardly any grain,’ says the mechanoid Kryten ‘and space weevils have eaten the last of the corn supply’. Kryten decides to grill the weevils (‘at least they are corn fed’), which Lister devours avidly, taking them for crunchy king prawns. Shades of contemporary discussions on insect-based diets!

Enter the character Legion, appearing from a swirling mist. He offers them a ‘traditional 24th century Mamosian banquet’. We are not told what the food consists of, but the tools to eat it are literally out of this world. Kryten, ‘programmed to be proficient in all known off-world eating techniques, including Jovian Boogle Hoops, and the often-lethal Mercurian Boomerang Spoon,’ is also versed in Legion’s antimatter chopsticks. The design of the first two is left to our imagination, but the antimatter chopsticks are presented rather unimaginatively as whirling devices, rather like egg whisks with the ends cut off.

No matter. The point of the chopsticks is that they never touch the food, which rises by itself when the chopsticks are brought near. The Mamosian telekinetic wine that accompanies it is contained in glasses that are fixed to the table, so that there is no chance of knocking them over. One simply wills the liquid into the mouth, and then telepathically decides on its flavour. Robert Heinlen offers a similar idea when his characters land on a planet inhabited by friendly aliens who can read your mind and modify local fruits and vegetables to your taste.²⁶

Question: Can we get close to any of these ideas in real life? Well, who knows? Taste sensations on the tongue have been stimulated electrically,²⁷ although stimulating the olfactory bulb may be a trickier proposition. It is interesting to note that there is now an implant that can read the brain waves of people and convert them into written words.²⁸ So maybe, just maybe, we could one day produce taste and flavour sensations by thought alone, or even have food levitated by thought.

Designer animals

Douglas Adams²⁹ offers us ‘a large fat meaty quadruped of the bovine type with large watery eyes, small horns and what almost have been an ingratiating smile on its lips. ‘Good evening,’ [it says] ‘I am the main Dish of the Day. May I interest you in parts of my body? ... Something off the shoulder perhaps? Braised in a white wine sauce?’

‘Er, *your* shoulder?’

120 ‘But naturally my shoulder, sir,’ mused the animal contentedly, ‘nobody else’s is mine to offer.’

Question: The ethics of designer animals

Adams is challenging us in a number of ways here, not least in the way that we often treat food animals in real life, and in the idea of ‘designer animals’ bred exclusively for food. In doing so, he elevates the role of science fiction which, like other forms of fiction, can be used to raise and investigate distinctly uncomfortable ideas.

Humans

Some of the most powerful ethical questions of all revolve around the question of cannibalism. To what extent is it permissible? Under what circumstances?

*Soylent Green*³⁰ is a well-known example. Less well-known, and more extreme, is the Larry Niven short story ‘Bordered in Black’.³¹ The title itself is a black joke, since death notices are frequently bordered in black. But the story is worse. Far worse. So bad, in fact, that we would recommend that people who might be emotionally affected should possibly skip to the next section.

Two space explorers have discovered a planet that has been terraformed, but then apparently abandoned. There are lakes on the planet, full of algae. It appears that the planet was developed as a food source.

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But there is a wavy black line around each lake. Close approach reveals that it consists of people, struggling to reach the algae. It seems that they are the descendants of farmers left on the planet to harvest the algae before it was abandoned. But recognition strikes. It wasn't the algae that was the food source; it was the *people*, kept as food animals and fed on the algae.

Sometimes a writer's imagination can take him or her a bit too far!

Food manners, etiquette and ethics

Ethical conundrums

Many of the ethical conundrums explored by science fiction writers are exaggerated versions of real-life situations.³² N.K. Jemisin's *Broken Earth* trilogy, for example,³³ deals with food rationing in a world that is facing disaster. A community's careful calculations of food rationing are thrown out when a woman gets accidentally pregnant. The solution is grim; it is determined that the woman will get no extra food to support her yet-unborn child until someone else in the community dies.

Another extreme example is Ray Bradbury's *Here There Be Tygers*.³⁴ Human space explorers discover a planet where anything may be had merely by imagining it. Water becomes wine for the asking. Fish swim unwittingly into hot springs, cooking themselves for your dinner.

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The conundrum comes with the over-exploitation of such an apparently infinite resource. In Bradbury's story, the discoverers can't leave well enough alone. They begin drilling into the ground, only to discover too late that they are injuring what turns out to be a sentient planet. Lakes turn into tar pits, dinosaurs and mammoths appear, and the explorers leave hastily. Their report back on Earth says that the planet is hostile and of no benefit to humans.

Climate change is a frequent subject, even before the issue became such a serious one in real life. Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl*, for example,³⁵ features large food corporations battling over gene banks in a world devastated by climate change.

Capitalist society also takes a battering. The American cartoonist Al Capp is seldom considered as a science fiction writer, but he certainly belongs in the genre with his invention of the shmoo in 1948 as a character (well, OK, species) in his cartoon strip *Li'l Abner*, set in the fictional deep South community of Dogpatch.³⁶

Shmoos (forerunners of Douglas Adams' bovine animal in *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*), are shaped like soft bowling pins, reproduce rapidly, are delicious to eat, and are eager to be eaten. They also lay eggs, their eyes make perfect suspender buttons, and their whiskers can be used as toothpicks.

But their free availability threatens to undermine capitalist society ('Wif these around, nobody won't nevah havta work no more'). Captains of industry become alarmed, and

organize to exterminate the shmoos. Dogpatch's extortionate grocer Soft-Hearted Jones is ecstatic: 'Now them mizzuble starvin' rats has t'come crawlin' t'me fo' the necessities o' life. They complained 'bout mah prices befo'! Wait'll they see th' new ones!!'

Finally, we must mention George R.R. Martin's *Tuf Voyaging*, set on the planet S'uthlam, which is suffering from food scarcity due to overpopulation.³⁷ The brilliant solution turns out to be a form of manna that inhibits the libido. Shades of the urban myth that bromide was added to the tea of British soldiers in the First World War for a similar purpose.

Question: With such powerful allegories, why hasn't science fiction had a similar impact to some traditional fiction on community responses to ethical questions? Well, occasionally it has. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, for example, still speaks to questions of science, ethics and society.³⁸ It is difficult, though, to think of other specific examples. Perhaps science fiction is seen (incorrectly) by most people as a genre devoted to ideas, but seldom to people.

Manners and Etiquette

Food manners and etiquette feature in a number of science fiction novels. In Asimov's *Caves of Steel*,¹⁶ yeast-based meals are served in communal kitchens. Good manners in this crowded imaginary world prescribe that one should not look at one's fellow diners while eating. The fact that two fellow diners keep glancing at our hero gives them away as baddies.

122 The etiquette of tea-drinking features strongly in Ann Leckie's debut novel *Ancillary Justice*.³⁹ Whole planets are devoted to its production. In a complex plot, the way in which tea is prepared and presented can serve to distinguish regional and cultural differences, and the supposed superiority of one group over another. The most prestigious teas are also used as gifts to someone from whom one might need a large favour. Tea drinking habits are used as clues by our heroine Breq as she seeks revenge against those who destroyed her starship by treachery.

The high point of food etiquette in science fiction, however, is surely Scott Meyer's *Master of Formalities*,⁴⁰ where good manners and the etiquette of dining play a central role in the plot, especially when the food *Skolash* comes in. A favourite on the hero Hennik's home world, it is presented as a dish that he has requested from his captors, whose society is governed by good manners – including preparing any dish that the captive has asked for.

But *Skolash* is some dish. Its literal translation is 'surprise,' and among those who are surprised are the chef, the sous-chef, and so on down the line, none of whom are allowed to know what the dish consists of. Nor are the guests at the banquet where it is to be served. The lowest kitchen employee is landed with the job of cooking a shapeless mass supported on a grav-platter (whatever that is). The food turns out to be a rotting carcass, cooked in a hermetically sealed chamber by setting fire to its own gases. The first slice is presented to Hennik as the honoured guest.

'I'm not hungry,' he says.

Humour

Which brings us to the subject food and humour in science fiction. Frequent examples may be found in the *Red Dwarf* series, but the prize must surely go to H.G. Wells in 'The Truth About Pycraft',⁴¹ published in .¹⁹⁰³

Pycraft is a hugely fat London clubman who wants to lose weight. The narrator is a fellow clubman, in possession of his Hindu great-grandmother's recipe book that contains, among other things, a recipe for losing weight. But, like many of his great-grandmother's recipes, it is fraught with danger. Among the ingredients are rattlesnake venom, an addled egg, and a pariah dog.

Should our narrator pass the recipe on for Pycraft to try? Eventually he does, with appropriate warnings, but both he and Pycraft have overlooked an important aspect of the wording. The recipe is for loss of weight, not mass. Pycraft remains the same size, but weighs nothing, and becomes like a floating balloon.

The situation is resolved by lead underwear, and Pycraft begs the narrator to keep his secret. But the pressure, with Pycraft's constant imploring glances as he eats yet another buttered bun, becomes too much, and the narrator reveals all.

Conclusion

Science fiction writers have come up with a few truly novel ideas with regard to food and foodways, but in the main their writing has aimed to highlight deep paradoxes and problems of human society and the human condition within a futuristic setting. Unfortunately, these lessons are seldom picked up or even noticed by the vast majority who do not count science fiction as serious 'literature'.

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But there is room for more, not necessarily so serious. No author to our knowledge has yet combined food questions with Einstein's relativity of simultaneity. If I am toasting somebody who is approaching close to the speed of light, how do we time the raising of the glasses? If a dinner party is held in a gravitational well so that some participants have gravitational time dilation, how do we determine whom to wait for when starting to eat? If seniority matters, what about time dilated seniors? These and other questions remain to be answered.

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Saving Food in Bulgaria: Imagining Hopeful Futures Through Quiet Food Sovereignty

Lindsey Foltz

ABSTRACT: Fermenting, drying, and jarring food for personal and familial consumption are common practices in post-socialist countries, while they are relatively marginal practices in most Western countries. These home preserved foods are a nexus of practices that link material, biological and cultural survival, formal and informal economies, social networks, cultivated and wild-harvested foods. As such, they show how ordinary people who engage in mundane social practices, like saving food for the winter, create resilience and meaning in their lives in the context of broader historical and contemporary economic and political forces, which lay largely beyond their control. Evidence from this study supports the value of ‘Thinking food like an East European’ and more fully examining the power and importance of ‘quiet food sovereignty’ (Jehlička, et al. 2020, Visser, et al., 2015). This paper is based on ongoing research involving participant observation, interviews and social media conducted both in person and virtually from 2018-2021.

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When I meet Vasi she is just coming from meeting some teachers at the elementary school and is wearing in a well-tailored dress with an abstract design in muted greens, golds, and tans. Her dress is complemented by formal white shoes with a low heel. We walk down the block to her house, which sits over the small-machine shop that she and her husband own. Walking down the sidewalk to her gate she greets many of the children, who are buying breakfast at the corner bakery. She explains to me that she has a Sunday school at the Orthodox church across the street and knows many children from there and from her volunteer work in the school. During her working years she was a primary school teacher and continues to volunteer there.

We take off our shoes and stash our bags as we head upstairs into her kitchen. There she is making yogurt, with milk from a woman she knows, which she does twice a week. She unwraps a towel and lifts the lid on the round, enamel pot to reveal the new yogurt. It is sitting in a warm and draft-free part of the house, next to the stove. She feeds me a large spoonful and it has a pleasant, mild sourness. She says you can buy starter for yogurt or just start the next batch with some yogurt from the previous batch mixed in with new milk. She is adamant that you can only use fresh milk to make yogurt and it is better to buy it from people you know ‘*poznati*’. She doesn’t trust the quality from the store. She buys milk from *poznati* because, ‘You know they won’t sell you something bad or that will make you sick

[...] you know each other and they will take care of you'. She describes this milk that she buys as 'clean' and 'good quality'.

She has heard I am especially interested in cellars so she says she will give me a tour of hers. Even though it is a hot September day, the air is cool as we descend the stairs into the stone and cement basement. She flips on a bare light bulb and opens an old wooden door to reveal a spotless and well-organized cellar. In the deepest, coolest part are wooden wine barrels, thick plastic barrels for cabbage fermenting (which will happen later in the fall), and a square plastic jug with a spigot containing the last remains of a slightly fermented lingonberry drink. 'This is good for the kidneys' she tells me as she offers me a small glass of the tart and slightly fizzy drink. 'In general the mountains have them [lingonberries]. But if we don't go to gather them ourselves then we buy them in the market from someone who did gather them [themselves]'. There are also dried herbs hanging which she uses for tea and seasoning food.

126 Along the walls she has several custom-built wooden shelves that go from the floor almost up to the low ceiling. Fabric is hanging in front of each shelf to keep dust off the jars stored there. She pulls up the green, flower-patterned fabric from the first shelf to reveal rows of jewel-colored jars and bottles and she narrates the contents of each one. She knows by sight what is in each jar. The first shelf is full of compote: raspberries, strawberries (both cultivated and wild), pear, peach, apricot, sour cherry, sweet cherry, cornelian cherry, and plums (both yellow and blue). She picks up a small jar with something deep and golden colored inside and describes how to make it, as she has done for many of the jars. 'This is cornelian cherry and apple marmalade. First you clean the cornelian cherries and after that you add peeled and sliced apples and cook them until they are soft. Then you grind them [in a food mill] and return them to the pot to cook until it becomes thick. You know it is ready, this is the way my grandmother taught me, when it becomes dark and is very thick'. We keep up our tour through the jars which are organized by type of fruit and after that move on to the vegetables.

We walk up two steps, just outside the cellar, into the garage where she stores her preserved vegetables along the wall. There are sliced cucumber pickles, tomatoes in salt water, marinated cherry tomatoes with spicy peppers, mixed vegetables (*gyuvech*), marinated eggplant, marinated summer squash, a seasoned tomato and pepper puree that she uses as a soup starter (*podpravka*), roasted pepper and tomato chutney (*lyutenitsa*), tomato juice, and ketchup (which she makes because her grandkids like it on pizza). Most of the *lyutenitsa* is in small, threaded glass jars with screw-on caps that she says are recycled baby food jars. The tomato juice and ketchup are in recycled Queen's brand juice bottles.

There are almost no empty jars at this point in the year. The jars are of different sizes and shapes, and some of them are recycled industrially produced food jars. But most of them are the squat jars with rounded shoulders, common from socialist times, that are sealed by

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round metal lids that must be crimped over the mouth of the jar with a hand-tool. Many of the jars were bought by her mother when she was 5 years old, so they are over 50 years old now. Vassi says that she buys new jars from time to time if older ones break.

As we look through the jars in the garage, she makes the comment that her daughter tends to buy fresh but ‘plastic’ imported fruits and vegetables all winter long. Many people describe these imports as ‘plastic’ or ‘wooden’ because while they look nice they don’t have any smell or taste. Vasi doesn’t understand buying this fresh produce since the taste isn’t as good and she thinks it is more expensive and not as healthy to buy out of season things. Most of the produce that Vasi eats and preserves comes from her garden and a few things she gathers from the forest or mountains such as blueberries, strawberries, and herbs. She buys sugar, salt, and oil for making preserves from either a local store or a larger chain store in a nearby town.

‘Is this really that useful to you?’ she asks with a smirk as we begin more carefully counting and inventorying the jars. She immediately answers her own question, ‘I guess it can show how one family feeds itself’. Then she reminds me, ‘This isn’t all the jars I made’. There are more in the pantries of both her son and daughter who live in their own houses. ‘How many do you think you made in all this year?’ I ask. ‘More or less 400’, she replies, not including any alcohol. She gives about 100 jars each to her children and keeps the rest in her cellar. ‘It’s a little bit like living in a village house, you know? We have a little of everything, scattered here and there, but it’s easier to live and more merry’.

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Introduction and Methods

Fermenting, drying, and jarring food, like Vasi does, for personal and familial consumption are relatively common practices in post-socialist countries, even while they are marginal practices in most Western countries. These home preserved foods are a nexus of practices that link material, biological and cultural survival, formal and informal economies, social networks, wild and cultivated foods. As such, they are an ideal subject for investigating how ordinary people engaging in mundane social practices, like saving food for the winter, are creating resilience and meaning in their lives in the context of broader economic and political forces, which lay largely beyond their control. Home-based food preservation practices provided resilience in the context of the socialist food regimes of the past and continue to be adaptive as Bulgaria has joined the global market economy and is increasingly integrated into the industrial, corporate food regime.

My ongoing, multi-sited research examines home-based food preservation practices in contemporary Bulgaria through participant observation, formal and informal interviews, cellar and garden surveys, and social media posts from 2018 to 2021 (built upon two years of living and working in Bulgaria from 2006-2008). The bulk of the research is conducted in person, though during 2020 due to COVID travel restrictions some work was done

virtually. I have taken an open-minded, empirically based, inductive approach to theme generation similar to grounded theory (Straus and Corbin 1998). However, I have diverged from a purely inductive model of theory generation by using a more deductive approach to analyzing existing literature and theories related to the themes identified inductively. This is consistent with what Goldkuhl and Cronholm call ‘multi-grounded theory’.¹

Through this process I am integrating my observations about everyday food saving practices in contemporary Bulgaria with literature emerging from Russia and Eastern Europe theorizing ‘quiet food sovereignty’.² By using social practice theories as an analytic, particularly those related to the dynamics of social change, I provide a tentative suggestion for how ‘Thinking food like an East European’ can contribute to developing food systems that are more just, resilient, and describe quiet food sovereignty that is not connected with rights-based, social movements or ethical consumerism as the primary driver to develop alternative food networks.³

Social Practices and the Dynamics of Social Change

I am using theories of practice as an analytical device for home-based food preservation which allows me to examine them as a constellation of social practices which condense in the cellar. Following Shove, Pantzar and Watson I will describe three basic elements of the social practices related to preserving food: materials, competencies, and meanings.⁴

128 These practices are constituted through particular performances but are also entities which exist as long as they are re-produced by a broader community of practice, amongst whom these food preservation practices are recognizable and the competencies of others in the community can be judged. Additionally, I will provide historical context for the social practices of home-based food preservation.

Practice theory rejects the focus on either individual minds and actors or social structures in studying and understanding social life and how it changes or stays the same; rather conceptualizing agency and structure as recursive.⁵ According to practice theorists such as Schatzki, what we know and how our social life is organized and reproduced is through action and interaction with practices. This includes how knowledge is advanced and how social life is transformed.

I am conceptualizing food preservation in Bulgarian households as social practices, which are intrinsically linked to other social practices relating to many aspects of everyday life such as shopping, gardening, foraging, cooking, and eating. Social practices are intentional, though often routinized and unselfconscious activities which consists of interconnected elements such as, ‘[...] embodiment, physical objects, inner emotions, competences of how to do things, and motivations to do them’.⁶ They are performed by carriers of the practices and when they are performed, they are ‘[...] the routine accomplishment of what people take to be ‘normal’ ways of life’.⁷ Accordingly, social practices are performed ‘[...] on the

basis of what members learn from others, and are capable of being done well or badly, correctly or incorrectly'.⁸ They are 'intrinsically connected to and interwoven with objects' and non-human entities.⁹

In simplified terms, social practices are composed of three interconnected elements: materials, competencies, and meanings.¹⁰ These three elements are integrated when practices are enacted and emerge, persist, shift or disappear, '[...] as links between their defining elements are made and broken'.¹¹ Finally, the careers of practices emerge and persist in historical and geographic context.

The Bulgarian cellar, seen through the lens of social practice theories related to the dynamics of social change, evidence quiet food sovereignty practices that do not manifest as a result of a public social movement or the development of alternative food networks based on individual ethical consumption. Foregrounding these everyday practices open up new opportunities for imagining the maintenance and emergence of more just and sustainable food futures.

Historical Post-Socialist Context

In Bulgaria, home-based food preservation practices are being enacted in a particular post-socialist historical context, which is helpful for understanding their initial emergence and continual re-production and innovation. I will begin with this historical grounding before more closely examining the materials, competencies, and meanings evident in cellars and interviews.

Home preserved foods play a significant role in everyday household strategies for making-do and pursuing meaningful lives in post-socialist countries but are also tied to experiences of living under state socialism.¹² Citizens in socialist countries, like Bulgaria, developed complex and multifaceted strategies to negotiate economies of shortage, secure basic material needs, and pursue something more than just utilitarian survival.¹³ Gaining access to food, not only for basic nutritional needs, but also for celebrating, offering hospitality, supporting health, performing personal, local and/or national identity, and satisfying personal and familial desires and aesthetics required elaborate strategies, networks and skills. These strategies included the creation and maintenance of extensive social networks and a robust second economy for everyday goods like food.¹⁴ The centrally planned economy in socialist states was not the only economy operating in everyday lives.¹⁵ During socialism, even as most agricultural land in Bulgaria was consolidated and nationalized by the state, many families tended small personal garden plots. These were especially common in small towns and rural areas. Home-preserved foods that were typically produced in rural areas circulated far beyond their rural origins; they traveled along networks of extended social relations in what Smollett referred to as the 'economy of jars'.¹⁶ Post-socialist foodways studies demonstrate that while post 1989 entry into neoliberal global economies is a rupture with the centrally planned economy of the past, many of the everyday food related

strategies, practices, and networks developed by Bulgarians and other socialist citizens continue to the present day.¹⁷ Home-based food preservation practices in contemporary Bulgaria emerge from long-term daily confrontation with uncertainty and precarity and are exemplary of resilient foodways that have allowed people negotiate major disruptions and changes such as the end of socialism and joining the European Union.

Elements of home-based food preservation: materials, competencies, meanings
Social practice theory emphasizes the inextricable and co-constitutive nature of material ‘things’ in the social. The materials that condense in the Bulgarian cellar are two-fold, those which are physically present in the cellar, and those that are utilized in the production process. Glass jars are critical in ongoing food preservation practices. While it is sometimes necessary for people to buy new glass jars, many people I interviewed inherited large collections of glass jars from their mothers, mothers-in-law, or grandmothers. I was also instructed on proper jar etiquette; if you receive a jar it is essential that you return it to its owner after you eat the contents. Many jars in the cellars I inventoried were produced during socialist times. They most commonly have crimp-on metal lids, which can be purchased in almost every outdoor market, shop, and supermarket throughout the country during the spring and summer months. Additionally, many people will wash and save the jars from commercially processed foods. Some of these are also from the socialist period, notably small baby-food jars which many people have saved from when their children were small. There are also more recently produced industrial jars from products such as *lyutenitsa*, beans, tomatoes, and juice. Many trips to Bulgarian corner stores and large supermarkets reveal the persistent prevalence of jarred industrial foods compared to tinned foods. These jars are threaded and usually re-used with the original branded lid so they are easy to identify. These re-used jars are evidence of a hybrid approach to food provisioning, that makes use of purchased, industrially produced food in addition to home-produced and preserved foods. This ongoing hybrid approach was not widely expected by those theorizing capitalist transitions in the nineties. While these hybrid approaches remain common, even among the middle class or upper middle class who don’t rely on home-produced food out of economic necessity, they continue to be described by some government documents as ‘ineffective’ or a ‘hangover from the past’.¹⁸ Jars are re-used year after year, though they may not always be in continuous use. Stockpiles of empty jars were a common sight in many homes. However, the glass is durable and is therefore a flexible resource which can be put to use whenever necessary.

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Additional materials that are durable and therefore carried over from socialist times include: multiple sizes of kettles for cooking and water-bath canning, food grinders, fire-pits built from brick or concrete blocks, gas burners, and pepper roasters.

The ingredients themselves are acquired each year and people who are participating in my research use multiple sources, methods, and economies for doing so. Some foods are

grown by the families in gardens or foraged by them, in other words through production. Other ingredients like oil, spices like ground red pepper or cumin, sugar and salt are purchased from formal markets such as stores. Some people also buy vegetables from supermarkets and large-scale vegetable producers. Informal or grey markets are also a source of ingredients which can include fruits, vegetables, herbs, milk or meat. These are often purchased from neighbors or other people that they know, '*poznati*', who are not licensed or taxed on this production.¹⁹ Finally, preserve-makers acquire some ingredients through informal transfer from people in their social networks as gifts. Because food flows from exchanges inside and outside formal markets, these producers' relationship with food is not exclusively commodity defined. This connects home-based food preservation practices to social networks, informal markets, cultivated production for self-consumption, and foraging (which incidentally occurs in both urban and rural settings). In summary, exchange (purchase in formal market), production, and transfer (informal exchange) are all common features of the ingredients found in Bulgarian cellars.

Competencies in the case of these preservation practices are usually learned from older generations; mothers, grandmothers or mothers-in-law taught about food preservation and older male relatives passed down skills related to making alcohol. There are competencies in cooking up the preserves, properly sealing them and safely water-bath canning them. Fermented foods and alcohol require a host of skills in cultivating desired and safe communities of microorganisms in addition to skills related to distillation and aging. Since many ingredients are home-grown, competency in growing and harvesting cultivated fruits and vegetables are evident, as are a wide variety of foraging skills including knowledge of where and when to look, plant identification, and proper harvesting and processing techniques. Interestingly, some people supplement or expand their repertoire through watching videos from other home-preservers on internet sites such as YouTube. Two women that I interviewed converted their knowledge on how to make fermented cabbage into making kimchee based existing knowledge supplemented by internet recipes and fish sauce purchased in a large town nearby. Some younger interviewees indicated that they are drivers in their household to make certain preserved foods, such as *lyutenitsa*, and that they bring the generations together so that they can learn through doing. In a similar fashion to the jars, these competencies may be learned and then lay dormant, sometimes for years, before being pulled back into use. These embodied competencies can be flexibly deployed, innovated upon, and called into action when necessary or desirable.

The meanings of home-preserved foods and motivations to make them are varying and in many cases, overlapping. I have sorted the most commonly identified meanings and motivations into themes illustrated by the following emblematic quotes:

- Tradition: '[...] because our grandmother's and mothers did this'.
- Wellbeing: 'Because it is easier to live and more merry'.
- Food Security: 'I have to eat, don't I?'

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- Memory: ‘One taste and I was transported to my grandmother’s garden when I was a little girl’.
- Safety/Purity: ‘You have to buy it from someone you know’.
- Taste/Aesthetics: ‘Do I have Covid? No, I just bought a tomato from Kaufland’.

While I will not extrapolate on it further in this paper, there are a group of people in one village where I worked who are actively recruiting home-made preserves into a food-based social movement, namely Slow Food. For these participants it was clear that public, political meanings were a part of their home-based food preservation practice. The same materials and competencies are being utilized but motivated and enlivened by new meanings such as preserving agricultural biodiversity, protesting corruption in the government, and participating in an international movement of gastronomes.

Features of Thinking food Like an East European, Lessons From the Cellar

Bulgarian cellars demonstrate many features identified by Jehlička et al. related to ‘Thinking Food Like an East European’ further supporting their claims of the benefit of looking to Eastern Europe for theories and practices related to resilient and just foodways. In particular, the non-oppositional nature of many systems often understood as contradictory in Western food studies: industrial vs. small scale agriculture, cultivated vs. wild foods, formal vs. informal economies, leisure vs. work.

132 People who produce home-preserved foods in Bulgaria get their ingredients from a wide variety of sources which include purchased, traded, gifted and self-produced items which entangle formal and informal economies and markets. There is a non-oppositional relationship between industrial and smaller scale agriculture evident through the integration of ingredients from both systems and, in some cases, generating income through employment in industrial agriculture while the household also makes home-preserved foods. Another point of comparison to their studies are that the middle class continues production. Most of those I have interviewed are squarely in the middle class, highly educated, and have stable employment or income. They have strong familial livelihood networks which include multiple sources of income such as pensions, remittances, and paid employment. This runs counter to ‘development’ narratives which predicted declining household production of food as incomes increase and people are more thoroughly integrated into formal markets. This is not to say that home-based food preservation is purely a leisure activity. It is important nutritionally and is a way to reduce expenditures. Accessing things like utilities, prescription medications, and complex medical care are still a challenge for many households due to their expense. Though outside of self-identification as either indigenous people or peasants, the people I interviewed communicate a strong personal attachment to gardening, wild lands and rurality. People in my study who are foragers routinely criticize the extraction of resources through activities like logging both

in conversation and in social media posts. In addition to the obvious conflict of decreasing habitat where things like mushrooms grow, this commentary is also usually connected to government corruption since the logging is occurring on public lands that are supposed to be protected from such activity. People describe their own foraging for wild species or grazing their animals on wild lands as beneficial for increasing biodiversity. They have practices and ethics related to achieving this goal. This situates foragers as environmentally friendly collaborators with nature as opposed to for-profit (mostly illegal) logging which is extractive, profit seeking, and linked to corruption.

There are many environmental and social benefits of home-based food preservation in Bulgaria that link it with food sovereignty. Though small-scale food production, which provides the bulk of the ingredients, is not always without chemical inputs they are minimized due to both considerations of care and expense. In some cases, keeping small animals like chickens or goats, make closed-loop nutrient cycles possible. Food miles are also minimized as is food waste. Some people making home-preserved foods are also specifically saving and propagating rare varieties of agricultural plants and animals that are well-suited to food preservation. Preserved foods that are fermented, dried or jarred do not require refrigeration. Additionally, they minimize non-reusable food packaging. These foods, and the materials and competencies required to produce them, provide food security and resilience in the face of uncertainty. Not only do they diversify foods during the winter and provide calories they are also gift-able, trade-able or sale-able and so can be converted into other resources. They are also functional foods which can restore or preserve health and decrease dependency on expensive medicines or care. They preserve materials and competencies for future use. Beyond these benefits are the feelings of pride, the pleasure in familiar and valorized tastes, the ability to properly host guests and celebrate, and connection to familial and national heritage.

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Conclusion

The everyday practices and tactics useful during the socialist food regime provides insights into social practices that provide insulation and resilience to both state and market failures. Home-preserved foods in Bulgarian cellars are prized as clean and reliable alternatives to industrial food (even while sometimes utilizing industrially produced ingredients), tastes of home and the village, functional foods that preserve and restore health, and essential components in both everyday and ritual life.

For many people world-wide, predominant food systems are bleak. Imagination is critical to the pursuit of future food systems that go beyond mere sustenance and uphold the aspirations of food sovereignty which include the right to food that is desirable, healthy, meaningful, and produced or acquired in an environmentally sound way. The entanglement of formal and informal economies, domestic and wild foods, small holders and industrial

farms, local and global influences that are visible in everyday food practices in Eastern Europe provide resilience in terms of food security but also the ability to pursue something more than mere survival and encourage ongoing knowledge and practices related to agroecological food production and traditional ecological knowledge, which Visser et al. characterize as quiet food sovereignty.²⁰ Examining these everyday food sovereignty practices in Bulgaria, where these practices are historically rooted in the socialist past, provide underappreciated manifestations of resilient, alternative food networks and how they might be developed in contexts where there are various political and economic barriers to Western conceptualizations of social movement-based change or primarily individualize, marketized approaches to alternative food system development.

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A Conceit of Coney: Britain's First Television Food History Programme and how Philip Harben pulled a rabbit out of a castle to imagine what food broadcasts may have looked like in Elizabethan times

Kevin Geddes

ABSTRACT: We almost take for granted today that 'food history' on television is a commonplace and well-established genre of its own, with programmes taking us back to imagine food production and consumption through the ages. We think nothing of seeing Annie Gray, Lucy Worsley and many others pulling on the costumes of the past to ignite our imaginations and bring the past to life through food. However, little is known about the history of food history on television. Where and how did it all begin? How were the earliest examples used to inspire what we see on screen today?

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This paper will examine the first food history programme in Britain, broadcast by the BBC as part of an inventive celebration of all things Elizabethan to coincide with the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 (Radio Times 1953). For the 'Elizabethan Evening', Harben wore a fantasy Elizabethan outfit to create his own version of an Elizabethan dish – A Conceit of Coney – live on television, imagining the past for his imagined audience at home.

By analysing an intact archival copy of the *An Evening's Diversion* broadcast (APTS 2021), together with additional primary sources, this paper will examine the look, feel and outcome of the programme – the way Harben dressed, talked, inspired and educated, but most of all entertained as he introduced food from the past.

This paper will argue that television allowed for a visual representation of imagination which was, and remains, a perfect vehicle for food history, helping audiences at home to imagine themselves in Elizabethan times and seeing the television cooks of the day (should they have existed) cooking a vision of spectacular feasts.

I will conclude that the imaginative recreations of food history owe much to Harben and his imagery of the Conceit of Coney, which may not have been the most historically or culinary accurate representation but was nonetheless a spectacle aimed at sparking the imagination of television viewers in 1953 – a legacy which remains today. This will be a unique, and entertaining, contribution to food history, television history and the intersection of food history on television.

Introduction

Today, we can happily switch on the television and choose from a myriad of options to settle down and watch. Even within genres, there are endless choices and sub-genres. If we are interested in watching programmes about food, we are not limited to learning about the preparation of ingredients solely. We can discover where food comes from, how supermarket products are made, what effect different foods have on our bodies or watch ordinary people or celebrities compete to produce the biggest, best, worst or strangest concoctions. We can also choose to watch food history. Indeed, it is hard to imagine the schedules without Annie Gray and Lucy Worsley dressed-up and ready to explore kitchens of the dim and distant past, bringing them to life before our eyes. We are transported back in time regularly to see modern-day families cook, eat and enjoy (or otherwise) food from the past. It may seem like a relatively new thing, with an explosion in food history programmes since *The Supersizers* went Edwardian in 2007, closely followed by an Elizabethan adventure in 2008.

So, the idea that food history form part of our televisual habits is not new, but just how old are the ideas? Where did food history on television begin? What elements of food history on television today have been borrowed from television history? Has the mix of television entertainment and education that we can enjoy watching in *The Supersizers*, with Annie Gray and Lucy Worsley or through the eyes of families on *Back In Time For...* been a new twist, or does it have its roots in the past?

Although early television programmes in Britain are often considered to be basic in nature, several the programmes broadcast after the war were more experimental in nature, attracting audiences who simply enjoyed watching without learning, or realising that they were being entertained. Must-see television broadcasts which would lead Guy Debord in the 1960s to coin the phrase 'Society of the Spectacle' to represent the relationship between the audience, and wider society, with the images and messages they were receiving more and more through mass media such as the television (Debord 1994). Audiences became consumers of media and society itself became more consumer focused, using the spectacle to convey messages about what the consumers should 'have' and 'want' in their own lives. These cultural changes noted by Debord had a background firmly focused on history, which he proposed was at the heart of culture, and society.

This paper will look in detail at one such 'spectacle' broadcast in 1953 by the BBC to coincide with, and celebrate the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, to look more closely at the imagined past being explored through television screens and consumed by eager audiences at home. *An Evening's Diversion* (Radio Times 1953) included the very first television food history demonstration by the then 'television cook' Philip Harben (ONDB 2021a). Did he unwittingly inspire a boom in food history programmes, dressing up and an explosion of imaginative interpretations of food from the past?

Context

Reinterpretation of historical events, and historical food, was obviously not new by the time television broadcasts began. Some may argue that all written recipes are historical documents which are then reinterpreted by those who cook at home, recreating what others before them made. The idea of understanding history more through re-enacting events is also well understood as a valuable and performative tool for historians and those interested in history and food archaeology (Gray 2010). As food played a central role in all lives, modern and historic, the re-enactment and re-discovery of food, recipes and menus from the past has enabled people to understand and define periods of history better (Long 2004). Television cooking shows can act as a vehicle for storytelling, sharing and interpreting experiences entertaining and education simultaneously (Matwick and Matwick 2019).

When television services began again in Britain after World War II, the popularity of television sets in the home increased greatly (Scannell 1996). Prior to the war, television services and transmission were limited primarily to London and considered in retrospect as 'experimental' for the BBC, at that time Britain's only broadcaster (Briggs 1985). Television broadcasts had ceased completely in Britain during the war, with radio broadcasts continuing. Radio was considered a vital communication lifeline for the people of Britain, and television much less so. It was only after the war, perhaps, that television would be considered as something useful for households (for a wider discussion, see Scannell 1996). A useful distraction, a source of entertainment, a place to receive information and also, crucially, a provider of education to a nation focused on family survival and resilience for a number of years.

Television of the late 1940s and early 1950s is often characterised as radio enhanced by visuals (Lyon and Ross 2016) with the assumption that previously tried and tested programmes, formats and ideas broadcast via radio were simply transferred to the television studio, recreated and set loose into the homes of Britain as a somehow secondary form of national broadcast. However, much of these early broadcasts are lost to the world as many were transmitted live, not recorded and not considered at that time to be in any way valuable as artefacts to be preserved in archives (Gorton and Garde-Hansen 2019). Television was mostly, at that time, produced, consumed and forgotten about even. In particular, programmes deemed 'ordinary' in their scope (which often in reality meant lifestyle programmes produced mainly for a female audience watching from home during the day as they completed their housework) were low on the priorities for recording and discussing (see Bonner 2003 and Sullivan 2005).

Television itself can be seen as part of everyday lifestyle culture (Sullivan 2005) which has grown and developed since the beginning of television broadcasts in Britain. Britain moved from 'television scarcity' in the 1940s, where television was a cultural novelty, to a period where television symbolised a 'new modernity' in the 1950s (Carnevali and Strange 2007).

However, it was not until the 1960s, when television was less of a novelty, that a historical understanding of the place of television in lifestyles can be recognised (Benson 2005). This led to a more established genre of lifestyle programming and channels in the 1990s.

Due to the archiving policies of television companies (see Baker and Terris 1994), and the assumed lack of interest or significance of 'lifestyle' programmes aimed at women in particular (Bell and Hollows 2005), as well as early television programmes being broadcast live, without any recording (Briggs 1985), complete programmes from before this are hard to find. Issues of analysing television programmes prior to the establishment of clear archiving policies from the major institutions have been the subject of several recent discussions (see Gorton & Garde-Hansen 2019; Lison et al 2019 and Scannell 2010).

Fragments of information, from programme listings in *The Radio Times*, reviews in *The Listener*, publicity materials, photographs and interviews published in newspapers and other resources become invaluable in piecing together what programmes may have been like, beyond the basic descriptions often relied upon.

History in itself was a popular subject on television from the very beginning, whether the history was part of the broadcast or a subject within it (Hilmes 2003). From the earliest broadcasts in 1936 on the BBC examples of 'history' were shown. The BBC had a remit to inform, educate and entertain and their early historical output reflected this with variety (Briggs 1985). History featured in drama, such as *The Mask Theatre* in 1936 (*Radio Times* 1936). Musical programmes with a historical background were broadcast, such as *The Orchestra and Its Instruments* (*Radio Times* 1937a). History featured in comedies focused on important historical events, most notable was the early screening of a version of events from 1066 (*Radio Times* 1939). Documentaries followed subjects such as the fire service and provided a historical background to the development of these services (*Radio Times* 1938). Educational programmes such as *Living History* which suggested using models and miniature figures to bring the teaching of history to life (*Radio Times* 1937b).

Food and cooking also were quick to transfer to the 'new' medium of television. X Marcel Boulestin is often credited as the 'first' television cook, but others appeared in the early months of 1936 before he made his first appearance in January of 1937 (see Geddes 2021). Following the resumption of television broadcasting in 1946, after a seven-year break during the war (Briggs 1985), cooking programmes also resumed their place in the schedules (*Radio Times* 1946a). Some broadcasts included food and advice linked to information from the Ministry of Food, as food rationing was still in place. Cooking presenters such as Marguerite Patten and Joan Robins, who both had food demonstrator backgrounds with the Ministry, began regular presenting duties on cookery and food programmes (ODNB 2021b and c).

These programmes reflected the expected audiences with names such as *Designed for Women* (*Radio Times* 1947b), *For the Housewife* (*Radio Times* 1948) and *Housewife in*

the Kitchen (Radio Times 1947a). However, the ten-year period after the war included a broad range of cookery programming which covered the BBC remit to inform, educate and entertain, not simply to encourage housewives to cook more efficiently (see Geddes 2021).

In the next section I will discuss Philip Harben who cooked alongside Marguerite Patten and Joan Robins on the BBC from 1946 and who hosted the *An Evenings Diversion* programme discussed later in this paper.

Philip Harben

Philip Harben arrived on radio at the BBC, and indeed to cooking itself, partly by accident. A series of coincidences led him to first of all manage and then cook at the *Isobar* restaurant, in the now iconic *Isokon* building on London (Daybelge and Englund 2019). Untrained, he quickly learnt 'on the job' and his skills were in demand with the British Overseas Airways Corporation as their canteen manager (Bateman 1966, 8). It was during a propaganda press event, with the BBC in attendance, where Harben was called to demonstrate an omelette made from reconstituted egg (9) which led to him being asked to appear on radio. In 1943 he gave a talk about his experiences as a catering adviser in wartime (*Radio Times* 1943a), which led to regular appearances for the next few years on *The Kitchen Front* programme, giving talks aimed at cookery beginners (*Radio Times* 1943b).

140 Philip Harben began his broadcasting career giving a radio talk for the BBC about his experience as a catering adviser during wartime, broadcast on 26th September 1943 (BBC Genome 2021). This led to a regular series of talks for the *Kitchen Front* (BBC Genome 2021) programme, and others, before a series entitled *Cookery* for BBC television in June 1946 (BBC Genome 2021). Each week, he guided viewers through a different dish, beginning with Lobster Vol-Au-Vents, homemade noodles and coffee before progressing to the use of dried eggs, 'emergency' bread and how to bottle fruits for the larder (for example, *Radio Times* 1946b).

Harben published his first cookbook, *The Way to Cook*, in 1945 (Harben 1945) which he insisted was not a recipe book, but rather a book to explain the ideas and principles of cooking, which he would then go on to exploit on television. On screen, he was presented as a 'lively, tubby, bearded little man in a butcher's apron, who makes difficult dishes look simple in his brisk, well-planned demonstrations' (Bateman 1966). Despite his appearance, presentation style and lack of formal training, Harben became a 'personality' (Bateman 1966) credited with turning food into a form of theatre (Humble 2005). Harben cultivated his personality through appearances on variety shows before moving from the BBC to join the newly formed Independent Television (ITV) in 1955 (Andrews 2012), where he also established consumer culture connections with products, industry and advertising, establishing his own range of cookware, Harbenware, which had an annual turnover of £100,000 (Bateman 1966). His television cooking programmes, such as *The Grammar of*

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Cooking and *The Tools of Cookery*, ran regularly on Independent Television until 1969 (TV Times Project 2021), with associated cookbooks published alongside (Harben 1965; 1968). Harben chose to wear a butcher's apron tied high over his 'substantial' stomach on screen, with a grey shirt and paisley-patterned tie (The Liverpool Echo 1958). His look created controversy, as it was not 'correct' for a cook or a chef, coming at a time of change in British society. However, Harben later clarified that it was his 'trademark' and chosen as it was right 'for the camera' (The Yorkshire Evening Post 1953). Reviews of his demonstrations on television drew attention to his ability to bring things 'down to brass tacks' while other presenters maintained a 'quite maddening air of lofty superiority' (The Sketch 1949). Despite this, by 1951 Harben himself claimed to have given over one hundred and twenty television demonstrations (Harben 1951a), rising to over one hundred and thirty in other publications that year (Harben 1951b), and regularly referred to himself as 'the television cook' while other publications referred to him as 'the television chef' (Harben 1951c), which may have indicated a level of cultural capital attached to the growing ownership and consumption of television.

An Elizabethan Evening

On Tuesday 7th November in 1953 the BBC devoted its schedule over the course of one evening to one subject, "An Evening's Diversion" which transported viewers to an imagined studio in Elizabethan times, as if there had been television at that time (Radio Times 1953). In 1953, with the Coronation of Elizabeth II, a new Elizabethan era brought with it a revived interest in Tudor times. Costumed announcers explained that the evening was 'Proffered On The Anniversary Of The Session Of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth I', setting the scene with the words "Now we ask you to imagine that in 1596 the Elizabethans had a television service of their own, and join us as we put back the clock....." inviting those at home to engage with their imaginations to view events and entertainments presented historically and for modern eyes simultaneously. The 'news' became a 'Chronicle of the Times', entertainment was provided in the form of song and dance, documentary-style information was presented on new inventions of the time, and 'concerts' were given, purely for leisure, featuring fashion, shopping, comedy and song.

Befitting of such a historic and Royal occasion, the entire Evening was telerecorded. This was unusual at the time, although this of course now means that the programme still exists in the archive to view today. This allows us to see directly how the television of the time in the 1950s sought to portray history, and this particular early example of food history.

The cookery segment of An Evening's Diversion was provided by BBC resident 'television cook' Philip Harben, styled as 'Master Harben' 'the cook' who contrives a Conceit of Coney. The BBC studio set contained one grand kitchen where Harben swapped his useful cooking outfit for something more Elizabethan, and talked the audience through the

cookery demonstration, as he imagined it would have been presented in Elizabethan times. The next section considers his broadcast in the context of the first food history on television in Britain, and what, if anything, this innovation lends to television food history today.

A Conceit of Coney

Suspension of Imagination

The Mistress for the Evening, the usual Alexandra Palace continuity announcer who would normally appear on screen, in the studio, to provide live links between programmes, Jeanne Heal, dressed as a courtier or perhaps as an imagined Elizabeth I herself, introduced Master Harben following the Interlude in the evening. She would later remind the audience that 'rightly is Master Harben known as the Epicure of Cooks', establishing him as an authentic voice for both food and history. Harben invited the audience to suspend belief and imagine they were watching him as an Elizabethan cook, holding a pair of rabbits high in one hand. The scene was set for an instruction in food history.

Setting the Scene

142 Harben set up his cookery table in front of a grand brick fireplace within the studio, to resemble the kitchen of a palace or castle which he might have been cooking and broadcasting from had this really been Elizabethan times. Behind him and across the table are an array of cooking equipment, wooden bowls, pewter plates and apothecary bottles, placed more to conjure up the times than for any historical accuracy or reference. Harben tends to the cooking conies throughout, sitting in a three-legged iron pot 'upon' the fire 'there it will keep hot and there it will thicken', he reassured the audience.

Harben dressed in an Elizabethan ruff and outfit more suited to court than kitchen, with puffed sleeves and a tightly tied apron. Harben traditionally wore a striped butcher's apron while on television, itself an imagined representation of a cook's outfit, however this switch of outfit maintained his style, remaining easily recognisable as the familiar face of cookery on television at the time. Harben looked directly down the camera lens and spoke in his usual clipped, clear and precise voice. His hands motioned towards the audience at home to ensure that they remained engaged with all he had to say. Harben began by reading out the ingredients for the recipe he would demonstrate, in the same familiar way that he would during normal broadcasts, signifying that this too was a 'normal' cooking programme, albeit set in the imagined world of Elizabeth I.

The cookery segment was broadcast live, as the entire evening was. Harben was skilled at presentations, and worked between two cameras, often directing a camera to focus on details by signalling 'if we look closely here' while completing a task. Harben modulates his language and voice throughout the demonstration, using scripted phrases such as 'bear

with me my fair gentles if I seem ware of this work', 'mark you gentles' and 'this pie crust is as frail and insubstantial as a young mans' vows' to illustrate an entertainment value as well as use of perceived historical phraseology.

Harben ultimately creates a castle from pastry to encase his coney, or stew. Building the castle walls from pre-prepared pastry cut to resemble turreted walls with windows and doors, Harben admits 'this work is fraught with possibilities of danger.' Although at one point it seems as if 'disaster has overwhelmed' Harben with a breakage, it allows him to reassure the audience that he has spare parts prepared just for this occasion, stating 'fear not, I have another yet' in place of 'here is one I prepared earlier.'

Harben-isms – was this broadcast about history, or about Harben?

Harben cannot, however, resist including a few trademarks of his own style and persona to the demonstration. From the word go he is honest with the audience that this 'conceit of coney' is by his 'own devising', swapping the instruction to 'take four chickens' from the supposedly real original recipe, declaring boldly 'I am using coney' without any given explanation. Harben carved a particular niche on television for cooking using a frying pan (which he later would go on to develop his own range of known as Harbenware, with other kitchen equipment, for sale) and during this segment instructs 'put them into the frying pan' and 'place them on a baking sheet' out of character and time, but as Harben would have during an ordinary modern-day broadcast.

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Any illusions of historical accuracy are gone when the time comes to beat eggs to add to the dish, as Harben does this with an ordinary kitchen fork, folding them into the pot with an ordinary domestic wooden spoon.

Harben keeps a long, pointed knife tucked into his apron belt. He brings this out performatively to chop parsley with more than an exaggeration and also a lemon sliced with vigour. Harben pours wine (for the recipe) from a small 'fair round brass pot' which he says his daughter Jenny had bought him as a present when she visited the Isle of Guernsey, more in line with the added commentary he might add to a more normal broadcast than offering anything of historical accuracy, being unlikely that the daughter of an Elizabethan cook would make such a journey.

History or Entertainment – was Harben aiming for Authenticity?

Harben lends an air of authenticity to his broadcast by referring to supposedly real-life characters from history, which viewers may recognise or at least would recognise as sounding probable. The conies which Harben held aloft at the outside were described as coming from 'My Lord Oxford' to prepare. Lord Oxford may have been the real-life courtier in the Elizabethan era most prominently linked as a potential alternative author for the works of Shakespeare, although no defining details of him are given during the broadcast. Harben

prepares his dish to 'lay before Lord Oxford and those who he may honour' signifying a different role for the food than merely for enjoyment. The Elizabethan meal was as much theatre just as Harben's demonstration of it was.

Harben states that he has devised this 'conceit of coney' for Lord Oxford, but also that he has made some changes to the original recipe to include a few things Harben thought 'my Lord Oxford would prefer' – things which were richer and sweeter. Harben holds an old book in his hands, and looks as if to read the recipe from it as he mentions that it has long been a 'favourite in my master's family' to emphasise to viewers the perception that this recipe – which he refers to as a receipt to signify the language of Elizabethan times – is historic, established and authentic. Harben puts the book down, again emphasising that he is now in control of the recreation, and tells viewers 'up until now I have faithfully followed my Masters recipe ...from now on this is where my conceit shall start.'

Harben adds several herbs and spices to his dish, many of which evoke historical connotations. By using 'thyme, winter savoury, sweet marjoram, cloves and mace' and also pepper, bashed to a ground in a pewter mortal, and powdered nutmeg from a large jar, he gives the impression of history to the viewers by underlining the unfamiliar.

At the end of the demonstration, Harben breaks open his pastry castle 'conceit' and tastes a piece of the pastry to show viewers how delicious it was. This felt more like a 'normal' end to a Harben cookery programme than in the way in which an Elizabethan cook would act.

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Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed interpretations of food history, and although these undoubtedly took place prior to the arrival of television in Britain, I have shown that their own history stretches back much further into television history than those of recent memory. Philip Harben presented the first television historical interpretation of food and cookery in 1953 as part of a wider celebration of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, itself an important and historic occasion. Harben's imagined culinary tourism to Elizabethan times was part fantasy, part entertainment, part self-promotion and part inspiration, perhaps encouraging audiences to gain a mere flavour of the past enabling them to explore more.

Like most innovations, there was no blueprint or example to follow, however Harben's broadcast shares many familiar aspects of television food history today, elements which we would expect to see if we watched *The Supersizers*, Annie Gray and Lucy Worsley or the *Back in Time For...* programmes. He set is performance in a credible location, indicating 'history' if not an entirely credible Elizabethan location. His usual studio and performance setting was replaced with artifacts and items which again suggested 'history.' Harben's costume was instantly recognisable as Elizabethan, albeit in more of a fancy-dress way than as an authentic cooks' outfit of the time. He performed using dialogue and phrases which

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conjured up images of the past while still connecting himself to, and not alienating himself from, his present-day audiences. Harben referenced books, recipes and people from history to give his performance some legitimacy and authenticity.

Ultimately, Harben's performance and demonstration would be unlikely to stand up to close scrutiny and standards by historians who may be part of, or acting as consultants, on the programmes we consume today, nor would his broadcast fool 'serious' historians watching for a documentary type of food archaeology. The programme was intended to inform, educate and entertain as per the founding principles of the BBC. It succeeded in firing the imagination of audiences at the time, and subsequent writers, presenters and consumers of food history on television, who have more to thank Philip Harben for than they realised.

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Feast for the Soul: Food Imaginaries in a South Indian Performance

Sudha Gopalakrishnan

ABSTRACT: Purushatha Koottu is the subversion of the Indian concept of ‘purusharthas’, about codes of ethical living, often referred to in Indian philosophy as the four classic goals of life – these are *dharma* (doing righteous action), *artha* (acquiring material wealth), *kama* (indulging in sensual pleasures), and at the end of it all, *moksha* (attaining spiritual liberation). The Vidushaka’s monologue which goes on for five days is a deliberate inversion of these ideas introduced into the play in the form of a parody.

I am going to tell a story about a glutton. This is about how a glutton imagines and enjoys good food. This is a narrative oral performance called Asanam, which in Sanskrit language simply means, “eating.”. So obviously it is about food, in this case a grand feast. But first I have to provide the context of the story. It is a segment from a narrative performance called Purushatha Koottu (literally, a play about the four goals for a human to achieve). This is part of the performance of a Sanskrit play written in the ninth century called Subhadradhananjaya, the story of two lovers Subhadra and Dhananjaya. This performance is in the mode of the Sanskrit theatre of Kutiyattam which has an elaborate method of acting, taking several days to complete the story. The segment of Purusharthakooottu is a delightful digression from this main story where a comic character called Vidushaka, a friend of the hero of the play, holds the stage singlehandedly for four days, speaking in the vernacular Malayalam language and entertaining the audience with his seemingly silly, farcical dialogue. While the theatric grammar of the codified art of Kutiyattam remains less accessible to most people, the speech and actions of the Vidushaka are directed towards more popular tastes.

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Purushatha Koottu is the subversion of the Indian concept of ‘purusharthas’, about codes of ethical living, often referred to in Indian philosophy as the four classic goals of life— these are *dharma* (doing righteous action), *artha* (acquiring material wealth), *kama* (indulging in sensual pleasures), and at the end of it all, *moksha* (attaining spiritual liberation). The Vidushaka’s monologue which goes on for five days is a deliberate inversion of these ideas introduced into the play in the form of a parody.

So in this performance, though the Vidushaka belongs to a high-class Brahmin community, lives a precarious life. Over the years, his village and community itself have become so decadent, illiterate (the word ‘anadhīti’ attached to the name of the village

suggests their deplorable state of illiteracy) and also anarchical, with total collapse of morals. He tries to mediate and settle disputes, but here is no other way forward, but to substitute purusharthas with another code of ethics. One by one the four “original” purusharthas are subverted, driven by self-interest and a powerful survival instinct. Now he himself identifies four ‘alternatives’ to the ‘original’ *purusharthas*: seeking sensual pleasures (*vinoda*), swindling/cheating others (*vanchana*), enjoying a good feast (*asana*), and serving under a king for a carefree life (*rajaseva*). But to everyone’s delight, the new, re-articulated norm is light-hearted, silly, and mostly lovable, unlike the ethos of the dharma texts.

After the first day of introducing the context, each of the other four days of the performance is devoted to discussing the four themes. The monologue is in a conversational, and argumentative mode as though two people are talking to each other, with a chance to give multiple points of view, with exaggerated commentaries, nonsensical speech, parodies, illustrative sub-stories, The pleasure of knowing the inquisitorial role of the Vidushaka and the flair of his narration in the familiar setting of the *koottu* stage has made him a favourite with audiences down the centuries.

Asanam, which happens on the third day is about a grand feast held by a prominent brahmin family on the occasion of the first death anniversary of the head the family. The Vidushaka protagonist is lusting after the good vegetarian feast about to be served. He is a connoisseur of good food and has an insatiable appetite. However, the Asanam it is not merely about what happens during the feast, and is more than a gourmet’s fantasizing about good food. It is an encyclopaedia of culinary information, abundance of illustrative examples of food items framed or packaged in the parodic mode. The Vidushaka elaborates various incidents and stories that deal with food and eating. The performer moves forward and backward in time using the format of an imagined conversation between two people. He quotes parodic verses, intersperses the elite Sanskrit language with the local Malayalam, and interprets complex ideas in an entertaining language blended with humour, satire and mockery accessible to all. Within the structure of the narrative, the performer of Asanam has the challenging task of improvising and elaborating, citing verses and anecdotes, creating a world of imagination consistent with the times in which the play was choreographed but also adapting it to suit the taste of contemporary audiences.

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So what is all this about? It tells about the joys of eating seen through a glutton’s eyes. He warns at the outset that it is not easy to understand food, one needs to know many things, such as the different occasions for a feast, the different types and characteristics of hosts, varieties of food, and manner of serving, the amount of serving.

He makes some key statements:

The Best Occasion for a Feast

A birthday? A grand wedding, perhaps? The Vidushaka disagrees. The best social event for a feast, he says, is the celebration of the anniversary of the death of the head of a family. This is because

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On such an occasion, all the people of the Anadhitimangalam village set out for the house where the feast is being held. There is great excitement in the air. Once the group reaches the venue, they are a bit dismayed at the large crowds, but are reassured when they tour the storehouse and granary inside the house, where ample food is being prepared. (In case it bears remembering: the Vidushaka acts this entire tableau himself.) Many verses are devoted to describing each element of the feast: large mounds of rice, huge piles of vegetables, enormous pots containing oil, heaps of fruits, towers of coconuts, and massive cooking vessels. With the depiction of each item in graphic, elaborate terms, the crowd's craving for food increases. There are charged accounts of how the food is served. When the distribution of the food starts from the first row, the anticipation grows, and the Vidushaka, picturing himself in the story, almost swoons in excitement by the time the food reaches him.

Rice, Sustainer and Nourisher of the World, Is like a King

Just like a king is loved by all and has an honoured position among his people, rice is undeniably the king of foods. For example, just like a king's arrival is accompanied by drumbeats, when rice arrives on the scene during a feast, the announcement comes first, when tinkling vessels make a pleasurable sensation all around. Comparable to a king's retinue, rice accompanied by main dishes and side dishes. It is not possible to imagine a situation without a king, exactly like it is impossible to think of a world without rice. Just think of a situation when someone consumes all accompanying dishes—different types of curries—without the overall predominance of rice. Everything gets jumbled up in the system, exactly like how a country becomes anarchical without a ruler.

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A Feast with Different Courses and Delicacies for Each Course is like a Beautiful, Well-Adorned Woman

Now his imagination goes wilder. He speaks passionately about the aesthetic aspects of food, and this leads to his second major statement. It is not a mere assertion, but is established with every detail, with minute comparisons brought out, acknowledging the virtues of each and every food item. For example, when white, fresh butter melts slowly over a mound of steaming rice, if you keep gazing at it, you can detect a glow, like the soft smile of a lovely woman, can't you? Now come closer – softly fried eggplant, shining, luscious like her lips. I am not going into more details here, it gets fantastical, absurd by the minute but suffice it to say that minute comparisons between her body and aspects of food.

There Are Four Varieties of Hosts: The Gracious-Churlish, Churlish-Gracious, Churlish-Churlish, and Gracious-Gracious.

Coming to the next point, who serves food, and how? Not everyone who invites you for a feast is a right host. This debate takes him to analyse the characteristics an ideal host.

Feast for the Soul

Don't ever go for a meal at the first category, the gracious-churlish (appearing to be gracious but in effect not welcoming or offering food) if you are really in need, perhaps you could go to the second, churlish-gracious (appears to be inhospitable but in the end gives a good meal). Never to the third churlish-churlish (needless to say), and of course, visiting the fourth one's gracious-gracious's house is always a delightful experience. The Vidushaka has delightful anecdotes, on the experiences of visiting the houses of each of these four kinds of hosts. For example, the last one tells his guest:

“Great, come, come in. I'm delighted you are here with us today. You look a bit tired, please rest for a while. Here's some water, please wash your face. You came at the right time. The meal is just about ready. Do you need to take a bath and freshen up before that?”

These words are heard so often at his home that even his child and the parrot inside the cage repeat them each time!

He praises the dishes one by one. He speaks directly to the bitter gourd:

*Young babies of bitter gourd clusters, birthed by creeper mothers!
Spattered with green along the fields as an embellishment to the hedge
Wafting and billowing in the breeze, like blessed gifts
crushing the arrogance of nectar—please come, come to my hands now*

He pays homage to a mixed vegetable curry called *olan*:

*Pumpkin, cucumber and eggplant
combining with fresh string beans—
Ah, if lovely blue eyed women served them
Olan, olan is enough—why look for a hundred others things?*

He worships *pāyasam*, Kerala's much beloved dessert:

*When superb sugar mingles exquisitely
with purest milk, payasam is born.
When heavenly nectar sought a contest
payasam was judged superior
and nectar fled in shame.*

When the grand feast concludes, our gluttonous brahmin is so pleased that he blesses (or, rather, curses) the eldest member of the family to “conduct another such event in the house exactly twelve months from now!”

Entertaining, sophisticated, witty, and very powerful, Asanam is an invaluable resource of information on food and food culture, handed down from the semi-urban Brahmin community of Kerala of the sixteenth century. While there is a pronounced Kerala-Malayali flavour to the narration and performance, it offers both philosophical insights and a set of practical recommendations on how to eat, live and survive in a harsh world where deceit and self-interest reign supreme. But delightfully, these complex ideas are re-articulated in a light-hearted, silly, and mostly lovable manner.

Food as Fun and Fantasy in the Old Comedy of Ancient Athens

Christopher Grocock

ABSTRACT: Wild flights of imagination were the bedrock of ancient Athenian comedy as it is represented by the surviving plays of Aristophanes and numerous fragments (principally in Athenaeus). Several important scenes in the surviving plays make extensive reference to foodstuffs and foodways to make comic points, especially in Aristophanes *Knights*, *Wasps* and *Peace*. These passages have often been discussed in the past from a literary viewpoint, with great emphasis on the symbolism of the foodstuffs referred to and with attempts to establish a mainly imaginary context for the scenes developed. There has been rather less emphasis on the precise nature of the 'original' foodstuffs as the vehicle for developing the humorous situations in the plays – food as the basis for the fantastical in the imagination of the authors. This paper seeks to 'start from the other end', as it were, and by looking at the basic processes of initial production of the types of food referred to and the distribution routes suggested for some of the specific items mentioned in the plays (cheese being the most obvious) with reference to the possibilities available to fifth-century Athens from both a geophysical (i.e. known transport links) and the political context(s) in which fifth-century BC Athens found itself during the different stages of conflict during its protracted wars with Sparta. This paper explores how the scenes created in the comedies may be interpreted as 'fun made by referring to real food,' rather than seeing them as completely or purely fantastical elements in the comedies, which has been the tendency in studies on these topics to date. It examines the possibilities that one of the core ingredients in two typical comic scenes – the Sicilian cheese – was a real product, actually transported to 5th century Athens in sufficient quantities for it to be a comic staple. In this, it takes a different approach to purely theoretical literary approaches, combining an examination of ancient texts and archaeology with current farming practice to establish what kinds of cheese might have referred to in the ancient application of invention to everyday realities.

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In two passages in the comedies of Aristophanes, *Peace* and *Wasps*, the author makes rapid references to Sicilian cheese. These remarks are central to part of the comic (and geopolitical) points he is making in the scene from *Peace*, but the one in *Wasps* is throwaway, incidental almost, and yet it is there. Aristophanes wrote comedies, but as every comic playwright knows, comedy is a serious business; more so for Aristophanes, since his aim was not just to make an audience laugh, but to make them laugh so much that they laughed more at his work than his rivals in a drama competition. He wanted to win, and every word had

to count. So why *Sicilian* cheese? Was there something intrinsically funny about it for an ancient Athenian audience? It made me wonder. It also made me wonder what sort of cheese it was that he and his audience might have had in mind.

Let us begin with the two scenes. I have included the Greek text for anyone who wishes to may see them easily; the translations are my own.¹ I have emphasized the relevant words in bold.

First, *Wasps*.² This scene is ridiculous and fantastical enough without the cheese course: to satisfy his lust for passing stiff sentences in the lawcourts (an obsession of which his son Bdelykleon wishes to cure him), the old man Philokleon is presiding at home over the trial of his dog Labes (Snatcher), accused of theft by another dog, simply called ‘Dog’. The whole scene is wryly observed by Xanthias the slave:

	Φιλοκλέων	τίς ἄρ' ὁ φεύγων;	
	Βδελυκλέων	οὗτος.	
	Φιλοκλέων	ὅσον ἀλώσεται.	
	Βδελυκλέων	ἀκούετ' ἤδη τῆς γραφῆς. ἐγράψατο κύνων Κυδαθηναίεὺς Λάβητ' Αἰξωνέα τὸν τυρὸν ἀδικεῖν ὅτι μόνος κατήσθειεν τὸν Σικελικόν . τίμημα κλωδὸς σύκινος.	895
152	Φιλοκλέων	θάνατος μὲν οὖν κύνειος, ἦν ἀπαξ ἀλῶ.	
	Βδελυκλέων	καὶ μὴν ὁ φεύγων οὐτοσὶ Λάβης πάρα.	
	Φιλοκλέων	ὦ μιάρὸς οὗτος: ὡς δὲ καὶ κλέπτον βλέπει, οἶον σεσηρῶς ἐξαπατήσειν μ' οἶεται. ποῦ δ' ἔσθ' ὁ διώκων, ὁ Κυδαθηναίεὺς κύνων;	900
	Κύνων	αὔ αὔ.	
	Βδελυκλέων	πάρεστιν οὗτος.	
	Ξανθίας	ἕτερος οὗτος αὔ Λάβης. ἀγαθὸς γ' ὑλακτεῖν καὶ διαλείχειν τὰς χύτρας	
	Βδελυκλέων	σίγα, κάθιζε: σὺ δ' ἀναβάς κατηγόρει.	905
	Φιλοκλέων	φέρε νυν ἅμα τήνδ' ἐγγεάμενος κάγῳ ῥοφῶ.	
	Σωσίας	τῆς μὲν γραφῆς ἠκούσαθ' ἦν ἐγραψάμην ἄνδρες δικασταὶ τουτονί. δεινότατα γὰρ ἔργων δέδρακε κάμὲ καὶ τὸ ῥυππαπαῖ. ἀποδράς γὰρ ἐς τὴν γωνίαν τυρὸν πολὺν κατεσικέλιζε κἀνέπλητ' ἐν τῷ σκότῳ –	910

Dog You have heard for yourselves the charge which I have brought,
Gentlemen of the jury, against the defendant. For he has done
The direst deeds both again and against every man jack of you.
He sneaked off into a corner and – well, he ensicilized³
Loads of cheese and woofed it down in the dark.

Philokleon By Zeus, it's clear he did! He's just now belched cheese
most evilly at me, the loathsome creature!

Dog And he didn't give me any when I asked for some.
Think about it – who'll be able to do you a good turn,
Is somebody doesn't throw a bit to me, your watchdog?

And later, 'Dog' adds this further accusation:

Dog And don't find him innocent – why, of all the dogs he's by far
the most eat-it-by-yourselfing man there is,
he's sailed right round the mortar in a circle
and gnawed the hard rind off the city-states.

154 There is pure Aristophanic fantasy here – one dog prosecutes another in a makeshift Athenian-model courtroom scene set in a humble domestic setting; later, witnesses called include a dish, a pestle, a cheese grater, a brazier, a cooking-pot and other half-burnt kitchen equipment. More than that there is political satire on two leading politicians of the day – the Greek word for 'Dog', *kuōn*, sounds a little like Aristophanes' principal target, the demagogue Kleon, who styled himself as 'the people's guard-dog'. *Labēs* or 'Snatcher' sounds like another politician, Laches. The *cheese* represents their ill-gotten gains – and one of 'Dog's main accusations is that 'Snatcher' wouldn't share it when asked!

But what about the cheese? It is clearly (and obviously) *Sicilian* – the adjective is placed at the start of a line in an emphatic position, and comes at the end of the charge, which might more literally be rendered 'cheese – alone – he ate up/ - the Sicilian stuff'. Later, 'Snatcher' is accused of 'ensicilizing' it. And finally, in a glorious confusion of realities and fantasy, he 'went round gnawing the hard rind off all the city-states'. So *hard* cheeses which have developed a solid crust are implied: τὸ σκίρον means 'the hard part' – Sommerstein translates it as 'rind', while Barrett interprets it as 'plaster' and claims in a note (somewhat oddly, I think) that 'cheeses were encased in plaster to keep them fresh'.⁴ We are dealing with a mature, hard cheese here: the presence as a witness of the 'cheese grater' or τυρόκνηστιν, which implies that the cheese itself was hard as well. The situation Aristophanes creates is utterly fantastical, but one of his building blocks seems to be a product familiar to his audience – a hard cheese with a rind, from Sicily. As we shall see, this was almost certainly a sheep's cheese – something like a pecorino romano – and in the scene devised by the playwright, the cheese need not be regarded as fantasy at all; it is used to implant in the

audience's mind the idea that the greedy politicians had helped themselves to some of the cities' revenues. The idea that 'he's sailed right round the mortar in a circle and gnawed the hard rind off the city-states' is a glorious conflation of concepts which leaves the mind reeling, though one can easily imagine a dog nibbling off the accessible parts of a cheese within reach. In fact, it happened to us. Our old dog Winston was once left in the back of the car with some provisions we had bought, including a very large piece of pecorino. We felt he was safe to be left as he had never eaten shopping of any kind before. On this occasion the temptation proved too great, however, and 'gnawing all round' is precisely what happened! We did not need to put him on trial.

The second scene from Aristophanes is from *Peace*, a satire produced in 421 BC on the protracted war between Athens and Sparta, the deity War is watched by the hero Trygaeos as they demonstrate their powers of destruction by putting ingredients which sound like or remind the audience of different ancient Greek states into a giant mortar, ready to be pounded together to make a *muttōtós*, a paste often served with fish, and in consistency not unlike the Latin *moretum*:⁵

Πόλεμος	ἰὼ βροτοὶ βροτοὶ βροτοὶ πολυτλήμονες, ὡς αὐτίκα μάλα τὰς γνάθους ἀλγήσετε.	
Τρυγαῖος	ὦναξ Ἄπολλον τῆς θυείας τοῦ πλάτους, ὅσον κακόν, καὶ τοῦ Πολέμου τοῦ βλέμματος. ἄρ' οὐτός ἐστ' ἐκεῖνος ὃν καὶ φεύγομεν, ὁ δεινός, ὁ ταλαύρινος, ὁ κατὰ τοῖν σκελοῖν;	240
Πόλεμος	ἰὼ Πρασιαὶ τρεῖς ἄθλιαὶ καὶ πεντάκις καὶ πολλοδεκάκις, ὡς ἀπολείσθε τήμερον.	
Τρυγαῖος	τουτὶ μὲν ἄνδρες οὐδὲν ἡμῖν πρᾶγμά πω: τὸ γὰρ κακὸν τοῦτ' ἐστὶ τῆς Λακωνικῆς.	245
Πόλεμος	ὦ Μέγαρα Μέγαρ' ὡς ἐπιτετρίψεσθ' αὐτίκα ἀπαξάπαντα καταμεμυττωτευμένα.	
Τρυγαῖος	βαβαὶ βαβαιᾶξ ὡς μεγάλα καὶ δριμέα τοῖσι Μεγαρεῦσιν ἐνέβαλεν τὰ κλαύματα.	
Πόλεμος	ἰὼ Σικελία καὶ σὺ δ' ὡς ἀπόλλυσαι.	250
Τρυγαῖος	οἶα πόλις τάλαινα διακναισθήσεται.	
Πόλεμος	φέρ' ἐπιχέω καὶ τὸ μέλι τουτὶ τάττικόν.	
Τρυγαῖος	οὔτος παραινῶ σοι μέλιτι χρῆσθ' ἀτέρω. τετρώβολον τοῦτ' ἐστὶ: φείδου τάττικου.	

- War: Alas for you mortals, mortals, mortals, much-suffering ones.
How much your jaws will ache, and soon!
- Trygaeos: O Lord Apollo, look at how wide that mortar is!
What an evil thing it is, and look how War is scowling!
Is this the one we try to flee from, 240
The terrible one, the shield-bearer, the one
who makes us shit ourselves?
- War: Alas Prasiae, city of leeks, three times wretched, yes, and five times,
and ten times, how you'll be smashed up today!
- Trygaeos: At least, gentlemen, this doesn't affect us yet:
For this trouble is Sparta's. 245
- War: Alas Megara, Megara, how you will be mashed up at once,
Thoroughly beaten into a paste (*myttotos*).
- Trygaeos: Oh no Oh noooo, what great and odiferous wailings
He's thrown in for the people of Megara!
- War: Alas for Sicily, how you are ruined too! 250
- Trygaeos: What a wretched community will be grated up!
- War: Come on, let me pour on some Attic honey as well.
- Trygaeos: Hey you, I suggest you use some other honey.
That's the four-obol kind; go easy with the Attic stuff!

The mention in lines 250 and 251 to Sicily being dragged into the pan-Hellenic conflict uses the verb *διακναισθήσεται*, 'will be grated up'. This is not unique to Aristophanes and elsewhere he uses of a bad actor ruining a play; but its root *διακναιώ* means 'to grate' or scrape away', and a *κνήστις* was a grater, which (in its compounded form *τυρόκνηστιν*, 'cheese-grater') we saw was a witness in the courtroom scene in *Wasps*. Here too, the link to Sicilian cheese must have been an easy one for the audience to make. War was pounding the four Hellenic areas mentioned like leeks, garlic, cheese and honey; behind the pantomime-like scene lay a contemporary political reality; all these areas had been badly affected by the war between Athens (and its allies) and Sparta (and its allies) and the suffering was real. Aristophanes' play was produced as peace negotiations were reaching a (successful if temporary) conclusion. But the association of Sicily and a hard, grateable cheese which reached Athens from there is once again a plain one to see. The fantasy is built on familiar objects, of which this cheese is one.

But before we look at what kind of cheese this might have been, it is worth examining the surviving ancient evidence from the other end of the trade route – Sicily itself.

Sicily and ancient sources on cheese

Dairy produce – and cheese in particular, was an essential part of ancient foodways, and the fact that the raw material – milk – can be turned into a nourishing, valuable, lasting and transportable product was not lost on either Greeks or Romans, and recent finds show that it was valued in Asia Minor and Egypt as well.⁶

Its appeal was and is due to the combinations involved in its manufacture of ‘aroma, bacteria and serendipity’ whose complexities are discussed by Sarah Freeman and Silvija Davidson in their helpful explanations of the different factors involved.⁷ Its value

from a dietetic perspective – depending on the individual – was well appreciated by the Hippocratic writers: the treatise *On Ancient Medicine* assures us that ‘Cheese does not harm all people who can eat as much of it without the slightest adverse effects . . . but others suffer dreadfully’ (*VM* 20).⁸

Sicily, ‘land of plenty to archaic Greeks and Carthaginians’ as Andrew Dalby so neatly puts it, was a source not only of luxury foodstuffs but also of ideas, in the shape of both cooks and cookbooks, by the 5th BC, and Sicilian luxuries made the term ‘Sicilian tables’ a synonym for gastronomic pleasures’. The potential of such luxuries may even have stimulated ancient Greek (and especially Athenian) expansion in the area.⁹ Sicily was certainly an attractive target for Athenian expansion, as Thucydides’ account of the Sicilian expedition recorded in Books 6 and 7 of his *Histories* makes plain: Athens had several allies on the island, but were also (by 415 BC at least) opposed by Syracuse.

Other ancient references to Sicily as a source of luxury provender comes from the comic poet Hermippus, who indicates the extent and volume of commerce across the Greek world in this period:

‘Tell me now, Muses whose dwellings are on Olympus, how many good things Dionysus has brought here to men in his black ship since he plied the wine-dark sea: from Cyrene, [silphium] stem and oxhide; from the Hellespont, mackerel and all salt fish; from [Thessaly], wheatmeal and ox ribs; from Siralces an itch for the Spartans; from Perdiccas many ships full of lies. The Syracusans send us pigs and cheese; and the Corcyreans, may Poseidon damn them in their slick ships, for they have shifty thoughts ... Africa provides much ivory for sale; Rhodes, raisins and dreamy figs. From Euboea, pears and fat apples; captives from Phrygia; mercenaries from Arcadia. Pagasae sends slaves and jailbirds; the Paphlagonians sent the chestnuts



A bronze alloy cheese-grater in the form of a goat. Found in a man's tomb, Asia Minor, 6th – 5th centuries BC

and glossy almonds which are the ornaments of the feast. Then Phoenecia, bread wheat and the fruit of the date palm; Carthage, rugs and fancy pillows'.¹⁰

'On the basis of this and other sources of the sixth and fifth centuries' comments Andrew Dalby, 'one may distinguish some true local contributions to the developing gastronomy of the Aegean coasts and the wider Greek world'.¹¹ He goes on to confirm what we have already looked at in this paper, namely that 'Sicilian cheese was quite a commonplace of Athenian comedy. It crops up often enough to show that its reputation is more than a literary reminiscence of the Cyclops episode of the *Odyssey*, which later readers universally pictured as taking place in Sicily. The Cyclops was certainly said to make goats' milk and ewes' milk cheese (*Od.* 9. 218-33), as Athenian comedies and satyr plans often recalled.¹² Antiphanes 233 [*Epitome* 27d] lists 'a cook from Elis, a jug from Argos, Phliasian wine, bedspreads from Corinth, fish of Sicyon, flute girls of Aegium, Sicilian cheese, perfume from Athens, Boeotian eels' in a combination which Dalby suggests may be 'a satirical feast for some temporary political alliance'.¹³ From the fourth century we have confirmation from Aristotle (*History of Animals* 522a22) that 'Goat's milk is mixed with sheep's milk in Sicily, and wherever sheep's milk is abundant'.¹⁴

Ancient cheese manufacture

158 Roman sources provide us with some helpful information on manufacture and storage. They are somewhat later than Aristophanes, but equally clearly are helpful in understanding ancient production techniques, if not methods of using the cheese, which were probably little changed since then. Cato 76 provides us with a recipe for *placenta* involving 14lb of sheep's cheese but this is clearly fresh – he says it must be *ne acidum et bene recens*, 'not sharp and nicely fresh'. Such cheese would not have been suitable for long-distance trade. There is rather more detail to be found in Varro and Columella. Varro, *De Agricultura* ii. 11. 4, tells us in his brief mention of cheese-making that the period for making cheese extends from the rising of the Pleiades in spring until the Pleiades in summer,' which the Loeb editors interpret as from 10th May to mid-July. Columella xii.10 – 13 lists several 'things which ought to be collected and stored during the summer about the time of the harvest or even when it is over,' of which cheese *usibus domesticis*, 'for use in the home,' is the last, on the grounds that in this season, the cheese produces very little whey.¹⁵

Columella's exposition of cheesemaking in book vii section 8 of his work is by far the most detailed: quality of the milk and methods of curdling are set out in great detail, and he notes the practice of the *rustici* to press the fresh cheeses with weights to squeeze the whey out. Once removed from its basket, the cheese is put in a shaded storeroom and sprinkled with salt. Then it is pressed a second time with weights for nine days, before being washed in fresh water and stored in wickerwork trays to dry out under controlled conditions. *hoc genus casei potest etiam trans maria permitti*, he says at vii. 8. 6: 'this type of

cheese can even be exported overseas'. This seems to fit most closely with the kind of cheese Aristophanes was suggesting, though it is worth noting that Columella's detailed account of cheese-making comes straight after his discussion on keeping *goats*, not *sheep*, and goats are clearly indicated in the discussion about fresh cheeses in the same chapter, immediately following the comments about cheese for export.

Pliny the Elder, a contemporary of Columella (before AD 79), lists all the cheeses which he knew or had heard came to Rome in his *Historia Naturalis* xi. 97.240: the most highly-praised came from the districts of Lozère and Gévaudan, in the region of Nîmes (but it had a short shelf-life); from Alpine pastures came two sorts of cheese; but more useful is Pliny's comment that from the Apennines came 'Coebanum cheese, mostly made from sheeps' milk,' and from the lands bordering Tuscany and Liguria, came 'Luni cheese, remarkable for its size, since individual cheeses weigh up to 1,000lb'. Finally, we should note *trans maria vero Bithynus fere in gloria est*, '(Among cheeses) from overseas, the Bithynian cheese is practically put on a pedestal'. Bithynia (southern Turkey in modern parlance) is a longer voyage than Sicily to Athens ever was.¹⁶

Current cheese production in the region

At this point it might be helpful to consider what sorts of cheeses are produced in Greece and in Sicily nowadays. I do not pretend to be an expert in these matters and would welcome clarification on the discussion which follows, which is obtained from the sources cited. However it was interesting to note as I embarked on my brief exploration of the available material what differences there are in regional varieties; in particular, I found it fascinating that *Greek* (?equating to ancient *Athenian* practice?) cheese production is nowadays dominated by the manufacture of feta, which forms a central plank of modern culinary offerings for the visitor.¹⁷ Feta is not the sole type of cheese produced, though sheep and goat's milk cheese predominate: as Diane Cochilas notes, 'Cow's milk cheeses exist but only a handful of Greek islands ... the mountainous Greek landscape generally is not conducive to cattle grazing. There are approximately 70 distinct cheeses produced in Greece today, although many are similar and fall into one of several broad categories'.¹⁸ In particular we may note these hard sheep or sheep/goat cheeses: *Formaella of Parnassos*; *Kefalotiri*, made in Macedonia, Sterea Hellas, the Peloponnese, Thessaly, Crete, Epirus, and in the Ionian and Cycladic islands; *Graviera* of Naxos and of Crete; and a mixture of the two last kinds, the *Kefalograviera* made in Epirus, Etolokanania and Evritania. These cheeses are all ripened for at least three months (at least five, in the case of *Graviera* from Crete) and have a moisture content of 35-36% and fat content varying from 28.8% in the *Kefalotiri* type to 40% in the *Graviera* of Crete.¹⁹ The fat contents of the cheeses show how it concentrates the value of the raw milk as food; typically, sheep's milk contains 9% fat, and 5.7% protein (only reindeer milk has a higher fat and protein content), while 10 litres

of sheep's milk will produce about 2 kg. of cheese.²⁰ The setting time of sheep's milk cheese is less than 45 minutes. Presswork (shaping the cheese and squeezing out whey) takes place on the 2nd to 4th days, and the cheese can then be put into storage. In temperatures over 12°C, ripening is fast.²¹

In Sicily, the picture is rather different, and a number of sheep or sheep/goat cheeses produced nowadays would serve as the rind-covered, grateable type Aristophanes seems to have had in mind. These are the *Pecorino Siciliano* and *Pecorino Pepato*, both aged 2 – 4 months, and often used grated; the *Piacentu Ennesse*; the *Calcagno*, aged up to 10 months, and also often grated; and the *Maiorchino* from Messina and the northern coastal regions, which is aged between 6 – 8 months, and can be matured up to a maximum of 24 months and can weigh up to 20kg.²² As I have said, this information has had to be garnered from available internet sources. When lockdowns are firmly in the past, a regional exploration of local cheeses has got to be incorporated in a tour of these areas! What is curious, however, is the way in which modern regionality in cheese production reflects a lack of hard cheeses in the area round Athens. Was this also the case 2,500 years ago?

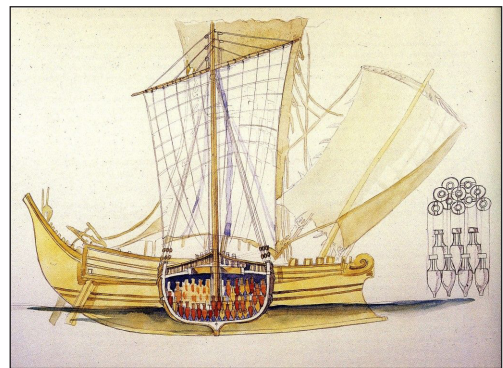
How was the cheese transported?

The type of vessel used to transport goods round the Mediterranean has now been researched very thoroughly, and is exemplified by the reconstructed vessel *Kyrenia II*.²³ About 14 m in length, the vessel displaces about 25 tons and has an average speed of 4–5 knots depending on sailing conditions.

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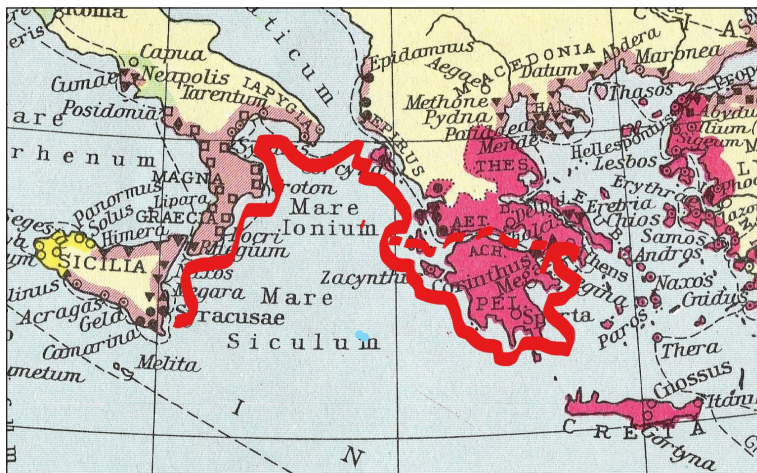
What routes were taken?

We get a confirmation of a trade route from Thucydides' narrative about the Athenian expedition to Sicily in 415 BC, in *History* 6.44: the naval force sailed from Corcyra and crossed to Iapygia and Tarentum, then followed the coast down to Rhegium before crossing the straits of Messina and reaching Sicily. We can also note that on a return journey from Sicily to Athens, it was at Thurii that Alcibiades jumped ship to avoid a political trial (*History* 6.61). In addition, evidence of shipwrecks showing likely routes can confirm the accepted pattern of ancient trading – namely, that ships'



captains tended to hug the coastlines as far as possible, and kept a ‘weather-eye’ open in case they needed to make port in a hurry.²⁴

The narrower arrows across the gulf of Corinth indicate the time which might have been saved if a



ship was able to use the so-called Diolkos or overland ship crossing, saving the long (and potentially hostile) route around the Peloponnese, though it should be noted that David Pettegrew has cast doubt on the logistics of colportage, and in any case Corinth was in the enemy camp as far as the Athens of Aristophanes’ day was concerned. The longer route was probably the one taken.²⁵ It is some 1,000 nautical miles in length, as opposed to the direct distance of about 400 nautical miles from the eastern littoral of Sicily to Athens.

Another factor needs to be borne in mind – the winds and weather. To the west of the Peloponnese, the prevailing winds come from the north west. This supported the route from Sicily via Calabria and then crossing over to Corfu.²⁶ Sailing at 4–5 knots over a 12-hour day, a sailing vessel could cover 50-60 nautical miles without too much trouble.²⁷ Thus, a journey round the southern Peloponnese from Sicily to Athens might have taken about twenty days, perhaps less, but often probably more.

This would probably not have affected the quality of the cheese by the time it reached Athens; a ship’s hold would have been shaded and at a relatively ambient temperature, and the salinity of the sea-voyage would probably not have added to the saltiness of the cheese as it was prepared for transportation. It is generally accepted that trade by sea was carried out from mid-spring to mid-autumn; cheese made in one year might well have been stored prior to early sailing in a subsequent year. Matching this to the seasonality of cheese production, it also seems practicable for cheese made in the early season (i.e. from mid-May) to have been ready after three month’s maturing for shipment in mid-August; it might even have been shipped in mid-July, and the time spent in the ship’s hold could have expedited its final maturation. This certainly seems to have been the case with the transportation of ancient *liquamen* or fish sauce.²⁸

In conclusion, despite the utterly fantastical, off-the-wall scenes which Aristophanes (and Athenian Old Comedy generally) made a staple of his plays, it can be seen that they

were built around everyday, familiar objects – one of which was Sicilian cheese. Likely types of this cheese, of which a pecorino would be a likely modern type, made mainly from sheep’s milk, still form a major part of high-quality Sicilian agricultural produce. Its production, preservation and conveyance in the 5th century BC over the long sea-route to Athens was not a fantasy at all, but was one of the ‘hooks of realism’ around which the comic fantasies revolved.

Notes

1. Greek texts downloaded from the Perseus collection of the University of Tufts, Chicago, at <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0043%3Acard%3D903>, accessed on 28/4/2021. *Wasps* – the trial scene, lines 894 – 914 (produced at the Lenaea in 422 BC); *Peace*, War and Havoc stir things up for the Greeks, lines 238 – 254 (produced at the Dionysia, 421 BC).
2. Commentaries ad loc. by Alan H. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes Wasps: The Commentaries of Aristophanes Volume 4* (Aris & Philips: Warminster, Wiltshire, 1983); more recently, Zachary P. Biles and S. Douglas Olson, *Aristophanes, Wasps* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2015); fine helpful translations in the *Loeb Classical Library* series by Jeffery Henderson (*Aristophanes: Clouds, Wasps, Peace*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1998) and David Barrett (*Aristophanes: The Wasps/ The Poet and the Women/ The Frogs*. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth, 1964.) I have re-allocated the speaking parts, which are a matter of confusion in the manuscript tradition, to make more sense of the final outburst.
3. *ensicilized* is Sommerstein’s rendering of Aristophanes’ invented verb *κατεσικέλιζε* (one of his favourite tricks), rendered ‘sicilized’ by Olson in the Loeb, ‘siciliated’ by Barrett in the Penguin translation, and ‘ensicilized’
4. Sommerstein, ad loc; Barrett, n. 33 p. 217.
5. Commentaries ad loc. by S. Douglas Olson, *Aristophanes, Peace* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998), pp. 117-121; Alan H. Sommerstein, *The Comedies of Aristophanes; vol. 5, Peace* (Aris & Philips: Warminster, 2nd corrected impression 1990), pp.144-5. On *moretum* see Chrostopher Grocock and Sally Grainger, ‘Moretum – a Peasant Lunch Revisited,’ in Harlan Walker (ed.), *The Meal* (Prospect Books: Totnes), pp. 95-103. Déry, ‘Milk and Dairy Products’ p. 119, suggests that the cheese used in the poem is a ‘round cheese’ and ‘evidently a hard (one) stored up against times of want.’
6. For a helpful survey see Joan P. Alcock, ‘Milk and its products in Ancient Rome,’ in Harlan Walker (ed.), *Milk: Beyond the Dairy: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 1999* (Prospect Books: Totnes, Devon, 2000), 31 – 8, at pp. 31, 33. There is a useful history of cheese in Harold McGee, *On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen* (British edition Harper Collins, London 1991) and pp. 3-6. For the Asia Minor find, see <https://www.imj.org.il/en/collections/431984>; for the Egyptian find, see <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/16/science/oldest-cheese-ever-egypt-tomb.html>.
7. Sarah Freeman, Silvija Davidson, ‘The Origins of Taste in Milk, Cream, Butter and Cheese,’ in Harlan Walker (ed.), *Milk: Beyond the Dairy: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 1999* (Prospect Books: Totnes, Devon, 2000), 161-67.
8. Cited by Elizabeth Craik, ‘Hippocratic Diata,’ in John Wilkins, David Harvey and Mike Dobson, *Food in Antiquity* (University of Exeter Press: Exeter, 1995), pp.343 – 350, at p. 347.
9. A. Dalby, *Food in the Ancient World from A to Z* (Routledge: London and New York, 2003), p. 302. See also Mario Lombardo, ‘Food and “Frontier” in the Greek Colonies of South Italy,’ in John Wilkins, David Harvey and Mike Dobson, *Food in Antiquity* (University of Exeter Press: Exeter, 1995), pp. 256-272, and his discussion of ‘Sybaritic Luxury’ at pp. 267-69.
10. Hermippus 63 [*Epitome* 27e], translation by A. Dalby, *Siren Feasts* (Routledge: London and New York, 1996), p. 105; the original text from R. Kassel and C. Austin (eds.), *P C G: Poetae Comici Graeci* (9 vols.; De Gruyter: Berlin, 1983 -).
11. Dalby, *Siren Feasts*, p. 105
12. Dalby, *Siren Feasts*, p. 108, and n. 51.

13. Dalby, *Siren Feasts*, p. 125.
14. Dalby, *Food in the Ancient World*, pp. 80-81.
15. Cato and Varro, ed. and trans. William David Hooper, rev. Harrison Boyd Ash (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Loeb Classical Library; Harvard University Press/ William Heinemann, 1935); Columella, *On Agriculture*, ed. and trans. E. S. Forster and Edward H. Heffner (3 vols. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Loeb Classical Library; Harvard University Press/ William Heinemann, 1968).
16. Pliny the Elder, *Historia Naturalis*, ed. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Loeb Classical Library; Harvard University Press/ William Heinemann, 2nd ed. 1983).
17. See for example <https://athensattica.com/things-to-do/gastronomy/>, accessed 16.4.2021; the website of the Costelaros Cheese factory, <https://www.greekgastronomyguide.gr/en/item/kostarelos-cheese-dairy-markopoulo-attica/>, accessed 22.5.2021, and <http://www.realgreekfeta.gr/history-of-feta/>, accessed 16.4.2021.
18. <https://www.dianekochilas.com/intro-to-greek-cheeses/>, accessed 22.5.2021.
19. <http://www.greece.org/hellas/cheese.html>, accessed 22.5.2021.
20. K. Biss, *Practical Cheesemaking* (Ramsbury, Marlborough, Wiltshire: The Crowood Press, 1988), pp. 8, 29.
21. Biss, pp. 81, 105ff., 110. See also the detailed description of production methods in Columella, *De Re Rustica* 7.8 1 – 4, and the summary in Alcock, ‘Milk and its Products’, pp. 36-7, and Carol A. Déry, ‘Milk and Dairy Products in the Roman Period’, in Harlan Walker (ed.), *Milk: Beyond the Dairy: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 1999* (Prospect Books: Totnes, Devon, 2000), 117 – 25, at pp. 118-19.
22. Information taken from <https://www.tasteatlas.com/most-popular-cheeses-in-sicily>, accessed 22.5.2021. See also https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Main-Traditional-Landscapes-in-Sicily_fig3_254315240, accessed 22.5.2021.
23. There is an interesting presentation on Kyrenia II at https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky_Institute/courses/maritimearchaeology11/files/19115628.pdf, <http://www.cypnet.co.uk/ncyprus/city/kyrenia/castle/shipwreck/index.html> and http://www.learningsites.com/Kyrenia/Kyrenia_home.php, accessed 11.5.2021.
24. Strauss, J. (2013). *Shipwrecks Database*. Version 1.0. Accessed 11.5.2021: oxrep.classics.ox.ac.uk/databases/shipwrecks_database/; thanks are due to Sally Grainger for navigating my way to this. See also <http://www.ancientportsantiques.com/ancient-sailing/>, accessed 11.5.2021, which contains a wealth of clear and fascinating information about ancient ships and shipping routes.
25. See <https://www.sailingissues.com/corinth-canal-diolkos.html>, accessed 22/5/2021; David F. Pettegrew, ‘The Diolkos of Corinth,’ *American Journal of Archaeology* 115 (2011), 549-74, at https://www.academia.edu/7948794/The_Diolkos_of_Corinth, accessed 22.5.2021.
26. Citation and map details from <http://www.ancientportsantiques.com/ancient-sailing/>, accessed 11.5.2021, which contains a wealth of clear and fascinating information about ancient ships and shipping routes.
27. <http://www.ancientportsantiques.com/ancient-sailing/#3>, accessed 27.5.2021.
28. See Sally Grainger, *The Story of Garum: Fermented Fish Sauce and Salted Fish in the Ancient World* (Routledge: London and New York, 2021), pp. 168-9.

The Curious Case of Nala's Mirror on Cooking: Innovation in Medieval Indian Cookbook Writing

Andrea Gutiérrez

164 ABSTRACT: *Nala's Mirror on Cooking* (the *Nala Pākadarpaṇa*), a single-standing cookbook in Sanskrit of unknown provenance that I date to the twelfth–fifteenth centuries CE, is no doubt the most extraordinary example of culinary writing from India's past, understudied and yielding more mysteries than it resolves. It was the most imaginative of historical cookbooks of South Asia, and not only for its contrived 'clever deceptions,' visual trompe l'oeils that ended up in the stomach. *Nala's Mirror on Cooking* was the only cookbook from India, historical or modern, to utilize a narrative framework to showcase its cookbook author's creativity in offering tasteful royal entertainment and promoting the palace chef's skills. This medieval manual's explanations of innovative culinary technologies appear presented in playful passages of narrative originality. While the frame story providing the context and raison d'être of the cookbook directly paraphrases verses from the famous Indian epic the *Mahābhārata* (MBh.), the unconventional techniques that do not feature in other historical South Asian cookbooks are explained in passages of the author's own invention. These imagined dialogues account for, I suggest, regionally- and historically-contingent practices of cooking and service. To illustrate my argument I utilize two short excerpts from *Nala's Mirror*: one recipe for a 'clever deception' and one dialogue that rejects the normative use of gold and silver vessels for serving kings in favor of betel leaf wraps for storing and serving dainty individual portions while also protecting food from contamination and imparting a delightful fragrance. Building from my lengthy study and translation of this medieval cookbook alongside other South Asian culinary texts, this paper sheds light on one facet of non-western culinary history: a cookbook largely ignored by food historians yet one which markedly influenced the later Indian culinary and medical writing in its wake.

Nala's Mirror on Cooking (*The Nala Pākadarpaṇam*), of unknown provenance within South Asia, is no doubt the most curious example of culinary writing from India's past, an understudied cookbook composed in Sanskrit that yields more mysteries than it resolves. Comprising chapters on dals, prepared rice dishes, buttermilk preparations, vegetable sides, snacks, drinks, milk sweets, yogurt, and more, it is one of the earliest extant single-standing recipe collections in book (manuscript) form from South Asia, offering a rich glimpse into the region's historical culinary practices. Considering that there has been little scholarly

work on *Nala's Mirror on Cooking*, I will first introduce this text's dating and compositional milieu before presenting one special feature, an example of a 'clever deception' trompe l'oeil recipe. Then I will introduce this cookbook's innovation in terms of its style, including narrative passages, and the extent of the cookbook's innovation in culinary terms. Next I come to the heart of my discussion: the less conventional technologies appearing throughout *Nala's Mirror*, which are also sometimes presented in creative 'invented' passages. What is significant is that these invented narratives describe what appear to be regional or historically specific culinary techniques, certainly less common culinary practices. I will describe how these uses of betel (or perhaps areca) leaf seem anomalous in the culinary record, illustrating my point with an example of this cookbook's creative writing. I will then conclude by asserting the cookbook's anomalous status overall, which further confirms the originality of *Nala's Mirror* within the corpus of South Asian historical culinary writing.

With its author unknown (the work was composed under a pen name) and the milieu of its composition also unknown, prior studies on *Nala's Mirror* have generally established its dating as pre-1600 or 1700 CE, due to the textual absence of chili pepper, tomato, and other New World foods brought to the subcontinent as part of the Columbian exchange following the arrival of Europeans to South Asia.¹ This is dating by *argumentum ex silentio*; as always, using an absence or lack of evidence is not fully reliable for dating a work. Dating by what is missing from a text is even less conclusive here because *Nala's Mirror* is incomplete in all of its extant manuscripts. The cookbook abruptly cuts off in what appears to be a very short chapter without a concluding verse to end the chapter, so we cannot know with all certainty what this text might have contained.²

My own study of this work has fixed the cookbook's dating to ca. twelfth–fifteenth centuries CE due to language, style, and the use of the word 'mirror' (darpaṇa) in the title, indicating a (literary) mirror for princes, i.e., a royal manual.³ To further justify my dating, there was a boom of culinary writing in South Asia around the eleventh–fifteenth centuries, with other cooking manuals and recipe collections written, as well as a sub-genre of cookbooks called *sūpaśāstra*(s), manuals or treatises on cooking, with *sūpa* being a generic term for foods or sauces.⁴ My study of *Nala's Mirror* has also determined that the work was composed in a royal setting, as entertainment to be read in courts for the literary pleasures of amusement and aesthetic delight as well as for edification on the subject of cooking, which was one of the elite 'arts' or domains to be mastered by those in the upper echelon aiming to impress.

While not much is known about the cookbook's provenance, not even the kingdom in which it was composed, *Nala's Mirror* offers many delights while reading it as well as invaluable information on culinary methods. This work was, without a doubt, the most imaginative of historical South Asian cookbooks, and not only for its contrived visual trompe l'oeils that ended up in the stomach. One such trompe l'oeil involves plantain stems,

the edible inner core of the banana or plantain plant stem. In this recipe, the plantain core is cut three different ways to mimic the ingredients of a rice pilaf- or biryani-type dish, although it is not called such. The chef cuts the inner core into rice grain-sized pieces, into channa-shaped pieces, and into circular shapes, presumably like fried vada pieces or meat chunks, before combining the cooked shapes and serving, fooling the eye but not the palate or stomach. This very recipe also provides an example of the other sort of innovation discussed later in this paper that *Nala's Mirror* exhibits: innovation in rejecting some of the traditional, normative rules of food service laid out in earlier Sanskrit works, and not only in cookbooks.⁵ Because innovative divergence from traditional food service appears in this trompe l'oeil plantain recipe, I have included my translation of it here [bracketed words added to the original text for clarity].

Trompe l'oeil plantain stem 'rice pilaf':

166 'To extract the core from the middle of the royal plantain plant, one [first] removes the outer "skin." Also cutting off the tip and root [of the plant] with a sickle, a wise person throws [these parts] away. Make pieces the size of the thumb from the innermost stalks and cut [them] again like rice grains. Repeating [this method], cut more stalks like small pieces of rice grains. A very clever chef will cut additional stalks into the shape of pieces of channa. Then, make circular shapes out of [the rest of the material] from the plantain plant stalk [suggesting fried vada or chunks of meat].

'A wise [chef] puts these different shapes into [three] different vessels, adds salt, and also adds turmeric so they take on a nice appearance, and, adding sour citron, cooks these on the flame. Then, one puts the seasoning ingredients [into a pan] and toasts them, removing them from the flame after heating.

'Then put [all of these components] in betel (*pūga*) leaves, and make them fragrant [i.e., fumigating with flowers and aromatics] as in the previous [recipe]. And then a wise cook would wrap [these] little bundles and put them on a tiered tray for serving. When the hour of dining arrives, serve these finest of plantain stems'.⁶

Besides clever contrived dishes and the alternative technique of service discussed below, what makes *Nala's Mirror on Cooking* foremost in innovation is that this is the only cookbook from South Asia, historical or modern, that utilizes a narrative framework to showcase the cookbook author's creativity in offering tasteful royal entertainment while promoting the palace chef's skills and fame. With poetic flourishes, chapter endings in verse conforming

The Curious Case of Nala's Mirror on Cooking

to the rules of high Sanskrit literature, language style imitative of older epic writing, and entertaining dialogues along the way, it is clear that the aims of this text were as royal entertainment beyond instructing on culinary *śāstra* (system of knowledge).

Determining Innovation in Medieval Indian Culinary Writing

This particular medieval culinary manual might not be the most innovative in terms of *variety* of culinary techniques, especially if we compare *Nala's Mirror* to the twelfth-century Cālukyan-kingdom *Mānasollāsa's* culinary section, with its various types of breads both sweet and savoury, roast fish and even turtle, tandoori-style cooking methods, and heating or 'toasting' using the heat that emanates from the top of covered pots. *Nala's Mirror on Cooking* might also appear to lack originality in its repetition of preparation style. For example, a seasoned vegetable dish recipe may be listed once as an archetype, with virtually identical variations or ectypes given using a number of different vegetables, repeating much of the same preparation instructions (e.g., wash, peel, cut, season, and sauté the vegetable). Such repetition does not actually indicate a lack of imagination, however, as listing identical or similar methods and cases was common practice within this style of Sanskrit writing (i.e., *śāstra*) and in related Sanskrit genres.

What makes *Nala's Mirror on Cooking* so fascinating in terms of its creativity is the happenstance that the rationale for this cookbook's instances of culinary divergence are explained in playful passages of equally original narrative. What do I mean by this? The frame story that provides the context and the reason for writing this cookbook is largely paraphrased directly from the famous Indian epic the *Mahābhārata* (MBh.). The Nala who is the eponymous supposed author of this cookbook is a legendary prince in the *Mahābhārata*, famous for his gambling with dice and his horse-riding prowess, but also a fine chef with prowess in the kitchen. In fact, although a prince, when forced into the disguise of a dwarf later in this micro-narrative within the epic, Nala's wife (from whom he has been separated) is able to locate Nala and recognize his presence by identifying the taste of his cooking (barbecued or roasted meat) as unmistakably the cooking of her husband Nala. It is in the guise of the dwarf Bāhuka that this cookbook's backstory transpires, with the whole of *Nala's Mirror* recounted in the voice of the dwarf (really Prince Nala) describing his extensive culinary knowledge to King Rtuṣarna to convince the king to take him on as palace chef so he can be gainfully employed. Incidentally, Nala's fame as a masterchef extends far beyond the MBh. and this particular cookbook. We find this legendary Nala described in a wide number of texts as an excellent cook and cookbook author, as well as finding recipes attributed to him cited in a variety of works, including in the āyurvedic (medical) tradition.⁷

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In *Nala's Mirror*, many narrative dialogues between Nala (as Bāhuka) and the King paraphrase actual passages from the famous epic word for word or with phrases that imitate the epic's passages closely enough that it is possible to identify them with actual verses from the MBh. This is the case for sections that lay out the general framing of the cookbook and the occasion for the cookbook's composition: convincing the king of Nala's skills.

While some passages paraphrase the epic quite closely, the divergent techniques that do not feature in other historical South Asian cookbooks are explained in narrative passages of this cookbook author's own invention. These imagined dialogues between expert chef Nala and the king do not appear anywhere in the massive *Mahābhārata*, a work which, incidentally, itself claims to contain a recorded account of everything there is.⁸ These are purely invented playful episodes inserted in the cookbook to explain why certain cooking techniques are utilized or are superior to other culinary technologies as well as to 'play up' Prince Nala's expertise. As it would happen, these invented 'excerpts' from the *Mahābhārata* describe instances of what I suggest are regionally- and historically-contingent practices of cooking and service that we can uniquely glimpse in this cookbook. While I have not been able to pin down *Nala's Mirror on Cooking's* region of origin at this time in my investigation, I call these techniques 'historically-contingent' because they are not found described elsewhere and appear specific to time and place. They also provide details and rationale specific enough to suggest actual practice in historical reality. Further, these are instances of seemingly intimate and personal foods items for the king and the elites in his court, as my example below illustrates.

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Justifying Divergent Technologies

The cookbook author, in fact, *had* to rely on his own invention to account for these original practices because they diverge from conventional techniques described in other manuals (religious, legal, royal, and culinary); in essence, this author had to explain why these techniques were superior to others commonly practiced. This necessitates the composition of original writing to justify non-normative or non-standard techniques. As an aside, he also obviously had to invent these passages because the MBh. of course did not enter into such great detail regarding culinary techniques. The brief didactic passage from *Nala's Mirror* that I present below rejects the usual, normative gold and silver vessels for serving kings and their retinue in favor of betel leaf wraps for steaming, storing, and serving dainty individual portions, while also protecting food from contamination by dust, dirt, and insects, and imparting a delightful fragrance to the food. The above plantain core recipe did not utilize betel leaf wraps for *cooking*, but countless other recipes in this collection do. Using leaf or plant matter to cook and serve food in South Asia is not at all a historical anomaly, as we find textual attestations of using lotus plant matter as well as palash (*Butea Frondosa*) and other tree leaves and natural materials for plates and vessels.

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Palash, areca spathe, and banana leaves are still commonly used today in India for disposable and biodegradable plating and food service, for example, in temples.⁹

What is unique in this cookbook is its emphatic repeated use of particularly and only one type of leaf, *pūgapatta*, literally areca (= *pūga*) 'leaf' but more likely, I argue, *betel* leaf, as a wrapper or envelope for cooking, storing, and serving morsels of food in individual packets, as one might serve hors d'oeuvres today.¹⁰ Betel leaf is better known as the digestive leaf chewed after a meal or at a special function like a wedding, also given as an offering to temple deities and to guests in one's home. The stimulant betel has also historically been offered and chewed, typically with areca nut and other flavourings, to 'seal a deal' as well as to mark one's status as subservient to another if one willingly receives a betel leaf roll from a more powerful figure such as a king or husband. In these situations, the betel leaf preparation is chewed as a stimulant and digestive, often after a meal, and is not itself swallowed. In *Nala's Mirror on Cooking*, the betel leaf is used as an envelope to wrap and contain morsels of food and is not meant to be chewed or eaten with the final food preparation. This usage of betel appears unique to this cookbook and I have not found other historic or modern instances of this mode of food cookery, storage, and service involving betel leaf.

Among other plant matter used for making plates and vessels in the historical period and up to the present, we do find areca spathes, informally and incorrectly called leaves, which are the dried sheaths of plant material surrounding the flowering part of the areca palm tree. Nineteenth-century documentation indicates that such technology was used to make plates, cups, and dishes for holding various foodstuffs, including plantains, sweet preparations, and fish.¹¹ While *Nala's Mirror on Cooking* usually uses a term that literally describes *areca* 'leaf', the cookbook indicates that the cook should use the material to wrap an envelope or bundle around a portion of food on the spot in the moment after cooking. Areca spathe, as dried plant matter, is less flexible and does not lend itself to fold on the spot as a pliable material. Typically the spathes are moistened by soaking for hours and are pressed together firmly, often with heat (nowadays using machines) to 'glue' leaves together and fashion plates or bowls long prior to their use; these dishes are brittle after assembly.¹² This is a further indication that *Nala's Mirror* is referring to betel, the soft, delicate, and tender leaf of the betel plant which is easy to fold on the spot, commonly used as a wrap for paan, and imparts a floral-like fragrance to everything it surrounds.

The following 'imagined' passage from the MBh. recorded in *Nala's Mirror on Cooking* illustrates the cookbook author's creativity in inventing narrative to inform on an exceptional culinary technique. At the conclusion of the chapter on beverages, King Rtuparna questions Nala (Bāhuka) about why he uses betel leaf (*pūgapatta*) so frequently for preparing and plating fine food and drinks for a king, when luxurious gold and silver vessels are available to royalty.

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'King R̥tuparna's question regarding vessels:'

'The King says: "Tell me, O Little-armed one (= Bāhuka), when there are golden vessels and more [at the king's disposal], why are all sorts of foods prepared using *pūgapatta*?! (betel or areca leaf)."

'And Naiṣadha (= Nala/Bāhuka) [replies:] "Nice aromas [like] of flower blossoms will be released from this food [cooked in *pūga*], disturbing the worms, bugs, and similar creepy crawlies. Such cooking wards off all sorts of insects (i.e., keeps them away) from sweet and tasty items."¹³

As I indicated, using leaves and other plant material to cook and serve food has never been a rarity in South Asia. However, using fragrant betel leaf (also a natural insecticide) for such purposes appears to be a novelty in this cookbook, not appearing elsewhere in the Indian culinary corpus although featuring extensively throughout this cookbook.¹⁴

170 Nala does not use the more expected justification for why he repeatedly cooks using betel leaf. The more natural explanation for the Indic context would be: single-use leaf containers mean that servers and consumers do not have to worry about purifying vessels and other dishes after and between use. Purification is a major concern in Indian religious law, and leaf dishes are disposable and will only be touched or sullied by the consumer. Instead of what the reader expects to find, Nala prioritizes explanations that are meaningful for the culinary realm and the *śāstra* (body of knowledge) on cooking (*pāka*): 1) this sort of leaf imparts a fine fragrance to the food and 2) this form of packaging for cooking and service keeps insects out, also likely repelling them with this particular leaf's properties. Both flavouring and the cleanliness of uncontaminated food are priorities for chefs as well as keeping food soft, moist, and warm, in other words, fresh, for serving. This takes precedence over the religio-legal emphasis on purification and avoidance of contamination due to saliva that we find in other literature. Interestingly, the king's worry is that plant matter vessels do not appear royal enough (why not use gold vessels? he asks). Nala's response assuages the king, with the implication that adding floral fragrances to food is a very royal, elite mode of cooking; fumigating (or making fragrant) with flowers appears in numerous other royal recipes in this collection.

Conclusion: Nala's Mirror in the Context of Medieval Indian Cooking

In analyzing this exceptional use of a different leaf for storing and service, one must bear in mind that *Nala's Mirror on Cooking* is in itself an anomalous cookbook. Much of the recipe content described in this book appears in no other historical Indian cookbook except for

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later royal manuals and cookbooks that copy directly from *Nala's Mirror*. The content from *Nala's Mirror* that is most often transmitted in later culinary sources is theoretical content, e.g., the common errors that a chef makes or the basic rules of rice-making. This *Mirror on Cooking* is also anomalous for what it leaves out: there are no recipes for the variety of flatbreads that appear in other royal cooking manuals from the medieval period. Additionally, recipes detailed in Nala's cookbook vastly differ from other versions of such dishes; for example, Nala's recipe for tamarind rice unusually calls for garlic, a combination I have not encountered elsewhere in the historic record.¹⁵ The spice and flavouring combinations used in Nala's cookbook are seasonings and aromatics widely known in other Sanskrit literature, but which do not typically appear in the other Sanskrit culinary manuals.

In addition to this cookbook's exceptional culinary status, we can also consider literary points. *Nala's Mirror* was meant as courtly literature of entertainment as well as a text of culinary learning, although both situations apply to other royal works on food. While the MBh. does have descriptions of feasting, roasting, and butchery, the epic obviously does not contain historical recipes. Naturally, any narrative passages in *Nala's Mirror* describing culinary preparations would have to be the cookbook author's own invention. Thus we find the lovely pairing where culinary wit and imagination parallel literary wit and imagination. The author reveals his literary flair and the palace chef (if not the same person as the scribe recording the content) reveals his culinary flair. These instances of narrative justifying cooking techniques 'step out' of the more cosmopolitan mode of writing in Sanskrit, also the mode for writing *śāstra*. These playful passages of narrative imagination, of which I have discussed just one, are also where the author steps away from (re-)recording the traditional rules of cooking, with rules and lists being a common feature of *śāstric* technical writing in Sanskrit. Such lists and rules, which are also found in *Nala's Mirror*, likely indicate older content re-recorded from earlier sources, since these tidbits of culinary knowledge need to be imparted over the centuries. In contrast to the lists and rules that are traditionally re-copied, these narrative passages record other types of information, likely more historically contingent information.

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No truly final conclusion is possible here due to the sparsity of the cookbook record for the pre-modern period in South Asia. We sometimes have gaps of a few centuries or more between extant cookbooks, meaning that much is left out from our understanding of the royal art of South Asian cooking, especially in terms of what might be considered anomalous and what commonplace. Further, there are a few fragments of Sanskrit cookbooks in Newari script and a couple of medieval Kannada cookbooks that I have not been able to analyze due to my own limitations in reading only a few South Asian scripts and languages. Perhaps this technique involving betel is not anomalous or exceptional in other cookbooks and we simply do not have enough research to support another conclusion.

Finally, although this is speculation on my part, this culinary technology's exclusion from the historical cookbook record might not be a result of the sparsity of extant cookbooks but

might rather stem from this technique appearing more humble than royalty might like it to. Wrapping exquisite food items fit for a king in tropical 'jungle' leaves might not confer the prestige and status that a king's elite food service—typically in gold and silver vessels—ought to convey. That said, it is also not the case that betel is a lowly substance. It is a dietary product imbued with lofty ritualistic significance across various echelons of South Asian life, including royal ritual practices involving betel leaf rolls. Betel therefore rides a fine line in terms of conveying status, but it does not communicate the same luxury as fine gold and silver serving vessels. Whether the use of betel leaf wraps was a technology in restricted historical use in South Asian cuisine or not, I am confident that *Nala's Mirror on Cooking* as a whole and through its framing certainly is the most imaginative cookbook of the South Asian corpus, in terms of its entertaining stories, its elaborate and ornate verses of 'high' prosody, and also, likely, in terms of its culinary technologies and flavouring methods. Nala's book without a doubt in my mind well merits the descriptor of the most innovative cookbook in India's history.

Notes

1. Heike Gilbert's study largely comprised her translation of the work into German and was not a historical study or a collation of variant manuscripts. Note that Jan Meulenbeld's study also fixed an earliest possible date for *Nala's Mirror on Cooking*: not earlier than 1200 CE due to the terms used for two plant foods in particular. Heike Gilbert, *Das Pākadarpaṇa, ein altes indisches Kochbuch* (Digitaler Nachdruck der Dissertation, Marburg 1995). *Monumenta culinaria* 2/2012. Giessen, Germany: Giessener Elektronische Bibliothek, 2012. G. Jan Meulenbeld, *A History of Indian Medical Literature Vol. 2A: Text*, 9: Miscellaneous, Ch. 1: Works on pākāśāstra (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2000), p. 417 & G. Jan Meulenbeld, *A History of Indian Medical Literature Vol. 2B: Annotation*, 9: Miscellaneous, Ch. 1: Works on pākāśāstra (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2000), p. 427, footnote 50.
2. As an example of what is missing, this text lacks some fundamentals of South Asian cuisines seen elsewhere in culinary writing by the twelfth century, including the preparation of flatbreads.
3. *Speculum* literature was popular worldwide in the medieval and Renaissance period, with its height from the twelfth to sixteenth centuries for both Europe and greater Asia. The notion of the (literary) mirror and the mirror genre in general likely entered Indian culture via Persian influence from the eleventh century onwards, with the genre popular in Persia from the eleventh century although not yet using the name 'mirror' in Persian in the eleventh century. Richard M. Eaton and Phillip B. Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India's Deccan Plateau, 1300-1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 23 and elsewhere.
4. *Nala's Mirror on Cooking* can be classified as a pākāśāstra or sūdaśāstra, with both meaning a manual or treatise on cooking, although all three terms, sūpaśāstra, sūdaśāstra, and pākāśāstra, are synonymous. Any of the three terms can also refer to the genre of writing on cooking, just as śāstra can be an umbrella term for technical instructions on a subject, referring to a whole body of knowledge.
5. For example, see the Sanskrit description of royal food service in the annabhoga (enjoyment of food) section of *Mānasollāsa* 3.13.1585-1587, etc. *Mānasollāsa of Someśvara III*, G. K. Shrigondekar, ed. Vol. 2 (Baroda: Central Library, 1925-1961), pp. 134-5.
6. *Nala Pākadarpaṇa* 1.211-217. *Pākadarpaṇam, Mahārājanala*, Sanskrit text with translation in Hindi, Vāmācaraṇa Bhaṭṭācārya and Indradeva Tripāṭhi, eds. (Vārāṇasi: Caukhambhā Saṃskṛta Samsthāna, 1983), pp. 31-2.
7. As far as I have ascertained, recipes attributed to Nala in other works do not cite this text or redaction of *Nala's Mirror on Cooking*, although this does not exclude the possibility that there were other historic cookbooks authored by a supposed 'Nala'.

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8. MBh. 1.56.33 and 18.5.38 (critical edition): 'When it comes to dharma, artha, kāma, and mokṣa, what is here is elsewhere—but what is not here is not anywhere else' and similar verses in the MBh. I thank Nell Shapiro Hawley for locating this verse for me on short notice.
9. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmāśāstra*, Vol. 2, Part 1 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1941), pp. 761-2.
10. The word used literally means areca, the nut or fruit often chewed in betel leaf rolls or quids (also known as paan), but the word informally refers to the betel leaf roll as a whole, a case of synecdoche, as well as to betel leaf. For instance, pūgīlatā, the 'areca (sic.) creeper,' actually refers to the creeping vine plant, betel, and not to the areca palm tree, decidedly not a creeper. Likewise, the pūgapātra, 'areca' container, keeps the tender betel leaves fresh and clean and prevents them from drying out, as well as storing areca nuts and the other flavourings one might add to a betel roll. For both terms, Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special Reference to Cognate Indo-European Languages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899), p. 641.
11. See George Watt, *Dictionary of the Economic Products of India*, Vol. 1 (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing/Authority of the Government of India, Department of Revenue and Agriculture, 1889), p. 298: 'The spathe which covers the flowering axis may be used for paper-making... The spathes are largely used in India for packing and in the preparation of small articles for personal use'. Also, 'The soft, white, fibrous flower-sheath [i.e., spathe], called kácholi or poy, is made into skull-caps, small umbrellas and dishes; and the coarser leaf-sheath, called viri or virhati, is made into cups, plates, and bags for holding plantains, sweet-meats, and fish'. *Ibid.*, p. 301, citing the *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol. XV, Pt. 1: Kanara (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1883), p. 300. I thank James McHugh for locating this record.
12. Nahla Nainar, "Biodegradable plates make a splash," *The Hindu*, 17 May 2019, https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/biodegradable-plates-and-bowls-made-from-areca-palm-spathes-are-making-a-big-splash/article27161523.ece#comments_27161523. Last accessed 27 May 2021.
13. Nala Pākadarpaṇa 5.23-24. Pākadarpaṇam, p. 90.
14. See Ma. C.B. Gragasīn, "Essential oil from betel leaf, a promising insecticide" *AGRIS* 13.4 (2006); Made Sritamin and I. Dewa Putu Singarsa, "Utilization of Betel Leaf Extract as Botanical Pesticides to Control meloidogyne spp. and Tomato Plant Production" *Advances in Tropical Biodiversity and Environmental Sciences* Vol. 1, May 2017; and other studies.
15. Nala Pākadarpaṇa 7.12-15. Pākadarpaṇam, p. 97.

Stories Full of Recipes

Adrienne Harrington

ABSTRACT: Maura Laverty was an Irish writer whose seminal cookery book *Full and Plenty* was first published in 1960. Each of the fifteen chapters is introduced by an anecdote based on the key ingredient in that chapter. At first reading, these stories are charming and amusing, telling apparently simple tales of rural village life and local characters. However, when examined in greater detail, they are seen to play a more subversive role in conveying a strong message about the power of good cooking, and Irish food culture and heritage as a source of agency for women at a time of great social and economic transition in Ireland.

174 Recipes and cookery books are more than a set of instructions on how to cook a dish. Floyd and Forster argue that the recipe ‘illuminates the cultural worlds in which it appears’.¹ This paper examines a seminal Irish cookery book *Full and Plenty: Maura Laverty’s Complete Guide to Better Cooking*², written by the Irish writer Maura Laverty and published in Dublin in 1960, to explore not only how its recipes shine a light of the Ireland of the 1960s but also how the stories that introduce each chapter illuminate this world and allow Laverty to highlight the changing role of women at the time, as well as women’s agency arising from their cooking role.

It is useful to situate the publication of this cookery book in the Ireland of the time. Ireland was still a relatively young country, having only gained independence in 1922. It was just over a century since the Famine (1845–1852) when approximately one million people died from starvation and disease, and another million are estimated to have emigrated. The 50s had been a decade of economic hardship, with over 400,000 people immigrating during that time³.

The early 60s signaled a time of change. Seán Lemass became Taoiseach (Prime Minister) in 1958 which heralded a new progressive era for Ireland. The Whitaker Economic Plan⁴ of the same year promised a new Ireland, one that was outward-looking and leaving behind the protectionism that marked previous decades. Electrification, running water and kitchen appliances such as cookers and fridges had become a feature for many in towns and cities, though many parts of rural Ireland were yet to see this progress. By 1965, 81% of the country had been electrified, with the 99% connectivity by 1975.⁵

Despite these economic changes, Ireland was a socially conservative country. Articles 41.1 and 41.2 of the Irish constitution dealt with (and still do as these Articles remain in place) the place of women in society;

41.1 In particular, the State recognises that by their life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

41.2 The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers are not obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home⁶.

The Catholic church exerted a strong influence over government policy, and directly ruled family and women's lives. It ran most hospitals and schools. A marriage bar in place across many sectors including banking and the public sector forced women to resign upon marriage. Contraception was illegal. Despite this, Ireland could not be protected from the significant changes that the 1960s brought. By 1963, almost half of the population could receive British television stations, and could see at first-hand the cultural revolution that had begun, even if for many, it was still to directly impact their lives.⁷

Ireland today is an acknowledged centre of food excellence. However, for many in rural Ireland in the 1960s, their diet had not changed significantly in decades, while for those in towns and cities, outside influences were beginning to be felt. Looking at Lavery's cookery writer contemporaries, Fanny Cradock had at that stage become a famous TV cook in the UK, and a year before Lavery wrote *Full and Plenty*, Julia Child co-authored *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*.

Lavery was born in 1907, in a small Irish village, Rathangan Co Kildare, one of nine children. Her biographer⁸ (Kelly, 2017, p. 42) tells that when she was nine years old, Lavery was sent by her mother to live with the Dublin couple for several years. This may have been



FIGURE 1. Maura Lavery

for financial reasons; Lavery's father died when she was very young, having been a poor provider in previous years due to his gambling problem. Lavery left Ireland at the age of 17, moving to Spain to work as a governess, an independent move at a time when most of her contemporaries chose to emigrate to the UK. While in Spain, she began writing and developed an interest in food, often submitting articles for publication both in Spain and in Ireland. Returning to Ireland in 1928, she worked in radio with her own woman's programme, as editor of the magazine *Woman's Life*, and as a playwright.

She was also a prolific author, writing cookery books; children's books; novels and plays, with her play *Tolka Row* becoming RTE's (Ireland's public

sector broadcaster) first soap opera. Lavery wrote four novels, with two of these *Never No More* and *No More than Human* presenting a fictional character Delia, based on the author herself, telling of Lavery's early life and her time in Spain. Two of her novels were banned in Ireland, with copies rumoured to have been publicly burned in her home town⁹. What distinguishes her novels is the detailed attention paid to food and recipes throughout, with many traditional Irish recipes and techniques highlighted. Richman Kenneally, in a 2016 article in the Irish Times, describes Lavery's writing as 'stories are full of recipes, her recipes full of stories.'¹⁰

Her first cookbook *'Flour Economy'* was published in 1941, commissioned by the Irish government to encourage people to use potatoes and oatmeal as substitutes for wheat. 1946 saw her second cookbook published *'Maura Lavery's Cookery Book'*

As a genre, *Full and Plenty* is part cookery writing, part improvement literature and part fiction. The first edition runs to 473 pages, and includes illustrations and full-colour photos, an unusual feature at that time. The book contains 15 chapters, with many of these common to cookbooks of the time such as eggs, meat and vegetables. More unusually, Lavery included a chapter on canapes and another on homebrewed elixirs in which she had advises on the health benefits of fermented milks. The book also includes a chapter entitled French Cooking Made Easy, with Lavery's daughter Maeve Carney credited with the writing of this chapter, having been a student at Le Cordon Bleu, Paris. It was not universally praised, with Elizabeth David having written on her copy of the book 'the kind of pretentious rubbish that has brought French cooking into disrepute as a snobs preserve'. (Hayward, 2009)¹¹.

It is informative to look at the context in which *Full and Plenty* was commissioned. Bread had been a staple of the Irish diet for generations, but as Bryan (2014, pp. 11) highlights, bread rationing had been introduced in 1947¹², brought on by post-war economic plight and consistent bad weather. Yet by the late 1950s, the decreasing level of bread consumption was being debated by the Irish Government as the price of flour rose while its quality fell. This had led to a backlash against the flour millers who in response, mounted a PR campaign entitled 'Eat More Bread'. The Irish Flour Millers Association commissioned Lavery as a trusted household name to write a cookery book called *Full and Plenty* which was to be a key element in their campaign. The millers subsidised the cost of the book, with their aim being that every household in the country could afford a copy – in 2021 terms, the book would have cost the equivalent of approximately 10 euros, good value for a hardback book with hand-drawn illustrations

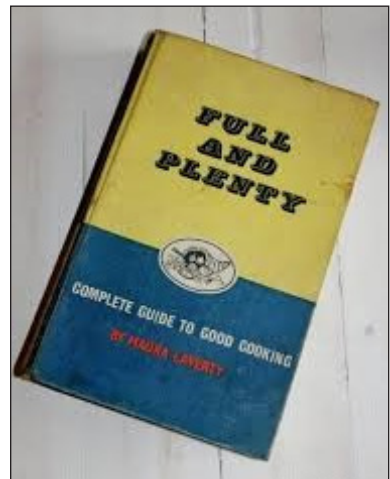


FIGURE 2. Front cover of *Full and Plenty*.

and colour photos. Prior to this, the only cookbook in most Irish households was the book that was provided free by the suppliers of the electric cooker. The Irish Flour Millers Association had not misplaced its optimism for book sales. The first run sold out and the Irish Times of the 8th of July 1960¹³ reported on a reception held in Jury's Hotel Dublin to mark the publication of a second edition, bringing the total to 75,000 copies, 'one of the largest editions of a book ever produced in this country'. The book was a major success and holds a place in the hearts of many Irish families as a cherished reminder of their mothers and grandmothers.

Laverty took her brief from the millers very much to heart. The chapter on bread opens the book, and begins with the following:

'I believe in breadmaking' is the first and the most important article of my culinary Credo. I applaud every effort to revive this kindest of domestic arts. My enthusiasm is not based on health reasons alone. I believe in the traditional goodness of bread. I believe that the woman who bakes her family's bread brings this goodness into the kitchen.¹⁴

This last line is a very strong endorsement from a woman who at the time, was what we would today call an influencer. She placed bread-making at the pinnacle of the housewife's duties, and with the use of the word 'Credo', gives it a religious undertone. The chapter brings together a combination of traditional and modern recipes and ingredients, the everyday as well as treats, and includes the regular use of spices as well as recipes from abroad.

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high-falutin lassie with strings of letters after her name. A college-trained cook with class notions about dressed-up dishes who'll come in here and make little of your cooking, and who'll make your son wonder how he ever managed to reach manhood on the food you fed him.¹⁵

Mrs Feeney

realized now that her happy acceptance of Brian's courtship had been based on visions of herself imparting all she knew of home-making to a girl who would look up to her and respect her and treat her as an oracle.¹⁶

What to serve when Anna came to tea was the widow's dilemma as she was '*the worst hand in the world when it comes to making fancy cakes*'.¹⁷ The narrative confirms this to be true

As was the case with most of the farming women of Ballyderrig, the making of fancy cakes was as foreign to Mrs. Feeney as going upstairs is foreign to a tinker. Plain bread was a different story¹⁸

with Mrs. Feeney's plain soda bread extolled for the remainder of the paragraph. However '*while good soda bread was all right in its way, it would not suffice of itself to make an attractive*

tea table, [...]'¹⁹ There is an added misfortune as Mrs. Feeney lived in rural Ireland, 'a backward place like this where a nice fancy cake is not to be bought'.²⁰ There was also a suspicion of a shop-bought cake that may be stale or 'of the cheapest quality'. The widow begs her neighbour to make some cakes for the occasion. On the day, the table is laid with 'a sponge cake with a swirl of white icing to crown it'²¹ and a 'marble cake [that had] risen nicely'.²², as well as Mrs Feeney's soda bread 'for those who might like a bite of something plain to start [...]'.²³ When tea is served, Anna begins with the plain bread. 'She took a slice, and then another slice, and another slice after that'.²⁴ When offered cake, she replied

I'd rather have this delicious soda bread [...] I've never tasted the like of it in my life. It would win a prize anywhere. How on earth do you make it Mrs Feeney?²⁵

Mrs. Feeney gives her recipe, with Anna continuing

I always think it's in the cooking of plain food that a real cook proves herself [...] any girl could make a sweet cake that will pass²⁶.

[Adding] it's only after leaving college that a girl like myself find out all that she has to learn. Anyone at all can cook in a city kitchen where there is nothing to be done but look after the stove. But the cook who really deserves admiration is the woman who can turn out good food in a farmhouse kitchen in between churning and feeding calves and fowl.²⁷

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Mrs. Feeney responds that 'All any young married woman needs is to have someone experienced at hand to give her advice now and again and to show her the way'.²⁸

This anecdote very much places a value on what has been handed down by generations, on the inherited skills and recipes of traditional Ireland as represented by the widow. Soda bread is the traditional, iconic bread of Ireland made with flour, bread soda, buttermilk and salt. It became popular in the Victorian era when a Frenchman Nicolas Leblanc first produced sodium carbonate (a precursor to today's sodium bicarbonate or baking soda) in 1791²⁹. Soda bread was well suited to Irish-grown wheat and with buttermilk being a by-product of butter-making, it allowed for a cheap bread to be made with readily available ingredients and which could be cooked in a pot, over a fire, without the need for an oven.

Furthermore, as Sexton, (2015, pp. 298) identifies, soda bread is significant in the Irish foodscape in being one of the few foods of Ireland that developed outside the influence of British food culture.³⁰ Lavery eulogises soda bread in one of her early books *Maura Lavery's Cookery Book* (pp. 70)

Every time Ireland is put in the dock, I feel our diplomats are sadly lacking as a counsel for the defense that they don't bring forward in mitigation of

our crimes the fact that we have given a four-leaved shamrock to the world. One leaf is W. B. Yeats, another is boiled potatoes in their jackets, another Barry Fitzgerald. The fourth is Soda-bread. And the greatest of these is soda-bread. Spongy white soda-bread with a floury, brown crossed crust... flat sweet griddle-bread with an inch-and-a-half of tender well baked dough sandwiched between the thin crisp crusts... wholesome brown bread with growth and health and energy in its rough nuttiness [...] The queer thing is that in its native habitat soda-bread is never so called. We call it “cake” or cake-bread”. A loaf of bread comes out of the baker’s van, but a cake of bread comes out of the pot-oven.³¹

In her readiness to praise the *‘plain bread’*³² and value the country housewife, Anna simultaneously reinforces and privileges the importance of the Irish food tradition and the rural way of life. Yet as a trained home economics teacher, Anna represents a modern educated Ireland. This was a time of transition in Ireland and Anna personifies this transition. The homemade is also valued over the *‘fancy cake’*³³ bought in the shop, the traditional over the modern. The equal status between the two women shows when Mrs Feeney shares her own recipe for soda bread *‘just take the form of the little blue jug of milk, as much as you think of flour, the taste of salt and a suspicion of bread soda’*. There is no need to set out exact amounts of ingredients. There was an assumed knowledge between the widow, with her recipe handed down through the generations, and her formally-educated soon-to-be daughter-in-law. This is a meeting of equals. The widow’s valuable traditional skills are recognized; Irish cooking heritage is something of which to be proud, to be embraced and included in the new modern Ireland.

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Laverty’s chapter on meat begins with the story of the almost 40-year-old Statia Dunne who was *‘not the type to catch a man’s eye’*.³⁴ and who lived and cared for her bed-ridden father and three brothers. Dr Crowley moved to the village, he being *‘at the age when a man who is not married begins to show the needs of a woman who’ll [...] make sure that he eats food regular meals’*.³⁵ Her stew with *‘a tantalizing smell, made up of twenty different fragrances’*³⁶ tempted Dr Crowley to accept an invitation to stay for dinner one night and

In the way that one thing leads to another, Dr Crowley got acquainted with Statia’s stuffed steak, her coddled rabbit and her baked liver load with scalloped potatoes. Before he was halfway through her culinary repertoire, they were engaged.³⁷

Once married, they took Statia’s father to live with them, which allowed one of Statia’s brothers to marry his girlfriend of 16 years, who took Statia’s place as the household cook. *‘So that she might do this adequately, Statia brought a twopenny copybook and wrote out the rest of her recipes for her’*.³⁸

Again, this is story is imbued with significance. No more than in the bread chapter, the ability to cook well brings achievement and advancement. Statia Dunne is spared a life of spinsterhood and service of her male relatives, '*at an age where she had almost given up hope of ever having a man of her own to cook for*'.³⁹ Similarly, Dr Crowley marries a woman who can look after him in a manner fitting a professional man in a small village. The domino effect is that her brother is now in a position to marry, so in effect, Statia's stew has led to two marriages. This was significant in the Ireland of the 1960s where emigration rates were still high, with many single men and women leaving, so finding a suitable marriage partner was challenging. In 1966, 45.7% of all Irish men were single⁴⁰. These are not the only marriages that occur in the book. Four other chapters, the fish; pudding and dessert; vegetables and salads and cakes chapters all end in a marriage facilitated by good food, with a marriage saved by good food in the sauces chapter.

The meals that Lavery decides to highlight in the meat chapter are worthy of attention, namely stew, steak, rabbit and liver. With the exception of the steak, the meats are day-to-day and ordinary, with the rabbit most likely caught in the fields by her brothers. Even the steak is stuffed to make this more expensive piece of meat go further. The message is clear – good food does not have to be expensive food if the cook has the right skills. And as in the case of Mrs Feeney and Anna, Statia passes her recipes to the soon-to-be sister-in-law, again highlighting and preserving the Irish food heritage for the next generation of home-cooks. Lavery herself researched traditional Irish recipes at the National Library of Ireland in writing her novels and as a result, would have been familiar with many older recipes.⁴¹ In her novel *Never no More*, she acknowledges Irish cookery writer Florence Irwin, and Clear (2003) writes that Lavery '*seems to have used some recipes from Redington's economic cookery book*' which had its first edition in 1905 and was privately published in Dublin in 1927.⁴²

The rewards of good cooking are reinforced throughout the book. In the introduction titled *Cooking for Health and Happiness*, Lavery is explicit about these rewards '*It does your nerves the power of good*'. *Rubbing water into flour is something I would recommend to neurotic people as a better tonic than anything their doctors could give them*'.⁴³ The value of cooking is further emphasized in the introduction where Lavery states that

Cooking is the poetry of housework. But it is satisfying in twenty other different ways as well. There is a grand warm companionable feeling to be got out of the thought that every time you baste a roast or beat an egg, or do any other little ordinary kitchen job, you are making yourself one with the Grand Order of Homemakers, past, present and to come.⁴⁴

The use of the words Grand Order is worthy of commentary, echoing the freemason/secret society/tradesmen's guilds of the time where power was vested in skills and qualification. These skills are as important and evident in the kitchen. Lavery describes the gravy that was the basis of

Statia's stew '*Years of practice had gone to finding the exact amount of mustard that should be added for tanginess, of sugar for the faint underlying sweetness and of vinegar for a teasing sharpness*'.⁴⁵ This was no accident, but rather the accumulated wisdom and skill of an expert who had learned and honed her craft. The kitchen is seen as the woman's realm and domain, her center of power where men rarely entered and then, only to eat. The use of the word homemaker rather than housewife is also significant as it incorporates all of the female duties. It also applies equally to both married and single homemakers, and equally to all genders, though this would not have been a consideration in 1960s Ireland. The term 'homemaker' may also reference the Commission on Vocational Organizations of the 1940s to which Clear⁴⁶ outlines a proposal for a National Council of Home-Makers was made, a term put forward by women's organizations at the time.

It is also useful to return to the banning in Ireland of several of Lavery's novels. Clear (2003) states that in a letter to an American newspaper in 1947, Lavery writes that her book *Liffey Lane* had been banned;

on the grounds that it is 'in general tendency indecent or obscene'. No reviewer outside Ireland took this attitude – and only one within it. In America, even such religious periodicals as the Jesuits' 'America' and the Passionists' 'The Sign' found no fault with the book on moral grounds. I can only conclude, therefore, that the ban is due to the fact that in 'Liffey Lane' I tried to show the slum conditions which have become intensified during 15 years of misrule.⁴⁷

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Clear argues that the books were banned

above all their frankly sensual, joyous and subversive celebration of what the 1937 Constitution called women's 'physical, and moral capacity and social function' – women's work in all its forms.⁴⁸

Lavery would appear to have use *Full and Plenty* as a vehicle for conveying a message about the place of women in the home in the transitional period of 1960s Ireland. The book highlights the role of women in the home, their expertise, their skills, and most particularly their being part of an inter-generational movement whereby the recipes and traditions that they learned from their mother and grandmother are in turn, passed these to the next generation, thus finding a place in the emerging modern Ireland.

The ingredients used in Lavery's recipes are everyday foods, with little exotic or imported. In the introduction, she tells us that '*Good ingredients are more readily available in Ireland than in any other country in the world*'.⁴⁹ Many of her recipes are for foods with a rich Irish heritage such as soda bread, colcannon and stew. She also introduces some new foods for the time such as spaghetti bolognese, chop suey and paella, thus again reinforcing the message that the old and the new both hold a place in this transitory phase of Irish history.

The men in Laverty's stories are usually the passive recipients of the food cooked, be they father, brother, boyfriend, husband, or professional figure. Only in the vegetable and salads chapter do we read of a man cooking (stuffed onions) but even here, the onions he cooks evoke memories of his mother. These stories reinforce the central role of the woman in the kitchen but in a manner that elevates this role. Cooking is a source of agency not one that suppresses or undermines the role of the woman. At a time when women were beginning to find more work outside the home, Laverty has taken the woman's traditional role and imbued it with a significance. The role of the homemaker is one that merits appreciation and respect. Additionally, cooking is presented as a means of empowerment, not repression; there is a worth and value in the role of the woman, with her responsible for the food economies of the house. Yet, certain stories retain a more traditional view of the woman's place in the home. The sauces, fillings, icings chapter opens with the following;

The Foleys were nearly a year married before Sheila discovered that a wife's first duty to her husband is to cook him the kind of meals he likes, and that no marriage can be really happy unless a man is satisfied with his table treatment.⁵⁰

This old-fashioned view of marriage is further underscored when the husband receives advice that *'A woman won't ever be happy till you let her see who's boss'*.⁵¹ The husband takes this advice; his wife sees the error of her cooking ways and they live happily ever after. Perhaps 1960s Ireland was not quite ready for equality in all marriages.

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Ireland was at a crossroads in the early 1960s. Few knew this better than Laverty who had suffered from the conservative approach in seeing her books banned. In her work as an agony aunt, she would have heard the range of issues and challenges faced by the Irish woman, and rather than risk her messages not being heard in a novel. Laverty cleverly used the cover of a cookery book to advance her subversive message. Women were resourceful. They were adapting to a changing Ireland, to a new modernity characterized by electricity and modern kitchen equipment. The benefits of goods cookery were intrinsic in the twenty different ways in which she tells the reader that it is satisfying but also explicit. Feeding one's family was a role of which to be proud, and it contributed to the growth of the nation. As Richman Kenneally (2016, pp. 182) wrote, women could *'take command of the kitchen, and, by extension, gain respect as a pivotal, dynamic member of the household, and, by further extension, the nation'*.⁵² That is a worthy ambition for any citizen, woman or man.

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Materializing the culinary dreamscape: maps, guidebooks, and the role of terroir in (re)constructing the myth of the French gastronomic utopia

Jenny L. Herman

ABSTRACT: Rendering tangible the intangible, stimulating a sense of unity and shared values, inspiring imaginations and boosting economic markets alike – these are among the long-ripened fruits of the patrimonialization of cuisine in France. In 2010, the Gastronomic Meal of the French was recognized as a landmark case for culinary heritage when UNESCO granted it the status of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. A fundamental element of elaborating this culinary practice, at once ceremonial and quotidian, is the necessity of using ‘good products’ which emphasizes the significance of the concept of *terroir*. This paper seeks to explore the construction and concepts of *terroir(s)* and the representative power of regional products and dishes through analyzing three interlinked factors: culinary guidebooks and literature, gastronomic maps, and authenticity labels. I will identify the social significance of these three factors in mythologizing a collective culinary identity, and will propose how concepts of *terroir* are being adapted and employed today to address a changing nation.

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Despite the wide diversity of regional specificities in both culinary practices and among varying populations, the sense of identity arising from the production and utilization of local products reflects the consummation of an effort to unify a nation through food, thus evoking Brillat-Savarin’s famed directive: *Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es*.¹ By consuming the homeland, in all its territorial richness, from a round of Brie de Meaux, to a bottle of Champagne, to a Saucisson de Lyon, the French issue forth from a self-styled culinary utopia, a materialized *pays de cogagne*. What, then, contributed to the construction of *terroir* as an integral element of French culinary identity, thus imbuing regional products with the power of cultural representation? The analysis of gastronomic maps, culinary guidebooks, and labels of origin, all of which focus on products and their territorial associations, elucidates the social significance of *terroir* in mythologizing a collective culinary identity. Furthermore, exploring the pervasiveness of *terroir*-based themes in this literary and material culture will aid in understanding the symbolic power of food in France, and its permeation into the collective imagination. While France’s culinary history can be traced to more distant writings and events, this paper focuses from the beginning

of the twentieth century, where we see a marked growth of such publications, through the contemporary period when labels of origin emerged, to today.

From classical gastronomic guides and periodicals such as *La France À Table* (1928-197?) and *L'Inventaire du Patrimoine Culinaire de la France* (1992-2015), to more creative works such as *L'Almanach de Cocagne* (1920-1922) or *Les Vins du Gala* (1977), we see a rich literary tradition of emphasizing the connection between specific products and particular places, citing this rootedness to explain unique regional culinary characteristics. Likewise, gastronomic maps, either illustrating or enumerating geographically-linked products, reinforce the vision of *terroir*-as-identity and promote national cohesion. Whether included in gastronomic guides, such as those appearing in *La France À Table* or those published separately, such as chef Alain Bourguignon's *Carte Gastronomique de La France* (1929), these maps also serve as a significant tool in launching gastronomic tourism. Finally, with the creation of food labels signalling protected origin, such as AOP, we see the complex intermingling of patrimonial transmission and policy-making to promote and safeguard regional products as a part of French identity. The cultural criticism of Priscilla Parkhurst-Ferguson, *terroir*-focused scholarship of Thomas Parker, and socio-geographical studies of Jean-Robert Pitte will be principally applied in this research, and will be complemented by the application of semiotic theory (Culler, Barthes, Nora) and direct policy analysis. Through this study I propose a hybrid investigation of *terroir* in France, focusing on its interplay with territory and identity through the lens of gastronomic literature, culinary maps, and the valorization of regional products, with the ultimate aim of questioning the instrumentalization of *terroir* today, as a tool to both (re)construct the myth of the French gastronomic utopia and to respond to contemporary social, cultural, and economic challenges.

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Whose Gastronomic Utopia?

As a point of departure into France as a culinary dreamscape, it is necessary to acknowledge the absolute reign of plurality and hybridity when discussing both *terroir* and nation. What may appear today as the inheritance of a timeless gastronomic tradition, France's wider culinary acclaim (both within the country and abroad) hails more recently from the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when we also see the publication of culinary maps and gastronomic guidebooks, and the creation of policies to protect products of origin such as foods and wine. It is also necessary to acknowledge how thoroughly the mythology of France's culinary supremacy spread, achieving the reflexive association with high quality cuisine common today.

Echoed by the likes entrepreneurial chefs such as August Escoffier and later Paul Bocuse, to authors such as Marcel Rouff and Austin de Croze, profusions of nationalistic praise for France's gastronomic bounty are plentiful. With repetition they have gained the largely unquestioned status of truism; French gastronomy is 'incontestable and uncontested'².

Champions of French cuisine such as culinary journalist and writer Curnonsky (born Maurice Edmond Sailland) unhesitatingly declare France a *pays de cocagne*, enumerating its culinary marvels as a brimming cornucopia of plenty. When noting the references to the actual land, we begin to see that cuisine and culinary products are often conflated. The quality of cuisine itself is attributed to and dependent upon the quality of the products, and therefore the land. The natural abundance of France and the *savoir-faire* of its peoples is extolled, promoting *terroir* to an element of patrimony. The notion that France's culinary acclaim is linked with its produce is reinforced by the French and foreigners alike. For instance, in discussing their taste, Theodore Zeldin attributes the success of French cuisine to 'the variety of produce they use'.³ The prevalence of this assessment, being also a valuable marketing tool, has indeed remained largely unchallenged. However, even the most faithful upholders of gastronomic tradition may find place for criticism. Geographer and culinary scholar Jean-Robert Pitte, in *Gastronomie Française: Histoire et Géographie d'une Passion*, contests this mythologizing tendency with the more logical assertion: We are gravely mistaken in believing France would be a country where milk and honey flow spontaneously, where one would only stoop down to collect the most exquisite manna fallen from the sky'.⁴ Pitte argues that although France may possess 'favored by the mildness of its climate and by the variety of its regions', much more is owed to a simple matter of supply and demand, with the establishment of a court and nobility who sought fine foods and wine.⁵ Pitte Notes the fortuitous placement of transport routes and the presence and requirements of nobility as contributing to France's culinary success, having prompted the development of agriculture and the cultivation of good products. This balanced approach resists the patriotic enthusiasm of upholding the myth of France as a gastronomic utopia.

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In contrast, two fundamental culinary writers of the early twentieth century, Curnonsky and Marcel Rouff, reinforce the divine inheritance narrative by insisting that the art of eating well thrived throughout France because the country is 'favorisé par la douceur de son climat et par la variété de ses régions' which in nourishing all manner of livestock, fruits, vegetables, and wines, thrives as a veritable garden of Eden.⁶ These two ideas interestingly find overlap wherein Curnonsky and Pitte both acknowledge the fundamental role of cooks and the demands of a refined audience to appreciate them. This sentiment is echoed by Curnonsky in the *Anthologie de la Gastronomie Française*, where he insists that the 'Gastronome and chef are indispensable to each other: for what would come of the gastronomes if they didn't have good chefs, and what would become of the chefs if they didn't have fine gourmets to discuss and taste their cuisine?'⁷ They cite the symbiotic relationship of cook, land, and gastronome in developing France's culinary notoriety. Interestingly, Curnonsky and Pitte's recognition of the socio-cultural factor in developing French gastronomy corresponds with today's policy-enforced use of *terroir* employed by the INAO in defining and regulating *terroir* for both products of origin such as AOC wines and AOP foods, which emphasize tradition and *savoir-faire*.⁸

Tracing Terroir(s)

While the cultural power of cuisine has been evinced by scholars such as Priscilla Parkhurst-Ferguson, Amy Trubek, and Thomas Parker, and the geographic connection between food and identity have been elaborated by the likes of Jean Robert-Pitte and Marion Demossier, the analysis of *terroir* as a malleable factor, intentionally instrumentalized in culinary patrimonialization and marketing garners less focus. Several scholars, Parker being among the foremost, have treated the idea of *terroir* in terms of its historical usage and identified ways in which it has evolved over time, and the varying connotations associated with the term. An unexpected approach to *terroir* and its literary translatability is given by Timothy J. Tomasik, who explores the concept in the works of Michel de Certeau and highlights the challenges of transferring or ‘uprooting’ a distinctly French concept such as *terroir* for a broader audience. Significantly, Tomasik and Parker both note that *terroir* has not developed linearly, but rather it ‘oscillates between references to geologic characteristics like soil contents and to traits from the classical tradition of descriptive geography such as city/country (or urban/provincial) distinctions.’⁹ As Parker identifies, the development of geographic studies in France were rooted in rather romanticized notions of *terroir* which attributed location-based characteristics to people of a specific climate as much as the products which were cultivated there.¹⁰ It is no surprise then that these rather mystic notions are so present in concepts of regional products and populations, which figure largely into gastronomic texts. Despite describing concrete things, we already see the insertion of the intangible, which plays an important role in the mythology and safeguarding of culinary heritage in a contemporary context.

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Contrary to the often-repeated belief that *terroir*, being a French idea, is untranslatable, I suggest that, as we will see in the following section, it is a living term which can be uprooted, adapted, and instrumentalized. From being capitalized upon to strengthen France’s gastronomic offer in light of competition arising from globalization and standardization, to serving as a trace for nostalgia, to referencing a specific taste from derived from a geographical characteristic, *terroir* holds myriad potentialities. Depending on the consumer, it can signify belonging or the quality of being foreign, inverting its role with ease. The fluidity and allure of the term can suggest authenticity, lend a sense of cohesion between nation and region, or even bolster patriotism. When considering that culinary guidebooks, gastronomic maps, and product of origin labels explicitly evoke *terroir* as a complex, often plural signifier, I argue that we must stretch beyond the synchronic and diachronic treatment of *terroir* in order to understand its usage today, embracing a hybrid schema which considers plurality and simultaneity. We also must also consider the term indirectly, abstractly. For example we can read it in the subtext of food and wine critic Périco Légasse’s reflection on his travel through France and its gustatory offerings. He evokes the patriotic sentiment behind some current safeguarding measures, recalling

that it is upon [...] encountering these treasures that the patriotic instinct, animating our tastebuds, urges us to preserve'.¹¹ He finally asserts that 'French cuisine is, above all, a land of plenty'.¹² Recalling Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, Légrasse interestingly refers to cuisine as a place, something of a nostalgic territory where 'the remnants of experience still lived in the warmth of tradition' still linger.¹³

Guidebooks, Maps, and culinary literature

This sense of tradition being visitable, this romanticization of the rural blooming into a new pastoralism, plays a central role in the emergence of culinary guidebooks, literature, and maps, which allow consumers the stabilizing sense of upholding tradition, of preserving a collective past. Like *terroir*, regional cuisines and products act as both anchor and as livable patrimony. Mapping, inventorying, and thus maintaining these elements of national pride and heritage, became all the more impactful in the sluggish economic wake following the decline of industry and the slump in morale following the first and second world wars. As Tomasik observes, 'In a limited literary sense, *terroir* connotes authorial regionalism and generally conservative returns to rural life, wisdom, and culture'. These works signal a place where '...enduring values of man and soil are equated with the political ideals of national socialisms or are intended as correctives to the perceived urban values dominating the (Parisian) administrative center of postindustrial France'.¹⁴ Thus romanticizing the rural becomes the antidote for urban exhaustion and disconnection from nature, from roots. Unsurprisingly, then, works of culinary literature such as guidebooks, inventories, almanacs, and anthologies spread in popularity in the early twentieth century in France. *Terroir* becomes something visitable, consumable, marketable. As Barthes observes in his *Mythologies* 'the peasant dish' becomes 'the rural fantasy'.¹⁵

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A crucial character in promoting the popularity of regional cuisines and gastronomic tourism was Maurice Edmond Sailland, widely known by his journalistic pen name Curnonsky. Through numerous initiatives, including the direction of culinary maps, the publication of multiple guidebook series, monographs, and reviews, and the foundation of the famed dining club, the Académie des Gastronomes, Curnonsky championed a French cuisine which de-centralized Paris and focused on the collective bounty of France's gastronomic offer. Although culinary-centered travel is familiar to a contemporary audience, as Eluard-Valette suggests, Curnonsky launched the gourmet identity of the 'gastronome prospecteur' and initiated 'a new way of traveling, for the discovery of a dish'.¹⁶ This food-centric tourism was placed in the context of visiting other emblems of French patrimony. As culinary historian Julia Csergo notes (although other gastronomic guides did already exist) by the 1920s, 'Gastronomy comes together with other objects of patrimony'.¹⁷ Furthermore, the culinary highlights of each region of France not only attracted a new type of tourism, but also promote a sense of unity in the interwar period.¹⁸

La France Gastronomique. Guide des merveilles culinaires et des bonnes auberges françaises (1921-1928), a series co-authored with regionalist and culinary writer Marcel Rouff, reads like a proto-foodie travelogue, recanting romanticized memories, and poetic impressions. It gives the reader a favorable impression that they would be thusly welcomed across France, from the humblest country inn to the finest elite establishment. These personal digressions, however, should not be taken purely as cloaked advertising, but should also be seen as carrying on an oral tradition, which, paying tribute to one of France's celebrated fathers of cuisine, Grimod de la Reynière, whose *Almanach des Gourmandes* insisted that a table should be 'adorned in a wealth of anecdotes, stories and amusing accounts'.¹⁹ This pleasure of recitation reminds us that culinary conviviality is not centered on the concrete aspects of dining alone, but includes the immaterial. Thus a technically good meal does not necessarily equate a good dining experience. This democratization of taste is a crucial element of culinary unity-building. Given this, we see a corresponding shift from exhaustive volumes to lighter, more concise, guides. For example, Curnonsky's subsequent *France, paradis du vin et de la bonne chère*, published in 1933 gives an abridged, less anecdotal culinary overview of France's regions. This slim 63-page volume, complete with pastoral illustrations highlighting the charm of the French countryside, marks a notable shift in accessibility of culinary literature.

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In comparison with its twenty-four-volume predecessor, appealing more towards the passionate gastronome, we see the emergence of concise texts, and maps, geared towards the weekend traveler. In opening this volume, Curnonsky upholds the mythology of France's status as a '*pays de cocagne*' asserting that 'We are forced to recognize that our country is the most habitable on the planet, among other reasons, because it surely here that we eat and drink the best'. He continues to insist that '[...] our incomparable regional cuisine [is] born of the diversity within our provinces'.²⁰ The collective language of 'our' here suggests the text is directed at French readers, fellow citizens who can be proud to partake in France's gastronomic offer, belonging at once to the nation and to the region simultaneously. As Parkhurst-Ferguson summarizes 'Traveling spread knowledge of the culinary patrimony of France and made contacts between regions...'²¹ In terms of territory, *France, paradis du vin et de la bonne chère*, also resists following technical departmental lines, but presents sometimes cities, other times, regions, based on their specialties and culinary connotations.

However, much like the concept of body politic, Curnonsky situates Paris as the governing head, declaring it a '*capitale de la gastronomie*'²² or a convening place where all cuisines can be found. Politics and economics play a role in the presentation of cuisine here. For instance, this text opens with the wines and culinary offerings of Bordeaux, Bourgogne, and Champagne, regions which have more to offer affluent, cosmopolitan tourists. These economies, built around their famed wine production and trade, are described in urbane terms such as *riche*, *fine*, *somptueuse*, *exquise*, and *délicate*, evidently appealing to a wealthier

potential visitor.²³ A sceptic reader can hardly miss the plug of advertising in effusions like ‘The cuisine of Champagne, fine, delicate, and nuanced, borrows its best grace and its most delicious ‘spirit’ from the excellence of the wines which enter into the preparation of its sauces’.²⁴ Making sure, however, not to exclude any potential interest, Curnonsky assures ‘[...] Champagne agrees with all tastes, goes with all dishes and can be drunk in all circumstances’.²⁵ By contrast, poorer regions are celebrated for their virtues of loyalty and their regional dishes, which become culinary emblems of France. From vaunting the virtues of the Languedoc cassoulet as an ‘admirable national dish’ to praising the pot-au-feu and cuisine of central France as ‘aguste’ and ‘rustic’ each region is praised.²⁶ Regions already associated with culinary pride, such as Lyon, or Bresse/Bugey (birthplace of Brillat-Savarin) are labelled as *pays de cocagne*. Additionally, in listing traits of cuisine such as ‘savant’ or ‘noble’ alongside regional produce and products like fruits, vegetables, butter, and sausage, the presentation of culinary goods utilizes the hybridity of *terroir* as both location-based and cultural.

Another series, rife with imagination-inspiring folklore, is the periodical *La France À Table*. Also directed and edited by Curnonsky, and with regular contributors like regionalists Gaston Derys and Austin de Croze, this long-running gastronomic review is firmly rooted in the tradition of culinary regionalism established in the preceding decade. Initially published from 1934 to 1937 and resuming in 1949 after the war, this series features folk songs, maps, and alludes to the necessity of protecting the quality of French products as a duty.²⁷ With the use of high-quality photos, as well as its use of maps, it marks a visual turn in culinary guides, which, in combination with poetic texts, presents an irresistible, romantic rural life to readers. Take this de Croze’s florid sketch of Provence, followed by an idyllic photo set (figure 1):

The Provençal soul is exhaled in a composite and very characteristic perfume: it initially smells of verbena and lavender, melons and wheat, the figs which, near the threshold, dry on the *canisses* (racks of reed), hot

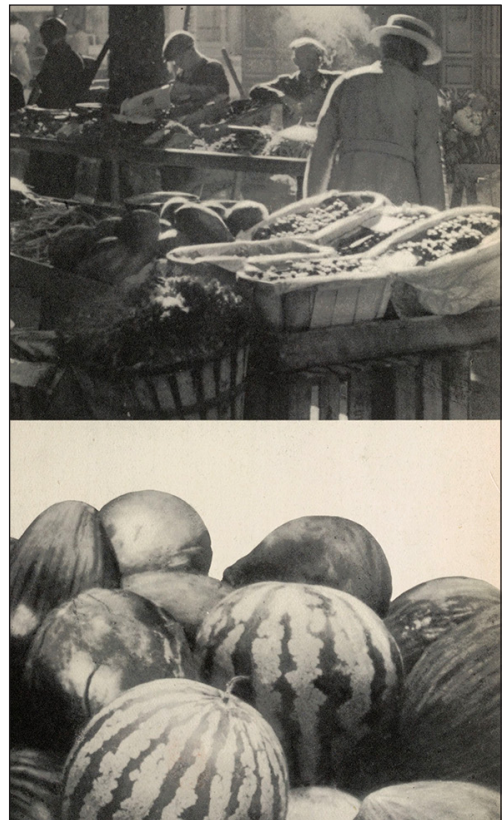


FIGURE 1. *La France À Table*. Janvier 1935. p.9. BnF.

charcoal, fine oil, thyme, fennel, saffron, good, boldly-spiced cuisine, all of this enveloped in the intoxicating odor exuding from the overheated leaves of the fig tree....The plots of soil seem violet where the watermelons flourish, the *lisetto* (Christmas melons), squash and courgette, the peppers, the aubergines, the ‘candy apples’, all of the good vegetables of Provence, flavorful and colored like the sweet-smelling fruits like flowers, the flowers radiant like the smiles of women in love....the climate is bright and dry, straightforward, the air crystal clear, the light, dazzling, and the horizons hazy’.²⁸

This evocative segment, written by Austin de Croze, engages the senses while constructing a multi-layered *terroir*-laden scene, not only listing regional products of Provence like watermelon, thyme, and oil, but also the scents of the landscape, the dry air, the colors, the charm of the women. This pairing of text and image would not only stimulate pride and recognition in a local, but would also allure a visitor. Although this example may suggest an advertising aim, it would be reductive to conclude that these publications only aimed at boosting tourism and consequently, the economy. The nostalgia-inducing prose and reassuring scenes of rural life celebrate a France that, deeply destabilized by war, saw the restructuring of its boundaries and territories. In the first issue after the publication hiatus during the second world war, Curnonsky issues the passionate assertion: No ! The cult of the table is not abolished and France remains the paradise of gastronomy.²⁹ This series places heavy focus, reinforced by both pictures and regional maps, on the connection between the land and its people, including photos of farmers, vineyards, and cultivated fields alongside images of churches and monuments. The pages are interspersed with poems, regional folk songs sung during harvest, recipes, and restaurant recommendations. Contributors range from the literary- Colette, for instance, having penned several pieces, to the scientific- with treatises on health (such as the benefits of wine or olive oil) presented by doctors or politicians, many of whom also belonged to dining clubs. We also see, in the cover art and photos throughout, the display of regional specialties as representative elements of a culinary culture, lending an element of authenticity. The food items gradually become a sign of themselves, an indicator for tourists that they have encountered the real. As semiotician Jonathan Culler writes, ‘the authentic is not something unmarked or undifferentiated; authenticity is a sign relation’.³⁰ Of course the term ‘authentic’ here refers to that which it is meant to signify. For instance, the cover image for the ‘Touraine’ issue already shows the area’s most-known culinary items and products of *terroir*, allowing for recognition and reinforcement of these culinary symbols for residents and tourists.

We see (figure 2) the iconic goat cheese, the *Saint-Maure de Touraine*, a pot of *rillettes de Tours*, and glasses of both red and white wines, which readers can assume are from the surrounding Loire valley. The unlabeled bottle is loosely covered in soil, suggesting this wine came straight from the land. The connection with *terroir*-based marketing is even more notable today, as each of the products on the table are of protected geographic origin. The more official cataloguing of products of origin is presented in the exhaustive series, *L’Inventaire du Patrimoine Culinaire de la France*.

This nineteen-volume undertaking emerged in 1992 following the aims of the Conseil National des Arts Culinaires and of the Ministries of Culture and Agriculture.³¹ Here each region is meticulously documented, and all products of origin, regional specialties, and preparations are listed. With a decidedly less-romantic tone, this series nonetheless serves as a gastronomic guide, valorizing products-as-patrimony through the safeguarding measure of the inventory for the future. A somewhat technical multi-volume series, however, spanning from 1992 through 2015, faces the challenge of presenting a fractured, if eventually comprehensive, list of France's culinary patrimony. Each region is bound within its own tome, remaining geographically separate. Here we can see why the use of culinary maps was crucial in presenting a more unified image of French cuisine.

Unlike written series, addressing different areas and regional cuisines separately, maps allow a sense of cohesion and interconnection, not only for the tourist planning a route, but unify and show France as a collective whole. Culinary maps are almost inseparably linked with *terroir* as they reinforce the connection with a specific place and a product. Because of their territoriality, these maps are also inextricably connected with representations of the nation by region. While each region alone may not justify France's reputation as a culinary utopia, the collective bounty displayed in a culinary map would have shown the culinary diversity in a collective format, a collective patrimony and source of pride. These maps, especially following the rise in auto tourism, encouraged culinary travel. For example, Alain Bourguignon's 1929 *Carte gastronomique de la France* (detail in figure 3) emphasizes regional specialties in bold print, and highlights notable wine regions in bright red and yellow. The spatial placement of food items also allows for a reinforced connection with the land, further stressing the link with *terroir* in constructing a French gastronomic identity. Maps more oriented towards foreign tourists typically employed illustrations rather than listed terms, thus overcoming a possible language barrier. Other approaches to displaying France as a gastronomic utopia are more subtle.

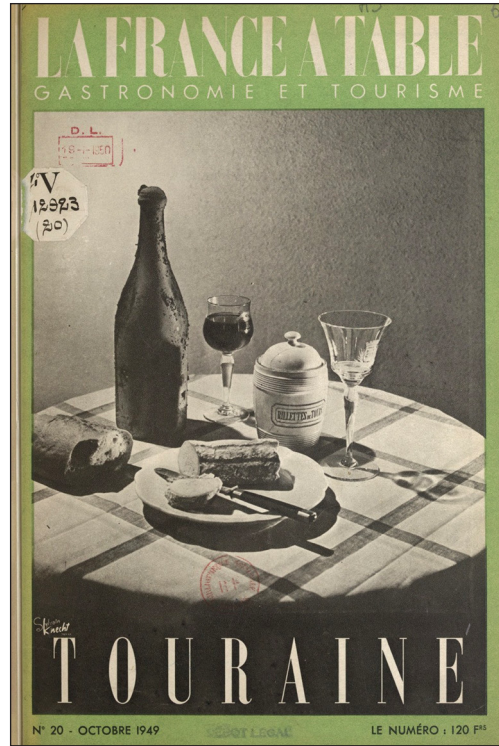


FIGURE 2. *La France A Table 'Touraine'* 1949. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k30519078>

texts which seem largely imaginative, such as Dalí's *Les Vins De Gala*, contain more than meets the eye. Dalí, whom Pitte praises for his ability to appreciate and meaningfully recount his dining experiences in *Diners de Gala* (1973),³² publishes this elaborate wine-centered volume in 1977. Filled with whimsically-titled sections like *Vins de Joie* and *Vins de Lumière*, and brimming with iconic surrealist sketches and paintings, this work included fictionalized narratives of wine origins such as a fable about Châteauneuf de Pape. At first glance this work seems to be an imaginative tribute by an unexpectedly informed wine enthusiast.³³ Upon closer inspection, however, a majority of the book's text, including the capriciously-titled vins de Gala, is written not by Dalí, but by former general director of the INAO Louis Orizet.³⁴

Interestingly, Orizet adopts a more poetical writing style to better-suits the tone of the book, and of Dalí. These wines, titled with abstract terms like 'joy' and 'generous', recall Curnonsky's emotive labelling of regional foods like 'loyal' and 'savante'. Each section of *Les 10 Vins de Gala* is subdivided into sections such as '*vins de lumière*' which include wines selected in association with that characteristic. 'Vins de Joie' for instance, include Beaujolais and Chinon, regions which Curnonsky and Rouff associate, in culinary terms, with lightness '*joie paisible*'.³⁵ Each entry is also followed by a '*note gastronomique*' which details pairings, often reinforcing the idea of a natural complement between local foods and wines. For example, in the section '*vins de pourpre*' which includes red wines of the Burgundy region, Orizet writes 'Thus the meat of Charolles and Morvandelle, the poultry of Bresse, the fish of the Saône, frame the prestigious Burgundy from Dijon to Villefrance-sur-Saône'.³⁶ Incidentally, this passage corresponds with the map section in figure 3. Orizet further insists on the propitious landscapes throughout France, claiming that for every gastronomic region of the country, one finds an accompanying soil and geography allowing grapevines to prosper.³⁷ We see the familiar reinforcement of the idea that natural provenance is indeed divine providence.

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What social weight, then, can we attribute to these culinary writings and what they reflect about the role of *terroir* and rootedness of products in French society? As Parkhurst-Ferguson asserts 'The importance and significance to cuisine of language, texts, and representations can hardly be overstated. As much as the foodways by which it is shaped or the actual foods consumed, words sustain cuisine'.³⁸ Or, as Orizet writes 'Every school, every religion begins by the establishment of a convention of language. Without this key, there is only obscurity, misunderstanding and conflict'.³⁹ It is precisely this recognition of the codification of *savoir-faire* implicated in culinary language which leads way to safeguarding measures that manifest not only in cultural heritage movements, but also in contemporary policies surrounding product of origin labels.

Conclusion

If the past century saw the successful construction of a culinary culture in France, today we the nostalgic utopia of culinary France evoked to safeguard not only *savoir-faire*, but also *savoir-vivre*. While culinary maps and guidebooks highlighted the culinary diversity of France, today's measures to certify authenticity seek to anchor that diversity both temporally and culturally. The blend of territory and tradition reign in certification guidelines built around *terroir*, simultaneously excluding changes of practices, tastes, or even populations. One of the final volumes of *L'Inventaire* includes a preface, summarizing the mission of the series, citing the need protect products of *terroir* from disappearing, as that would also imply the erasure of a collective past, and stresses the necessity safeguarding and transmitting this culinary patrimony for the future.⁴⁰ In other words, AOP/AOC labels resist the feared 'acceleration of history'.⁴¹ Recognizing that the hyper-globalization of the past decades brought significant economic competition against France's reputed cuisine, products of *terroir* are positioned to offer something difficult to replace.

If we consider then, as Tomasik proposes, that *terroir* 'carries a strong affective charge'⁴² and that the products and dishes arising from specific places or regions hold a representative power, we can see how *terroir* might become mouldable or moveable. The consumer need no longer visit a place to experience a culinary offer, nor even go to a regional-themed restaurant to experience 'authentic' tastes. Today the usage of labels for products of origin inverts the previous century's allure of pastoralism. Rather than travel to seek out rural foodways, one may simply visit the nearest supermarket to partake in a product of *terroir*. This result is nearly the anthesis of the actual concept of rootedness upon which *terroir* is based. Thus we see the capitalization of the term *terroir* and the mythology surrounding it.

An AOP cheese can release the unctuous aroma of an Époisses cheese directly into one's living room, a cured sausage from the Haute-Savoie need only its label removed, and it can evoke alpine scenes, or recall memories of a distant ski trip, feeding personal nostalgia and certifying it with a label of authenticity to validate it. A recent ad campaign in the metro stations of Paris asked pedestrians 'How do you eat your *terroir*?' with a #mangerAOP and a picture of a *chavignol* goat cheese, reinforcing the idea that *terroir* is a moveable, consumable object.⁴³ Last year, a three part series from the weekly journal *Le Un*, focused on three pillars of French culinary mythology; bread, wine, and cheese, delving into the socio-cultural role of these products, thus carrying on the current-day transmission of these aliments.⁴⁴ A summary report from the Ministry of Agriculture published in January 2021 notes a rise in the consumption of local products, even mentioning that trends during the Covid-19 crisis saw a spike in location-based purchasing.⁴⁵ We may hazard the guess that this phenomenon is linked to confinement and vicarious travelling through the palate, or perhaps we could point towards the influence closed borders and travel restrictions, or even the fear of foreignness and thus the unknown. Whatever the cause may be, this re-

territorialization of eating brings *terroir* back into focus as a mutable symbolic concept. As Parkhurst-Ferguson keenly summarizes ‘Every culture has its myths. Neither right nor wrong, neither truthful nor mendacious, myths *are*. Above all, they are useful. Products of a collective imagination, these understandings of the everyday serve individuals as they work for societies’.⁴⁶ Through the creation of culinary literature and maps, to the implementation of safeguarding policies, the French nation has seized upon the cultural significance of *terroir*, and we have seen its adaptability as it continues to be employed to address social and economic changes.

Notes

1. From Brillat Savarin’s *Physiologie du Gout* (1825), this quote inspired the cliché ‘you are what you eat.’
2. Curnonsky (dir.), Gaston Derys (ed.) *La Table; magazine saisonnier de la gastronomie Française* (Hiver 1931-32), p.12 « *prééminence de la gastronomie française est incontestable et incontestée.* »
3. Theodore Zeldin, ‘Understanding their Taste’, *The French* (London: Collins Harvill, 1988).
4. Jean-Robert Pitte, *Gastronomie Française: Histoire et Géographie d’une Passion* (Fayard: 2005), p. 35. ‘... *on se trompe gravement en croyant que la France serait un pays où couleraient spontanément le lait et le miel, où il n’y aurait qu’à se baisser pour récolter la plus exquise des mannes tombée du ciel.*’
5. Pitte, p. 32. « *les terroirs qui permettent de créer un produit noble...* »
6. Curnonsky, *La Table* p.11. « *favorisé par la douceur de son climat et par la variété de ses régions.* »
7. Curnonsky and Gaston Derys, *Anthologie de la Gastronomie Française* (Paris : Delagrave, 1936) p.13. ‘*Gastronome et cuisiner sont indispensables l’un à l’autre : car que deviendraient les gastronomes s’il n’y avait pas de bons chefs, et que deviendraient les cuisiniers s’il n’y avait pas de fins gourmets pour discuter et goûter leurs cuisine ?*’
8. The Institut Nationale des Appellations d’Origine (INAO) is the EU governing body for products of origin, the Appellation d’origine contrôlée (AOC) is an origin label for French wines, and the Appellation d’origine protégée (AOP) labels food products from a protected origin at EU level.
9. Timothy J. Tomasik, ‘Cerseau à la Carte: Translating discursive *Terroir* in *The Practice of Everyday Life: Living and Cooking*,’ *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 100:2. (Duke University Press, 2001), p.523.
10. Thomas Parker, *Tasting French Terroir: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley: UCP, 2015), pp. 155, 156.
11. Périco Légasse in *Le Repas Gastronomique des Françaises*. Eds. Loïc Bienassis and Francis Chevrier, (Editions Gallimard : 2015), p.54. ‘...*à la rencontre de ces trésors que l’instinct patriotique animant nos papilles nous enjoint de préserver.*’
12. Légrasse. P.55. ‘*La cuisine française est d’abord un paysage de cocagne.*’
13. Pierre Nora, ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire’, *Representations*, 26, (UCP:1989) p. 7.
14. Tomasik, p. 520.
15. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris : Editions de Seuil, 1957), p. 144. « *Le plat paysan...la fantaisie rurale* »
16. Cécile Eluard-Valette, *Les Grandes Heures de la cuisine française* (Paris: Libraries Associées, 1964) p.176. « *une nouvelle façon de voyager, à la découverte d’un plat.* » (Point of interest, Eluard-Valette is the daughter of Paul Eluard and Gala).
17. Julia Csergo, « *Quelques jalons pour une histoire du tourisme et de la gastronomie en France* », *Téoros*, 25-1 | 2006, pp. 5-9. « *la gastronomie vient s’agréger aux autres objets patrimoniaux.*’
18. The aim of this inquiry, however, is not the history of regional cuisines nor of the development of their marketing. For more-detailed reading on those subjects, see the works of Julia Csergo such as *La gastronomie est-elle une marchandise culturelle comme les autres ?* (2016).
19. Grimod de la Reyniere, *Almanach des Gourmandes* (qtd. in Cécile Elouard p. 153). « *ornée d’une foule d’anecdotes, d’histoires et des contes amusantes...* »
20. Curnonsky, *France, paradis du vin et de la bonne chère*. (Paris : Editions d’Art, 1933), p. 5. ‘...*nous sommes bien forcés de reconnaître que notre pays est le plus habitable de la planète, entre autres raisons parce que c’est*

sûrement celui où l'on mange et où l'on boit le mieux.; '[...] notre incomparable cuisine régionale [est] née de la diversité de nos provinces...']

21. Priscilla Parkhurst-Ferguson. *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (UP, 2004) p. 127.
22. Curnonsky, *Paradis*, p. 6.
23. Curnonsky, *Paradis*, pp. 8-13.
24. Curnonsky, *Paradis*, (p. 18). '*La cuisine Champenoise, fine délicate et nuancée, emprunte sa meilleure grâce et son plus délicieuse 'esprit' à l'excellence des vins qui entrent dans la préparation des sauces.*'
25. Curnonsky, *Paradis*, p. 20. '*le Champagne convient à tous les goûts, s'allie avec tous les mets et peut se boire en toutes circonstances.*'
26. Curnonsky, *Paradis*, pp 33, 48.
27. Curnonsky (ed.), *La France À Table* (Provence Méditerranéenne) 1935, p. 45.
28. Austin de Croze in *La France À Table* (January 1935), p.6. '*L'âme provençale s'en exhale dans un parfum composite et bien caractéristique : [...] cela sent d'abord la verveine et les lavandes, les melons et le blé, les figues qui, près de seuil, sèchent sur les canisses (claiés de roseau), la braise chaud, l'huile fine, le thym, le fenouil, le safran, le bonne cuisine hardiment épicée, tout cela enveloppé dans l'odeur grisante que dégage les feuilles de figuier surchauffées.*' [...] '*La terre des cultures semble violette où s'épanouissent les pastèques, les lisettes (melons d'hiver), les courcoudes ou courgettes, les poivrons, les aubergines, les « pommes d'amour », tous les bons légumes de Provence, savoureux et colorés comme des fruits embaumés comme des fleurs, les fleurs radieuses comme des sourires de femme énamourée.*' [...] '*Le climat est vif et sec, franc, l'air limpide, la lumière éclatante et les horizons vaporeux.*'
29. Curnonsky in *La France À Table* (Touraine) 1948. p.3. *NON! Le Culte de la Table n'est pas aboli et la France reste le Paradis de la Gastronomie.*
30. Jonathan Culler. 'The semiotics of Tourism' in *Framing the Sign* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1990) p. 6.
31. *L'inventaire du patrimoine culinaire*, 'Alsace : produits du terroir et recettes traditionnelles', [sous la dir. de J. Froc, M. Hyman, Ph. Hyman... et al.]; préf. par le président du Conseil régional d'Alsace, (Paris : A. Michel : Conseil national des arts culinaires), 1998.
32. Pitte, pp. 26-27.
33. Dalí, *Vins de Gala* (Paris : Draeger, 1977), pp. 59-70. Although not on the bibliographic information the texts from pp. 16-129 are written by Max Gérard and the texts from pp. 145-290 are by Louis Orizet. For the purpose of these citations I will use Dalí/Orizet when quoting Orizet.
34. Orizet also penned the slogan 'Le Beaujolais Nouveau est arrivée!' and created a marketing campaign which helped launch the flagging wine region into international fame.
35. Curnonsky, *Paradis*, p. 25.; Dalí, p. 155.
36. These claims are reinforced with a map of France's wine regions at the end of the book and a guide to its appellations. Dalí/Orizet, pp. 288-289. '*Ainsi la viande charollaise et morvandelle, la volaille de Bresse, les poissons de Saône, encadrent la prestigieuse Bourgogne, de Dijon à Villefrance-sur-Saône.*'
37. Dalí/Orizet, p.173.
38. Parkhurst-Ferguson, pp. 9-10.
39. Dalí/Orizet, p. 145. '*Toute École, toute religion commence par l'établissement d'une convention de langage. Sans cette clé, il n'y a qu'obscurité, incompréhension et conflit.*'
40. *L'inventaire du patrimoine culinaire*, 'Région Centre: produits du terroir et recettes traditionnelles', préface par le président de la Région Centre ; [coordonné par l'] IEHCA, (Paris : A. Michel ; Tours : IEHCA), 2012.
41. Nora, p. 7.
42. Tomasik, p. 521.
43. '*Vous le mangez comment votre terroir?*' An alternate version asks '*Vous reprendrez bien un morceau de savoir-faire?*' with a different cheese.
44. *Le Un*. Le goût du Fromage (19 Août, 2020); Le goût du Vin (12 Août, 2020); Le goût du Pain (5 Août, 2020).
45. Rapport n° 20074, 'Les Produits Locaux', (Ministre de l'agriculture et de l'alimentation), January 2021.
46. Parkhurst-Ferguson, p. 9.

Cogito ergo sum meditati: I think, therefore I imagine!

Peter Hertzmann

ABSTRACT: After six decades of cooking, I've learned to imagine dishes before I cook them. Along the way, I've developed three distinct methods of imagining food preparations. The first method starts with dreams, the second with an ingredient, and the third with a word phrase. All involve a certain degree of free association to move your thoughts along. All the methods are easy to learn, especially if you understand the principal elements of cooking: methods, techniques, and ingredients.

For four weeks in June 2016, I was the writer-in-residence at the Edinburgh Food Studio in Scotland. The establishment had existed for about six months by the time I arrived for my four-week commitment. It was started with money from Kickstarter, and I had contributed since I knew one of the two founders. 'Knew' was generous since four summers earlier, Ben Reade and I had been on the same panel at a symposium and spent the following hour outside in some amazingly pleasant Oxford weather talking about food.

My expectation before arriving in Edinburgh was that I would spend time observing the restaurant and then spend hours writing. Part of that turned out to be true. I had rented a room in an eighteenth-century stone house a couple of blocks from the restaurant. On my three days off each week, I spent much of my time sitting at the small desk in the dormer next to my bed. As I wrote, I spent as much time looking at the treetops out the small window with its restricted view.

The restaurant had a grand total of three workers plus me. On weekends, an additional guest cook would show up, sometimes just to work for a while and other times to lead the action for the weekend. Most of those passing through were acquaintances of Ben's from his time as director of the Nordic Food Lab. The other workers were Sashana Souza Zanella, Ben's business partner at the time and current life partner, and Philipp Kolmann, an Austrian art student studying in Eindhoven but working in Edinburgh while he explored making bone-based ceramics from some of the restaurant's waste.

Service days started at about ten in the morning with a bacon-sausage-egg roll from the sandwich shop two doors up Dalkeith Road from the restaurant. It ended early the next morning with a splash of Armagnac and a quiet walk back to my room. The hours in between were spent preparing, cooking, plating, serving, and cleaning-up the meals served in the restaurant. Duties were not divided. Everyone did everything.

The four of us gathered in the dining room each morning of service. After the morning roll was downed and the day's first espresso swilled, we created the menu for that evening. Before the 'bidding' for dishes began, it was necessary to take a quick inventory. Someone checked the basement to see what ferments were ready. Someone else surveyed the three mini refrigerators to see what was left from previous orders. The forager was contacted to ascertain what greenery was arriving later in the day. The fishmonger was called to determine if any unusual seafood was available.

Once the palate of ingredients was determined, working course by course, the seven-course meal was imagined. Ben wrote the menu on the whiteboard in the kitchen. Each course was broken into the preparations required before it could land on the diner's plate. During the day, the menu would be adjusted as need be to fit our collective change in imagination.

Each day the dishes were different in most respects. There were limitations built into the kitchen due to size, equipment, location, and the number of workers. Each piece of china was used only once during a service; little was left in reserve. Each course had to have its own plates, and no two courses could use the same plates.

200 Although the group imagined the entire meal, each person in the group imagined different dishes. When one cook proposed a strawberry soup, each of the other cooks imagined something different. Therefore, the cook who proposed a dish was in charge of its preparation and the additional objective to harmonize everyone's imaginations into the finished dish that was plated and served to the diner.

It may be obvious, but I should point out that although the Food Studio had many cookbooks, they were rarely consulted once a dish was imagined. Each cook relied on his or her personal cooking knowledge of methods, techniques, and ingredients. Occasionally, the other cooks were consulted, but rarely a book.

Method one

Over the years, I've become aware of three different methods for imagining dishes. The first method came to me like an uninvited guest. By the early spring of 2011, I was aware that my creative life was in the throes of change. Each morning I awoke with an idea for a new dish. Some concepts came to me fully developed, while others came from remembering some small event from earlier in my life. My imagination followed each remembrance through a series of lateral thoughts until they brought me to a new dish that was often in no way related to the original recollection.

The only constraint I placed on each new dish was size. Each had to qualify as an *amuse-bouche*, *intermède*, or *mignardise*.¹ At the time I was exploring how a series of bite-sized dishes could affect the overall feel of a dinner party. Rather than my standard 'French-style' four-course menu of *entrée*, *plat*, salad, and dessert, I started with four *amuse-bouche*

served individually over a period of an hour or so.² These were served in the lounge along with drinks. We then moved to the dining room for the first two primary courses. The salad was bordered on both sides with a single *intermède*. Dessert was followed by four *mignardises* served all at once along with any coffee and *digestifs*. The *amuse-bouche* and *intermèdes* were served individually on small dishes. The *mignardises* were served on a single large plate. (See Figure 1.)

Ginger ale and other sodas

One of the earliest memories I awoke with that spring was my 1960 trip to the Boy Scout Jamboree in Colorado Springs. It was curious to wake thinking about an event a half century after it occurred. The trip produced many memories, so it was curious that the memory I woke with that morning was of Coca-Cola. The grassy area where the Jamboree was held was hot and dry. At any minute, you could imagine a large herd of longhorn cattle approaching. Spaced around the grounds, which were large enough to hold the tents of 50,000 Scouts, were roped-off areas with enough bunting for a mid-sized town to celebrate Independence Day. In each area was a table where a dime would purchase a paper cup of slightly cool Coke. Prior to the Jamboree, I was not a Coke fan – I still never savour one – those were different. Like the original soda-fountain drink but without the cocaine, the Coca Cola syrup was mixed with carbonated water to produce the finished drink. The mixing occurred in the soda gun that the server used to dispense the finished Coke into the paper cups. Out there in the heat and dust, the system designed for indoor use produced almost flat, slightly chilled Coca Cola. I liked it and spent many dimes there.

As I laid in bed, not yet fully awake, thinking about those ‘perfect’ Cokes, my mind drifted to a later Jamboree, this time in Greece. No soft drinks were available for purchase

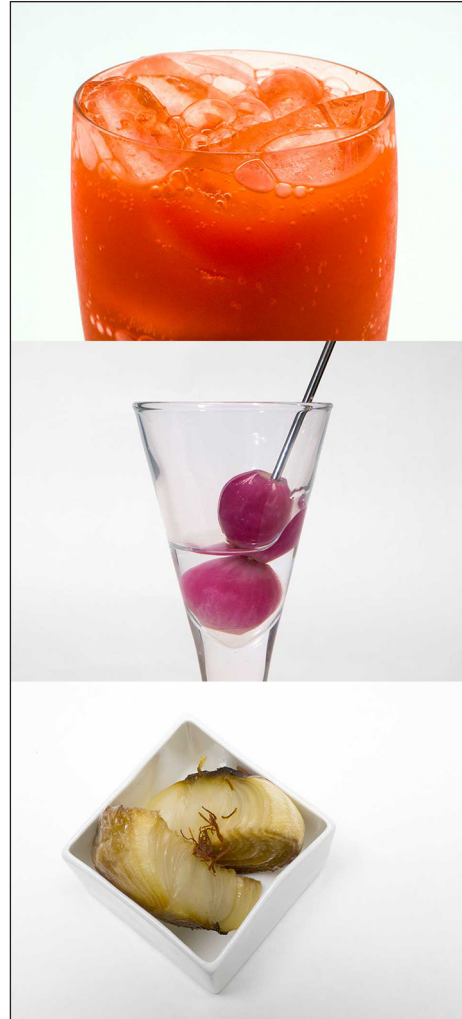


FIGURE 1. Carrot Soda (top), The Gibson (middle), Grilled Onion (bottom). Photos by author.

at the XI World Jamboree, but in Athens before the event I was introduced to real ginger ale, not the placid stuff available in 1960s America. This Greek ginger ale was spicy, hot, and sweet at the same time. While still in bed I began to imagine my own ginger ale.

I knew that to make ginger ale, I needed a quantity of ginger syrup. I found a simple recipe online for bartender's ginger syrup. The results were usable, but not great. The flavour was good, but clarification was problematic. I remembered that the process of candying ginger had, as waste, a very nice ginger syrup. So, I candied a couple of pounds of ginger and set the syrup aside.

With syrup in hand, I knew of two ways to make a soda from it. The easiest is to add it one-to-one to soda water. A second method is to dilute it one-to-one with filtered water and then carbonate the mixture. The second method produces bubbles that are sharper on the tongue, so it works best for small portions.

Even before my ginger ale first met an ice cube, I began imagining other sodas based on some other syrups sleeping in my refrigerator. My homemade Meyer lemon syrup was a natural. The bourbon-barrel-aged maple syrup was also handy and delightful. The bacon syrup sample I had recently received made for a curiously interesting soda. The onion syrup I made – because I could – produced a soda with an acquired taste. The ultimate variation was the carrot soda I created when I was playing with Method II for imagining dishes.

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Pickled onions

On New Year's Day in 1955, my father's parents celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary. Relatives came from all over the country to help them celebrate. The events lasted four or five days and my seven-year-old self had to attend every one of them. One night at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco, I got parked with a cousin and his wife for forty-five minutes in the Garden Court.³ Lionel and Anna Schatz drank Beefeater Gibsons, which were, in fact, gin martinis disguised by the substitution of a pickled onion instead of green olives.⁴ This made an impression on me. Most of my life, the Gibson has been my cocktail of choice. The idea that came to me that morning on waking was not for the Gibson, but for the onion.

At that time, I'd never pickled any vegetable. A short time earlier I had seen a local high-end French chef pickle a mixture of raw vegetables using a method that included the concoction sitting a specified amount of time in the sun. I took his method and decided it could be significantly simplified.

My brine was two parts white-wine vinegar, one part filtered water, and one part, by volume, granulated sugar. The brine was brought to a boil and then poured over peeled pearl onions in the canning jar. The jar was sealed, while still hot, with a two-piece lid. The actual pickling consisted of sitting on my kitchen counter for five days followed by the onions spending the remainder of their short existence in my refrigerator.

For service, a drained onion or two is placed in a small cordial glass. A few drops of fine gin complete the *amuse-bouche*.

This preparation eventually spawned another where a slightly larger cippolini onion was cut in half crosswise, quick-pickled in the same brine, and the cut edge was grilled before serving. Or in other words, a raw, pickled onion was cooked before serving.

Method I decoded

This process of creation starts with being semi-conscious during your dream state. I think of it as morphing from a sleep dream to a daydream. When I wake at the end of a dream, especially one about some event in my past, I latch onto the dream's tail with my mind and spin it further. If I'm lucky, the chain of thoughts will move toward food and maybe a new dish. The whole process is not too dissimilar to Freud's concept of free association.

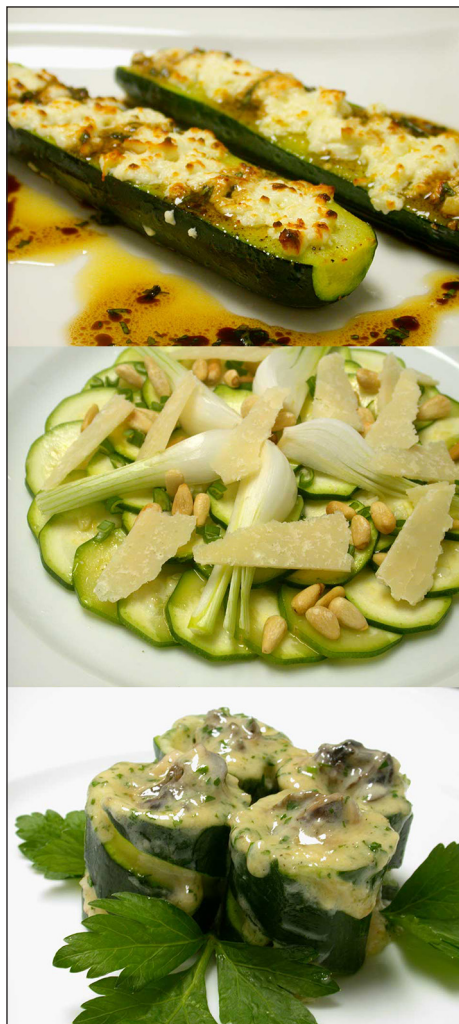
If you can catch your dreams, you can turn them into dishes! With experience, you can gently nudge the path in a direction that seems full of potential. After a while, you no longer need a dream as a catalyst. You'll taste a dish at a restaurant and immediately evolve a dozen dishes from it.

Method II

Unlike the previous method that starts with thoughts, this method starts with a base ingredient. By 'base', I mean an ingredient that is central to the dish, such as a vegetable, meat, or seafood. It is an item that dishes are based around rather than an item that accents another ingredient. Examples could be a potato, a parsnip, a perch, or a pig. With an ingredient as large as a pig, a foot may be a better place to start rather than with the whole animal, although I wouldn't narrow it down to fore or hind leg. Likewise, it's better to start with round onions as opposed to the entire *allium* genus.

Once an ingredient is selected, simply think of different ways to prepare the ingredient or components of the ingredient. When I use this method with groups of cooks as an exercise, the ideas flow linearly for a while, and then branch out based on a component of the ingredient, such as its juice. The more experience the cooks have, the easier the process. I've tried it a couple of times with book reading audiences. It went nowhere. They usually lack the required expertise.

The more extensive the participant's knowledge of methods, techniques, and ingredients, the easier it is to devise totally new dishes. One's personal list of cooking-method familiarity is a matter of experience, but ingredients often benefit from some research. Before you attempt to make onion syrup, it's helpful to understand that the average round onion contains about four percent sugar. You also need a means to extract the juice from the onion. Understanding the structure of the onion can help with this. (See Figure 2.)



Method II caveats

Since we are only imagining dishes with this method, no recipe testing is required to check our results. Experienced cooks should be able to prepare any dish they imagine, but the results may not justify the effort. Unless you do the exercise and then prepare each dish, you'll never know if imagined preparation can be realized.

Some of the concepts produced in this exercise may work just as they are stated, whereas others would require refinement, and some would be a waste of time. For an experienced cook, putting any of the ideas into practise should be simple.

The purpose of the exercise is to expand your cooking range. If your repertoire is expanded, that's nice too.

Choosing an ingredient

My mother never met a zucchini she couldn't turn into inedible paste. Being an American, I know the courgette as a zucchini. I've chosen the courgette for this example in part because it is one of my least favourite vegetables. No matter how many times I prepare tasty courgette dishes, my distain remains.

The first step is to better understand the courgette. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, *courgette* first appears in English literature in the early 1930s and *zucchini* in the 1920s. Both were previously referred to a vegetable marrow. This information can be

FIGURE 2. Dishes that fit with Method II: Grilled Courgette with Feta (top), Pickled Courgette with Cheese and Pine Nuts (middle), Courgette Stuffed with nails (bottom).

Photos by author.

useful as we pull ways that we've previously prepared courgettes from the depths of our collective, societal memory.

Next, we need to understand the components of a courgette. Most important is that a typical courgette is about ninety-five percent water. This tells us that high heat cooking methods may be limited due to the cooling effects of evaporating water. The sugar level is

less than two percent, so syrup is a longshot. Likewise, starch is non-existent. The amount of pectin present is unknown, other than it exists in the cell walls of all vegetables. Any thickening will probably require an additional ingredient. The only positive thing about courgettes is that they are high in Vitamin A. One pound is all you have to eat to meet the daily requirement!

Although some preparations may use the whole vegetable, the skin is quite distinct from the flesh of a courgette. While the skin has substantial strength, the flesh is easily mashed. At first glance, there's not a lot to work with using a courgette.

To cook a courgette

- Raw courgettes can be cut into shreds and tossed with a variety of salad dressings. The solo courgette can be accented with other raw vegetables or shredded herbs.
- Raw courgettes can be fermented in salt or a salt-based compound such as miso, fermented in koji, or pickled in an acid. Small specimens can be fermented or pickled whole while larger versions will need to be cut into chunks or slices.
- Raw courgette slices can be dehydrated into chips.
- Diced courgette can be dehydrated, fried to crisp, and used like croutons.
- The juice can be used for a soda, consumed plain, or as an ingredient in cocktails.
- The juice can be thickened with a gel to produce a cold sauce for fish or a cold soup. Acidified, the sauce could be used to dress a salad.
- The juice can be solidified with a gel to produce an aspic, or the flesh can be pureed and gelled to make a denser compound that can be diced and used in other dishes, like tofu's uses.
- The juice can be combined with eggs and cornflour to make a savoury pastry cream for use in savoury tarts.
- A cold puree can be fashioned into pearls using agar and a column of cold oil. The pearls can then be used like peas in warm or cold dishes.
- The solid waste produced by juicing can be used as a batter ingredient in cakes and a filling component in pastries.
- The waste can be combined with fish paste to make Japanese-style fried fish cakes (satsuma-age).
- The waste can be combined with other ingredients to make the filling for raviolis and other stuffed pastas.
- The waste can be dried, ground into a powder, and combined with starch to use as a flour substitute in pasta and crackers.
- Sliced courgette can be cooked in stock and then pureed and served as soup.
- Diced courgette can be cooked slowly in fat and then crushed with a fork for serving.
- Shredded courgette can be pan-fried either alone or with other shredded vegetables.

- Chunks of courgette can be roasted until browned.
- Slabs of courgette can be used as a substitute for flat bread and topped with an array of meats, vegetables, and cheeses before roasting.
- The centres of courgette halves can be scooped out to form elongated bowls for filling, or thick, crosswise slices can be hollowed out and filled.
- Courgette puree can be frozen into a granita, mixed with sugar and frozen into a sorbet, mixed with a sugar syrup and egg whites and frozen into a sherbet, or mixed with milk and cream to make an ice cream.

Method III

206 The last method partially originated with a word phrase. I morphed the current ‘in’ dish of Chicken and Waffles into Chicken Waffle. Macaroni and Cheese became a crispy rigatoni stuffed with goat cheese. I made a Bacon-Marshmallow Lollipop because I liked the way it sounded. I used the same excuse for the Pig’s Foot Lollipop and Corn Bark.

The word phrase results from thinking about an ingredient – often one that leapt over from another dish or one given to me. The Chicken Waffle started when I found myself the proud holder of fifty pounds of chicken meat. The Macaroni and Cheese started when I had a bowl of puffed rigatoni on hand from an experiment. The Bacon-Meringue Lollipop started when I was given a bottle of bacon-flavoured syrup and I wasn’t interested in making a bacon-tini. The Pig’s Foot Lollipop evolved from an excess of pig’s feet. The Corn Bark was the result of my purchasing some freeze-dried corn kernels and deciding they would be better with Aleppo pepper and dark chocolate. (See Figure 3.)



FIGURE 3. Chicken Waffle (top), Bacon-Meringue Lollipop (middle), Corn Bark (bottom). Photos by author.

For this method to work, you must be able to visualize a finished dish based on the words in your phrase. If you never eaten ratatouille, what would you visualize upon hearing the name? How about vichyssoise? Or if you're not from the United Kingdom, how about neeps and tatties or spotted dick? Or not from America, scapple? These last items can conjure up all sorts of dishes, none of which relate to the original.

The process used in this method is not dissimilar to the cook that opens up the refrigerator and prepares a meal from the contents. The ingredients provide the opportunity and the cook's experience provides the added 'ingredient'. The difference is whether the effort is conscious or not.

Tying the methods together

All three methods, as presented, require a knowledge of how to cook. I define the three elements of cooking as methods, techniques, and ingredients. The more familiar you are with all three, the easier it is for you to cook. (Note: For clarification, braising is a method, stirring is a technique; gelling is a method, clarification is a technique.)

The more you are familiar with the methods and techniques of cooking in your culture or another, and knowledgeable about the ingredients available to you, the easier cooking with your imagination will be. Vast knowledge is not required – I've even used these techniques with beginning cooks – but an active imagination and a willingness to dispense with following recipes are required.

Notes

1. *Amuse-bouche*, *intermède*, and *mignardise* are French terms for small dishes served throughout a formal meal. The meal starts with *amuse-bouche*, or what the English-speaking world would call hors d'oeuvres. *Mignardise* bookmark the meal and are served after the dessert, often with coffee or tea. The term is usually translated as 'petit-fours' but is not limited to small cakes. *Intermèdes* are rarely seen on French menus. In the United States, we would term them as palate cleansers.
2. In French dining, the *entrée* is the first course or appetizer. The *plat* is the main course.
3. The Palace Hotel was first built in 1875 as the largest hotel in the Western United States. It was seven stories tall and covered a full city block in San Francisco. In the center was a large glass-covered courtyard of sufficient size that multiple carriages could enter through an archway on Market Street and discharge or gather their passengers away from the street mud and inclement weather. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the courtyard was converted into a restaurant. The hotel was destroyed in the Great Earthquake of 1906 and rebuilt a few years later, including Garden Court. Until my grandfather's death in 1958, many of our family celebrations were held at the Palace Hotel.
4. At the turn of the twentieth century, a Gibson consisted of equal parts French vermouth and English dry gin chilled with ice and strained. By the 1950s, the ratio was six-to-one gin-to-vermouth. I prefer my Gibson to be made with the vermouth bottle left on the shelf.

Reconsidering the Culinary Imagination

Jennifer L. Holm

ABSTRACT: Recent critiques of French gastronomy and the nation's foodway suggest that we must reconsider the consequences of the culinary imagination that has flourished and formed the way in which French people eat and think about food over the past three decades. These critiques suggest that the nostalgic thinking about food and the rural and a consequent heritagization push that arose from fears of globalization have created an unsustainable and inequitable gastronomic system.

Gastronomic narratives of the extreme contemporary provide the space for elucidating consistent and brutal critiques of the nation's heritagization of food by revealing wilfully maintained blind spots and patterns of co-optation of rural values. We can read Paul-Henry Bizon's 2017 novel *La Louve* as an exemplary case. *La Louve* brings together urban gastronomy and rural agriculture to reveal the consequences of engaging some imaginaries while neglecting others. Through Camille, a small farmer practicing agroecology, and his wife Victoire, *La Louve* proposes a new way of literally and figuratively sustaining the nation, one that will rely on utopian thinking. I engage Erik Olin Wright's conception of 'real utopias' to frame the imaginative potential of Camille and Victoire's vision for the future of the French gastronomic system.

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In contemporary France, there is a tension between the nation's culinary imagination and reality. The beginning of the twenty-first century marked a period of wide-spread, nostalgia-induced gastronomic heritagization, capitalizing on the culinary imaginaries of consumers and politicians eager to fortify individual and national identities through ties to the local, the rural, and the land. Today, though, the consequences of engaging these imaginaries are coming to the fore. The gastronomic reality in which the French now live suggests that recent culinary imaginings, despite their creative and emancipatory potential, have resulted in an unsustainable and deleterious gastronomic system. Gastronomic narratives of the past five years have been integral in the shift from imaginative to realistic thinking. Breaking from their own highly nostalgic bent at the beginning of the twenty-first century and embracing pseudo-documentary forms, gastronomic narratives reveal brutal truths and provide necessary critiques of French gastronomic consumption and production. Importantly, though, many of these narratives avoid fatalism, imagining alternative modes of production and consumption, thus calling for a reconsideration of the culinary imaginaries upon which we act. An exemplary narrative in this vein is Paul-

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Henry Bizon's 2017 novel *La Louve. La Louve* presents a sweeping and unforgiving critique of the French nation's culinary stance, particularly as it takes shape in Paris, while also proposing a promising alternative gastronomic system in the shape of what sociologist Erik Olin Wright defines a 'real utopia'.

The imagination has occupied a fundamental role in shaping foodscapes over the past three decades. Facing a rapidly changing society, the loss of community structures, and the perceived dilution of culture brought on by globalization, a nostalgic gastronomic reflex marked the turn of the twenty-first century. To orient themselves in the present and establish a trajectory for the future, people turned to food, a preeminent aspect of individual and national identity that is also readily available and easily manipulable. The food of import was local and terroir-linked, as these nostalgia-laced products offered up the vicarious experience of the 'authenticity' of rural life as well as a connection to the land, to roots and to perceptibly fleeting values and ways of life. In a compounding of the imagination, people and nations were engaging the symbolic values of foods and culinary practices to gain access to an imagined past. This thread of culinary imagination extended across the globe, but was particularly influential in France, a country that had a particularly negative response to globalization.¹ Throughout Europe, a series of food safety scares arose at the same time, contributing to French wariness of the global market and industrial food production.² Foods with a connection to terroir, rural heritage, and small-scale agriculture were not only a direct line to the national rural heritage but also a safe and knowable alternative to the mysteries of the industrial food system. What has developed is a veritable obsession with the rural and the local, an obsession which allows city-dwellers to appropriate and consume rural values and identities, perpetuating the notion that the countryside exists to the city in myriad ways.

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The nostalgic embrace of the local, the rural, and the traditional in terms of gastronomy extended to the nation. Spanning across the political spectrum, the French government, at the local, regional, and national levels, has embarked on a sustained and far-reaching heritagization effort to protect French culture and values with a particular eye to the nation's gastronomy.³ While the list of heritagization efforts is too extensive to discuss here, we can highlight several examples. Internationally, France has engaged in a vast gastrodiplomacy campaign, availing itself of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List to protect and promote the gastronomic meal of the French in 2010 and has just recently, in 2021, proposed a nomination file to put the baguette on this list. At the local and regional level, protection and promotion came about through local festivals and celebrations dedicated to specific foods and culinary practices. In conceiving of these events, imagination looms large. Many of the origin stories of local products are swathed in myth-making and nostalgic recollection.⁴

The figure at the heart of these events was the *paysan*. Though translated as 'peasant', *paysan* refers to the rural inhabitant who has maintained a deep connection to the land and

to French agricultural and rural heritage. The *paysan* is not exclusively a farmer, though many are. Traditionally, the *paysan* is considered a guardian of traditional values and an emblem of French civilization. He represents ‘the *soul* of the nation, evoking the deep-rooted cultural traditions, attachment to the national territory, and an equilibrium that guarantees the health of society’.⁵ Throughout history, the national body has relied on the *paysan* to sustain the nation literally and figuratively and, depending on the moment, reinvigorate or sustain the national economy.⁶ As such, given the need to protect French identity and gastronomic values, this turn to and elevation of the *paysan* is unsurprising.

French gastronomic narratives – literary and cinematic works in which gastronomy serves as a central structuring device – captured this nostalgic turn in real time, offering it up as a national engagement in which all could take part. Indeed, gastronomic narratives provide valuable windows into contemporary foodways, expressing values, critiquing practices and attitudes, and foreshadowing foodscapes to come.⁷ Films such *Le Fabuleux destin d’Amélie Poulain* (*Amélie*, 2001) demonstrated the ways in which France and the French would harness culinary nostalgia as a tool for self-fashioning in a seemingly unstable world.⁸ *Amélie*’s world was, as the title indicates, fabulous and fantastical. Though, it was also indicative of the moment and exemplary of a wider trend in gastronomic narratives and the national gastronomic discourse. In the film, *Amélie* spends her days dreaming up good deeds, and delighting in the small pleasures of food such as cracking the burnt sugar crust of a *crème brûlée* and sinking her fingers into sacks of grain as she visits her local food vendor. She is an inhabitant of highly-charged culinary spaces, working in a café seemingly stuck in the 1960s, whizzing through a busy market street, and often in her kitchen or at the table. The foods and culinary spaces of *Amélie* and similar narratives offer up a figurative *retour aux sources*, a return to the land, to the past, and to the perceived values of a time gone by, serving as viable touchstones in the present with the aim of fashioning a better, more stable future.⁹

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Over the course of the past five years, however, there has been a marked shift away from the nostalgic, the imaginary, and the fantastical. In gastronomic narratives in the extreme contemporary, a pseudo-documentary form is taking its place. This shift is part of a larger trend in contemporary French literature and film towards the real that has been occurring since the beginning of the twenty-first century but is only recently crossing into gastronomic narratives. There is a general belief that the challenges of our time merit a realistic perspective and a reckoning.¹⁰ In the gastronomic context, authors and filmmakers carefully intertwine truth and fiction to expose and critique the brutal realities of what it means to produce, sell, and consume food in contemporary France. Indeed, the proliferation of these narratives is marked, with over a dozen noteworthy examples and new narratives entering the mainstream each year, some of which I highlight below.

Reconsidering the Culinary Imagination

A dominant preoccupation of these narratives is the plight of the modern-day small farmer and the family-owned vineyard. Films such as *Ce qui nous lie* (*Back to Burgundy*, 2017), *Petit paysan* (*Bloody Milk*, 2017), and *Roxane* (2018) shed light on the challenges of owning and running a family-owned farm in the face of European regulation, the threat of multinational corporations, and punitive French tax laws.¹¹ In this vein, two narratives stand out, each bringing to light the elevated rate of suicide among farmers – Michel Houellebecq’s 2019 novel *Sérotonine* (*Serotonin*) and Édouard Bergeon’s cinematic hit *Au nom de la terre* (*In the Name of the Land*) from the same year.¹² *Sérotonine* tells of the demise of a farmer, Aymeric, through the eyes of his friend and a former employee of the Ministry of Agriculture who is also the novel’s narrator. Enumerating facts and figures that represent the realities of dairy farming in France, the narrator provides the context through which readers understand Aymeric’s desperation and eventual suicide. The narrator’s own willingness to buy groceries at Carrefour, one of the world’s largest grocery distributors, while witnessing the downfall of his longtime friend, provides a reflective and critical mirror through which the reader might view herself. *Au nom de la terre*, depicts a similar picture, drawing the viewer in to rural life through an intimate portrait of a farmer struggling to maintain the family farm, eventually succumbing to a multitude of pressures by taking his own life. This film is semiautobiographical. The film’s director grew up on a farm and his father similarly took his own life. The aim of these narratives is to reveal that, even while consuming terroir-linked products, attending agricultural fairs and food festivals, and exalting the local, we are painfully unaware of the realities facing those who form the backbone of the food system. They engage readers and viewers by immersing them in the world of the farmer so that he becomes distinct and knowable rather than a distant, minimized subject in a blurb on the evening news.¹³

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These new narratives break the nostalgic gaze, revealing the devastating, albeit sometimes unintentional, consequences of the culinary imaginaries that have flourished in and shaped the twenty-first century. They expose the gaping chasm between the popular, urban imagination of rural life and its reality, namely the hardship that farmers face. Urban consumers willingly ignore signs of industrial, productivist agriculture such as giant combine harvesters, the use of fertilizers and pesticides, and sprawling warehouse-style barns.¹⁴ It is not only consumers who are to blame, however. Despite numerous opportunities to do so, the French government has repeatedly neglected to address the paradox in which farmers live – they make profound sacrifices to sustain the nation while unable to sustain their own families.¹⁵ This lack of understanding and the paradox of the small farmer are indicative of what historian Venus Bivar describes as a ‘collective and voluntary case of misrecognition’.¹⁶ Gastronomic nostalgia and the heritagization of the rural have led to the proliferation of ‘fair-weather ruralists’, or urban-bound citizens who call upon farmers to protect the landscape and stand as bearers of national values only to

either occasionally descend upon the countryside to consume them or otherwise leave them at the mercy of government policy and the industrial food complex.¹⁷

These paradoxes and moral shortcomings come under the microscope in Paul-Henry Bizon's 2017 novel *La Louve*. An exemplary narrative of its kind, the novel lays out a sweeping assessment of contemporary French food culture, bringing together agriculture and the contemporary urban food scene in a clash of gastronomic values and vision in the interwoven tales of two men: Camille Vollot, an overly idealistic small farmer with dreams of transforming French agriculture and society, and Raoul Sarkis, a smooth-talking charlatan looking to profit off the gastronomic frenzy that has taken over the French capital. Intertwining fiction with journalistic exposé, the novel is a *roman à clef* referencing the Jeune Rue affair, in which Cédric Naudon, a self-described cultural entrepreneur, swindled banks, artists, farmers, chefs, politicians, and, in essence, the entire French nation, all in the name of protecting French cultural heritage.¹⁸ Through Camille and Raoul, *La Louve* exposes the harsh truths that compose the imagined world we (believe to) consume, revealing the whole of French gastronomy to be nothing but artifice – ‘a good joke’, ‘a theatre’, ‘a scene’.¹⁹

212 Through Raoul Sarkis, *La Louve* demonstrates how gastronomy's centrality to the national project renders it easily exploitable. Profiting off the heritagization push described above, investors, politicians, and banks have been eager to throw their weight behind any project aimed at protecting and promoting this national treasure. In the novel, Sarkis claims to be creating a large cultural hub in the centre of Paris, the *Pavillon des Horizons*, where people will engage with the hottest figures in the arts and food. At the centre of the project, he claims, will be French terroir. Ingredients for restaurants will be sourced from small-scale farmers practicing ecologically friendly agriculture, because as Sarkis notes, this is the foundation of the whole of French gastronomic exceptionalism; without its magnificent agriculture, French gastronomy would be ‘nothing’.²⁰ Bringing together farmers from around the nation in the heart of Paris, the *Pavillon* will impact all of France, Sarkis explains.²¹ Speaking as if a saviour, he insists he is creating a ‘better world’.²² Sarkis smooth talk and the thrust of the contemporary heritagization project all but certify his success. Politicians ‘could only support him. Public opinion would salute him for his initiative in favour of the land’.²³

In reality, though, Sarkis is simply co-opting the rural and the local to his own financial ends. His words are just ‘ecological smooth-talk’.²⁴ Sarkis is condescending towards engaged farmers like Camille who truly work for the betterment of the natural world.²⁵ He is a ‘compulsive liar’ and an ‘opportunist’.²⁶ He usurps the discourse of land and heritage and steals the fruits of Camille's labour ‘to create a brand, a little toy for Parisians and rich tourists’.²⁷ Sarkis is ‘totally indifferent to what is on his plate’ or any other, only caring about potential profits to be had.²⁸ He has no intention of following through on his pretend

plans. Once he has enough money in his pockets from banks, investors, and thieving, and just before the walls come crashing down around him, he will cut and run, leaving only financial and cultural ruins in his wake.

The urban co-optation of the rural has become increasingly common with the rise of heritagization and implicates everyone, from everyday consumers to power-hungry politicians. Geographer Claire Delfosse describes the urban and political co-optation and appropriation of rural values, norms, and products as ‘post-modern heritagization’.²⁹ The urban profits off the rural while negating the latter’s identity rather than reaffirm it. So eager to believe in something greater than oneself and support a national cause, people are more likely, the narrator in *La Louve* claims, to fall victim to empty promises and deceptive projects like the one Sarkis claims to be leading.³⁰ Investors and politicians waste money and power while consumers are duped into a false knowledge about what they are eating.

Sarkis is keen to get into the gastronomic scene because it is so easily exploitable. While he is at a dinner with the movers and shakers of the Parisian food scene, another guest explains that Parisians go to restaurants ‘believing that the people who run them are better than their predecessors, that they work towards the happiness of clients, for their well-being and the well-being of all humanity, that they are engaged in a fight for the environment, for farmers, and all that’.³¹ A tone of mockery accompanies this exposé and the dismissive finish of the remark make the reality all the more biting. In an interview, Bizon identifies this lack of knowledge as central to the novel, saying he aimed to depict how ‘city-dwellers, who are distanced from the soil’ forget that agriculture is at the heart of everything they eat.³² Within the novel, the narrator laments urban consumers who use local products as a way of gaining cultural capital and feeding their fanciful and abstract notions about the countryside, but fail to form any real connection to *paysans* or the land.³³ The entire Parisian gastronomic system, the novel suggests, has devolved into lip service to an ideal that does not exist. In this way, *La Louve* rejects the culinary imagination that birthed and continues to nourish this very system.

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While this increasingly derisive take on French gastronomy and the rural turn compounds as the novel progresses, bordering on an altogether fatalistic view, *La Louve* turns back towards the potential of the culinary imaginary at its close in a rethinking of the gastronomic system. After all, imagination is inescapable. It is an integral part of ourselves. It shapes who we are and our understanding of the world. Imagination is necessary for change; how else would we create something new?³⁴

A new vision of French foodways comes through Camille Vollot, his farm where he practices agroecology and permaculture, and his cooperative of like-minded farmers. After living for several years in the city of Nantes, Camille and his wife return to the fictional village of Montfort-sur-Sèvre in the Vendée region and purchase his uncle’s farm. In just a few years, Camille shows an immense success with permaculture and creates ‘a model

ecosystem'. The farm is 'a stupefying laboratory whose vegetable production [is] *objectively* several times higher than the national average' despite not using agricultural machinery, fertilizers, or pesticides. Not only is Camille's farm 'a nourishing landscape' of 'astounding beauty', it is also a testament to agricultural diversity. One might lose themselves in the 'plant-covered labyrinth where hundreds of varieties and species blossomed in spirals of a mandala-like garden, around ponds, under the foliage of the forest and orchards'.³⁵ Because of his success, Camille believes that this alternative to industrial agriculture is the way forward for France. His greater mission is 'to defend the rural people by freeing them from the overly reductive figure of the "small producer" and to propose a production both certified and of sufficient scale to supply grocery chains and even school cafeterias and retirement homes'.³⁶ His cooperative serves up a healthier and more sustainable alternative to what is in the supermarket – 'the containers of meat wrapped in plastic, the same petrified cheeses and transformed products of all kinds, the same brands of cans and jars and "thingamajigs" to drink, but nothing, really, that seems actually good or edible'.³⁷ Quite the opposite, the products from Camille's farm 'radiate with a prodigious optimism', 'shine with power and joy', and have unique tastes and textures that linger on the palate and transport the eater.³⁸ Camille's food is superior. It communicates the land in which it was grown and is imbued with life-affirming values.

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For Camille, agroecology provides not only a better way to eat, but also a better way to live. Camille and his mentor Anne-Marie believe that there is a fundamental problem in contemporary French society – that it has lost the ties that bind it together – that a true connection to the land may resolve. This loss is manifest in how the nation nourishes itself. In Anne-Marie's mind 'our postmodern society, whose model of row crop farming contradict[s] nature's cyclical model that [does] not necessitate the use of fossil fuels or generate waste, neglect[s] a fundamental notion – the necessity of multiple and reciprocal connections between living things'.³⁹ Undeniably, this passage speaks to the dangers of maintaining the agricultural status quo. It comes in a section of the novel subtitled 'Accusation' and in the middle of a long documentary-like exposé on modern industrial agriculture and the harm it inflicts on people and the land. However, removing the subordinate clause, we also understand that postmodern society's blind spot has resulted in the dissolution of multiple and reciprocal relationships between all living things. The gastronomic ecosystem that France has constructed for itself over the course of the past sixty years is on the verge of collapse. Values traditionally associated with French gastronomy including conviviality and agricultural diversity have come to ring hollow in the search for the gastronomic new and both economic and cultural capital. Thus Anne-Marie's, and later Camille's, principal concern is French society's negligence – the forgotten truth that people must cultivate deeply rooted bonds with each other and with the natural world to flourish. It is through the land, figuratively and literally, that Camille believes people can re-establish these links

and break down the long-standing, though artificial, divide between nature and culture while simultaneously eating well.⁴⁰

Camille's dream is to create 'rhizome', of which the cooperative will provide the 'central nervous system, linking the soil and its inhabitants, capable of revitalizing all of society'.⁴¹ Indeed, Bizon identifies Camille's vision as his desired consequence of the novel. Readers should understand they are part of a vast ecosystem in which all people and things interact and are dependent upon one another.⁴² The image of the rhizome is particularly important in its emancipatory and creative potential. It is philosophical and natural form that rejects the verticality of 'rooted' thinking while embracing the expansion of connections and possibilities.⁴³ It is democratic and subversive. Through the rhizomatic cooperative, Camille hopes to create the exact opposite of the 'technocratic utopia' that has driven the French food market since the 1960s. He wants to craft 'the first viable model for virtuous production and for direct sales on a scale much larger than that practiced by the young, locally politically engaged farmers and hippie communities'.⁴⁴ In this model, consumers are in direct contact with producers, cultivating real and extensive bonds while also creating economic opportunity for farmers working with alternative forms of agriculture that privilege quality and health for the land and the consumer. It is his fervent belief in the possibility of achieving this new utopia, though, that leads Camille to blindly believe that Sarkis also shares this vision. Camille falls victim to his own imagination.

At the close of the novel, Camille's wife Victoire, an ardent realist and the only person to see Raoul for what he is, stands alone in the courtyard of what would have been the *Pavillon des Horizons*. Looking at the magnificent building around her, she is struck by its beauty. She sees the potential of creating a gastronomic hub in the centre of Paris, though one that is built by and through her family's agricultural cooperative, not through profiteering intermediaries. If she and Camille can harness their resources and personally take control of the building, then the cooperative could have a promising future and Camille's rhizomatic ecosystem may flourish.

Ultimately, the novel proposes what sociologist Erik Olin Wright terms 'real utopias'.⁴⁵ Wright envisions real utopias as 'viable, emancipatory alternatives to dominant institutions and social structures'.⁴⁶ These alternatives balance the fantasies we imagine in utopia with the practical realities and constraints of the world in which we live. Wright's concept of real utopias works on the assumptions that they are generated from the ground-up rather than from top-down approaches and that movement toward greater equality and more democratic societies 'expand the possibilities of human flourishing'.⁴⁷ Examples of real utopias include the goal of instituting a universal basic income, urban participatory budgeting, and worker-owned cooperatives.⁴⁸ This final example is particularly interesting in the context of *La Louve*. Camille's agroecology cooperative is the backbone for the movement he wants to propagate. Worker-owned cooperatives provide alternatives to contemporary capitalist

structures, giving power and agency to workers. These benefits of cooperatives are essential to reforming contemporary foodways, not only in France, but globally. Furthermore, while Victoire is a realist, and her vision at the end of the novel may not completely overlap with that of her husband, her creative thinking provides an important first step on the journey to creating the more viable gastronomic and human ecosystem that her husband imagines. These types of way posts are essential to the real utopia because they provide checkpoints, so that even if the utopic end is unreachable, we ‘nevertheless have accessible waystations that help us move in the right direction’.⁴⁹ The quest for real utopias, thus, may prove integral to creating real, radical and rhizomatic alternatives to the status quo.

In a foreword to *Food Utopias* (2015), Frederick Kirschenmann, President of Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture and an international leader for sustainable agriculture, proclaimed that the time had come for a ‘creative moment’ for engaging new imaginings for our global food system.⁵⁰ The French gastronomic system realistically portrayed in *La louve*, is a system imagined from the top-down. Farmers have long played to the imagination of others rather than cultivate their own visions for the future. The financial constraints and the bureaucratic obstacles they face do not afford them the luxury of realizing their own imaginaries. This system is morally, economically, politically, environmentally, and nutritionally unhealthy. It is also at a breaking point. Gastronomic narratives that question, criticize and elucidate this system are essential in this moment. Unlike their immediate forebearers, gastronomic narratives of the extreme contemporary elevate new ideas and propose change. We would, certainly, be wise to consider the imagined cultural and systemic changes for which they call. As Christy Wampole reminds us, ‘the most staggering cultural changes often must happen first in literature, music, and art, which provide the space where new ideas may be tried out without the requirement of apodictic certainty’.⁵¹ In these spaces, imaginative, utopian thinking thrives. In the quest to develop an alternative to the gastronomic (and unsustainable) status quo, the capacity to imagine and create real utopias proves a necessary faculty, not a fanciful endeavour. If we are to create change and follow the imagination, then, the questions become: Who gets to imagine? Which imaginative visions do we pursue? Camille and Victoire answer Kirschenmann’s call. *La Louve* causes us to reassess the culinary imagination as it has been and as it could be. The novel proposes new imaginations that will fundamentally alter the foodscape while providing direct and meaningful access to the purported values of the nation. The seeds of the gastronomic imaginary must move from the ground up. Only then can imagination lead the development of a real gastronomic utopia.

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Caste: The Main Character of Indian Food

Ragini Kashyap

ABSTRACT: Food has been one of the most visible expressions of hierarchy and power in India for over three millennia. Today, India's caste-based rules of food consumption, preparation, access, and exclusion are more deeply ingrained in the public psyche than perhaps many are comfortable to acknowledge. Although India is a young country, the caste system has been legitimized by centuries of practice and is embedded within the fabric of the culture. It has given rise to an incredibly complex food system, rife with symbolism, which is used to maintain power, status, and notions of religious purity.

This paper will first discuss the definitions and Vedic origins of the confluence of food and caste identity in India. It will explain the impact this system had on Islam and Christianity on the subcontinent, consider the role of modern politics, and finally show that these antiquated ideals have moved far beyond national borders to influence Indian food internationally. Today, the perception of Indian cuisine is primarily that of an upper-caste cuisine. It is ironic that approximately a quarter of all Indians are unlikely to ever access to this food which restaurants around the world serve in abundance.

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Caste is ubiquitous, and that is precisely why it is imperative to consider the role it plays in any study of Indian food. Examining the food practices of those typically excluded from the discourse is the first step to address generations of social conditioning, and to unpack the marriage of caste and culture that surrounds food in India.

[C]aste is ingrained in our taste buds and eating habits. Food snobbery is a part of India, and the food that belongs to upper castes has always been more celebrated. In a caste-sensitive India, labelling your product as Brahmin is a way to communicate that it boasts of the highest form of purity.' - Pushpesh Pant¹

The access to food is a practical necessity, and perhaps, a rather unimaginative one. In India, however, a wholly imagined construct dictates the details of this access: the caste system². Food has been one of the most visible expressions of hierarchy and power in India for over three millennia, since the composition of the *Manusmriti*. Vedic civilization divided people intentionally and irreversibly through categorizing what people can eat based on their caste.

Subsequent religious and colonial incursions have failed to challenge this system, and in fact, have most often built upon it to further their political interests. This imagined structure has therefore become a defining characteristic of the nation and every community

within it. From the *badhraloke* of Bengal in the East, to the Tamilian Brahmins in the South, the *Pathare Prabhu* in the West, the *Gangaputra* Brahmins of Uttar Pradesh, and the Kashmiri *Pandits* in the North, caste is truly a national feature of Indian society's collective imagination.

Regional Indian cuisines are a manifestation of this highly stratified system, and bound in their Indianness not by flavour, spice or technique, but by an adherence to caste-based exclusionary measures. Despite boasting a staggering diversity of highly developed cuisines, this division is, incredibly, one of the few constant features of Indian food along the length and breadth of the country. The ghee-laden curries enhanced with elaborate spice mixtures are primarily the prerogative of the upper-castes, while the curries of the lower castes are often simpler counterparts that maximize available ingredients. In doing so, however, they hinder their upward mobility through the caste-system.

This paper will first discuss the definitions and Vedic origins of the confluence of food and caste identity in India. It will elucidate the impact this system had on Islam and Christianity in the subcontinent, consider the role of modern politics, and finally show that these antiquated ideals have moved far beyond national borders to influence Indian food internationally. Today, the international perception of Indian cuisine is primarily that of an upper-caste cuisine. It is ironic that approximately a quarter of all Indians are unlikely to access to this food which restaurants around the world serve in abundance.³

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A System Designed to Discriminate

The caste system in India traces its roots back to the Vedic Civilization of Aryan invaders who arrived around 1700 BCE. They established a structure to classify the population by occupation, placing themselves at the top. They were intellectual and violent warriors who used caste to subjugate the indigenous populations as they expanded their rule.⁴

In the first years of the Common Era, the Aryans recorded the Hindu caste system in the early Vedic constitutional document, the Manusmriti (Laws of Manu). This established the order and occupation of four major caste groups: the Brahmins, who were priests and teachers; the Kshatriyas, who were warriors and law keepers; the Vaishyas, who were the economic engine of society; and, finally, the Shudras who were craftspeople and labourers. These groups were then further divided into thousands of *jatis* based on occupation, family-clan and ethnic identity.⁵ The stratification is so deeply embedded and forms the basis of Indian identity today, with little distinction between caste and culture.

A fifth category, previously referred to as the Untouchables, was reserved for those who worked with waste and other tasks considered 'polluted' by the upper castes. Today, *Dalit*, a term popularised by activists in the late 1800s, describes those who sit at the bottom of the caste system, or worse still, outside of it. K. T. Achaya notes *Dalit* comes from the Hindi word *dal* (lentils), which comes from Sanskrit for split or broken.⁶ The metaphor of food

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to denote a community that sees itself as broken is powerful, as food is one of the most common and powerful caste markers in Indian society.

Several lower castes are named for what they eat rather than for their occupation, implying that it is their most defining character: the *Mahars* are those who eat carrion, the *Musaharis* named for their consumption of rats, and often, the *Valmiki*s are called the *jhootan* caste for accepting leftover foods of upper castes.⁷ A nuanced translation of *jhootan* implies that contact with another human being has sullied the item and rendered it impure. One can safely assume that these were not names that communities gave themselves, and it is difficult to underestimate the impact of these classifications, as they continue to govern social interactions across India today.

The *Manusmriti* has no less than 56 verses devoted to food, exalting the purity of ghee and milk, categorising plants and vegetables, categorising animal products, outlining cooking instructions, who to accept food from, and whom to exclude for fear of polluting oneself.⁸ Given these texts were in Old Sanskrit and confined to the readership of Brahmins, they brought the system to life through practice for the rest of society. It is the implications of this practice that perhaps led Arjun Appadurai to claim that the convergence of the moral and social implications of food is most clear in Hindu India.⁹

It would be a challenge to speak of Hinduism and not address the two symbols popularly associated with the religion: the cow and vegetarianism. A common misconception in the modern times is that the early Vedic Aryans attributed a sacredness to the cow based on a desire for cow protection, thus giving the religion a symbol that is threatened by anyone who consumes beef.¹⁰ As D.N. Jha has shown, the holiness of the cow in Hinduism is a politically motivated fabrication that gained prominence much later. While the early Brahmins respected the cow for its value in dairy production and farm work, they routinely sacrificed the animal for consumption. In fact, all of the earliest Indian religious texts, including the Hindu Vedas (1500-600 BCE), the ancient Buddhist texts (1 BCE) and to a lesser extent the early Jain texts (5 CE), all reference some consumption of flesh as a recommended dietary practice.¹¹

The first record of Brahmins abstaining from beef was in response to a famine. As the most powerful caste, they eased tensions with the starving masses by adopting a partially vegetarian diet. This was radical for its time, and despite the nobility they attributed to their own restraint, the *Manusmriti* maintained that 'it is not sinful to eat meat of eatable animals. For *Brahma* has created both, the eaters and the eatables.'¹² Following this, the veneration of the cow went through cycles of Brahminical rigidity and relaxation for centuries. During a period of territorial expansion, in 5 CE, into Southern India, Brahmins travelled with their armies and a small herd of cattle. This was the first time they prohibited cow slaughter for two major reasons: first, they had a lot of land to cover; and second, they established their Brahminical superiority through a rejection of local dietary practice. They

therefore introduced southern India to a version of Hinduism where vegetarian Brahmins led the most meritorious, righteous lives.¹³ This would give rise to arguably some of the most conservative Brahmin cultures in the present day Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, whereas in the North, Brahmins continued to consume beef well into the 18th century, even requiring it for certain religious rituals.¹⁴ Over the centuries that followed, this system became an accepted way of life across the country, despite certain Brahmin communities maintaining a diet that included fish, like in Bengal or meat in Kashmir and Kerala.

The Aryan nomads were meat-eating warriors and herders before they were farmers. Conversely, today's popular Hindu discourse idealises an agrarian lifestyle and the vegetarian Brahmin, only making patronising concessions for the upper castes who eat meat, but not for anybody who eats beef. The vegetarian ideal in India is myopic, as it exalts the cow while literally milking it for all its worth. The hyper consumption and religious postulation of dairy, specifically of ghee and milk, has facilitated the growth of inhumane and problematic dairy and leather industries.¹⁵ It is noble to revere and protect the cow while the animal is dairy cattle, however, killing, skinning, consuming or disposing of the animal are impure acts.¹⁶

Further, given that beef is the cheapest protein in India, it is a significant source of nutrition for those unable to afford more expensive meats. Since the caste-system encompasses all aspects of one's professional, personal and spiritual life, this consumption perpetually keeps *Dalits* who consume beef bound to the bottom of the Hindu system.

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Islam and Christianity in India

‘[Originating] in the Hindu social order, [caste] has infiltrated all faiths on the Indian subcontinent. As old as the order of the Indic civilization, the phenomenon of controlling human capacity, creativity and labour has been core to its ideological performance secured by strict legal order. Caste in India is an absolute sanction – of the dominant class over the dominated.’¹⁷ – Suraj Yengde¹⁸

Although Hindu in its origin, the occupation-based caste system is a South Asian phenomenon and is therefore also a feature of the religions that did not originate in India, namely the subcontinental expressions of Islam and Christianity. Initial Christian and Muslim incursions were minor, but by the time of the Delhi Sultanate in the early thirteenth century, the first large-scale Muslim rule in the subcontinent, the Hindu way of life had persisted for over a millennium.

While some lower-castes converted to escape the tyranny of their birth, many upper-caste Hindus converted to Islam (e.g., Muslim Rajputs), and Christianity (e.g., Syrian Christians) as well. Historically accustomed to significant social capital and the servitude of others, caste would prove too significant a benefit for them to forego, and caste-based power and food dynamics persisted. In South Asian Islam, as Zarina Ahmed argues, the

social distance between the castes is so great that inter-caste commensality is exceedingly rare and socially unacceptable. The *ashraf* castes, or those who can trace their lineage to non-Indian ancestors (typically either Arab or Persian), hold higher status than the non-*ashraf* castes, who are predominantly indigenous converts.¹⁹

Colonial powers, Gandhi and the new state

As we move towards the twentieth and twenty-first century, it is imperative to note the influence that the British colonial rule and the ultimate rise of Mohandas K. Gandhi had on what M.N. Srinivas refers to as the ‘Sanskritization’ of caste-based food practices in India.²⁰ Both these forces legalized and legitimized the caste-system, as well as the idolization of vegetarianism in the Hindu imagination.

As the British looked to make administrative sense of highly fragmented Indian communities, Dirks claimed ‘that ‘caste’ became a single term capable of expressing, organizing, and above all ‘systematizing’ India’s diverse forms of social identity, community, and organization’,²¹ suggesting that this was the genesis of caste becoming a prominent feature of modern Indian politics. This further blurred the lines between caste and class, equating lower castes with lower economic class, since occupation was the basis of division.

The colonial administration and army primarily employed Brahmins,²² putting them not only at the top of the religious order, but the administrative order as well. From the time of the Aryans, caste-based politics honoured upper-caste sensibilities, but it was only during colonial rule that the system became a part of modern law and governance, thus moving this wholly imagined system to a legally valid identification, which persists today. As we will see in the next section, this dominance had a significant impact on India’s national food policy and popular food culture after independence in 1947.

In the years leading up to and after Indian independence, Gandhi, played a significant role in glorifying an upper-caste Hindu diet, alienating the majority meat eating population of India.²³ Born into the *Vaishya* caste, he was raised a strict vegetarian, and upheld the notion of the righteous vegetarian for most of his life. More troubling, however, was his obsession with the self-governing, agrarian Indian village, which is structured on a strict adherence to caste norms.²⁴ As discussed, these norms are all-encompassing and near impossible to challenge, so implicit in his patronage of the caste system was an acceptance of the food hierarchy previously discussed. Gandhi has been criticised by Dalit scholars for conflating caste with culture, and further cementing the caste-system as the ideal structure of the nation.²⁵

Following independence, in the 1950s and 60s Indian food policy and the Public Distribution System (PDS) went on to champion a vegetarian Hindu Brahmin diet.²⁶ Dr. Veena Shatrugna, former Deputy Director at the Indian National Institute of Nutrition, opines ‘[o]ne should note here that these experts were upper-caste Brahmins whose

personal diet was vegetarian, [and despite] scientific evidence that animal protein came closest to human tissue proteins, with an almost 100 per cent utilisation in the body (called biological value), it was said that if cereal and pulses are eaten in a ratio of 4:1, in every meal, it will provide sufficient proteins... justifying the decision to not include milk and other sources of animal protein' in the PDS.²⁷

Since the basic Hindu caste order, as identified by Dr B. R. Ambedkar, begins with those who do not eat meat at the top, followed by those who eat meat but not beef, and finally, those who eat beef at the very bottom, the PDS' focus on cheaper grain and pulse rations further encouraged vegetarianism. It was also used as the basis to reduce minimum wage, and together these factors have contributed significantly to malnourishment, stunted growth, and increased communal and caste stigmatisation.²⁸

One nation, many castes

224 'In India, casteism [...] affects 1 billion people. It affects 800 million badly. It enslaves the human dignity of 500 million people. [...] and [results in the] loss of moral virtuosity for 300 million Indian untouchables.²⁹ Further, today, approximately 1500 years after the Vedic civilization, Hindu thought continues to underlie contemporary Indian food practices. Indian law no longer states the required conditions for food consumption, as in the *Manusmriti*. However, food practices are one of the strongest definitions of culture and identity, and meals across the country are still strong statements of caste belonging, exaggerated in recent years by laws against cow slaughter, and the subsequent violence against those suspected of disobedience, most of whom are *Dalit* or Muslim.³⁰

With over 4000 distinct communities there is almost no homogenous feature of Indian food, except caste, which is truly national. As Yengde points out, the caste system is unique because vertical mobility is not an option³¹. This gives rise to two very specific cultural phenomena. First, since human identity is relative, the rules of food consumption apply as much to oneself as they do to others, making it exceptionally difficult to access foods that society believes one should not have access to. The reasoning is bindingly circular: the Brahmins are at the top of the social order, their diet is pure, and other practices are naturally inferior because their logic is the pinnacle of morality. Second, it has given rise to innumerable micro-cuisines across the deserts, jungles, plains and mountains of the subcontinent, since inter-caste commensality was religiously implausible. As a result, we see the Tamilian Brahmin cuisine, the Pathare Prabhu cuisine, the food of the Kayasths of Delhi, the Baniyas of UP, the Nimboodari Brahmins of Kerala, the Mewar cuisine of Rajasthan, and the Ghanchis of Gujarat, to name a handful. Marriott describes this phenomenon well, concluding that the Hindu thought runs parallel to the assumptions made by Western social science, where rank decreases intimacy. In the Hindu social order, rank increases intimacy within the group and higher castes are likely to insulate themselves collectively, for fear of pollution from lower castes.³²

While the upper-caste communities had the luxury to create elaborate cuisines within the boundaries of their restrictions, *Dalit* food has historically been the food of poverty, subsistence, and foods permissible to them by other castes. They eat millets where the upper castes eat wheat, broken corn rather than rice, intestines rather than shoulder or breast meat, molasses rather than jaggery or sugar, watermelon seeds rather than white flour, sun-dried pig skin rather than sundried lentil poppadums, and finally, they use animal fat in place of cooking oil or ghee. Though divided by language and geography, *Dalits* are more likely to share food practices across India, including a dependence on chili and salt for flavouring and the consumption of animal parts that upper castes reject. A nutritious, vegetarian diet is simply too expensive. Indeed, the adherence to a caste-based system of food may well be the most common feature of India's 'national' cuisine, and the societal, cultural and mental capital spent to preserve this divisive structure is so well-ingrained, that upholding it is a reflex for upper-caste Hindus. Though a *Dalit's* place in society may determine what they eat, it is the imagined narrative of impurity in the minds of upper castes that impose a social narrative on *Dalit* food.³³

What is Dalit food?

'Whatever meat could not be consumed, quickly before it got spoilt, she dried it in the sun. After a few days of drying, the sun turned the meat into thin, crackly strips. Those *chanya* were so delicious! *Aaee* would roast them in the fire for us to eat and for so many weeks, we would beg her for the treat'- Narendra Jadhav³⁴

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The foods of *Dalit* communities are both understudied and underrepresented in popular discourse, and a cursory look at Indian cookbooks, both in India and abroad, will confirm this. While community-specific cookbooks have been on the rise since the mid-twentieth century,³⁵ it has been the prerogative of upper-caste communities who feel pride rather than shame for their diet. A seminal sociological study titled '*Isn't this plate Indian?*' hosts one of the first collection of *Dalit* recipes published in English.³⁶ The three sample recipes in Figure 1 are samples of Indian delicacies, from a cuisine that has to exist under the radar.³⁷

Where the Brahmins may define themselves by what they refrain from consuming, *Dalit* narratives note that their strength comes from being able to digest just about anything. After all, it is they who plough the fields to harvest the rice, wheat and vegetables for other Indians.

In recent decades, increased urbanisation has not displaced the Hindu food hierarchy, which persists as the most prominent claim of social superiority.³⁸ An upper-caste, vegetarian landlord in Mumbai will comfortably proclaim that his/her home is available only to vegetarians, immediately excluding people of lower-castes or other religions.³⁹ Broomfield has described the new urban Indian middle-class as '[a] socially privileged and consciously superior group [...] keeping its distance from the masses by its acceptance of

<u>Chunchune</u>	<u>Rakti</u>	<u>Mohol Chi Poli</u>
<p>Ingredients: Beef fat, oil, salt</p> <p>Process: Cook the beef fat on a medium flame, allowing the oil of the fat to separate fully. Then take out the dry lump of fat cut it into small pieces. Sprinkle these pieces with salt and deep fry them to a crisp.</p>	<p>Ingredients: Oil, goat blood, onion, red chili powder, salt</p> <p>Process: Clean the blood well. Dry roast the onion in a pan, adding the blood once the onions have browned slightly. Cook till the blood is thick, then add chilli and salt and continue cooking till it is solid.</p>	<p>Ingredients: Bee larvae, sliced onion, and red chilli powder.</p> <p>Process: Cook all three ingredients together to the consistency of egg whites. This dish has to be consumed immediately, lest it sticks to the top of your mouth!</p>

FIGURE 1. Three recipes from Dalit communities in Maharashtra

high- caste proscriptions and its command of education [...] ⁴⁰ Horizontal inter-caste, or inter-community exchanges, although common in urban India, are seen as cultural, rather than caste exchanges. Even the few urban, financially mobile *dalits* are therefore not able to bring their traditional, lower-caste foods to this exchange, and are more likely to mimic upper caste diets in urban India.

Indian food internationally

226 Appadurai argues that the definition of a national cuisine in India was essentially a postcolonial process, that was initiated by the need for a new pan-Indian identity. ⁴¹ Until the nineteenth century, regional Hindu culinary traditions were transmitted orally, they were largely domestic, and they were regional in scope. As addressed earlier, Hindu state was politically, linguistically and geographically Balkanized, which resulted in innumerable local cuisines.

Indian food has long captured the western world's imagination. Every tradesperson, coloniser or missionary effort that has come to India has taken something with them, whether it was a trunk full of spices, the very idea of a 'curry', or an adaptation of Indian recipes. Part of the appeal of Indian food is how diametrically opposite it is to the Western palette, namely the artful combination of spices, and an exaggerated vegetarianism that is used to define the cuisine. ⁴²

Regional Indian cuisines undoubtedly play a key role in defining the national cuisine, but it was the colonial expression of the Indian food that was the most significant precursor to the internationally emerging Indian cuisine of the twentieth century. ⁴³ The culinary manuals produced for the colonial administration, the colonial army, and colonial trade paved the way for Indian food outside India. Influenced primarily by the extravagance of the Mughal courts, colonial Indian food looked to be as opulent as nobility, while appealing to a Western palette. The export of Indian cuisine is, therefore, primarily the export of lavish, upper-caste foods.

Caste: The Main Character of Indian Food

Later Indian immigrants of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries further propagated the ideals of upper-caste or royal foods as the norm. A quick look at popular Indian restaurants in countries like the U.K, U.S and Canada will reflect this trend, whether through a higher reliance on ghee than on animal fat, through serving primarily vegetarian foods, or by the sheer number of spices required to construct their menus. Since culture and caste have been intertwined for so long in the public imagination, it is plausible that many restaurateurs may be unaware of the caste hegemony reflected in their menus. For example, the restaurant *Disboom* in the U.K, which is positioned as an ode to the Mumbai of yesteryear, only serves the food of certain upper caste communities: the vegetarian street fair delights of Gujarati and Jain traders, the foods of Punjabi and Sindhi migrants⁴⁴ and then finally a classically Mughlai biryani.⁴⁵ The menu overlooks the foods of the indigenous inhabitants of the city, the *koli* fishing community and the indigenous *Dalits*, whose *rakti*, *bhakri*, *mandeli* or *nevtā*⁴⁶ are not on the menu. Ironically, the one menu item that mentions the *koli* people, prawn *koliwada*, is a dish that was invented at a Punjabi restaurant in the 1950s.⁴⁷

This story is common across restaurants (and Indian cookbooks) in the West and urban India alike. Unfortunately, the food that developed as a means for survival is neither celebrated nor acknowledged, and the superstitions of a few continue to define the many.

Conclusion

On the surface, Indian food is a variety of produce and spices combined with the finesse of highly developed cooking techniques. Many home cooks are equipped with generations of oral tradition and are highly skilled. However, it is the narrative in the minds of the cooks and consumers that give us true insight into Indian food culture. Who is cooking? who is being fed? what are they eating? what are they excluding? And finally, who is forbidden from being at the table? Answers to these questions tell the story of an imagined structure that has dictated Indian food practices for over three millennia. Today, India's caste-based rules of consumption, preparation, access, and exclusion are more deeply ingrained in the public psyche than perhaps many are comfortable to acknowledge.

Although India is a young country, the caste system has been legitimized repeatedly by history, and is now deeply embedded within the fabric of the culture. It has given rise to an incredibly complex food system, rife with symbolism, which has been used to maintain power, status, and notions of religious purity. Despite some changing patterns of consumption in cosmopolitan India, most of the country continues to practise food habits that were prescribed thousands of years ago. Therefore, if *Dalits* continue to eat foods that are accessible and affordable (e.g., beef and pork), upward caste and social mobility is impossible. At the same time however, a nutritious upper-caste vegetarian diet is unaffordable to them.

Caste is ubiquitous, and that is precisely why it is imperative to consider the role it plays in any study of Indian food. Examining the food practices of those typically excluded from

the discourse is the first step to address generations of social conditioning, and to unpack the marriage of caste and culture that surrounds food in India.

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Food, the imagination and social resistance in Sandra Cisneros's *Woman Hollering Creek*

Méliné Kasparian-Le Fèvre

ABSTRACT: This paper analyzes food-based analogies and metaphors in contemporary Mexican-American writer Sandra Cisneros's short story collection *Woman Hollering Creek* (1991). It suggests that rather than simply adding flourishes to the text, these food-based images speak to hierarchies of power by focusing on class, race and gender imaginings, and interrogate established ways of thinking about the world by focusing on the connection between the mind and body, the human and the non-human. Throughout the collection, food-based analogies subvert established norms and boundaries and highlight the poetics and politics of connection and separation.

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Mexican-American writer Sandra Cisneros has often commented on the role that imagination has played in her life and in her work as a writer, and even her works of prose have a very imaginative and whimsical quality, as several critics have noted (McCay 2004, Bejarano 2013). Her short story collection *Woman Hollering Creek* (1991) is no exception, featuring a striking number of imaginative metaphors and poetic images. Another feature of Cisneros's writing that has been remarked upon by critics is the importance of food in her texts (Balestrini 2012, Mullen 1996). However, no study has focused on the role of food in Cisneros's collection *Woman Hollering Creek* as a whole, or on the intersection between the theme of food, and the imaginative, whimsical quality of her prose. This unexplored facet of Cisneros's writing is what this paper seeks to bring to the table, by analyzing imaginative food-based metaphors and analogies in *Woman Hollering Creek*. Indeed, food is not only evoked in a realist manner as a material reality in the collection but appears in imaginative associations and metaphorical images. This paper will analyze relevant examples of food-based metaphors and analogies in *Woman Hollering Creek*, to show that such metaphors address the question of connection and its opposite, separation. This paper will also suggest that, in Cisneros's writing, the imagination is highly political and linked to questions of social justice: Cisneros's use of food metaphors exemplifies the idea that "the issues raised by food and hunger have always been as political as they are poetical" (Gilbert 2014, ii). In *Woman Hollering Creek*, food metaphors are indeed as political as they are poetical, as subversive as they are enchanting.

The food-based analogies and metaphors that pepper *Woman Hollering Creek* tend to fall into two categories: unconventional, particularly inventive food metaphors, and

more conventional or expected food-based analogies. This paper will explore each of those categories in turn, showing that the idiosyncratic food images in Cisneros's collection bridge the divide between the more marginalized, and the rest of society, as well as between the human and the non-human, and the mind and the body. The more conventional food-based analogies in Cisneros's text evoke societal norms and resist sexist and racist discourses, exemplifying the idea that behind the food images in the collection lies not just an attempt to transform the mundane or to add a poetic touch to the text, but a commitment to address the reality of oppression and domination.

Unconventional food-based analogies: promoting interrelationships and overcoming dualisms

Speaking back against stereotypical views of those living in poverty

This section will focus on unconventional, creative and idiosyncratic food-based analogies in *Woman Hollering Creek*, to show that they highlight connection and undermine certain separations and dualisms that pervade American society and Western culture in general: more precisely, the dualism between people living in poverty and the rest of society, between body and mind, and between the human and the non-human.

Firstly, unconventional food-based analogies in Cisneros's text subvert stereotypes around poverty and erase the artificial distance that is often perceived to separate poor people and the rest of society (Rimstead 2001, Swanson 2001). These analogies contradict pathologizing representations of poverty, and highlight what humans have in common across class lines—making it easier for middle-class or high-class readers to identify and empathize with people who live in poverty, instead of othering and excluding them. *Woman Hollering Creek* offers a realistic depiction of the lived experience of poverty, an experience that Cisneros herself has gone through during her childhood. The text centers on Mexican-American characters, who live in a 'barrio': a socially segregated, marginalized, and majority Spanish-speaking neighbourhood, characterized by overcrowding and underdevelopment. Some of these characters are children, whose lives are marked by unpleasant realities, from rats, to hunger, to parental neglect, to sexual abuse. It is therefore not surprising that these characters should seek refuge in imaginative daydreams, in which foodstuffs frequently appear. Food-based analogies are part of Cisneros's efforts to convey 'the child's voice' (Heredia 49) in her writing and appear in passages which vividly conjure the imaginative worlds of children. In 'Remember the Alaimo', the adult narrator Tristán remembers that as a child, he would imagine that the sound of rice sizzling in a frying pan was actually the sound of an audience applauding him: 'When I was a kid and my ma added the rice to the hot oil, you know how it sizzles and spits, it sounds kind of like applause, right? Well, I'd always bow and say Gracias, mi querido público [thank you, dear spectators],

thank you, and blow kisses to an imaginary crowd' (Cisneros 1991: 67, translation mine). Daydreaming constitutes an essential tool of survival that allows the narrator to escape 'the ugly, the ordinary' circumstances of his life (Cisneros 1991: 70), which is marred by poverty and abuse (Cisneros 1991: 70). The sounds of cooking fuel his playacting and allow him to transport himself into a different reality, in which he is not standing in the kitchen of a dilapidated apartment but performing on a stage for an adoring public. What food provides is not just physical nourishment but a material for his daydreams, for his visions of a different life and a different future, visions that are as sustaining as any dish could be.

Such passages, in which the motif of food plays a role in children's imaginative worlds, and which may be described as food reveries, reappear throughout the text. Food-based analogies consistently draw the reader's attention to the inner lives of the poor children in the collection, which humanizes them. Through these food reveries, the characters are presented not as stereotypes but as individual children, with their own idiosyncrasies, dreams and aspirations. The reader is invited into the inner worlds of these characters, and thus encouraged to care for poor children who, even if they are fictitious, reflect the real experience of many marginalized and invisibilized subjects in the United States. The food-based daydreams that appear in the collection facilitate an imaginative connection between the characters, and the readers, whatever their social background may be. Cisneros's text suggests that apart from their social status, the poor children depicted on the page are like any other in their propensity to dream, to play, to retreat into the world of their imagination. These children's food reveries may therefore remind the readers of their own childhoods, a time when they likely experienced the world in the same playful, imaginative way. Since imagining (as well as eating) is a shared, universal experience, food reveries allow the readers to see themselves in Cisneros's characters, and to practice empathy for those who come from a different background. In that sense, Cisneros's collection reflects the idea that '[l]iterature enlarges our experience, compelling us to enter into imaginative and sympathetic relation with characters and predicaments we would otherwise never encounter' (Vlacos 2014: 190). In Cisneros's text, food-based analogies are central in facilitating the readers entering into such imaginative, empathetic connections with characters whose backgrounds and experiences differ from their own.

When looked at closely, food reveries reveal how Cisneros's text debunks certain representations around poverty, which tend to separate the poor from the rest of society and to deny their humanity. The passages in which food reveries appear speak back to certain dehumanizing and stereotyping discourses about people living in poverty that have profoundly influenced the American culture and the American collective unconscious, as is exemplified by the character of Tristán. Tristán's dream of achieving success on a stage evokes his ambition and his aspirations. His food reverie occurs at the very beginning of the story: Tristán is introduced to the reader first and foremost as an ambitious character who

dreams of a better life, which he will actually achieve, as he becomes a performer. Tristán's ambition and success goes against a stereotyped view, which has been quite pervasive in American culture and in the social sciences (Romano-V 1969), of poor Mexican-Americans as passive, lazy, resigned to their lot and incapable of envisioning a better life for themselves. On the contrary, the characters in Cisneros's collection, like Tristán, dream of escaping the 'barrio' and actively seek out opportunities. Far from being content, they look for an escape, even if the only escape to be found is through their imagination.

Through food-based analogies, Cisneros's text also contradicts the stereotype according to which poor families are dysfunctional and fail to maintain stable affective ties. This notion pertains to the 'culture of poverty' thesis, which was first explored by Oscar Lewis (1959) and has left a deep mark on the American collective psyche. According to Lewis, poor people (and especially Mexican-American people, who were the main subjects of his writings) developed a specific culture which kept them in poverty, a culture that was characterized, among other traits, by a lack of family values and of familial cohesion. Two food-based analogies which appear in one of Cisneros's stories debunk the idea that poor persons are pathologically incapable of maintaining functional, stable, affectionate families. In 'Mexican Movies', the narrator, a young girl, describes the delights offered by rare outings to the movie theatre with her family: 'You can put a quarter in the machine in the ladies' bathroom and get a plastic tic-tac-toe or pink lipstick the colour of sugar roses on birthday cakes' (Cisneros 1991: 22). In the child's imagination, the banal tube of lipstick is associated with a world of colour, beauty, ornamentation and pleasure, far removed from the rat-infested movie theatre she stands in (Cisneros 1991: 23), and the vending machine becomes a portal towards colourful worlds and visions. The narrator and her siblings always enjoy going to the cinema, even if the movie playing is not particularly interesting: 'We just roll ourselves up like a doughnut and sleep, the armrest hard against our head until Mama puts her sweater there' (Cisneros 1991: 23). These two food-based analogies (linking the lipstick with a birthday cake, the sleeping children with doughnuts) not only evoke children's ability to transfigure quotidian life (however drab or difficult that life may be); they also suggest that this young girl has experienced affection, connection and familial love (evoked through the reference to a birthday cake, often meant to celebrate a loved one, and to the mother's loving gesture of folding up a sweater to put underneath her sleeping children's head). This contradicts the notion that poor people always have dysfunctional families, and suggests that the poor, Mexican-American families who live in the 'barrio' are just like any other.

Unconventional food-based analogies that evoke children's reveries in Cisneros's text speak back to, and resist, dehumanizing, stereotyped views of people living in poverty, and they make it easier for readers to care for and empathize with people who have had different life experiences from their own, by focusing on experiences that can be shared across class

lines (such as cooking, eating, daydreaming, or showing affection). Besides bridging the divide between poor people and the rest of society, unconventional food analogies in Cisneros's text also blur the line between body and mind, and contest the distinction between the human and non-human world.

Food-based analogies and the connection between mind and body, human and non-human

234 Paying close attention to the more creative, unexpected, and idiosyncratic food-analogies in Cisneros's short story collection reveals its posthumanist orientation. According to Stephen Hobden, '[a] central element of the posthuman move is the attempt to extinguish a perceived ontological dualism between human and non-human nature' (2013: 175). Several food-based analogies that appear in Cisneros's text can be linked to posthumanism as defined by Hobden, since they blur the distinction between the human and the non-human. In 'My Lucy Friend Who Smells like Corn', the narrator, a young girl, describes the effect of the sun on her body through a comparison to baking: 'I'm sitting in the sun even though it's the hottest part of the day, the part that makes the street dizzy, when the heat makes a little hat on the top of your head and bakes the dust and weed grass and sweat up good, all steamy and smelling like sweet corn' (Cisneros 1991: 13). In this passage, as well as in the title of the story, the human body is compared to non-human substances. But more than a simple analogy, the passage also conjures up the image of a real intermingling between the human body and non-human elements (the dust, the weed grass, the sweat): the heat is compared to a cook baking a cake, of which the human body is only one of the ingredients—which combats the anthropocentric tendency to isolate the human from the rest of the world and to associate the human with exceptionality (Moore 2017). Here, the human becomes one ingredient among others, and the human body fuses with non-human elements and beings, just like separate ingredients are mixed together to form a homogenous batter in the process of baking. The food-based analogy collapses the boundaries between the human body and the non-human world, evoking not separation but incorporation. Similarly, in 'Bien Pretty', the narrator evokes the effect of summer in Texas in terms that collapse the distinction between human and non-human: 'the heat split[s] you open like a pecan shell' (Cisneros 1991: 159). Here too, an imaginative, food-based analogy abolishes the separation between human and non-human bodies.

The importance of the body in the many food-analogies that appear in Cisneros's text highlights a clear connection between the imagination and the corporeal, which goes against the tendency to oppose the body and the mind within the Western, Cartesian tradition of thought. In the food reveries that appear in *Woman Hollering Creek*, embodied experience is central. Indeed, the characters' food-heavy daydreams revolve around specific sensory details: such as the sound of rice frying in a pan (compared to applause),

the colour and texture of sugar paste roses on a cake (compared to that of lipstick), the shape of a doughnut (compared to that of a child asleep in a narrow spot), or the smell of heated grass. Food-based analogies that appear in the daydreams of children mobilize sight, sound, touch, and smell, as the characters rely on their embodied experience to make imaginative connections. Cisneros's text therefore clearly insists on the connection between imagination and the body. In *Woman Hollering Creek*, food-based analogies and reveries suggest that imagination is anchored in the sensory realm of the body, and that embodied experience constitutes a fuel for creativity, as it clearly does for Cisneros herself, whose texts are peppered with specific references to food and cooking that open up onto narratives of memory, family and identity. Just like the children in her stories who dream up images based on their embodied experiences around food, Cisneros draws inspiration from the culinary and alimentary realm, and uses food as a material for storytelling and meaning making. Food-based analogies and reveries, in Cisneros's text, suggest that body and mind, the corporeal and the imaginative, are not separate but interdependent.

The most unconventional, creative, idiosyncratic food-based analogies that appear in Cisneros's collection highlight the connections between people living in poverty and the rest of society, between the human and the non-human, and between the body and the mind. They speak to boundaries and divisions that are pervasive within American society and highlight points of connection and commonalities instead. The second section of this paper focuses on the more conventional food-based analogies in *Woman Hollering Creek*, which also point towards divisions, specifically around gender and race. This section will suggest that conventional food-based images in *Woman Hollering Creek* reflect on the role analogies and metaphors play in the collective imaginary and in the diffusion of oppressive ideologies and stereotypes.

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Conventional food-based analogies: race and gender (re)imaginings

Cisneros's text points out the way conventional metaphors and analogies, including food-based analogies, can be used to create a boundary between the self and the other and to oppress certain groups. Cisneros's collection both reflects and subverts the oppressive use of food-based analogies in racist and sexist discourses. The collection evokes the frequent use of food images to signal racial difference, and to create a hierarchy of power which disadvantages people of color. As López-Rodriguez explains, comparisons between certain types of bodies and certain foodstuffs play a central part in the perpetuation of ethnic stereotypes and racist discourses. Food metaphors are used to exclude and discriminate and become a shorthand for racist ideologies, as many racist slurs use the language of food. An example of this use of food metaphors is the comparison between certain skin tones and certain foodstuffs:

In order to come to terms with people who eat and look differently, the color and shape of foodstuffs have always been at hand. Color terminology has been used ... to create a taxonomy of human races because of the glaringly obvious differences in skin colors. Hence it seems logical that the color of certain foods be used to conceptualize human groups. (López-Rodriguez 2014: 19)

236 Cisneros's text reflects on this tendency to use the colour of foodstuffs to create boundaries between certain groups. In the story '*Bien Pretty*', the narrator, who is a painter, uses a food-based analogy to describe the colour of her Mexican lover's skin: 'God made men by baking them in an oven, but he forgot about the first batch, and that's how Black people were born. And then he was so anxious about the second batch, he took them out of the oven too soon, so that's how White people were made. But the third batch he let cook until they were golden-golden-golden, and honey, that's you and me' (Cisneros 1991: 148). This creation story draws lines between different types of bodies through a food-based analogy, following the logic that has been used to devalue people of colour and to present whiteness as the desirable norm. However, this logic is turned on its head here, as the narrator presents brown skin as desirable: 'God made you from red-clay, Flavio, with his hands. ... And then he blessed you, Flavio, with skin sweet as burnt-milk candy... . He made you *bien pretty*' (Cisneros 1991: 148). The title of the story, '*Bien pretty*', which appears in this passage, insists on Flavio's beauty and counters the dominant norms of beauty within American society, which associate beauty with whiteness (Rooks 1996, Painter 2011). While food-based analogies are often used in racist discourses to denigrate non-white people, here the comparison between this Mexican man's skin, and a caramel candy, is meant not to disparage but to underline his beauty. Balestrini has identified the same reversal in Cisneros's novel *Caramelo*: 'The novel challenges any essentializing preferences for light skin through the protagonist's fascination with caramel- and chocolate- coloured skin and sweets' (2012: 71). It is interesting to note that this valorization of darker skin through food imagery and more precisely through references to candy takes place in more than one of Cisneros's works, as *Woman Hollering Creek* also reclaims food-based analogies, that have often been used to denigrate ethnic minorities, in order to affirm the beauty of people of colour.

Food-based metaphors also play an important role in perpetuating sexist stereotypes and norms that oppress women. The analogy between women and edible substances, often associated with sexual connotations, dehumanizes them and associates them with passive substances that have value only as long as they satisfy men's appetites. The trope of the edible woman is pervasive in patriarchal societies, and presents 'women-as-prey, passive and ready to be plucked' according to Antje Lindenmeyer (2006: 471). Cisneros's collection explores this trope of the edible woman in order to evoke the reality of violence against women and to combat the patriarchal norms that restrict women's sexual exploration and freedom.

Such norms condemn women who seek to fulfill their own appetites freely and suggest that women's sexuality should be controlled and remain in the service of men. As Mary Becker explains, '[i]n patriarchy, men are sexual subjects and women objects: women's sexuality exists to please men' (1999: 28). The trope of the edible woman perfectly embodies this idea that women should remain passive objects, instead of taking on active roles, especially in regards to sexuality. Those women who are seen as transgressing a boundary by taking control of their own sexuality and seeking their own fulfilment are often punished within a patriarchal society, as Linda LeMoncheck has suggested: 'when women live in a patriarchal society, their sexual exploration, pleasure, and agency become targets for their sexual restriction, repression, and violation' (2011: 9). Cisneros explores this aspect of patriarchal society in 'Eyes of Zapata', a short story set in Mexico during the early twentieth century. In this story, the narrator's mother exemplifies the violence that women often have to face as a reaction to their sexual agency and exploration. After having had a succession of lovers, she is the victim of a collective rape by men who want to punish her for her sexual freedom. The narrator of the story, her daughter Ines, has supernatural abilities and sees how the rape happened during one of her visions:

And I see other faces and other lives. ... My mother in a field of ... flowers with a man who is not my father. ... How, at a signal from her lover, the others descend. ... A machete-sharp cane stake greased with lard and driven into the earth. How the men gather my mother like a bundle of corn. Her sharp cry against the infinity of sky when the cane stake pierces her. ... Eyes still fixed on the clouds the morning they find her—braids undone, a man's sombrero tipped on her head, a cigar in her mouth, as if to say, this is what we do to women who try to act like men. (Cisneros 1991: 111)

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Through the comparison between the mother and a 'bundle of corn', the trope of the edible woman is mobilized to emphasize women's vulnerability in the face of men's violence under patriarchal norms that condemn any woman who does not conform to the strict gender roles meant to control women's behavior and to limit their agency. Cisneros's story explores the consequences of what Carol Vance has described as 'the traditional bargain women were forced to make with men: if women were "good" (sexually circumspect), men would protect them; if they were not, men could violate and punish them' (1985: 2). Cisneros's story clearly reflects the idea that rape is a tool of control and intimidation, a reminder to women that they are not the ones in power within a patriarchal society and that they should seek to conform to prescribed notions of femininity at all times (Vance 1985: 3).

However, Cisneros's collection does not just offer images of vulnerable, oppressed or violated women, but portrays rebellious women who manage to achieve a degree of freedom and autonomy without being the victims of male violence. As Mullen explains, '*Woman*

Hollering Creek offers stories of a variety of women trying various means of escape, through resistance to traditional female socialization, through sexual and economic independence, self-fashioning, and feminist activism, as well as through fantasy, prayer, magic, and art' (1996: 8). One of the main avenues of escape and resistance for the women in Cisneros's text lies in sexuality. According to Rojas, Cisneros 'incorporat[es] a type of female sexuality in her work that declares, "I defy you. I'm going to tell my own story"' (1999: 136). Interestingly, in *Woman Hollering Creek* women's resistance through sexuality is often expressed through food-based analogies that reverse the trope of the edible woman and portray women as active consumers, while men are edible substances to be devoured. Such analogies occur in passages that focus on women who satisfy their own desires instead of conforming to gendered norms according to which women should devote themselves to satisfying the needs of others. One such character, Clemencia, the narrator in 'Never Marry a Mexican', has affairs with married men: 'Borrowed. That's how I've had my men. Just the cream skimmed off the top. Just the sweetest part of the fruit, without the bitter skin that daily living with a spouse can rend' (Cisneros 1991: 72). In this analogy between men and foodstuffs, sexuality outside the confines of marriage becomes a delicacy, as delicious and sweet as any food can be. The food metaphor underlines Clemencia's transgression, which lies in her refusal to abide by the idea that 'female desire should be restricted to zones protected and privileged in the culture: traditional marriage and the nuclear family' (Vance 1985: 3). The image of edible men also highlights Clemencia's appropriation of the active, aggressive role usually associated with men, during the sexual act which she describes through an alimentary metaphor: 'I leapt inside you and split you like an apple. ... If I'd put you in my mouth you'd dissolve like show' (Cisneros 1991: 81). As Catherine MacKinnon explains, 'The male sexual role ... centers on aggressive intrusion on those with less power' (1987: 65). In Cisneros's story, it is Clemencia who appropriates this traditionally masculine role of aggression, and the food metaphor, which presents her as metaphorically devouring the men she has sex with, expresses her power, dominance, and resistance to traditional patriarchal roles. Cisneros's play on the edible woman trope therefore both exposes and reverses the patriarchal hierarchy which subordinates and oppresses women— just as her evocation of the analogy between food and people of colour subverts the racial hierarchy that associates beauty with whiteness. The more conventional food-metaphors in her collection expose, and resist, oppressive and exclusionary boundaries related to the construction of race and gender.

It can be argued that metaphors and analogies are intrinsically about connecting and linking disparate elements: this is particularly true of the food-based metaphors and analogies in *Woman Hollering Creek*, which are not simply about transfiguring the mundane or adding a whimsical, poetic dimension to the text. As this paper has suggested, food-based analogies and metaphors in Cisneros's text address the politics of connection and exclusion, and they transcend certain entrenched dualisms by connecting the body

and mind, the human and non-human. They explore different forms of relationality: some inclusive (opening up towards the Other), others excluding and oppressive (such as the connections made between segments of the population, like women and people of colour, and certain characteristics or norms within racist and sexist discourses). In keeping with Cisneros's political commitment, the imaginative and poetic moments in *Woman Hollering Creek*, especially those that feature food-based analogies and metaphors, are directly linked to an exploration of hierarchies of power and issues of oppression, and they promote interrelationships, inclusion and empathy.

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Food and the Irish Short Story Imagination

Anke Klitzing

ABSTRACT: Short fiction is a format heartily embraced by the Irish literary imagination since the nineteenth century. This paper takes a gastrocritical approach to investigate the role of food in selected stories from the recently published anthology *The Art of the Glimpse* (2020). It shows that through the years, food and foodways have been valuable tools for Irish writers, providing setting and context, themes and symbols, plot points, conflicts, characterisation, as well as the quintessential epiphanies.

Irish writers have been drawn to the short story since it developed out of older short fiction forms such as fairy tales in the nineteenth century, reaching an early peak in Ireland with George Moore's *The Untilled Field* (1903) and James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914). Influenced by French and Russian short story masters like Chekhov and Maupassant, the form flourished here more than it did in England, for example.¹ Critics have proposed that short fiction thrived in Ireland because of the long-standing tradition of oral storytelling, which was still vibrant in the nineteenth century, although it suffered – like many other Irish folk traditions – during the Famine and its aftermath, fading away even more with the advent of radio and TV.² However, Ingman argues that oral tales, focusing on plot, stereotypical flat characters, and repeating motifs to suit the public performance to an audience, are quite distinct from the modern written short story.³ At least since Moore and Joyce, Irish short fiction has featured tightly controlled plots with a single focus and often an emphasis on character and mood. Ingman traces the affinity of Irish writers for short fiction to its characteristically sharp, focused insights rather than broad sweeping social panoramas, which suit times of uncertainty, instability, or unfixed identity. Ireland's history of the last 150 years has been marked by upheavals, repeated searches for identity, and often a fragmented community. The Great Famine decimated the population, especially in the rural and coastal areas of the West, taking with it also folk traditions and knowledge. The nineteenth-century Celtic Revival prompted the quest for a pre-colonial Irish identity; however, rooted in an intellectual, mostly urban middle class it failed to thoroughly connect with contemporary rural Gaelic communities. Meanwhile, Anglo-Irish landowners felt alienated and threatened through land reforms and rising nationalism. The struggle for independence brought the revolutionary nationalist streak to the fore, but the subsequent civil war undermined the social unity of newly independent Ireland. Neutrality in World War II and decades of protectionism and social conservatism isolated Ireland from much of Europe in the mid-twentieth century; the

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1970s saw both the entry to the European Community for the Irish republic and the Troubles in Northern Ireland. The 1980s were characterized by economic recession and a flush of Catholic fervour after Pope John Paul II visited in 1979. The Celtic Tiger brought a boost of confidence from the mid-1990s onwards, but also the new experience of net immigration and a growing multicultural population. The stranglehold of the Catholic church was broken at the turn of the millennium by a series of harrowing scandals, and a period of social liberation followed, allowing different identities to find their voices. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 relies on the acceptance of a multitude of identities within the same social space. The recession from 2008 onwards again posed questions of community cohesion and solidarity between those who benefitted from the boom years – some through corruption – and those who were passed by. In a society in flux such as Irish society has been in for over a century, a form of literature like the short story that allows flashes of insight is well-suited to capture and reflect liminal identities and social dynamics as they emerge or disappear.

Gastrocriticism

242 What role, then, does food play in the Irish short story imagination? This paper takes a gastrocritical approach to investigate this question. Gastrocriticism is an emerging form of literary criticism focused on human relationships with each other and to the natural world through food. It investigates not only the symbolic and rhetorical use of food and foodways in literary texts, but also meaning and context – social, historical, political, or other – of their material or embodied appearance, thus becoming a useful quasi-ethnographic tool for the study of foodways and culinary traditions.⁴ Fields such as food history, sociology, folklore, and cultural studies offer a complex understanding of food and foodways, and the gastrocritical approach explores how these meanings are refracted in literary writing.

Representations of foodways in literature may be part of the setting, the background and ‘props’ to the action. This gives a text verisimilitude, which is of particular importance in realist fiction. It has been much commented that food and foodways are rich in meaning in real life – Appadurai calls food a ‘highly condensed social fact’.⁵ These layers of meaning translate via representations of food into the meaning of the literary text, making the culinary sign a valuable tool for writers, while inversely also conveying insights into the extra-textual reality. At times, foodways are more densely woven into the fabric of the text and drive the plot, sustain tension, or define characters.⁶ The action is moved forward when characters meet and new characters are introduced at meal occasions; also, foodways may chronicle the passing of time.⁷ Food preferences and habits of a character can speak to their social and economic status, worldview and state of mind; through interactions around food, protagonists’ affection for each other – or lack thereof – can be succinctly illustrated.

Food representations may provide metaphors, metonymy, similes, or symbols.⁸ More broadly, they may provide a theme to the text. Specifically food-related themes include

hunger, nourishment, feeding, growth and harvest, communion, appetite, taste, or pleasure. Texts may express emotions, values, or the social status of the author through food and foodways. A text may also exhibit what Jakobson calls the conative function, when it is intended to have a physical, psychological or behavioural effect on the reader.⁹ Many literary representations of foodways are quite literally mouth-watering. Multi-sensory descriptions of food create vivid images, stimulating a sense of pleasure or indeed appetite. This visceral effect also works in the opposite direction, evoking disgust and horror, either simply for the thrill of it or as a call to civic action.

Genres are categories of text that provoke and meet expectations of format, characters, settings; even plot, mood, or message. In the short story, an important characteristic is the achievement of effects through compression, suggestion, and implication. Epiphanies are also a quintessential element. The multi-layered meanings of food representations prove a useful tool in this case once more.

The Stories

Five stories from the newly published anthology *The Art of the Glimpse: 100 Irish Short Stories* (2020) were selected for gastrocritical analysis, as they featured food and foodways in a particularly significant way.¹⁰ They span almost the entire time period of the collection, from 1880 to 2012. Rosa Mulholland's 'The Hungry Death', first published in Dickens' *All the Year Round* in 1880, depicts the Irish Famine as it befalls a West Irish island community. The story focuses on a love triangle and ends with Brigid sacrificing herself by giving her last morsels of food to the starving rival. Daniel Corkery's 'The Awakening' (1929) tells of a young fisherman who is about to inherit his father's fishing boat and profession. In Emma Cooke's 'A Family Occasion' (1980), grown siblings meet over tea and cake and reflect on the different paths of their lives, as one of the sisters of the Protestant family married a Catholic and is now in thrall to the doctrines of the Catholic church. Maeve Binchy uses a dinner party in 'Holland Park' (1983) to showcase the epiphany of the narrator that she is in love with her female friend. Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's 'Literary Lunch' (2012) takes a rather sinister turn, as a spurned author shoots the chairman of the arts board after the latter's sumptuous lunch. Food – or beverages – fulfil a range of functions in these stories, providing a setting but also sketching out character and relationships, providing plot twists, expressing the authors' views, and even involving us, the readers.

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The Hungry Death

The story illuminates the socio-economic situation on the island of Inishbofin before and during the Famine of 1845-49. The first, pre-Famine, part shows the precarious situation of a community already familiar with 'the hungry death' (527) whenever inclement weather disrupts the potato crop, makes the fishing scarce, and interrupts the lifeline of the supply

boat from the mainland. Eating seaweed for sustenance is not unfamiliar to the islanders who predict the need for it based on the weather and have opinions on its taste. Fishing brings its own challenges, as fishermen regularly perish. Emigration is a fact of life. The second part, describing the Famine in full force, shines a light on the individual suffering often hidden behind statistics. It shows solidarity, charity, kindness, loyalty, but also baser emotions. Coll struggles to bring a bag of maize meal from the harbour to Moya's cabin, as desperate people try to arouse his pity and obtain a share:

Hard work I had to carry it from the beach, for the eyes o' the creatures is like wolves' eyes, an' I thought the longin' o' them would have dragged it out o' my hands (541).

Here, for once, the author acknowledges the de-humanising aspect of starvation, as she likens the starving to 'creatures' and wolves. It is notable though how strongly she otherwise affirms the persistent humanity even of the most desperate. There are no vivid descriptions of food in the text, apart from the 'rank-looking' (540) seaweed, but it could be argued that the graphic descriptions of starving people, which have been called macabre,¹¹ aim to rouse sympathy, pity, even horror in the reader. This is particularly effective since the people are never fully disenfranchised of their humanity.

244 The food items appearing in the narrative fit the time and place. It would have been common in nineteenth-century rural Ireland to produce one's own potatoes, to have chickens and a cow for milk, butter, and buttermilk. Wheat would be nearly impossible to cultivate on Inishbofin due to the meagre soils and wet climate, so flour is bought, along with tea and sugar. Crucially, Brigid also buys 'a sack of meal' (529) at the store, and 'meal' features prominently as the only food still available when the potatoes rot. It is 'meal' that Coll and Moya try to feed to the dying mother and that Brigid distributes among the starving, eventually saving Moya from the brink of death. The 'meal' in question is maize or 'Indian' meal, imported into Ireland to fill subsistence gaps from the early 1800s and in considerable amounts during the Famine.¹² As the Famine hits, the islanders persevere 'on a mess of Indian meal once a day, mingled with such edible seaweed as they could gather off the rocks' (539).

Food and foodways are central to the action, particularly in the second part. The search for food drives Coll and Moya about the island; similarly for Brigid's charitable distribution. Food is strongly linked to nature in the text. The struggle to win sustenance from land and sea is ever-present. When the potato blight hits the island, combined with prolonged bad weather and storms, nature is described as a strong and merciless power: 'Earth and sea alike barren and pitiless to their needs' (539). The storms are equally overwhelming as they destroy boats and fishing gear and prevent the provisions boat arriving from Galway. The main conflict in the second part is between humans and nature, rather than each other.

For Brigid, though, food embodies a conflict with herself. The ‘han’ful o’ male [meal] at the bottom o’ the bag’ (542) becomes the crucible in which she faces her dark feelings, her jealousy, and even hatred of Moya, but it also leads her to overcome those feelings, to reach forgiveness to the point of sacrifice. Fischler points out that sharing food turns eating from a mere physiological act into a spiritual one.¹³ The reliance on a boat to bring vital provisions, the devastation of the Famine due to a near-total reliance on the potato, and other details are specifically local to a Western Irish island community, but other forces that shape the story such as pride, love, jealousy, or gratitude are universal. Due to the background of the Famine, it is food that throws these universal human traits into sharp relief. The story may be understood as an early specimen of the modern short story – it still shows several characteristics of a tale, with its focus on plot; characters with a touch of the formulaic in the flaming red-haired beauty of Brigid, the tall, handsome male hero, and the innocent wisp of a girl that needs saving; and motifs such as stormy nights, swamps, and love triangles. However, the narrative allows for modern literary traits such as character development and insights into the protagonists’ interior life.

The Awakening

Corkery’s ‘The Awakening’ is a realist story, and setting, time, and status markers are all given through food. The story opens as the protagonist wakes to participate in the night’s mackerel fishing. After the catch and a communal meal, the boat leisurely returns to the harbour to land the fish. Foodways appear in two fundamental ways. On the one hand, food work (fishing) is the setting and prime activity. As their livelihood, it shapes the individual and communal identity of the protagonists. On the other hand, there is the meal, which consists of ‘good food’ and ‘close companionship’ (151). The companionship is emphasized again elsewhere in the story, when Ivor repeatedly speaks of the ‘real families’ (148, 150) of the men who were sleeping on land, indicating another type of family, on the boat. Similar to a so-called ‘family meal’ in a restaurant, the boat ‘family’ eats together, bonding over food. They eat boiled fish and potatoes (150), a simple yet nutritionally complete and typical meal.

The story gives insights into the material and social realities of the life and work of a young Munster fisherman in the early twentieth century. It illustrates the fishermen’s occupational identity,¹⁴ including their standing with other community members and the community as a whole; their relationships as boat crews in terms of solidarity, hierarchy, roles, responsibilities; matters of authority, ownership and inheritance; also superstition or prejudice, for example about accepting a stranger as a crew member. The meal shines a light on some of these matters, companionship but also hierarchies as the cabin boy cooks and cleans while the captain does not partake in the conversation.

The fishing is vividly rendered, the ‘dripping, fish-laden’ (146), ‘fish-spangled net’ (147); the darkness and intermittent ‘flakes of wet brightness’, where flying drips are caught in lamp light; the mackerel appearing like a ‘flight of shining steel-bright daggers’ (147). These descriptions are attractive to the reader but also to Ivor who finds himself enamoured with the work, the companionship, and the thought of running the boat himself. This is his titular ‘awakening’, and the epiphany of the story. Visceral descriptions of food and foodways invoke the conative function, and it is no different here. Multiple senses are employed to describe the work of fishing – wet drips, bright flakes, shining daggers, the clanking of the windlass, the movement of the boat, the smell of smoke and food, the heat of the warm hold as they eat. It glamorizes the fishermen’s work and solicits understanding for the ‘fisherman’s calling’ (149). The story praises skilled and hard work, family values, loyalty. While fishing is closely linked with nature and the elements, and the danger of drowning is mentioned twice, nature is not implicated as an opposing force. Even Ivor’s father’s drowning is presented impassively; rather, Captain Larry’s loyalty is emphasized. The text chimes with efforts to capture Irish tradition and heritage in the newly independent country, such as the work of the Irish Folklore Commission that from 1935 recorded a wealth of information on Irish folklore, customs, and heritage. Corkery published several works on the Irish language and Gaelic tradition, as well as a study of Synge who in turn wrote extensively about the Irish peasantry and was involved in the collection of folklore.¹⁵ Indeed, the story resonates with Synge’s writings, several of which are set in coastal communities, albeit in the West of Ireland.

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A Family Occasion

The foods offered at the afternoon tea gathering of the siblings links the story to Ireland. The drink is tea; eaten are (store-bought) ‘iced fancies’ (138), sponge sandwich cake, and homemade potato cakes. The story revolves around family interaction, inter-religious marriage, and women’s reproductive rights, but the setting is a food occasion, and a key point of the back story, the meeting of the inter-religious couple, also revolves around food – a meat sandwich that Catholic Seamus accidentally consumes on a Friday, which is a taboo for him. The stroke of midnight turned the meat-containing sandwich from a food to a non-food, an ‘offending sandwich’ (144). Seamus’ dismay at his transgression underlines his strong Catholic beliefs: ‘[Beattie] turned round to find Seamus standing staring at a sandwich as if it was about to explode’ (144), and later, he looked at her ‘in horror’ (144). The incident provides the first interaction and indeed meeting of Protestant Beattie and Seamus, and had it not happened, neither might the marriage. Beattie alludes to the significance of the sandwich, saying it was ‘a joke that she had kept to herself,’ but that ‘in the end, it hadn’t been funny after all’ (144). While the incident is only remembered and not part of the story action, it can be seen as the story’s epiphany. The meat sandwich

embodies conflict within Beattie – not at the time but now, as her once treasured memory is a reminder of her bondage to the Catholic doctrine prohibiting contraception that burdens her with many children.

Some food in the story may be read symbolically. When Beattie reflects on how nothing in the family home ever changes, she focuses on a chocolate egg, ‘a present from cousins in America’ (141), that has been sitting on the shelf, wrapped in cellophane, untouched, since they were children. Beattie recalls that she had been ‘wishing and wishing’ (141) that her mother would allow the children taste it, and she closes with the thought that ‘it must be mouldy by now’ (141). This is a realistic assumption, but it could be read as something extraordinary that was never shared and has gone stale and rotten, much like Beattie’s own dreams, stale and curtailed by the realities of her large family and husband who likes a drink.

Holland Park

In ‘Holland Park’, food is an integral part of the action. The central scene is the dinner at Malcolm and Melissa’s house, starting with an invitation to the party and going through the evening from pre-drinks at the narrator’s flat, then aperitif, dinner, dessert, coffee, and more wine – including an incidence of choking, which can be seen as a form of disordered eating. The narrator gets a piece of food stuck in her throat, guessing that it was ‘a piece of something exotic, avocado maybe, anyway something that shouldn’t be in a salad’ (65). The incident is the story’s epiphany, caused by the shock of recognition of the female narrator’s attraction to her friend Alice, something that perhaps, in her guilty view, ‘shouldn’t be there’. The choking embodies a conflict of the narrator with herself, while Alice is strikingly unperturbed and manages to steer the narrator through the difficulty.

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Food and drink are repeatedly used to characterize Malcolm and Melissa through their interaction in commensal occasions. Malcolm serves generous aperitifs and also pours the coffee later; Melissa makes everything seem effortless and welcoming, but does not display false modesty (‘There were no cries of praise and screams of disclaimer from the hostess’ [65]). Also Jeremy and Jacky, who are organising the following summer’s trip, are characterized by food. Presumably a gay couple, they are thought to be ‘madly camp’ (67), but when they are suspected to be stereotypically overwrought (‘Would they drive everyone mad looking for sprigs of tarragon in case the pot au feu was ruined?’ [67]), Alice, who had put forth this thought, is gently admonished for ‘typecasting’ (67).

Food supports the impression of reality in the text – dinner parties and holiday taverna visits are social settings where people meet, and the different stages of the dinner party serve as time markers. They are also status markers, a display of cultural capital. Expensive now, Holland Park was quite bohemian in the early 1980s. Cultural capital is exhibited in the choice, preparation, and presentation of the foods and beverages. These are slightly rustic yet perceived as sophisticated in their authenticity – the garlic bread is ‘fresh and

garlicky' (65), neither too hard nor too soggy. The main dish is spaghetti, described as 'excellent' as well as 'mountainous' (65). The salad 'was like an exotic still-life' (65), alluding to both exoticism and to art. The ice cream is rich, indulgent, and served in 'huge helpings' (66). The text reflects the young intelligentsia of early 1980s London who ate avocado and were able to make their own hummus, feta and pitta bread. They eat quasi-ethnic but 'authentically'-made food, with mildly exotic ingredients such as a salad with 'everything in it except lettuce' (65). The story illustrates the concept of foodies as later discussed by Johnston and Baumann.¹⁶ Exoticism and authenticity feature in many facets of the chosen foods, and there is the aspect of understated hospitality, of do-it-yourself, unlike the imagined alternative gourmet evening involving 'dinner around a mahogany table with lots of cut-glass decanters, and a Swiss darling to serve it and wash up' (62). Even the invitation is kept informal, talking about 'how many strands of spaghetti to put into the pot' (61) – pots rarely feature in dinner party invitation rhetoric, as the kitchen is kept out of sight.

Unusually for fiction, the reader is addressed directly as the narrator declares that Melissa's spaghetti was 'not the kind of spaghetti that you and I would ever make' (65). The visceral effect continues in the food descriptions of the dinner scene, specifically the garlic bread, which offers smell and taste ('garlicky' does both) as well as texture. Interestingly, the pasta cooking time is mentioned – Melissa seems to be out of the room for only three minutes although, as the narrator adds, 'I know it takes at least eight to cook the pasta' (65). While the actual time span may be different than perceived, underlining the hospitality skills of the hostess, the narrator is trying to reclaim a little cultural/culinary capital herself by showing that she knows how to cook spaghetti.

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A Literary Lunch

This is the story of two lunches, contrasted in affluence and abundance. The meals show time passing through the various courses and offer a rich backdrop for the story. While some of the setting is specific and real, such as street names, other aspects are invented or semi-invented. There has never been a bistro at Dublin's Usher's Island, but the photographic mural described does exist at an outdoor location further down the river Liffey. The nearly-real locations serve to anchor the story without claims to actual truth. Food and drink also provide period markers, for example through specifying wine vintages.

The choice of foods and eating establishments indicate the social and financial status of the protagonists. The coffeeshop where Francie has his lunch of a baguette sandwich with tuna, sweetcorn, and coleslaw is described as a 'cold little kip'¹⁷ (554). The art board members' choice of Gabriel's Bistro indicates a certain level of taste, cultural capital, and snobbery. It trumps their usual choice, a hotel restaurant with a slightly outdated feel and menu ('alarming starched tablecloths and fantails of melon' (551)). The bistro, on the other hand, has a 'clever ironic way' (552) that shows in its interior, for example the table set up

to mirror a mural of the Last Supper, which in itself can be regarded as ironic as it is said to depict 'typical Dubliners eating' (551). Irony also appears in the menu, which lists gourmet foods such as truffles beside hearty dishes like bangers and mash, and the etiquette: 'Put your elbows on the table, have a good time' (551). This 'irony' can be best appreciated through high cultural capital, as it requires an understanding of what to expect, why the expectation was reversed, and why the reversal of the expectation is arguably more luxurious and sophisticated despite looking the opposite. Cultural capital is not directly tied to financial capital, but indirectly it is, as its acquisition – like becoming a wine connoisseur – often requires money. The board members are not necessarily wealthy – Pam is a writer, for example – but their talent or social capital have led them to be included on the board, which means they can eat and drink expensive victuals gratuitously.

The Last Supper appears repeatedly as a motif. The photographic mural is mimicked and mirrored by the layout of the restaurant, and further echoed when the chairman seats himself in the middle and the others to his right and left, divided by gender. The board lunch turns out to be Alan's 'last supper,' as he is shot upon leaving the restaurant. In this analogy, Pamela, the new board member, turns out to be Alan's 'Judas,' although unlike the original Judas, the betrayal may not have been intentional. Francie's text to Pam that says: 'Each man kills the thing he loves...some do it with a kiss' is another allusion to Judas and his kiss of betrayal.

The lunch at Gabriel's embodies the excesses of the Celtic Tiger era, which witnessed corruption and the nefarious acquisition of wealth at the expense of fellow citizens, a dynamic symbolized in the relationship between Francie and the board. The board members drink copiously and eat sumptuous, expensive dishes, with the exception of the 'soup of the day' that one of the women orders. The eventual bill of €1200 does not perturb the chairman. Gluttony implicates eating in excess while others are starving. Francie is not physically starving, although his sandwich is remarkable neither in quality nor gastronomic satisfaction. However, he is starving metaphorically, consistently excluded from a share of the funding pie as well as recognition, while the board wallows in both, and in never-ending 'meetings and lunches, receptions and launches' (553). This is Pam's first such lunch. When Alan is annoyed with her, he vows to ensure it is 'her first and her last supper' (556). The commensality at the meal at Gabriel's is an exclusive one – literally, as only board members are invited, but also metaphorically, as some people were not 'invited' to participate in the spoils of the Celtic Tiger. It is a localized experience, but it speaks to wider human experiences of access and power, of social, financial and cultural capital, of frustration and desperation.

Conclusion

The recent publication of a new anthology of Irish short stories, spanning from 1880 to 2020, speaks to the continuing popularity of the genre in Ireland. While the form has seen different

trends during the past 140 years – realist, gothic, visionary, modernist, or fantastical stories, written by a diverse cast of authors – it remains a format appreciated by new and established Irish authors to reflect and question social dynamics and identities. A gastrocritical reading of selected stories from the collection has shown that through the years, food and foodways have served as valuable tools for Irish short story writers. Food and foodways have provided setting and context, themes and symbols, plot points, conflicts and characterisation. They have expressed loyalty, sacrifice, and humanity; showcased pride in traditional work; captured the oppressiveness of religious doctrine; traced growing sexual self-awareness; and embodied social inequality. As a rich culinary sign, food has also been employed to furnish the quintessential short story epiphanies, allusions, and implications. Throughout its prolific history, food and foodways have always nourished the Irish short story imagination.

Notes

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4. Priscilla P. Ferguson, 'A Cultural Field in the Making: Gastronomy in Nineteenth-Century France,' *American Journal of Sociology*, 104, no. 3 (1998): 597-641.
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7. Biasin, p. 13.
8. Biasin, p. 20.
9. Roman Jakobson, 'Linguistics and Poetics,' in *Style in Language*, ed. by Thomas Sebeok (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), 350-377 (p. 354).
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15. Daniel Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland: A Study of Gaelic Munster in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1924); Daniel Corkery, *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature: A Study* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1931).
16. Joséé Johnston and Shyon Baumann, *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2014).
17. Irish slang for a place in a bad state of repair.

‘Imagine a zoo ...’ – Show and surprise dishes in German medieval Cuisine, an homage to the medieval chef

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ABSTRACT: Medieval feasts had to be fun! Surprise dishes were an important means to achieve this goal. The joy of food transformation, the play with colors and shapes, and the surprise effect of the unexpected can be imagined while reading the many surviving recipes of German medieval cuisine. This paper presents the current research on this topic and attempts a re-categorisation by closely analysing the historic recipe texts.

‘If you want an animal enclosure, take flour and eggs. From this you can make whatever you want. From meat or fish you can make any ten animals, whatever you want, if you want, ten of each kind in this enclosure’. These are the opening sentences of a recipe in the recipe collection of Master Hanns, personal chef to the dukes of Württemberg, which is dated to 1460. The editor of the manuscript, Trude Ehlert, is sceptical about the practicability of the whole enterprise: ‘And the last recipe, the animal enclosure, with a castle and knights and ladies who are enjoying themselves in it – all made of edible material – must be relegated entirely to the realm of fantasy, as all this is difficult to realise; it seems significant to me, however, that the author neglects to include the instructions for preparing it ...’¹ The recipe describes an elaborate *Schaugericht*, a surprise dish, a not uncommon element of festivities during medieval times.

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For medieval people the course of the year was sequenced into fast and feast days, according to the church calendar, with the fast days highly predominating. Additionally to that, basic food provision was strongly dependent on weather and climate, so that even during the high times of agricultural production hunger was a constant threat to the whole population. In this context it is not surprising that the feasts were generally celebrated very lavishly by all social classes. The richer the host, the more extravagant were the meals as well as the entertainment offered to the guests. The host most likely had to build up or uphold his reputation and status. In the Middle Ages, feasts were generally used to celebrate political or social agreements, and the guests had to be impressed accordingly. A medieval feast was a staged event. The planning started with the decoration of the room, included the seating of the guests, and was, of course, continued in the meticulous choreography of the feast itself. The feast was a coordinated series of courses that varied according to the social status of the diners, between courses the guests had to be entertained. For this purpose musicians, jesters, trained animals, dance or even theatrical plays were included in the feast. But the

entertainment of the guests was not limited to the time between courses, chefs wanted to entertain the guests with their food, too.

There were no limits to the cook's imagination! Elements of surprise and entertainment could be added to all kinds of dishes, starting at the basic puree or deceiving names of simple dishes escalating up to elaborate dishes, that were planned and implemented like architectural construction projects. Research has preferably picked out examples of the last group, as these impressive dishes were also frequently recorded in historical accounts. Looking at this category of dishes from a different perspective by reading the recipe texts that have been handed down in various manuscripts, we can not only experience a greater deal of variance but also receive a more detailed picture of medieval chefs' imaginativeness. The defining elements of surprise dishes generally are found in a combination of factors: clever naming conventions can transform a simple dish like aspic into entertainment. They often provide an extraordinary visual impression, so that guests might not be sure at first glance what they are being served. Most important is the significant transformation of ingredients either through grinding, colouring, and/or substitution. And as implied in the name, surprise dishes have to entertain, by having a heightened fun-factor, evoking astonishment and even shock or repulsion.

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But while innovative in the different implementations of surprise dishes, medieval cooks were not the first to impress their diners with creativity that goes beyond the concept of a delicious meal. One of the earlier ones, a Roman textual witness of culinary deception is the description of a wild sow, filled with thrushes to be released when cut open, and its suckling pigs made of pastry being presented to the diners at Trimalchio's feast in the *Satyricon* by Petronius². The different recipe traditions have varying names for these kinds of entertainment dishes: The French term is *entremets*, for something that is served 'between courses'. These dishes equally bridged the gap between courses and allowed for leisure time for the guests. English texts refer to these dishes as *sotelties* ('subtleties'), or sometimes as 'served out of course'.³ The history of the French word is quite easily traceable through history. It is said to have been first used as description of a dish in the 12th century in a satirical chanson in a parody of a noble feast; in another example from about the same time it refers to some kind of theatrical entertainment. This double meaning is prevalent until a clearer distinction during the 16th century: in the late medieval food world *entremets* on the one hand denote elaborate dishes, table sculptures, fantastically arranged plates, or any other kind of entertainment between courses.⁴ The English *soteltie* also denoted any 'ornamental figure, scene, or other design, typically made of sugar, used as a table decoration or eaten between the courses of a meal'.⁵ Its use was antiquated after the 16th century. Looking at it from the practical side, these intermediary dishes generated some more time for the waiters and kitchen staff to take away one and prepare the next course, as they guaranteed that the guests were engaged, there seems to have been no fixed

order when these dishes were served, sometimes creations were even served only to select guests, while the others watched the spectacle.⁶ Edible *entremets* started out small and simple like wheat puree, aspic, or sauces – albeit coloured with saffron – but soon evolved into more and more elaborate dishes, providing the chef an opportunity to impress both his master and the guests.⁷ These masterpieces included the famous blackbirds in a pie, roasted peacocks dressed as live birds, *Coqz heaumez* (a roasted, helmeted cock seated on a roasted suckling pig like a knight in a tournament), or the 'Cockentrice' (where the front half of a suckling pig is sewed to the back half of a capon). At the turn of Modern Times it became more common or even necessary due to the complexity of the showpieces to also use non edible pieces like paintings, sculptures, or fountains as elements of the distraction between courses. But the different areas start to overlap and connect in their aim to impress the audience: 'Pie Parma Style' combines culinary skill with architectural elements as it represents castle-like structures filled with a delicious something or other, while in gold and silver coated roasted swans call for the skillful hand of a craftsman, who is used to working the fine metal.⁸

There are few to no records in German manuscripts that would prove customs similar to France or England, where certain dishes were served between courses. Historical sources of the wedding between Hedwig, the Polish King's daughter and Georg, Duke of Bavarian at the town of Landshut in 1475, which probably was the most entertaining event of the second half of the 15th century in this part of Europe, provide a list of dishes for the wedding feast, but a cradle, manufactured completely from gingerbread, which would have been the *entremets*, is only cursorily listed there.⁹ Nevertheless, there are a plethora of recipes describing fancy dishes that go beyond the simple preparation of food. Although such dishes are quite common in medieval German culinary recipes, until now nobody has provided historical evidence of contemporary names. Research took up the historical term *Schaugerichte* (or *Schauessen*), that has been used in the second half of the 16th century to describe dishes, or part of dishes (e.g. pie heads) that could also be labelled as *entremets* (in both its meanings). The focus, though, according to the historical dictionaries, was rather on the ornamental and entertaining than the edible aspect.¹⁰ Today, *Schaugerichte* is generally translated as 'show dishes', although the historical interpretation of the term as 'dishes that are meant for the guests to look at' would be more to the point. Presently we know of only three sources (all recipes for the famous 'pie with live birds') that provide Early New High German collective names for this kind of recipes: *ein schympfessen* or *Ein gepachens das gehoert zu einer kuerczweil*.¹¹ The recipe titles could loosely be translated with 'A surprise dish' or 'A pastry that is part of an amusement'. Since the terminology is not consistent in the English research literature either and this kind of dishes go beyond what is commonly denoted *entremets* or *sotelties* as they are also part of regular courses (cf. the

list of dishes at the Landshut wedding), we suggest using the term 'surprise dish', as it most comprehensively describes the character of this kind of dish.

Medieval recipe collections generally hand down the outstanding, or the complicated recipes, that might only have been prepared for special occasions. In this paper we assume a very broad minded view of surprise dishes, and we will not solely focus on the extremely extravagant preparations but aim at a categorisation of all dishes that fall under our initial definition including naming conventions, visual distinctiveness, transformation of ingredients or food, and an explicit entertainment factor (cf. table 1). It is a comprehensive summary of medieval cooks' skills and their fabulous imagination! We will structure the summary according to our definition and apply an order from simple to complex preparations.

I. Naming	food unrelated connotation preparation methods
II. Visual	colour imitation of standard dishes imitation of objects outside the cooking sphere
III. Transformation	substantial manipulation / change of physical condition imitation of ingredients substitution of ingredients ('fake' dishes)
IV. Entertainment	fancy cooking techniques extraordinary implementation, complex cooking techniques surprise elements to entertain, shock, or repulse

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TABLE 1. A systematic characterisation of medieval surprise dishes.

Some of the medieval German recipes indicate that the dishes were either presented by name when served or that there was some food related talk at the table, as one comment in a cooking recipe for 'An eel prepared in two ways' suggests: the eel is skinned and filled with egg stuffing, then the eel's head is sewn back to the skin, this is then roasted. The skinless carcass is cooked in wine. Following the serving instructions the author comments: *So mag der herr woll gesprechen von wann chumbt der ainn all* ('This way the master can say: 'Now served: 'one' eel?').¹² This renders the titles of the recipes (if they are available in the manuscripts) even more important as we consider them now! This would also be an explanation for some really hilarious naming of certain recipes like 'Peas roasted on a skewer'¹³, 'Roasted milk'¹⁴, 'Cloth puree'¹⁵, or 'Suspenders aspic'¹⁶. Both the titles of the pea and the milk recipe combine ingredients with cooking methods that usually do not really go well together. In the diners this evokes wonder, curiosity and suspension. Both recipes use a similar implementation: from the peas a sponge dough is prepared, that is baked, cut into squares, covered with batter and spit roasted; the milk is mixed with eggs, set into hot water to coagulate, cut into chunks and roasted on a spit. The other two titles seemingly combine ingredients from outside the cooking domain: cloth and suspenders, both

associated with accoutrement and clothing. Again, both the host and the chef play with the imagination of their guests and let suspension build up. The first recipe is, as medieval recipes often are, not really specific in its instructions: slices of stale bread are to be cooked in almond milk and served sweet. This is some interpretation on our side, but if the slices are rather big but thin, they might slightly resemble pieces of cloth. The instruction for the aspic is more detailed: roe deer skin has to be unhaired, cut into medium broad (just as broad as suspenders) stripes, boiled and then finished as a classic aspic, some tails of the stripes should be gilded and hung over the edge of the dish. For this recipe not only the title is meant to surprise but also the visual appearance is important.

The aspect of visual appearance touches, of course, all our categories to some extent, as the imitation of ingredients, dishes, and objects outside the cooking sphere are closely related to the transformation of foodstuffs. The numerous recipes for lent roasts in the medieval manuscripts combine these two aspects by replicating the visual image of a roast, oftentimes in impressive detail (e.g. larding the fast roast with egg white or fish filet). One maybe not apparent example of imitation are the recipes to make chicken leg from chicken breast¹⁷. This rather refined process requires the breast to be ground, mixed with spices, bacon and white bread and fitted on the chicken bone to resemble a conventional chicken leg. Recipes to imitate objects outside the cooking sphere don't result from lack of availability, but rather show the playfulness of the medieval upper-class kitchen in its purest form. Remarkable is the number of recipes, describing the creation of a 'Hedgehog', each recipe featuring a different main ingredient (almonds, raisins, ...), therefore offering a range of possible colours to choose from. Another example is the replication of a 'Necklace'¹⁸ made of dough and stuffed with apples and grapes.

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In this part, though, we want to especially focus on the customs of colouring food. As feasts were meant to entertain, medieval cooks created an extremely colourful cuisine. The medieval German recipe collections hand down many recipes for preparing food colouring, and tips how to preserve them. Maybe the best known and most frequently handed down recipe for coloured food is *Blanc manger* that can be found in nearly all recipe collections throughout Europe. But, the striking fact about this recipe actually is the absence of colour! All ingredients – almonds, breast of chicken, or fish if it is a lent dish – aim at producing a creamy white dish. But of course, the haute cuisine of the Middle Ages even coloured this dish, for example, blue by adding violett or cornflower petals. Food colourants were mainly derived from herbs, spices, or fruit. The most frequently called for are parsley for green, saffron for yellow, nutmeg, cloves, cinnamon for brown, raspberries for red, blueberries for a bluish violet. Black was generally produced by excessively roasting gingerbread, white often was simply eggwhite. With these, all kinds of dishes were coloured: purees, pancakes, aspic, stuffings, etc. The different coloured dishes were also often prepared in a way that the colours were arranged in a check pattern or layered like aspic or pancakes. The base

recipe for 'Pancakes in three colours' reads as follows: separate the yolks from the eggwhite; pound parsley and mix it with some eggwhite, colour the yolks with saffron and prepare white, green and yellow pancakes; brush the pancakes with egg and stack them; bake it in lard as any other cake. When the cake is brought before the guests and cut into pieces a beautifully coloured cut surface is displayed.¹⁹

Restrictions in the consumption of food – either imposed by nature or society – encouraged a special kind of culinary creativity: the imitation of certain foodstuffs in times of shortage or fast. Here again the visual presentation of the dishes are crucial, as the illusion relies on them looking like something they are not and thereby tricking the diner's eye. Probably the most common type of recipes for imitation dishes are lent versions of meat dishes, for example roasts. By indulging these 'fake' versions of dishes, one may indulge a fantasy of fasting even without any constraints, adding another layer of imagination to the culinary feats of medieval Europe. The visual aspect is important in conceiving these imitations, too. While taste is hardly ever mentioned (if so, the rather nonchalant *so ist es guet*, meaning 'this is well-prepared', offers no real information in that regard) the visual impression is highlighted and emphasised. There is a range of tools available to transform food in the Middle Ages, which range from transforming the substance of ingredients to tricking the diners by playing with known conventions, e.g. serving lent versions of venison dishes in the sauce inextricably linked with the actual meat version of the dish. This technique at least combines visual perception and taste.

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Surprise dishes often entail a striking change to the properties of the used ingredients. This can either aim at imitation of other foodstuffs (e.g. imitation as a crucial part of lent dishes) or simply offer a new perspective on everyday ingredients. This change may affect the physical condition or texture (e.g. grinding meat so fine, it can be formed to resemble something completely different) or the visual appearance. The last point of course is closely connected to the visual aspect, as colouring a dish both transforms and affects the appearance. The medieval German recipe collections are rich in puree recipes, most of them coloured in some way. By pounding and grinding the various ingredients into a fine mash, the original physical properties are lost, transforming them into one homogenous dish. The colouring gives them a linking property that charms the diner by adding one of the many known food colourings. But the transformation aspect is maybe most important in regards to substitution and imitation of certain ingredients, the consumption of which may either be forbidden during fast days or impossible depending on the season. One of the most important substitution ingredients are almonds, which can substitute a variety of ingredients such as milk, cheese, butter, or even eggs. While almond milk and nut cheeses of various kinds are back in fashion nowadays (in the Middle Ages all kinds of nuts or hemp, or opium poppy seeds were used), the almond eggs are a forgotten art. In a recipe for 'Almonds as poached eggs'²⁰, almonds are ground and divided into three parts, the first

to be transformed into yolks by colouring with saffron and mixed with white bread, spices and honey. The second, still white part forms the egg white, which shall hold the yolks, while the third part is liquified a little and mixed with flour, sugar and again saffron. This unbelievably creative dish is only one of many substitution dishes with almonds playing a central role, all of which prove that necessity is the mother of invention.

The second dominating factor concerning the question, which ingredients were consumed during any given time period in the Middle Ages besides the Roman Catholic church calendar was nature. The seasons inevitably determined what foodstuffs were available, spurring on imitation of ingredients not in season. One of resulting dish is 'Fake morels, around Christmas time'²¹, in which the morels are formed of dough, covered in batter and fried in lard. The fake morels can also be made out of choux pastry, dried fruit or meat paste and filled with various stuffings. The wonder and excitement at receiving something simply not available at this time of the year is what makes these kinds of dishes so intriguing. Both approaches compensate for an absence of foodstuffs, one self-imposed, the other environmental.

Some of the dishes handed down in the medieval German recipe collections are entertainment perfected to the optimum, whilst all remaining edible still. By applying unusual cooking techniques medieval cooks created astonishing dishes that ranged from 'simple' roasts to extraordinary complex architectural food sculptures. Fancy cooking techniques are employed to render normal food preparations exceptional. Some of these are the coating of roasts with colourful batter or crusts, moulding hollowed out roasts filled with aspic, or the preparation of fish by skinning it and stuffing the skin with a farce made of its flesh, or applying two or three preparation methods on one piece of fish or eel (frying, cooking, roasting). The recipe of 'Fish prepared in three ways' is handed down in several European languages: put it on a roast, flour the head part, wrap the middle part with linen, score the tail part; pour hot lard over the head part until it is golden brown, pour a mixture of boiling wine and water over the middle part, the third part roasts itself.²² Bringing this dish before the guests would certainly have created awe and surprise, and both host and chef will have received great praise concerning this artful cookery. The recipe to produce one giant egg made of 30 or 40 normal sized chicken eggs with the help of two pig's bladders is handed down in many manuscripts²³ and intends to leave the diners wondering, what legendary creature the host might possess, that would lay such impressively sized eggs. Similarly, the result of the numerous 'Krosseier' recipes may seem more like a magic trick than a dish prepared by man: the eggs are slightly cooked, so that some of the eggwhite congeals, then blown out, the yolk is gently warmed and mixed with green herbs, subsequently filled back into the eggshells, the eggs are then hard-boiled and presented as whole,²⁴ unexciting eggs to the diner – of course the guests are in for a marvelous surprise, when peeling and cutting the eggs!

But the medieval sense for entertainment at the dining table surpasses what one might consider awe or wonder inducing techniques. At times, the intention behind recipes is clearly to shock or even repulse the guests. For this purpose, quicksilver was oftentimes used to bring movement to the already prepared dishes and thus making animals look alive as they squirm or jump in front of the guests. One example in the German manuscripts would be the 'Chicken, Clucking on a Table'²⁵, which by filling the neck of a roast chicken with quicksilver in a cautious manner as to avoid the neck from ripping open. Another are 'Live Fish in Aspic'²⁶, which calls for small fish to be filled with an amount of quicksilver the size of a pea to imitate them swimming in the aspic next to the actually consumable fish. This recipe also explicitly mentions that it may be served to noblemen. These recipes show a certain lavishness in festivities' cooking as animals tainted with quicksilver are not fit for consumption.

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Complex surprise dishes combine exceptional cooking techniques with technical or architectural skills. While the dishes named and described so far are extraordinary, the following have all the characteristics for being the climax of a feast: a pig's head spitting flames, a whole egg, or even a whole chicken served in a pinch bottle, a dish of parsley that actually grows on the table, the pie with live birds in it, a tiled kitchen stove. Even by reading the titles we can see that these dishes were primarily made to entertain and to surprise the guests. For some it is even hard to imagine how they would have been eaten, as we, in fact, know how to insert the egg or the chicken into the bottle, but we have no sources that tell us how it was taken out! To prepare these dishes, the chef needed to be extremely experienced and skilled. He had to be not only an expert in cooking and crafted in his techniques (skinning the chicken, inserting the skin whole into the bottle, restuffing it with the right amount of meat and cooking it to the point) but he also had to master some gardening skills (preparing the soil and the parsley seeds), know his chemistry (igniting the brandy in the pig's mouth with a glowing ember when served, dissolving the calcium in the eggshell to soften it up for insertion into the bottle), be an oven fitter, or at least have rudimentary physical knowledge when constructing and assembling the tiled stove: the tiles are egg dough deep fried over a wooden frame. These are glued to sections of pre-baked gingerbread with a stuffing of apples, raisins, and spices; they are ornamented with confectionaries. The gingerbread shapes the corpus of the stove, the top is a white dough sheet, on which sticks of wood and glowing embers made out of almond puree are placed. The recipe labels this dish as a *praut essen*, a 'bride's dish'.

The most important trait of a medieval chef in a courtly kitchen, however, must have been his vivid fantasy! An imaginativeness that allowed them to plan and implement enormous architectural showpieces made of food. The French chef Master Chiquart describes in his *Du fait de cuisine* a raised *entremets*, a whole castle: He starts with the wooden construction, on which a castle with four fortified towers is built, lit from within,

manned with crossbowmen, decorated with branches bearing flowers, fruit and birds. At the foot of the towers in the courtyard are a boar’s head, a pike cooked in three ways, a glazed piglet, and a swan, all four breathing fire and served with accompanying sauces. The centrepiece is a fountain of love, spewing rose water and mulled wine, beside it are a roasted goose and peacock, redressed with their feathers. All around are roasted birds, and men as well as animals moulded from meat and legumes paste. Chiquart closes the recipe describing how the wooden construction needs to be devised to hide several musicians.²⁷ Similar, albeit not so extravagantly outfitted castles are described in the *Forme of Cury* and a Lower German recipe collection.²⁸

A matchable architectural surprise dish is handed down in the recipe collection of Master Hanns from 1460. What he names an ‘animal enclosure’ actually is a description of a whole edible hunting party in a typical medieval setting: an extended compound, enclosed with walls and fences, filled with greenery and fruit trees, a tower surrounded by a moat with fish in it, the compound holds ten kinds of game, on the tower there are ladies, girls, knaves and knights who look out for the game to hunt. In the vicinity of the tower there is a kitchen and a feasting party. The description of the dish’s layout is interspersed with fragmentary cooking instructions: men and animals are to be made from meat and fish paste, the fences and walls from different bread doughs, the greenery from parsley coloured egg paste, and so on.

Research has often dismissed this recipe as a corrupted text or outright phantasmagoria due to the rather confusing text structure. All in all, in the light of medieval cooking recipe transmission in general and compared to Chiquart’s castle recipe, this is a perfectly sane and structured recipe – at least for people who are experienced in medieval cookery (like medieval chefs were). But above that, it can simply be seen as a great inspiration for cooks who love an imaginative approach towards cooking, as a practical attempt to implement this recipe by the historical cooking society KuliMa - Kulinarisches Mittelalter an der Universität Graz²⁹ has shown: As soon as the idea of surprise dishes and the design of Meister Hanns’ hunting party has been properly communicated, these cooking enthusiasts began churning out ideas ... the results of this endeavour have been captured on video.³⁰ Watching it conveys the awe, suspense and entertainment medieval surprise dishes must have evoked with contemporary diners!

Notes

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3. Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2007), p. 192.
4. L. B. Ross, ‘Beyond Eating: Political and Personal Significance of the entremets 145 at the Banquets of the Burgundian Court’, in *At the Table: Metaphorical and Material Cultures of Food in Medieval and*

- Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Timothy J. Tomasik and Juliann M. Vitullo (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 145-166 (p. 146-47).
5. Oxford English Dictionary, ‘subtlety’, 4.b. (Version 12/20) <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/193191?redirectedFrom=soteltie#eid>> [accessed 27 May 2021]
 6. Ken Albala, *Cooking in Europe, 1250-1650* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2006); Freedman, p. 30 and 192; Adamson, p. 74.
 7. Adamson, p. 74.
 8. Bruno Laurioux, *Tafelfreuden im Mittelalter*, trans. by Gabriele Krüger-Wirrer (Augsburg: Bechtermünz, 1999), p. 132; Freedman, p. 192; Adamson, p. 74 and 164
 9. Roman Deutinger, and Christof Paulus, *Das Reich zu Gast in Landsbut* (Ostfilder: Thorbecke, 2017), p. 68.
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 11. <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.gr1.234>, <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.b4.210>, <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.w1.212>
 12. <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.gr1.207>
 13. <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.b4.30>, <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.bs1.205>, <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.w1.30>
 14. <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.h2b.27>
 15. <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.bs1.105>
 16. <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.b4.187>, <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.bs1.15>, <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.gr1.210>, <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.w1.190>
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 19. <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.gr1.172>, <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.br1.24>.
 20. <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.gr1.108>
 21. <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.h2a.45>, <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.h2b.29>
 22. E.g., <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.gr1.bs1.257>
 23. E.g., <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.h2a.62>
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 25. <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:corema.gr1.158>
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 27. Terence Scully, *Du fait de cuisine par Master Chiquart 1420* (Sion: Archives Cantonales, 1985), p. 137-145.
 28. Chastletes, No. 197, in: Hieatt, Constance, and Sharon Butler, *Curry on inglysch* (London, New York, Toronto: OUP 1985); CoReMA recipe collections Wo5, recipes 39 and 77.
 29. <http://kulinarisches-mittelalter.org/>
 30. This video will either be part of the presentation or provided alongside it.

Big Cheese: Cheese and American Imagination

Bruce Kraig

ABSTRACT: Nothing fires human gustatory imaginations like cheese. Consider the British cheese gourmands Wallace and Gromit whose hunger for the stuff drives them to build a rocket ship that takes them to the motherlode of all cheeses, the moon (it's not Wallace's beloved Wensleydale). Wallace's and Gromit's turophilia are nothing compared to their American cousins' enduring zeal for quasi-rotted milk. Cheese is for eating, of course, but like other foods it represents ideas that American past and present have about themselves. Some of the ideas take political and social expressions, others are embedded in popular culture. The late nineteenth-century expression 'big cheese' meaning someone of importance, or 'big man' refers to large wheels of cheese displayed at state fairs among other venues and might refer to two historical patriotic cheeses. In broader food sense cheese tells us about how Americans think it should be produced, sold, and eaten, and what the taste and textures of desirable food should be or not be.

Nothing fires human gustatory imaginations like cheese. Consider the British cheese gourmands Wallace and Gromit whose hunger for the stuff drives them to build a rocket ship that takes them to the motherlode of all cheeses, the moon (it's not Wallace's beloved Wensleydale). Wallace's and Gromit's turophilia are nothing compared to their American cousins' enduring zeal for quasi-rotted milk. Cheese is for eating, of course, but like other foods it represents ideas that American past and present have about themselves. Some of the ideas take political and social expressions, others are embedded in popular culture. The late nineteenth-century expression 'big cheese' meaning someone of importance, or 'big man' refers to large wheels of cheese displayed at state fairs among other venues and might refer to two historical patriotic cheeses. In broader food sense cheese tells us about how Americans think it should be produced, sold, and eaten, and what the taste and textures of desirable food should be or not be.

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It has become a cliché that in popular imagination America is the land of abundance, a cornucopia of food that makes its inhabitants fat and happy. True in terms of agricultural output, a poisonous falsehood in the hard reality of historic food deprivation among many American, the myth has always taken political form. A well-known cheese story of the early republic centres on just this. On New Year's Day 1802 President Thomas Jefferson stood at the door of his official home, the White House, ready to welcome a gift from political supporters: the world's largest cheese, four feet across, eighteen inches high and weighing

more than 1250 pounds. The cheese had been made in the late summer of 1801 by the women of Cheshire, a small community (the 1800 census lists 200 people) in Massachusetts' western backcountry. The effort was led by a charismatic if socially embarrassing preacher named John Leland – he tended to shout and stomp around while preaching in church and in public. His flock were free-will Baptists resolutely opposed to the hierarchical religious and political establishment of Massachusetts and who thought of themselves as true citizens of a free republic established by God.¹ When Thomas Jefferson (a notable religious sceptic) and his populist Republican-Democratic Party won the presidency Leland's people set to work to celebrate the electoral victory by using the most democratic food produced by an abundant land: cheese. The milk of nine hundred cows from parishioner's farms was turned into curd and placed in huge vat set on a cider press (cider the usual beverage of ordinary Americans). It was salted, and then transformed by pressing into a big block of cheese.²

Most American-made cheeses of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century seem to have been cheddars though the people of Cheshire could have made the eponymous cheese. Since these were farmhouse products no records tell us what exactly they were. Cheese was a way to preserve surplus milk, especially during the warm months (milking lasted approximately from April to November), to provide protein over the winter, and to produce something that could be sold in local markets. Farmhouse cheeses were staples of rural America throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A cheese that weighed more than half a ton meant a considerable investment in each family's resources and labour since there were no milking machines. Ordinary milk cows of the period were shorthorns of mixed breeds mainly from northern England; not until the 1830s were 'improved' breeds such as Ayrshires and Dutch cows imported for better production.³ Super producing Holstein-Frisians did not appear until 1857. Early cows might have produced 1,500 pounds of milk a year or about 174 gallons a year.⁴ Even at these low milk yields an average farm with one cow could make 150 pounds of cheese assuming no milk was taken for drinking or butter. Cheshire dairy was already well-known because of the excellent grazing land so its cows were obviously much better producers than normal perhaps close to some exceptional yields of 2500 pounds of milk reported in 1800. Large amounts of milk were necessary because the great cheese required 13,000 pounds from the 900 cows in a short time. The American land and animals upon it were clearly abundant as the great cheese was meant to show.

The fame of this huge cheese spread, Leland glorying in the title given to him in the in the popular press 'the Mammoth Priest'. But the massive creation was so large and the roads so poor that it could only be shipped in wintertime over snow and ice by sleds and by water routes. It went down the Hudson River by boat to New York City where it was viewed by large crowds of people, then to Baltimore and on to Washington, DC. President Jefferson standing in his doorway welcoming this rare thing and was mightily pleased by gift. The makers may have known that in 1792 the village of Norleach in Cheshire, England had

created a 1350-pound cheese for America's *bête noir* King George III since it was reported in a United States newspaper.⁵ But here was a cheese all the better for being American, as Leland said in his message the president:

The Cheese was not made by his Lordship, for his sacred Majesty; nor with a view to gain dignified titles or lucrative offices; but by the personal labour of free-born farmers (without a single slave to assist) for an elective President of a free people ...

Sir, we had some thought of impressing some significant inscription on the Cheese; but we have found such inconveniency in stamps on paper, that we chose to send it in a plain Republican form.⁷

For the dairymen and women of Cheshire, the cheese was good publicity, their products well-known throughout the nineteenth century. Even better for Leland Jefferson paid him \$200 (roughly \$4238 in today's dollars).⁶

The word mammoth had just come into vogue partly due to Jefferson's own work on America's fauna and flora. Since his tenure as envoy to France he and earlier Benjamin Franklin had argued successfully with French naturalists that American plants and animals were larger and better than European ones. He succeeded in convincing the greatest one of all Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon by sending him a much-decayed moose skeleton and hide. In 1801 with Jefferson's help famed artist and naturalist Charles Willson Peale's had put the skeleton of a mastodon discovered near Newburgh, New York on display at his natural history museum in Philadelphia. Peale declared it 'the LARGEST of Terrestrial Beings', in short a mammoth.⁷ John Leland's huge cheese was an edible version of a nascent publicity industry. Peale's skeleton was later brought by P.T. Barnum for his American Museum showing that bigger and flashier almost always works in American minds as signs of superiority.

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Big food was of the moment and Jefferson's political enemies in the Federalist Party used it to ridicule him in their newspapers. They called it a 'Mammoth' cheese that would soon be filled with maggots and that only Republican-Democratic rats would eat. Actually there is no record of what happened to the cheese once it was brought into the White House, so it is possible that maggots did have a feast on some of it because it seems to have remained there for two years. One writer suggested that the women of Lenox also in western Massachusetts bake a mammoth apple pie, 15 feet across and 4,800 pounds in weight, to accompany the colossal cheese: 'the Apple Pye ought therefore to weigh at least forty-eight hundred as Mr. Jefferson, unless he has a Mammoth appetite for Cheese, will want four pounds of Pye to one of Cheese.'⁸ Pie and cheese for dessert was just as American as it was French or British.

Not to be outdone by opposition hyperbole the party of the people took up the theme with gusto in more than one way. In the spring of 1804, the official bakers of the Navy

prepared a Mammoth Loaf of bread presumed to be eaten with the last of the great cheese. Dressed in their best uniforms, the Navy bakers carried it into the Capitol where it was set in a Senate committee room. There is sat beside huge quantities of roast beef, whiskey, and hard cider. Jefferson, normally a fan of French and Italian dining, dressed in a plain old coat, mingled with a large crowd of ordinary people. A critic said, they were ‘people of all classes & colors from the President of the United States to the meanest vilest Virginia slave’. The President took out his pocketknife, hacked off a hunk of beef and bread and ate them, washed down with liquor. The ‘mob’ joined in and spent the rest of the day eating, likely cheese included, and drinking. The event was part of the administration’s campaign to raise money for the Navy to fight the infamous Barbary pirates, but it was a populist celebration of American food and drink.

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Thirty years later, another great cheese arrived at the White House, this one dedicated to the self-proclaimed greatest populist president up to that time, master self-promoter, Andrew Jackson. This one was made in the summer of 1835 at a time when American agriculture was becoming a main element in the new national market with consequent industrialization. Col. Thomas S. Meacham was a well-to-do dairy farmer with lands in Salt Creek New York near Lake Ontario. Although a Whig, opposed to Jackson politically, he was a patriot and nationalist. President Jackson’s suppression of South Carolina’s attempt at disunion in 1832 was applauded by men such as Meacham and so in honour of these acts (and to ingratiate himself with political leaders) he created several big cheeses. Three weighing 750 pounds went to the Vice President, the governor of New York State and New York City’s mayor. But the biggest cheese of all went to the big man himself at the White House on New Year’s Day 1836. Two feet thick, 11 feet in circumference and weighing more than 1400 pounds the cheese was made in a specially constructed vat composed of 24 staves – one for each state of the union – using milk from 150 of Meacham’s cows. It took days to fill with curd; no doubt this was an American cheddar since the technique calls for layering of curds. Once pressed it was wrapped in patriotic garb. Proclaimed a gift from ‘the whole people of the State of New York’, on the cheese was a banner 12 feet long and 7 feet wide painted with the motto: ‘The National Belt: The Union it must be Preserved.’ Twenty-four gold stars and a dedication to President Andrew Jackson came with the banner. A grand procession of boats and wagons carried the great cheese and its smaller fellows down Lake Ontario to Oswego, then by the on the decade-old Erie Canal and Hudson River to New York City thence to Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington. Throngs of people in cities along the way came out to admire the great creation and the cheered the sentiments on the banner. When the mammoth arrived at the White House the President accepted it and served up bottles of wine from the White House cellar. Jackson was pleased with the gift and even more with the banner if for no other reason than the phrase about the Union was his own toast (one of 24) given at the White House Jefferson Day dinner in 1830.⁹

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The cheese sat in the vestibule until 22 February 1837 when on George Washington's Birthday the White House was opened to the public for Jackson's last levee. The President announced that anyone could come and take whatever pieces of cheese that they wanted. One writer described coming to the threshold to encounter 'an atmosphere, to which the mephitic gases over Avernus must be faint and innocuous'. Never a people to turn down free food a crowd estimated at 10,000 from across the social spectrum arrived to grab whatever piece of the by now very ripe cheese they could get. Another eyewitness said:

For hours did a crowd of men, women, and boys hack at the cheese, many taking large hunks of it away with them. When they commenced, the cheese weighed one thousand four hundred pounds, and only a small piece was saved for the President's use. The air was redolent with cheese, the carpet was slippery with cheese, and nothing else was talked about at Washington that day.¹⁰

The reek of rotted cheese lingered in the White House for months, requiring all the drapes and furniture to aired out and the walls whitewashed to remove 'an odor which is pleasant only when there is not much of it'.¹¹ Free, abundant food and drink marked the next political campaign in 1840 along with hokum and bunkum that shape or reflect Americans' political imaginations.

Since those days Mammoth cheeses appear at state fairs and other agricultural exhibitions to show the fecundity of the land and the technical skills of the farmers – and their marketing associations – who create them. Farmers in Perth, Ontario created a 22,000-pound cheese standing six feet tall for the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. It is reported to have crashed through the floor of the railcar carrying it and the stage on which it was shown at the Fair.¹² These giants may have given rise to the satirical phrase 'big cheese' to denote a person of some importance or at least self-importance. New York State became the major American cheese-making centre especially in the Mohawk Valley. In the 1820s Herkimer became a centre for cheese production, by the 1860s shipping 25 million pounds or more. The first factory was set up by Jesse Williams in the upriver town of Rome in 1851.¹³ Although milking machines had not been invented until the 1870s and even then were not refined until the 1920s milk production increased. New cow types and selective breeding along with mechanized hay production combined with more efficient milk collection and curd making technology allowed dairymen (with the factory system men came to replace farm women as cheesemakers) to meet the American appetite for cheese. That the factories, some 200 in all, were set along the Erie Canal, built to link the Great Lakes and New York City shows what the new American dairy entrepreneurs were doing: feeding a growing national market. Farmers in Wisconsin finding that wheat cops were failing on the state's gravelly soils, turned to dairy farming in the 1870s and became the nation's largest cheese maker. By the late nineteenth century Americans were fully caught up in factory farming

ideology. Cheeses were not artisanal farmhouse varieties but like meat, flour and canned goods, mass produced to be consumed not by gourmets but by ordinary folks. The quicker and softer – hence more gobbable – the food the better.¹⁴

Most of the early American cheeses were semi-hard or hard. Of course when made at home some remained fresh like cottage cheese or farmer's cheese, but cheeses made for storage and for the market were the former types. The term 'American cheese' likely referred to the common cheddar or perhaps Cheshire styles. Soft cheeses such as brie and young Gruyère (most of these are now considered to be hard cheeses) were known by the American dairy industry but they were not popular.¹⁵ By 1905 soft cheeses Camembert type cheeses were beginning to make their appearance in the American market but limitations on storage made shipping of such European cheeses expensive.¹⁶ Limburger was the most widespread soft cheese but it is an acquired taste or at least smell is. A savoury, soft yet somewhat gelatinous texture was in favour; gelatined meats were popular so the texture of soft to semi-liquid savoury would be applied to cheese.¹⁷

Health gurus from the nineteenth century on recommended hard and coarse-grained foods as better for digestion – Sylvester Graham linking it to taming libidos – but soft cheese is irresistible and when merged with something a bit chewy or even crunchy then a perfect food is created. This dish, or class of dishes, is melted cheese on bread or toast. Early nineteenth-century American cookbooks have recipes for melting cheese on bread in a fireplace or later on a stove using either a tin Dutch oven or a common household utensil, a handheld grill-like cheese toaster. An English import, the popular cookbook Hannah Glasse's popular cookbook gives three versions of the dish calling them Welsh, Scotch and English Rabbit. Welsh and Scotch are basically melted cheese on bread, the English using wine to soak the bread.¹⁸ All American grilled cheese sandwiches in their many forms from lunch counter flat griddled to fancier panini descend from these early versions. Kraft Foods whose single sliced processed cheeses are the American standard has an encomium to melted cheese sandwiches. Like so many other advertisements for factory-made foods, it represents another theme in American food imagination, nostalgia.

The nineteenth century's premier melted cheese dish was no doubt Welsh rarebit or rabbit-the two names are used just as often and interchangeably. This familiar cheese sauce made with ale or milk and mustard came in numerous varieties and appeared restaurants featuring ale and wines. In 1837 New York's Pickwickian Club and The Grotto, ('104 Cedar Street, Edward Riley fitting up rooms where he will have Ales, wines, Welsh Rarebits in their season'¹⁹) were but two of many serving what was considered to be a British dish. Restaurants from the top of the social scale to the lowest served the dish. Rarebits then moved into polite society when the chafing dish craze gripped American culinary imaginations later in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Beginning among the upper classes chafing dish cookery and its accompanying cookware moved down the social

chain into middling class American homes. Chafing dish cookbooks appeared in large numbers, and general cookbooks all had recipes including Welsh rarebit. The chafing dish was a perfect vessel for melting cheeses in sauces and numerous variations were created, lobster, crab, oysters, mushrooms, Mexican, Golden Buck (with an egg in it), tomato juice, bean (using mashed cooked beans) among them. In 1898 The Natural Food Company (later Nabisco) promoted its shredded wheat as the base for many varieties of rarebits. So popular was rarebit that a well-known snack food was created to replicate it. Cheese-It, now one hundred years old, was described by its creator Green & Green of Dayton, Ohio as 'baked rarebit'. It is still made much the same way with the preferred cheddar cheese and a thin crispy biscuit.²⁰ Here is an example of food that is democratized in an American way – cheap, nostalgic, uniform, and made in a factory.

But, lust for cheese can lead people astray for gluttony is deadly sin. Americans are still a puritanical (hypocritically so) people who like just deserts meted out at the end of stories. Popular medical knowledge in the period held that rarebit was a hard to digest dish, indeed, dangerous to one's health and sanity. A correspondent to 26 October 1887 edition of *The Evening World* remarked in response to a question about how to make good Welsh rarebit: 'Editor of Evening World! Tell Mrs. R. that, for mercy's sake. If she loves her husband and has any regard for his friends, not to cook any rarebits at all. They nearly killed me. A Dyspeptic Brooklyn.'²¹ In 1904 cartoonist Winsor McCay created a comic strip for the New York newspaper, *The Evening Telegram*, called *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend*. In each strip a protagonist overindulges in eating Welsh rarebit and then after going to bed with indigestion has fantastical dreams, usually nightmares with a moral at the end. McCay was a genius artist who has influenced generations of illustrators up to the present day (Japan's great Studio Ghibli for one) especially with his brilliant *Little Nemo in Slumberland*.²² He was also a pioneer animator, *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1913) his most famous character. McCay animated one of his rarebit-themed strips in 1921, perhaps the first monster-eats-a city-genre films: Winsor McCay's *Dreams of the Rarebit Fiend – The Pet*. Another early film based on *Dream of a Rarebit Fiend* is an early live action piece made by Edwin S. Porter for the Edison Company in 1906. It has amazing special effects something like Georges Méliès's but based on McCay's strip. The disgusting eating scene in the 1906 film rivals any ever filmed since. McCay never did say why he chose Welsh rarebit as the subject of his moralizing jokes, but dyspepsia was a common trope and maybe he had suffered a bout of it from the infamous dish. Sloppy, gooey foods eaten quickly and in excess have always been thought to be funny the world over for varieties of reasons that range from bad manners to unconsciously rude behaviour to satire on supposedly elite food.

Something happened to rarebits during twentieth century: they mostly disappeared in America, though they did remain in their place of origin, Britain. Not that soft cheese went away, only this vehicle for serving it. Soft and melted cheeses hold sway over the American

culinary imagination. The texture of warm, silky cheese running down the gullet is embedded in all Americans. It is comfort food, not much to think about, just quick and easy to eat. The reasons for rarebit replacements are changes in cooking fashions that made chafing dishes only vessels for keeping party foods warm, the rise of processed cheeses and the popularity of pizza. The latter stories are beyond the scope of this paper, suffice it to say that historians use James L. Kraft as the model for making processed cheese the America's standard. His pasteurization and emulsifying techniques made cheddar cheeses – inferior ones – shelf stable.²³ His company bought the Velveeta company (the stuff invented in 1918) in 1927 and marketed it as a health food, liquid gold, the advertising said.²⁴ Melted cheese sandwiches as in the advertisement mentioned above are unthinkable without Kraft, or other company's knockoffs, invented in 1956. Cheez-Whiz (1952) is further development of processed cheese, indeed with virtually no cheese in it. It was marketed in the UK as a quick way to make Welsh rarebit and then, like rarebit, migrated to America the next year. Pizza, once popularized in the 1950s, drove the demand for melted cheese since unlike Neapolitan pizza American ones are loaded with it. The American culinary theory is more is always better.²⁵ Today America's most consumed cheese is not cheddar but mozzarella. These cheeses are triumphs of industrialized food processing just as milk and the animals from which it comes are the end product of a long history of American technical prowess.

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The arc of Americans' idea of cheese through time is this. The earliest cheeses were home bound, made by farm women for family consumption and local markets. It then entered the wider American marketplace with the rise of factories. Early cheeses were communal in the sense that makers in each town such as Cheshire, Massachusetts or Little Falls near Herkimer, New York took pride in the local products and linked them to patriotic ideas. Cheese preparations always had class built into them as seen in the rise of chafing dish cookery late in the nineteenth century. Welsh rarebit/rabbit was one dish common in genteel cookery, but it also reverted to its gastrically raucous public dining roots. As industrialized food production rose interrelated with urban-centred living so did consumer society. Cheese became a commodity, democratized because it was cheap, easy to use and ubiquitous. No longer thought of as a community-based food but now marketed to individuals and families processed cheese represents a different idea of America. It is one where seventy percent of the economy is driven by consumer demand and advertising emphasizes individuality over community. Grab a slice or two of packaged cheese, place it between slices of white bread and fry it in a non-stick pan until thoroughly melted. Television food advertising tells us this. It is replete with artfully made images, often nostalgic of gooey cheese, pizza for instance, showing long strands of melted cheese, melted cheese food drenching tortilla chip (corporate versions of nachos), vegetables...well, anything.

Finally, if there is a credo of American cuisine it is this: there is no food that cannot be improved but with the addition of cheese...and not a little bit of it, either.

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Steak or Salad? Food, Gender and the Victorian Imagination

Michael Krondl

ABSTRACT: The ambition of this essay is to examine the feedback loop that existed (and still exists?) between the imagined relationship of food to femininity and masculinity, and their real-world impact on the male and female appetite. I focus on the nineteenth-century urban bourgeoisie since this was the class that set the tenor for contemporary conversations on diet and decorum. It was the middle class that the authors and the period's mass media all targeted, whether in the form of magazines, behaviour manuals, popularizing medical texts or actual fiction. I argue that the gendered reality of subsequent American twentieth-century food culture is the outcome of this permeable membrane between imagination and reality, with decidedly real-world consequences.

The trouble with fantasy is that it has real-world implications. The V2 rocket and moon-landing both had to be imagined before they could be realized. On a more quotidian level, the perfect meal, the ideal body needs models that exist in the mind before their reification stains tablecloths or compresses abdomens. And imagined ideals affect behaviour. Societies invent performative paradigms which are then imposed on flesh-and-blood women and men. But that's only the first step, once these behaviours are normalized they feed back into the model and, sooner or later they are essentialized: men are defined by brawn and aggression – throw them red meat and watch them brawl; women are sensitive and dainty – a cup of tea and a plateful of gossip will satisfy their appetites.

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The ambition of this essay is to examine the feedback loop that existed (and still exists?) between the imagined relationship of food to femininity and masculinity, and their real-world impact on the male and female appetite. I focus on the nineteenth-century urban bourgeoisie since this was the class that set the tenor for contemporary conversations on diet and decorum. It was the middle class that the authors and the period's mass media all targeted, whether in the form of magazines, behaviour manuals, popularizing medical texts or actual fiction. I argue that the gendered reality of subsequent American twentieth-century food culture is the outcome of this permeable membrane between imagination and reality, with decidedly real-world consequences.

As anthropologist Mary Douglas, among others, has noted that belief and behaviour are ineluctably joined.¹ Or, as Carole M. Counihan has succinctly summarized when she links food to society, 'Class, caste, race, and gender hierarchies are maintained,

in part, through differential control over and access to food. One's place in the social system is revealed by what, how much, and with whom one eats.² This is as true of anthropologists' beloved tribal societies as it of the bourgeois milieu, perhaps even more so. In the Victorian era, middle-class gendered bodies supposedly resulted in gendered behaviour, which in turn led to gendered foods and gendered dining – tea rooms for ladies, men's clubs for gentlemen – and even the gendered distribution of pathologies – eating disorders among women and cardiovascular disease in men.

Body and Mind

The nineteenth-century conception of the disparate relationship of mind and body in men and women can be traced to the Enlightenment, when supposedly empirical explorations of sex differences yielded decidedly imaginative conclusions. Observations of socially constructed behaviour led to essentializing deductions. Thus women, for example, had an innate sweet tooth because they were seen to take sugar in their tea.

It's not as if awareness of physical distinctions between sexes or sexism didn't exist in pre-Enlightenment Europe. Even in medicine, Galenic dietary prescriptions were based, in part, on a patient's sex. Nonetheless in Christian Europe, the linkage between mind and soul was preeminent over the physical. This changed as eighteenth-century thinkers began to link women's bodies to their ability to act and think. While intellectual activity might have previously been seen as a distraction from their domestic duties now it was seen as a deviation from their biological nature.³ Behaviour guides make this clear in both England and France, perhaps most influentially in Rousseau's *Emile*, where the famed philosophe laid out in meticulous detail the rules for the raising of boys and (in much lesser detail) those for girls.⁴

Even as the eighteenth century's construct of a gendered linkage between mind and body was gaining steam among the intelligentsia, the mechanisms and gears industrial revolution were giving rise to a new urban class, which had its own reasons to invent a new feminine paradigm. The result was a new bourgeois domesticity, something that would be manifested in reimagined lifestyles, architecture, costume and foodways. This essentially economic and class transformation needed some sort of moral justification, something that the sermonizers of the day were more than happy to provide.

One such public-spirited scribbler was Thomas Gisborne (1758–1846) a Cambridge-educated Anglican priest and anti-slavery activist who weighed in on the roles of men and women at the close of the seventeen-hundreds. In a text that would echo throughout the coming century on both sides of the Atlantic, he neatly summarizes the roles open to women (at least those of 'higher or...middle classes of society'), whose influence 'is like the dew of heaven which descends at all seasons, returns after short intervals, and permanently nourishes every herb of the field'. This moistening effect was to take the following forms:

First, in contributing daily and hourly to the comfort of husbands, of parents, of brothers and sisters, and of other relations, connections, and friends, in the intercourse of domestic life, under every vicissitude of sickness and health, of joy and affliction.

Secondly, in forming and improving the general manners, dispositions, and conduct of the other sex, by society and example.

Thirdly, in modelling the human mind during the early stages of its growth, and fixing, while it is yet ductile, its growing principles of action; children of each sex being, in general, under maternal tuition during their childhood, and girls until they become women.⁵

This virtually doctrinal view of womanhood was periodically tweaked to suit circumstances. In the newly independent colonies, a variant that historian Linda Kerber has dubbed ‘Republican Motherhood’, expected women to feed their offspring with republican virtue as much as wholesome victuals.⁶ Late in the century, the motherly vocation of native-born women’s came with a nativist component when some New Englanders feared for the survival of their ‘race’. The danger was especially severe warned Massachusetts doctor N. Allen in an 1882 panegyric among the members of ‘cultivated and refined society’, who apparently considered the lives of couples with multiple children as ‘vulgar and sensual’. According to the good doctor, the decline of good housekeeping was the culprit here, since, ‘Economy, neatness, order and good cooking are indispensable requisites to the health and happiness of a family’.⁷

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Spiritual, or at least moral, sustenance came with the physical kind. Nurturing the next generation necessarily involved feeding it. Citing Caroline Bynum, Susan Bordo argues that even while home cooking was already a gendered activity in the European Middle Ages it wasn’t until ‘the industrial era, with its idealization of the domestic arena as a place of nurture and comfort for men and children, that feeding others acquire the extended emotional meaning it has today’.⁸ Women were repeatedly enjoined (predominantly by male experts) on how to feed their children, and to a lesser degree their husbands and fathers. Needless to say, a connection between diet and health is hardly spurious, even if we find much of nineteenth-century dietary advice risible. There was, however, an almost equal emphasis on the moral consequences of diet. Thus, a leitmotif of the mid-eighteen hundreds, in particular, was that certain foods – highly spiced dishes or intoxicants for example – would lead to sexual excitement, and inevitably masturbation, the latter an activity deemed not only sinful but actually medically hazardous.⁹ Mothers needed to be extra careful when feeding adolescent daughters. But whatever the specifics of the dietary advice, everyone insisted that feeding the family (or at least supervising the food preparation in affluent households) was a woman’s job. As a result, women, not men,

became knowledgeable, sometimes obsessively so, about nutrition, especially the nutrition of others. And, arguably, remain so to this day.

Of course, before a young woman could graduate to domestic goddess, she had to procure a suitable suitor and, despite the advice of innumerable advice writers to the contrary, 'a pretty face, a smart bonnet [and] a dashing dress' has never been incidental to the mating dance.¹⁰ The impact that the sight of a slim waist and an alluring décolletage had on young men was not lost on contemporary commentators even as they decried the effect.¹¹ Moreover, fashion became not merely a matter of showy display to attract the male of the species, it served, post factum, to validate the male's status in society. As Thorstein Veblen convincingly argued about his compeers, women's costume was specifically designed to make it as impractical as possible, to make it clear that she was exempt 'from personal contact with industrial processes of any kind'. If the yards of drapery did not make this abundantly obvious, the corseted waist made it clear any exertion was potentially perilous.¹² Not incidentally so too was a hearty appetite. The imagined, perfect female body as depicted in fashion plates throughout most of the nineteenth century had to contend with actual stomachs, hips and waists.¹³ Even when women weren't purposefully starving to fit into fashionable dresses they could hardly consume more than a couple of dainty morsels before experiencing discomfort. The corsets were only part of the problem. Young women, especially in any social gatherings, were constantly under surveillance, not merely from libidinous men but from other women seeking to police their behaviour.

274 Contemporary authorities were fully aware of this when they condemned young women who starved themselves due to class pressures. Jerome V. C. Smith, a prolific author, professor at New York Medical College (and one-time mayor of Boston!) was especially aghast at the fashionable abstemious of the socially ambitious, roundly condemning, 'Food most approved and that which carries with it the endorsement of maneuvering mothers anxiously looking forward to the establishment of their children in commanding social positions, even if the intended husband is a baboon, [that] is a slice of dry toast, weak black tea, and an occasional teaspoonful of sweetmeats.'¹⁴ How much, if any, of this advice was followed is an open question. Women – and they were the primary audience of advice manuals as they are today – received a variety of contradictory information: from fashion magazines, cookbooks, novels, lifestyle manual as well as medical authorities. Was at least part of the nervous disorder so noted among affluent women caused by guilt and confusion about food itself?

If today provides any guide, young women likely followed the admonitions of dietary authorities fitfully and incompletely. A more accurate snapshot of actual behaviour can likely be found in the diet doctor's complaints. Mainly that young women, in particular, were more concerned with appearance than health. You could hardly blame them, though, when every other message insisted that their only proper role was to get married and beget children. Looks were the paramount first step and there was an odd sort of congruence between how women should look and what they should eat.

Dainty Dishes

Perhaps the Victorian age's favourite adjective, at least when referring to women, was 'dainty.' The word was so ubiquitous that some commentators even tired of it. 'At one time I used to be rather fond of the word "dainty,"' wrote one griper in *The Irish Monthly* at the close of the century (the word knew no borders), 'and I still greatly admire the elegant quality it expresses. But the word itself has been quite spoiled to me by the indiscriminate use made of it by one of my acquaintance who applied it to every possible purpose. Not content with talking of dainty dishes, dainty manners, dainty fare, dainty dress, and dainty tastes she qualifies scenery, children, clouds, neighbourhood, furniture, and many things besides by her favourite adjective'.¹⁵ That said, daintiness was especially sought for in women's victuals and the more delicate the lady's constitution the daintier the fare. In a satirical novel *The Female Sufferer; Or, Chapters from Life's Comedy* (1883), Augustus Hoppin depicts an indolent upper-class invalid who lives on little more than 'tidbits of fruit and Jelly', 'a snip of a role', 'a wren's leg on toast', though she might occasionally become ravenous for 'dainty' items such as wedding cake, peaches and cream and freshly cut melon – all this while carrying on a perpetual social life.¹⁶ Dozens of cookbooks published in the latter part of the century are dedicated to 'dainty dishes'.¹⁷ Dainty didn't always mean light and delicate – as we might use the word – often it was just a synonym for fancy, but more often it did. And suffice it to say that what women liked, men were supposed to disdain. Serve them plain, solid fare without the fripperies that decorated the luncheon table.¹⁸

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Dainty dishes were often recommended for lunch, which, along with afternoon tea, had become a de facto homosocial meal by the middle of the nineteenth century. As D.M. Morell pointed out in the food-centered ladies' magazine *Table Talk*, 'The midday meal especially in cities belongs to the ladies and children of the household as few businessmen find it possible to lunch en famille'.¹⁹ Nineteenth-century mealtime had become ever more segregated as the distance between men's workplaces and homes grew ever more distant. The family might have breakfast together but men would now eat the formerly main meal of the day, dinner, away. Men generally sought out a chop house or other informal restaurant for their mid-day meal while genteel women took lunch in the modest privacy of their homes at mid-century and, increasingly, at gender-specific 'tea rooms' and 'lunch rooms' as the century waned.²⁰ At home, the lady was permitted a certain latitude in dress 'since the masculine element is almost invariably lacking at that hour'. If she had spent the morning shopping, streetwear was permissible or perhaps a tea gown if the bodice of the former proved too snug. The meal itself was equally informal. A selection of 'dainty nourishing dishes' from the previous night's supper might prove sufficient.²¹ The detail about the clothing is worth noting; women's appetites were literally restricted when in the presence of men. Lord Byron's probably apocryphal quip that 'a woman should never be seen eating or drinking, unless it be lobster salad and champagne, the only truly feminine and becoming

viands' was repeated often enough (often with the second clause omitted).²² Most women were more catholic in their tastes. Mary Alice Brown, in her *Dainty Dining*, has a long list of luncheon menus that do, in fact, feature, lobster with some regularity, mostly in the form of lobster Newberg and lobster cutlets and croquettes. However, chicken, veal, sweetbreads and fish are popular, as are salads, though sandwiches are relatively few. Except for the occasional inclusion of lamb chops, there is zero red meat in evidence. What there are in superabundance are sweets: ices, ice creams, sherberts, cakes, tarts, marshmallows, jellies, sweetmeats (here meaning candy), even that new-fangled invention, chocolate brownies.²³

If luncheon was heavy on the sugar, the other female-centric meal offered little else. Tea the meal, as opposed to just the beverage, went through several transmutations prior to its widespread adoption by polite society. Originally formulated in eighteenth-century Britain where cups of tea really were the focus, the beverage-focused concept was exported to the continent as a relatively informal elite get-together in the early years of the following century. As tea and sugar became increasingly cheap and ubiquitous a second wave of tea enthusiasm in the Victorian era followed eventually resulting in the 'afternoon tea' today's visitors to London's posh hotel tea rooms might still recognize.

Whereas, by the mid-eighteen hundreds, in Britain, just about everyone drank tea, in the United States both the beverage and the meal named after it had specific class and gender associations. The fact of the matter is that even American women weren't especially fond of the Asian beverage. Unlike in Britain, the tea table might feature coffee, hot chocolate, lemonade and iced tea, or even champagne and sherry depending on the season and the attendees' social set. Occasionally a clear broth might be offered. There were typically sandwiches and a variety of cakes, tarts and other sweet nibbles.²⁴ Hotel and department store teas were even more sweet-centric. A 1914 menu at the Waldorf-Astoria Tea Rooms offered seven kinds of sandwiches, twenty-one pastries and more than a score of ice creams and ices.²⁵

The opinion that women had a predilection for sweet foods was a Western cultural trope since at least the 1700's when Rousseau, in his pedagogic manual, *Emile*, critiqued Sophie, the book's supporting player, for her supposedly innate affection for dessert.²⁶ A century later, the female tooth is invoked so often in period literature that it almost seems a peculiarity of Victorian women's anatomy: 'Women, as a broad and general fact, it may be said, comparatively with men, care very little for eating,' pronounced a columnist in an early issue of *Harper's Bazaar*:

Their noted "sweet tooth" would prove this if there were nothing else; for where rich and hearty food is desired and eaten, candies and confections come in merely as a finishing *bonne bouche*, if at all, and, taken before hearty food, destroy all desire for it, anyway. Women, left to themselves, and without the necessity of preserving their health by a different regimen being constantly held up before them, would really have little other eating than bread and tea, with an occasional sweetmeat or a tart.²⁷

Medical authorities typically ascribed women's appetites to a different part of the anatomy, mainly their reproductive organs. Yale obstetrician Stephen G. Hubbard addressing the 1870 meeting of a medical society, explained that 'given the sympathies with every other part of the female organism', it is 'as if the Almighty, in creating the female sex, *had taken the uterus and built up a woman around it*'.²⁸ Pretty much any ailment could be traced to uterine distress, from neuralgia to consumption, from constipation to breast cancer.²⁹ Among other medical interventions diet also had to be adjusted to nourish the womb-dominated body and mind. Again, a dainty diet was imagined as the ideal. Stimulating foods were especially prone to overtax women's sensitive nervous systems, especially spiced dishes ('highly seasoned concentrated aliment'), alcoholic beverages, and red meat or at least meat to excess. New York-based Jerome V. C. Smith explained in 1875 how 'Women with us consume too much meat.... Neither the severity of the [New England] climate nor the necessities of their systems require it in large quantities'. He recommended that 'Farinaceous articles including an abundance of fruit fresh cooked or preserved should be provided in all well-regulated families especially where there are female children. Eggs and fish are proper and avoiding pork always. Mutton is the most wholesome next to good beef'.³⁰ The latter presumably in dainty preparations. Other authorities also contraindicated coffee and tea for being too stimulating and even sweets were to be avoided.

Manly Appetites

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Seemingly men, unless they were paid to do so, didn't fret much about food. That was, after all, a woman's job and, thus, unmanly by definition. And increasingly what nineteenth-century men did fret about was about manliness. The sedentary urban existence of factory accountants and bank managers wasn't likely to engender a society of virile warriors. An earlier, aristocratic definition of manhood seemed in crisis and all the facial hair grown by the Victorians couldn't quite disguise this. Some men found an antidote in sport, whether in boxing, or violent team sports such as rugby at British public schools or the copycat American football at Ivy League universities.³¹ In America, the rough and tumble western frontier was supposed to be a cure for the dyspepsia that plagued the industrial east.³² War and hunting were also options. Or you could roll these last three into one as Theodore Roosevelt did when he ran for New York City mayor as 'the cowboy of the Dakotas', before embarking on a career that included military stunts in Cuba and cynegetic pursuits even further abroad.³³

Masculine men of action required a suitable diet that distinguished them from the feminized epicureans of urban civilization. This imagined male-female duality in diet was best expressed in the semiotic resonance of meat. A character in one of Stanley J. Weyman stories summarized the opposition evident on his plate: 'You have there the manly beef and the feminine peas, so young, so tender!' The inverse was true as well. Women were seen a

disagreeably masculine if they ceased to resemble, or relish those sweet peas. When women craved flesh, especially bloody, roasted flesh, it wasn't merely unseemly, it broke down the 'natural' order of society. George Eliot references this sort of gendered revulsion in a scene in her 1876 novel *Daniel Deronda*, where a group of gentlemen is dining apart, as was the custom, after an afternoon of genteel archery competition. The course of conversation turns to women's appetites. One of the gathered men recalls a story 'about the epicurism of the ladies, who had somehow been reported to show a revolting masculine judgement in venison, even asking for the fat – a proof of the frightful rate at which corruption might go on in women, but for severe social restraint'.³⁴ Here, the unfeminine semiotics of venison is also complicated factors related to class and caste. Beef was a much more commonplace signifier.

In Britain, in particular, beef had long been the most virile of aliments. (A belief later echoed on the other side of the Atlantic.) The British veneration of bovine flesh is perhaps best depicted in William Hogarth's painting *O the Roast Beef of Old England*, where a side of beef, destined for an English inn, takes centre stage even as a weakling Frenchman cowers in the wings.³⁵ The painting's title references Henry Fielding's popular 1730s ditty that glorified the brawny impact of Albion's meaty appetites, in contrast to tastes in 'effeminate Italy, France and Spain' for 'nice dainties'.³⁶ The Briton's diet is often linked to his martial prowess. Phillip Stanhope (Lord Chesterfield), a prolific Georgian letter writer asserted that 'An Englishman...thinks himself equal to beating three Frenchmen. We [Britons] bragging of their boxing, of their meat and ale, of all that can support the force and energy of their virile will. Roast beef and beer make stronger arms than cold water and frogs'.³⁷ William Thackeray echoes this sentiment a half-century later in an ode to a rib roast: 'Fancy a hundred thousand Englishmen, after a meal of stalwart beef ribs, encountering a hundred thousand Frenchmen who had partaken of a trifling collation of soup, turnips, carrots, onions and Gruyère cheese. Would it be manly to engage at such odds? I say no'.³⁸

If war wasn't in the offing, exercise would have to do. For would-be sporty types, nineteenth-century trainers recommended a diet of broiled, bloody beef or mutton steaks and strong ale – avoiding vegetables at all costs.³⁹ This advice is reprised over and over on both sides of the Atlantic. One surprising opiner on the topic is Walt Whitman who, under the pseudonym Mose Velsor wrote a series of advice columns for the *New York Atlas*. 'The man in training,' the famed poet writes:

if he be of too full habit, too heavy, must be restricted to a moderate diet, including, for a while, only one substantial meal of meat a-day... Usually the breakfast, for a hearty man, might consist in a plate of fresh rare lean meat, without fat or gravy, a slice or chunk of bread, and, if desired, a cup of tea, which must be left till the last [and] dinner should consist of a good plate of fresh meat, (rare lean beef, broiled or roast, is best) with as few outside condiments as possible.

Whether he genuinely believed in it or not, this paleo diet seemed no more than a pipe dream as Whitman admits, sniffing that ‘Not one out of fifty eats a really wholesome, manly substantial dinner’. Though he doesn’t quite put it in those words, his real target seems to be all the dainty, feminine food eaten by most Americans:

In our view, if nine-tenths of all the various culinary preparations and combinations, vegetables, pastry, soups, stews, sweets, baked dishes, salads, things fried in grease, and all the vast array of confections, creams, pies, jellies, &c., were utterly swept aside from the habitual eating of the people, and a simple meat diet substituted in their place – we will be candid about it, and say in plain words, an almost exclusive meat diet – the result would be greatly, very greatly, in favor of that noble-bodied, pure-blooded, and superior race we have had a leaning toward, in these articles of ours.⁴⁰

As the century progressed, meat-eating didn’t merely separate men from women, it also came to denote a racialized virility. This discourse took on a more scientific veneer when medical-sounding ‘protein’ replaced ‘meat’ as the manliest of foodstuffs. In a study of potential recruits for the Raj, British doctors evaluated data on ‘the different tribes and races of India’, and concluded that ‘a high level of protein interchange in the body [is] accompanied by a high development of physique and manly qualities; whilst under the opposite conditions poor physique and a cringing effeminate disposition is all that can be expected.’⁴¹ In America, Maine Senator James Blaine made a not dissimilar point – if less scientifically framed – when he explained the negative impact of permitting Chinese workers, since if you work ‘a man who must have beef and bread’ (i.e. native-born American) next to man ‘who can live on rice’ you will inevitably degrade the American down to the standard of the Chinaman.

Not everyone was convinced that meat and Western manhood were necessarily congruent. In fact, there was a distinct and powerful countercurrent to the paradigm of the carnivorous male exemplified in vegetarian diets promoted by Sylvester Graham, his acolyte John Harvey Kellogg, and others.⁴² Yet vegetarianism has never really caught on in America. While plenty of real men did, in fact, subject themselves to Dr. Kellogg’s regimen at the Battle Creek Sanatorium (Roald Amundsen, Johnny Weismuller, John D. Rockefeller, and even Theodore Roosevelt all made guest appearances) it appears that most reverted to the carnivorous norm.

The meat-eating man stereotype was certainly alive and well in the nineteen thirties. In *Feeding Father* (1939), a cookbook focused on foods men were supposed to like, author Eleanor Howe summarizes the gendered culinary zeitgeist:

Just how does [sic] a man's food preferences differ from those of women? Well, for one thing, a man wants more substantial, plainer food. He likes a meal to be composed of only a few dishes, but he wants those to be tasty, full of flavor and perfectly cooked. He likes, also, to know what he is eating, he wants to be able to recognize each main ingredient in its familiar form. In a word, fancy cooking is wasted on the average man but good cooking is appreciated to the limit!⁴³

By now 'dainty', the adjective, had mostly gone of out style, but men were still supposed to scorn 'fancy cooking'. Even today, meat-eating remains gendered. Multiple studies have shown that vegetarianism and, even more, veganism are much more popular among women than men in the West, and society continues to see a carnivorous diet as more virile than the alternative. Today men still eat steak and women eat salad.

Conclusion

It's important to note that gender is, or was, (even in the nineteenth century, even among the bourgeoisie) hardly the only determinant directing people's dietary choices. Ethnicity, religion, personal preference, convenience, marketing and, above all, availability have guided what the middle classes have been eating ever since they attained cultural dominance some two hundred years back. Moreover, gender is less of a determinant than it used to be in a society where women's roles are less tied up with domesticity and food preparation now that the culinary industrial complex has taken over most food preparation. This is not to say that society doesn't still expect women to be the primary nurturers, as the Covid pandemic has amply demonstrated.

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Nonetheless, food preferences remain gendered. I'd argue that our dietary choices are the cumulation of at least two centuries of performing male- and female-inflected foodways. Following Erving Goffman's proposition that people are inclined to perform in ways expected by the social situation, I would suggest that this expected performance is stage-managed by several factors.⁴⁴ In this paper, I have focused on what might be described as the social imagination, that is the way men and women are portrayed in the popular press, in literature and in a variety of how-to manuals. These constrain behaviour in at least two ways: first by normalizing or stigmatizing certain behaviour; second by reproducing observed behaviour and, in the process, essentializing it in each sex. To take the thespian metaphor a little further, the actors are taught the script at home, perform it in public and eventually come to embody each micro-performance. Each bonbon delicately nibbled, each porterhouse ripped apart with gusto reinforce social constructions of femininity and masculinity. This is then incorporated back into the script reperformed on and on.

Does it matter that we keep repeating our gender-delineated roles? Epidemiological data on eating disorders and cardiovascular disease certainly indicate that it does. And from a

global perspective, it would be helpful if eating kale salad wasn't stigmatized as food for soccer moms and sissies. There is another, pernicious effect of men and women embodying gendered behaviour without being aware of it. It is that if society values equality between the sexes and, perhaps even more importantly, the concept of choice, self-awareness of gendered behaviour must be a necessary precondition. Of course, our foodways aren't the only way we reproduce nineteenth-century ideas of gender, but understanding why we eat what we eat can be used as an indicator of other embodied behaviour that stands in the way of a more equal society.

Notes

1. 'The rituals enact the form of social relations and in giving these relations visible expression they enable people to know their own society. The rituals work upon the body politic through the symbolic medium of the physical body'. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 129.
2. Carole M. Counihan, *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning and Power* (Routledge, 2018), 8.
3. See Karen O'Brian, 'Sexual Distinctions and Prescriptions: Introduction', in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, ed. Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 3–7.
4. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile: Or, On Education*, trans. Allan David Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979).
5. *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (T. Cadell jun. and W. Davies, 1797), 79,13.
6. *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).
7. N Allen, 'The New England Family', *The New Englander*, March 1882, 153–54. No Reference
8. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (University of California Press, 2004), 118.
9. Depending on the authority the list also included coffee, tea, chocolate, meat, warm bread and pastry and confectionery. For more on the topic see Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Fasting Girls: The History of Anorexia Nervosa* (New York; London: Random House ; Hi Marketing, 2001), 172; Jerome Van Crowninshield Smith, a prominent physician noted that avoiding 'highly seasoned' food would improve not only a girl's physical attributes but also lead to her 'brighter mental development', promising that this system promised 'with moral certainty to secure for their daughters sound health the foundation for happiness'. See *The Ways of Women in Their Physical, Moral and Intellectual Relations* (Hartford, CT: Dustin, Gilman & Company, 1875), 129.
10. Uncle David, *Uncle David's Advice to Young Men and Young Women on the Subject of Marriage* (S. W. Partridge, 1863), 5.
11. William Cobbett, *The Friendly Counsellor; or, Advice to Young Men and Young Women* (London: Ward, Lock & Tyler, 1876), 73.
12. Veblen perceptively describes the corset as 'substantially a mutilation, undergone for the purpose of lowering the subject's vitality and rendering her permanently and obviously unfit for work'. *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Macmillan, 1899), 121.
13. For more on the obsession on slimness and bodily control see Anna Krugovoy Silver, *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 27.
14. Smith, *The Ways of Women in Their Physical, Moral and Intellectual Relations*, 115.
15. C.G.D., 'Overworked Words', *The Irish Monthly*, February 1891, 104.
16. Joan Jacobs Brumberg, 'The Appetite as Voice', in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, 2nd Edition (Routledge New York, 2008), 159–79.
17. It would be tedious to list them all but a couple of notable titles should suffice for illustration: Sarah T Rorer, the principal of the influential Philadelphia Cooking School penned *Dainty Dishes for All the Year Round* in 1890 featuring 'such Dainty Dishes as Croquettes, Cutlets, Tempting Sandwiches etc. when one's appetite needs to be pampered with something delicate and tasty'. The book was sponsored

- by the American Machine Company, a manufacturer of ice cream freezers and other kitchen gadgets. Across the Atlantic, Kate Halford, another cooking teacher, authored *Dainty Dinners and Dishes for Jewish Families* (1907), a decidedly aspirational volume of French influenced recipes for London's wealthier Jewish households. Roast haunch of Venison anyone?
18. Men's actual predilection for plain dishes is less clear in the nineteenth century sources than in the twentieth. See Jessamyn Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking: Cookbooks and Gender in Modern America* (JHU Press, 2003), 77. On the other hand the medical advice books are pretty much unanimous in decrying fancy cuisine for either sex.
 19. D.M. Morrell, 'The Daily Trio: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner', *Table Talk*, May 1894.
 20. See Paul Freedman, 'Women and Restaurants in the Nineteenth-Century United States', *Journal of Social History* 48, no. 1 (2014): 1–19.
 21. Morrell, 'The Daily Trio: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner'.
 22. See for example the opinion of the 'amiable Lord Brackenshaw, who was something of a 'gourmet'. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (OUP Oxford, 2014), 94; According to American George Beard, writing in the 1870s, the romantic teen idol was apparently responsible for girls starving themselves to conform to the dead poet's tastes. See Trumbert, *Fasting Girls*, 180.
 23. Mary Alice Abbott Brown, *Dainty Dining: A Few Simple Luncheons and a Few Not So Simple; But with Tried Recipes [Sic] for Each and All. with a Post-Script for Dinners Added by Request* (Reed Press, 1908).
 24. See, for example, Anna Sawyer, 'Afternoon Tea', *Good Housekeeping*, May 10, 1890, 160; or Mrs. Hamilton Mott, 'Giving an Afternoon Tea', *The Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1893, 4.
 25. Rare Book Division, The New York Public Library. 'Waldorf Astoria' New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed December 13, 2020. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/c6d5d0ca-df25-54db-e040-e00a18063df6>
 26. Rousseau, *Emile*, 395.
 27. 'A Phase of the Cook Question', *Harper's Bazaar*, January 27, 1877, 50.
 28. The italics are the author's. Martin Luther Holbrook, *Parturition Without Pain: A Code of Directions for Escaping from the Primal Curse* (M.L. Holbrook, 1880), 15. I am assuming the 'professor Hubbard of New Haven' mentioned in the text is, Stephen G. Hubbard, professor of obstetrics at Yale Medical School from 1864 to 1880.
 29. Ann Douglas Wood, 'The Fashionable Diseases': Women's Complaints and Their Treatment in Nineteenth-Century America', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 4, no. 1 (1973): 29.
 30. Smith, *The Ways of Women in Their Physical, Moral and Intellectual Relations*, 175–76.
 31. See David Kirk, *The Sociocultural Foundations of Human Movement* (Macmillan Education AU, 1996), 210.
 32. Colorado was just the place for a cure: 'Chronic invalids are almost always benefited by a mere change of regimen, even if it be, in some minor respects, for the worse. If some change can be made from the humdrum of the Eastern home to the fresh and novel life of a mountain country, with its more substantial bread, more virile, blood invigorating beef, its tempting mountain trout and juicy wild meat, the benefits are multiplied tenfold. H.T.F Gatchell, 'Colorado Climate for Invalids', *The Medical Investigator. A Monthly Journal of the Medical Sciences...* 10, no. 113 (May 1873): 279.
 33. See Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (University of Chicago Press, 2008), 171.
 34. Coed archery was one of the period's elite's peculiarities. Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 94.
 35. *O the Roast Beef of Old England* ('*The Gate of Calais*'), 1748, oil on canvas, 788 X 945mm, 1748, Tate.
 36. There seem to several variants of the song in Fielding's plays, and additional verses accumulated over the decades. The following is from *Don Quixote in England* (1733): 'When mighty roast beef was the Englishman's food/It ennobled our hearts, and enriched our blood/Our soldiers were brave, and our courtier's were good/Oh the roast beef of old England/And old England's roast beef!/ Then Britons from all nice dainties refrain/Which effeminate Italy, France, and Spain;/And mighty roast beef shall command on the main'. *The Works of Henry Fielding*. (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1851), 994.
 37. Cited in Hippolyte Taine, *History of English Literature* (Chatto & Windus, 1880), 124.
 38. 'Memorials of Gormandising', in *The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray.*, vol. XIII (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1841), 581–82.
 39. Donald Walker, *Walker's Manly Exercises: Containing Rowing, Sailing, Riding, Driving, Racing, Hunting, Shooting and Other Manly Sports ...* (Bohn, 1855), 14.

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40. 'Manly Health and Training: With Off-Hand Hints Toward Their Conditions', *New York Atlas*, September 12, 1858, morning edition.
41. David McCay, *The Protein Element in Nutrition* (E. Arnold, 1912), 206.
42. See for example Kellogg's assertion that a grain-based diet was superior. *The New England Medical Gazette* (Medical Gazette Publishing Company, 1892), 8.
43. Cited in Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking*, 77.
44. Erving Goffman, 'Gender Display. Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication, 3, 69-77.', *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*, 1976, 69-77.

Defining Good Food Design through Case Studies from Turkey

Sibel Kutlusoy

ABSTRACT: Design, like art is the product of the imaginative mind. Unlike art however, it deals with producing solutions to problems. Without design, imagination would remain an abstract idea. There would be no innovation.

Today, more than ever, designers are dealing with food and food related fields. Food has become a subject of design, rather than an art form. Meanwhile, culinary professionals today seem also to be designing rather than cooking. In a way, chefs have turned from culinary artists into food designers.

Food design has come to be one of the sub-disciplines of design, with its wide spectrum of categories defined by Dr. Francesca Zampollo. These areas of specialization are design with food, food product design, design for food, food space design, eating design, food service design, food system design, sustainable food design, and critical food design.

284 Since food design is a design sub-discipline, could Dieter Rams' good design principles inspire us to set criteria for good food design? This paper will analyze various food related projects from Turkey, in accordance with the categories of food design defined by Zampollo, in an attempt to define a guide for good food design. The aim of the guide-to-be is not to evaluate design projects, but rather to emphasize the necessity to design with and for a purpose. Design and production for the sake of novelty, does not fulfil the environmental, social, and cultural requirements of our times.

The projects to be studied include an amuse bouche from the worldfamous restaurant Mikla, a traditional fermented Anatolian snack, an innovative functional food product based on a traditional soup dish, a porcelain coffee mug made with the first local porcelain clay, a simple set of wooden cutting boards made by local and refugee women in a wood workshop, a no-drip-no-stain tea cup, a set of kitchen tools made of olive tree prunings, a whisky tumbler with an energy and time efficient innovative production process, an art and architecture farm, and globally renowned jewellery made of upcycled PET drink bottles.

Design, like art is the product of the imaginative mind. Unlike art however, it deals with producing solutions to problems. 'Design [...] begins with consideration'.¹ Consideration of whether the overall quality of the product fulfils the needs of the user/consumer. Hence, design can be described as a methodological form of imagination involving definition, detailed planning, and execution.

Defining Good Food Design through Case Studies

Without design, imagination would remain an abstract idea. There would be no innovation. Mankind imagined, and then designed tools for hunting, cultivating, cooking, and eating. Restaurants, alternatives to home cooking, came into being. In the years following the Industrial Revolution, technology allowed for food to be produced, and consumed, in masses. Thus food, as well as the systems for its production, transfer, service, and consumption were designed accordingly.

Today, more than ever, designers are dealing with food and food related fields. Food has become a subject of design, rather than an art form. So much that the Design Museum announced the winner of the Product category for its Beazley Designs of the Year 2020 to be the plant protein based Impossible Burger 2.0, designed by Impossible Foods.² Food design has come to be one of the sub-disciplines of design, with its wide spectrum of categories defined by Dr. Francesca Zampollo.³

Meanwhile, culinary professionals today seem also to be designing rather than cooking. In a way, chefs have turned from culinary artists into food designers. Bruno Munari, curious of why artists are abandoning galleries and turning to sell mass-produced articles in shops, explains the transformation of the artist into the designer as follows:

It is probably the desire to get back into society, to re-establish contact with their neighbours, to create an art for everyone and not just for the chosen few with bags of money. Artists want to recover the public that has long ago deserted the art galleries, and to break the closed circle of Artist – Dealer – Critic – Gallery – Collector.

They want to destroy the myth of the Great Artist, of the enormously costly Masterpiece, of the one and only divine Thing.

They have realized that at the present time subjective values are losing their importance in favour of objective values that can be understood by a greater number of people.

And if the aim is to mass-produce objects for sale to a wide public at a low price, then it becomes a problem of method and design. The artist has to regain the modesty he had when art was just a trade, and instead of despising the very public he is trying to interest he must discover its needs and make contact with it again. This is the reason why the traditional artist is being transformed into the designer, and as I myself have undergone this transformation in the course of my working career [...] I try to see the why and wherefore of this metamorphosis.⁴

Munari's words remind us of certain chefs who abandon traditional techniques and their fine dining customers, sometimes even giving up on their precious stars. Could these

culinary artists also be acting upon the need to create for everyone and not only for the privileged few? Is there an underlying desire to get back in touch with the public? Can we translate the closed circle of artist – dealer – critic – gallery – collector, into the amazingly similar loop of chef – investor – critic – restaurant – fine diner?

Design deals with a wide variety of food issues including, but also way beyond, how food is prepared and plated at a restaurant. Mass production is an inevitable feature of design, industrial design in particular. When food came to be industrially produced, it transformed into an item of design because a production line was necessary for food to be produced and packaged, as quickly as possible, in numbers, for the masses. However, doesn't the work at a smallscale restaurant or bakery also involve speed, and a production line? Is not food, in all its forms, a result of some kind of mass production?

Dieter Rams, the legendary designer who led the design team of Braun for 40 years, summed up his design philosophy in the form of ten simple principles, which 'have stood the test of time as aids to orientation and understanding'.⁵ Cees W. de Jong points out that Rams' 'products and design ethos have had significant influence on designers around the world. Designers, manufacturers, and consumers remain inspired by his products and his legacy, [...].'⁶

This paper, also inspired by Dieter Rams' 'Ten Principles for Good Design', aims to discuss whether Rams' criteria can be applicable to designs related to food.

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Today, designers are faced with the challenge of finding sustainable food packaging solutions, to give an end to the global plastic pollution. Some others are designing innovative food production methods in order to stop hunger on earth. Meanwhile, the COVID19 pandemic had a great impact on food services and systems, which are in urgent need of innovative solutions. Ezio Manzini's following words should give us guidance for living and designing through this period of transition:

Design has always operated in the field of the function, form and social significance of industrial products. In different historical moments the centre of interest has moved from one to another of these three fields.

[...] in the face of the vast and rapid transformations which contemporary society is undergoing, the need for political, cultural and operative instruments for controlling and orienting them becomes evident. This also entails a need for skilled professionals who can influence production. And it is precisely in this sense that society manifests a large and growing demand for design.

If, and to what extent, design [...] will succeed in meeting this social demand is a question that is hard to answer at this moment. A lot will depend on its ability to redefine its culture and methods in the light of the new context it will face.⁷

Design does not like tradition, it thrives on technology and innovation. Yet, every tradition was once an innovation driven by imagination. With this in mind, this research will focus on innovative products and practices related to food from Turkey; traditional examples from the past, contemporary projects of the present, and conceptual projections into the future. It aims to study food design cases, hoping to start a collaboration among professionals, as well as formulizing a solution to Jeremy Myerson's proposal: '[...] the hybrid composition of the principles of fine art, craft, architecture, engineering, advertising and marketing etc, which was drawn up into the single discipline of industrial design in the early years of this century, should be pulled apart and reassembled to suit the new era.'⁸

This paper aims to underline the importance of design for the food industry and start a conversation on whether guiding principles of good food design can be defined for future projects.

Food Design and the Subdisciplines

Food design refers to an area of design which intersects food and design, and defines all design practices related to food. Hence, food design involves, other than design and gastronomy professionals, the cooperative work of various disciplines.

The following sub-disciplines of food design have been defined by Dr. Francesca Zampollo, one of the key academic figures of the discipline, in 2007.⁹ This paper will analyze various food related projects from Turkey, in accordance with these sub-disciplines, explained below.

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Design with Food

Designing with food is what chefs, cooks, bakers, and mixologists do. There is a methodology of the processes used for their products. Designing with food requires decisions as to the ingredients (raw materials) and the techniques (technologies) to be used. There is a production line in the kitchen. Spare parts are carefully prepared during the *mise-en-place*, cooking usually requires several steps of different techniques, and finally all elements are assembled on some kind of a surface or a container. Speed throughout the process, and repetition are inevitable in the professional kitchen.

On the other hand, basic elements like colour, texture, and shape, as well as principles such as contrast, balance, emphasis, and harmony are utilized in the design of these edible products. The same principles are also applied to the flavours involved, affecting the sensorial experience on the palate of the customer.

Food Product Design

This category describes the designing of industrially produced food products. Rick Schifferstein points out that food product designs 'often concern more than designing the food product itself, such as changes in the production system, a consumption ritual, a product display, a website or a marketing campaign'.¹⁰

Defining Good Food Design through Case Studies

Packaging design is an important practice related to these products, which are produced in masses, travel long distances, and must arrive to the point of sale safely. Packaging also has an undeniable function regarding the marketing of the product.

Eating Design

Eating design deals with the design of unique, single eating events. These range from catering events to more artsy situations, where the designer may want to raise awareness or make guests live a certain experience.

Design for Food

Designing for food includes the design of all tools, machines, and utensils used during the cultivation, supply, production, service, and recycling of food.

Food Space Design

Food space design generally refers to the design of spaces that we cook and eat in. It also involves the design of spaces where food items are sold. Indoor farming spaces can also be studied under this category.

Food Service Design

288 Food service design organizes the processes and human interactions during the service of food. Main areas of work are fast-food chains, schools, hospitals, care homes, and airlines. Online ordering and delivery systems have also become an important part of this system.

Food System Design

The production, consumption, and recycling of food are parts of larger systems. Where and how raw materials are produced, the way they are turned into products, and the recycling of waste are all parts of a much greater system.

Sustainable Food Design

We are living in times where all design and production activities must be sustainable. If not, they should not be designed. However, there seems to be a confusion, even among designers as to the meaning of sustainable design. Nature, environment, environmentally friendly, healthy materials, and natural daylight seem to be the most widely misunderstood terms in sustainable design.¹¹

Critical Food Design

Critical design is the type of design first defined by Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, which ‘focuses on asking questions rather than providing solutions.’¹² The aim is to start debate on issues. Some of these critical designs are projects related to food.

Good Design and Dieter Rams

According to the Design Museum's publication *Designer Maker User*, 'the idea that there might be such a thing as good design refuses to fade away.'¹³ The incentive behind this research is also such an idea, not to set standards, but rather to emphasize that whatever will be produced, must fulfil a purpose and should not be produced if it is not good design.

Erik Mattie explains that:

Since the time of Vitruvius [...], architects, artists, and designers have attempted to formulate universal principles which good design must adhere to. [...] Vitruvius' three basic principles (are) – the first set of criteria for design ever formulated: *Utilitas* (user-friendliness, usefulness), *Firmitas* (strength) and *Venustas* (beauty). Vitruvius was, of course, referring to architecture but these three universal, timeless main criteria leave their mark on all design disciplines. At the same time Vitruvius believed that design was subject to change, even if it was because the available building materials and (social, geographical) circumstances can differ.¹⁴

In the late 1970's, as Cees W. Jong states, Dieter Rams had become deeply concerned by the state of the world around him. Aware of his contribution to that world, he asked himself an important question: is my design good design? Since good design could not be measured, Rams decided to define the most important principles for what he considered was good design.¹⁵ However, formulating these was not as simple as it seemed: Similar to designing a product, Rams was continuously trimming and polishing his set of criteria.¹⁶ It took ten years for Rams to finalize his list of principles.

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The first time that Rams tried to formulate criteria was in 1975 [...] where he advanced three general principles: the rule of order, the rule of harmony and the rule of economy. [...] An elaboration of Rams' own three rules followed in 1976. Six points – a combination of attributes and principles – describe how good design can be achieved:

1. the function is for us the starting point and the target of all design.
2. experience with design is experience with people.
3. only orderliness makes design useful to us.
4. our design attempts to bring all individual elements into their proper proportions.
5. good design means to us: as little design as possible.
6. our design is innovative because the behavior patterns of people change.¹⁷

For the first time Rams formulated his credo 'as little design as possible,' clearly related to the statement by Mies van der Rohe, [...]: 'less is more.' [...], Rams would eventually achieve a synthesis: less but more, thus personally fulfilling the sixth criterion of 1976.¹⁸

Rams arrived at a more concise and clearly formulated set, reduced to the essence, in 1984:

1. good design is innovative.
2. good design renders utility to the product.
3. good design is aesthetic design.
4. good design makes a product easy to understand.
5. good design is unobtrusive.
6. good design is honest.¹⁹

During a lecture held in Washington in 1985, Rams came up with the final ten statements that are according to him [...] not mandatory, but in a constant state of development. The criteria are an elaboration of earlier criteria, together with an explanation, [...].²⁰

Dieter Rams' Ten Principles for Good Design

This section will include a list of Rams' principles, followed with a discussion of its applicability to food design.

Good Design is Innovative. The possibilities for innovation are not, by any means, exhausted. Technological development is always offering new opportunities for innovative design. But innovative design always develops in tandem with innovative technology and can never be an end in itself.²¹

290 This section will question whether current technologies are sufficient to support the imaginations of chefs, designers, and engineers to innovate new forms of food design.

Good Design Makes a Product Useful. A product is bought to be used. It has to satisfy certain criteria, not only functional, but also psychological and aesthetic. Good design emphasizes the usefulness of a product whilst disregarding anything that could possibly detract from it.²²

This section will discuss how food design is functionally, psychologically, and aesthetically useful.

Good Design is Aesthetic. The aesthetic quality of a product is integral to its usefulness because products we use everyday affect our person and our well-being. But only well-executed objects can be beautiful.²³

This section will discuss aesthetic qualities of food design, whether edible items, tools and utensils, or packaging.

Good Design Makes a Product Understandable. It clarifies the product's structure. Better still, it can make the product talk. At best, it is self-explanatory.²⁴

This section will discuss how an edible food design can be self-explanatory; and how tools, utensils, machines, and packaging related to food should be understandable in their functions.

Good Design is Unobtrusive. Products fulfilling a purpose are like tools. They are neither decorative objects nor Works of art. Their design should therefore be both neutral and restrained, to leave room for the user's self-expression.²⁵

Defining Good Food Design through Case Studies

This section will discuss how and why food design products must be neutral and restrained.

Good Design is Honest. It does not make a product more innovative, powerful or valuable than it really is. It does not attempt to manipulate the consumer with promises that cannot be kept.²⁶

This section will discuss how a food design product can be honest in the ingredients/materials used for its production.

Good Design is Long-lasting. It avoids being fashionable and therefore never appears antiquated. Unlike fashionable design, it lasts many years – even in today’s throwaway society.²⁷

This section will discuss how a food design can be long-lasting, even traditional.

Good Design is Thorough Down to the Last Detail. Good design is thorough down to the last detail. Nothing must be arbitrary or left to chance. Care and accuracy in the design process show respect towards the user.²⁸

This section will discuss how crucial details are in edible and non edible food design, as well as food services and systems.

Good Design is Environmentally Friendly. Design makes an important contribution to the preservation of the environment. It conserves resources and minimizes physical and visual pollution throughout the lifecycle of the product.²⁹

This section will discuss sustainable food design throughout the food system.

Good Design is as Little Design as Possible. Less, but better – because it concentrates on the essential aspects, and the products are not burdened with non-essentials. Back to purity, back to simplicity.³⁰

This section will discuss how simplifying food design can improve the overall system of food.

Very good design, however, does not evolve only by ticking those ten boxes. From a good, ordinary design there should always be the possibility for an outstanding, self-explanatory design to arise. It very seldom happens. Such outstanding products and their aura of being close to perfection are an essential stimulus to encourage how we design. [...] They are the benchmark for the future.³¹

Case Studies of Good Food Designs from Turkey

A brief explanation of the products/projects chosen so far, to be discussed in this paper, are listed below. Each one will be analyzed as to how innovative, useful, aesthetic, understandable, unobtrusive, honest, longlasting, thorough down to the last detail, environmentally friendly, and as little design as possible it is.

Cases of Design with Food

Balık Ekmek. A contemporary interpretation by chef Mehmet Gürs of the traditional Istanbul street food called *balık ekmek* (fish and bread), which is basically a mackerel sandwich served straight off the grill on vendors’ boats parked alongside the entrance of

the Golden Horn. The remake by Mehmet Gürs is an amuse buche served at Mikla, since its first day of opening, fifteen years ago.

Cases of Food Product Design

Maraş Tarhana Chips. *Tarhana* is a traditional Anatolian soup ingredient in coarse powder form. Its two basic ingredients are flour and yoghurt, sometimes with additions of spices, tomato and/or pepper paste. The ingredients are mixed into a dough and fermented. Later, patties of this dough are dried under the sun. *Tarhana* is prepared during the summer months when ingredients are plentiful and the sun is hottest. During the drying process, the patties are turned over daily, and (if preferred) crumbled by hand. Every region, if not every household, has a unique *tarhana* recipe. The ingredients used, and the form of the *tarhana* vary greatly. During cold winter months, *tarhana* is cooked by dissolving a handful in a pot of water, and made into a soup. It is possibly the first instant soup in the world. One specific form of *tarhana*, unique to the Kahramanmaraş region in south-eastern Turkey, is in the form of chips. The fermented dough is very thinly spread over a straw mat, dried, and later broken into pieces as it is removed from the surface. A nutritious snack even in this form, the chips can further be deep fried and turned into a crunchy delicacy.

292 *Pacha Chips.* Inspired by the traditional trotter soup paça çorbasi, this is an awarded innovative product recently introduced by a team led by an academician food engineer Dr. Aslı Zuluğ. Trotter soup is a dish with high collagen qualities, hence is often recommended by doctors to patients with fractured bones or joint problems. However, it is cumbersome to prepare at home, the smell makes it difficult for patients to consume, and it is high in cholesterol. Looking at these problems from a different view point, Dr. Aslı Zuluğ separated the fat and dehydrated the liquid to obtain a crunchy, high protein, high collagen snack. The product contains no additives. Natural ingredients such as root ginger, lemon, bananas, yoghurt, fresh mint, cocoa powder, and cinnamon are used for the several varieties to make Pacha Chips especially easy for child patients to consume.³²

Cases of Design for Food

Cube. Designed by Sema Obuz, Cube is a set of twelve serving dishes of two different depths. Designed especially to be used at eating events, these dishes, when stacked on top of one another create columns, combining simple aesthetics with function.³³

Golden Tree. This product, designed by Özlem Tuna, is a porcelain coffee mug. It is the first-time use of a local porcelain clay developed by a team of material researchers.

H-Cut. H-Cut, designed by Barış Gün, is a group of wooden cutting-boards. Their reference is the multi-layered culture of Harran and its rich archeological heritage. Each form in the set represent the form of an archeological find, such as the *kümbet* (dome) houses, or the minaret of the Ulu Mosque. H-Cut is a member of the design collection Atlas,

which aims to create social impact through design and translate Mesopotamian cultural heritage and aesthetics to our times. The set is produced in a wood workshop, by the women of Harran and the Syrian refugee women living in Harran. The workshop built in Harran is a part of ADEM (Family Support Centre) within the Governorship of Harran. The income from each purchase is given to the women who play an active role in production.³⁴

Messenger. Designed by Dr. Oya Akman, the Messenger is a simple and timeless design of a glass tea cup, produced by joining three glass tubes of different diameters and heights. The handle has a second function to hold a flower, or a message. The ridged design of the saucer, on the other hand, prevents drips and stains.

Toolives. Designed by Koray Özgen, Toolives is a set of kitchen tools produced by recycling the usually discarded branch prunings of olive trees.

Snow White. Also designed by Dr. Oya Akman, this porcelain whisky tumbler is fifty percent energy and time efficient through its innovative technique of production. Instead of baking the clay form, glazing, and rebaking, these tumblers are produced through a single baking process.

Cases of Eating Design

Gönül Paksoy's Receptions. These private lunch receptions first began twentyfive year ago, to bring friends and family together. The preparations of each annual event start exactly a year in advance. Each dish is thoroughly designed, using seasonal, regional, and mostly unusual ingredients and served to around 200 guests each year.

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Cases of Food Service Design

The Open Market Movement. A recent non profit/nongovernment organization established to support women producers and market vendors who lost connection with their customers when open markets were closed due to the pandemic. Açık Pazar Hareketi is an online ordering platform bringing vendors and customers together.

Chefs and Jars. Started with an aim of collecting the recipes of selected international chefs and making them accessible for everyone to experience. World-famous chefs prepared meals and designed them as to fit in jars. Chefs and jar recipes were renewed every six months.

Cases of Food System Design

Ek Biç Ye İç. The first establishment in Turkey which combined indoor farming and a restaurant in the same space. They have also organized many workshops, sharing their experiences with others. The first urban roof top farm, on top of a shopping mall is also one of their projects.

Palanga Art and Architecture Farm. Contemporary artist and film maker Kutluğ Ataman inherited a farm up in Erzincan, north-eastern Anatolia. He started breeding

animals like chicken, cattle, and goats. He wanted also to include art & culture into the farm project. He decided it to be an openair architectural collection, a museum of animal shelters designed by famous as well as promising young Turkish architects. Animal welfare was one of the most important criteria for the buildings. The farm also has an educational purpose. It receives local and international academicians and students.³⁵

Cases of Sustainable Food Design

Komporize. A material project from Rize, the hub of tea production in Turkey. The waste from tea factories are used in the making of a bioplastic material.

Ottan Studio. They collect fruit peels, expired grains, vegetable waste from local retailer companies and producers. After a cleaning, drying, and grinding process, these materials are mixed with a resin and injected into moulds to create minimal yet multi-purpose products.³⁶

Project Pomace. A collaborative design research project between Turkey and the Netherlands, studying the possibilities of a bio-plastic material made of olive pomice, a by product of olive oil production.

Tertium Non Data. Trained as an architect, designer Gülnur Özdağlar has been producing cups, jewellery, and home accessories by upcycling food packaging made of PET. She collects PET bottles and reshapes them by heating, cutting, melting, and drilling holes into them. Her aim is to obtain a product of higher value in order to emphasize and encourage recycling.³⁷

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Cases of Critical Food Design

Will Grow Up to be a Stew. *Büyüyünce Türülü Olacak* is an installation project by chef Maksut Aşkar. Inspired by *türülü*, a stew made from fresh beans, aubergines, courgettes, tomatoes, and onions, the visitors of the exhibition were presented with a sachet full of the seeds of these vegetables required to make the dish.

Notes

1. Dieter Rams, 'Tokyo Manifesto', in *Ten Principles for Good Design*: Dieter Rams, ed. by Cees W. de Jong (Munich. London. New York: Prestel Verlag, 2021), p. 46.
2. The Design Museum, <<https://designmuseum.org/exhibitions/beazley-designs-of-the-year/product> > [accessed 16 May 2021]
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25. Dieter Rams, 'Ten Principles for Good Design', p. 110.
26. Dieter Rams, 'Ten Principles for Good Design', p. 114.
27. Dieter Rams, 'Ten Principles for Good Design', p. 118.
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Imagination and Food (and Drink) in the Novels of Iris Murdoch

Paul Levy

ABSTRACT: In her fiction the late novelist (and philosopher) Dame Iris Murdoch frequently cites dishes, meals, menus and accompanying drink. Most of these citations are to imagined instances of food and drink, and serve the more usual purposes of satirising or characterising the status, social class, beliefs or tastes of her fictive *dramatis personae*. However, in a late novel *The Sea, The Sea* (1978), which many critics think her best, the food and drink are not imagined, but recalled, and constitute a culinary biography of her late husband, Professor John Bayley.

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Food and drink have figured in novels at least since Rabelais. In the 16th century French writer's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* references to food and drink had a clear purpose: they were used to satirise excess. Dean Swift's 1729 *A Modest Proposal* advocating that the poor should eat their babies is also patently satirical; and food and drink have found their place in satire from antiquity to the present day. But what about the modern novel in which food and drink figure, but do not have a transparent satirical intent? Rereading Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1901), for example, I found this description of a meal given to the would-be suitor Bendix Grünlich:

He ate mussel ragout, julienne soup, baked sole, roast veal with mashed potatoes and brussels sprouts, maraschino pudding and pumpernickel with Roquefort cheese – and at each course he offered a new tribute appropriate to the delicacy. For example, raising his dessert spoon, he gazed at a statue woven into the wallpaper and said aloud to himself, “God forgive me, I can do no other; I’ve eaten a large serving, but this pudding is just too splendid. I simply *must* implore my hostess for a second helping.”

The point of this excursus on a mid-nineteenth century meal is not to make the character appear greedy or the hostess generous. It is not poking fun at either of them. It is more to exemplify the haut bourgeois setting; if anything, the purpose of the passage is to make some subtle class distinctions between the nouveau riche suitor and his old-money Buddenbrook intended.

I also reread a clutch of Dame Margaret Drabble's novels to note her treatment of food, and I recently found a germane piece in the *Guardian* (which originated in a 2003 paper for the Oxford Symposium):

Writers love writing about food, and criticising one another for the manner in which they do it: the only comment a friend of mine made on one of my recent works was “I think your *salade tiède* was an anachronism”. Some years ago, I asked the foodie-philosopher Paul Levy for his expert help in planning a repast that was to serve both as a celebration and a last supper for one of my characters [in *The Witch of Exmoor* (1996)]. The menu we devised consisted of ravioli aux trompettes des morts, pieds de porc Sainte-Menehould, and a little of the soft cheese known as the *Caprice des Dieux*, which sports pretty cherubs on its packaging.

We didn't get round to naming any wines, surely an oversight on my part, as there must be many heavenly vintages with appropriately suggestive designations.¹

Part of what I learned from my survey of Dame Maggie's novels, is that mere citation as opposed to more elaborate description of dishes, meals or menus, is often used as an indication that the novel is in one Realist tradition or another – i.e., the characters eat breakfast, dinner, lunch or (especially) tea, because that's what the human frame requires. Ignoring the characters' need for nourishment is unrealistic (as it is to ignore their need to relieve themselves; and I note that in some of the novels I've been rereading for this paper, a character does occasionally use the loo). The reasons for a novelist citing food can range from the straightforward, indicating that a character is a picky eater, or greedy, or even has an eating disorder, to indicating minute differences of social class, attitudes or political views. Portraying a character as vegetarian is a venerable but easy way of implying that his political stance is left of centre.

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All these dishes, meals and menus are the work of the imagination, and rereading Dame Iris Murdoch's fictional oeuvre, I have found there is a good deal of citation of food and drink in her twenty-six novels, from “good sandwiches” in *The Bell* (1958) to the cheese soufflé and “delicate leg of lamb” in her last novel, *Jackson's Dilemma* (completed just before she succumbed to dementia; published 1995). There's poached pheasant and jugged hare in *The Unicorn* (1963). There's *pollo alla cacciatora* in *The Italian Girl* (1964):

Maggie had left her sewing and was busy at a side table with a dismembered chicken and some vegetables. Now the chicken was sizzling softly in a pan while with quick small fingers Maggie plucked the soiled tattered skins from big mushrooms revealing the creamy fleshy discs within. Then on an oval chopping-board with brisk little movements she chopped yellowish-white fluted stocks stalks of celery and a large moist onion. The sharp smell of it pricked my eyes, while now Maggie was plucking at a papery integument of garlic and peeling the plump yellow clove within. A glass of red wine stood by her on the table.

In *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine* (1974) most of the food and drink cited is in a ten-page scene, set in a restaurant, that, judging from its menu, might be the Elizabeth in

Oxford. The meal is a dinner given to David Gavender by Edgar Demarny, the new master of an Oxford College. A preference for medium or sweet Sherry is used to indicate Emily McHugh's lower social status.

By far the most prevalent meal in the Murdoch corpus is tea; it is also the most common drink, though whisky is pervasive in her novels.

In *The Good Apprentice* (1985) there is, of course, the cult-like vegetarianism:

"Now, we have made a feast for you," said Mother May. "Every meal is a sacrament, but this is a celebration."

"A festival," said Bettina.

"But first we should explain that we are vegetarians," said Mother May. "I hope you don't mind?"

"No, no, I'm almost a vegetarian myself, I often feel I should be, I don't mind what I eat –"

...

Spooning from various bowls, mother may put upon Edward's plate a mixture of beans dressed with oil and herbs, lentils in a sweetish sauce, a flat rissole made (as he discovered) of nuts, a concoction of scrambled egg and spinach, and a salad composed of various unidentifiable leaves. All of this (as he also discovered) was delicious. The butter was unsalted and the thick crumbly bread self – evidently home-made.

"Will you have wine?"

...

From an earth and will jug decorated with blue and green geometrical patterns, Bettina poured a reddish liquid into his glass. "Elderberry wine, last year's vintage. We make our own wine."

...

The wine was delicious too, with a fragrant sweetish taste and quite strong. Edward felt he was drinking flowers.

At Seegard, the house where much of the novel takes place, the vegetarianism serves a narrative function, indicating the belief system of the family.

But Murdoch's writerly use of food has one big exception. Though critics have found the *clef* in several of her *romans*, and identified her characters with their historical models, one such identification stands out from all the others. In one of her best books, *The Sea, The Sea* (1978), the protagonist, Charles Arrowby (though he has negative traits, especially blind arrogance, that make him unlike John Bayley) is a culinary portrait of Iris's husband,

John. Rereading it, I see that the food (and wine suggestions) is a compendium of John's "assembled" (as opposed to "cooked") meals, which some commentators have found disgusting, and others find merely curious. Charles Arrowby thinks himself not exactly a great cook, so much as a great provider of meals – most of which, in the first two-thirds of the novel, are solitary. He wonders if he will ever get around to writing *Charles Arrowby's Four Minute Cookbook*. The reader will note that the recipes, or rather, assembly instructions, involve very little fresh food, and are heavily dependent on tinned food.

For example, Arrowby's post-swim lunch: "For lunch, I may say, I ate and greatly enjoyed the following: anchovy paste on hot buttered toast, then baked beans and kidney beans with chopped celery, tomatoes, lemon juice and olive oil. (Really good olive oil is essential, the kind with a taste. I have brought a supply from London.) Green peppers would have been a happy addition only the village shop (about two miles pleasant walk) could not provide them. (No one delivers to far-off Shruff End [the sea-side house he has bought], so I fetch everything, including milk, from the village.) Then bananas and cream with white sugar. (Bananas should be cut, *never* mashed, and the cream should be thin.) Then hard water-biscuits with New Zealand butter and Wensleydale cheese. Of course, I never touch foreign cheeses. Our cheeses are the best in the world. With this feast I drank most of a bottle of Muscadet out of my modest 'cellar'. I ate and drank slowly as one should (cook fast, eat slowly) and without distractions such as (thank heavens) conversation or reading. Indeed, eating is so pleasant one should even try to suppress thought. Of course, reading and thinking are important but, my God, food is important too. How fortunate we are to be food-consuming animals. Every meal should be a treat and one ought to bless every day which brings with it a good digestion and the precious gift of hunger."

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This is a typical John Bayley menu, as Iris once said to our mutual friend, the musicologist and psychoanalyst, Anthony Storr (the remark is reported in Peter Conradi's biography of Iris), "But this is what John and I eat *all the time*."² "What is more delicious," says Arrowby/Bayley, "than fresh hot buttered toast, with or without the addition of bloater paste? Or plain boiled onions with a little cold corned beef if desired? And well-made porridge with brown sugar and cream is a dish fit for a king." "I eat very little meat, and hold in horror the 'steak house carnivore'. But there are certain items (such as anchovy paste, liver, sausages, fish) which hold as it were strategic positions in my diet, and which I should be sorry to do without;..." "For lunch I ate the kipper fillets rapidly unfrozen in boiling water (the sun had done most of the work) garnished with lemon juice, oil, and a light sprinkling of dried herbs. Kipper fillets are arguably better than smoked salmon unless the latter is very good. With these, fried tinned new potatoes. (No real new potatoes yet.) Potatoes are for me a treat dish, not a dull everyday chaperon. Then Welsh rarebit and hot beetroot. The shop sliced bread is less than great, but all right toasted, with good salty New Zealand butter." "Felt a little depressed but was cheered up by supper: spaghetti with a little butter and dried basil. (Basil

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is of course the king of herbs.) Then spring cabbage cooked slowly with dill. Boiled onions served with bran, herbs, soya oil and tomatoes, with one egg beaten in. With these a slice or two of cold tinned corned beef. (Meat is really just an excuse for eating vegetables.)”

There are a few cooked dishes, such as the impossible-sounding egg poached in scrambled egg, but this compendium catches the Bayley culinary repertory pretty deftly. Even this last egg-fest is not meant to be the product of imagination, but of recall – it’s what the Bayleys ate “all the time.”

I must conclude by acknowledging that my family and I were close friends of the Bayleys (Iris was godmother to our elder daughter), and we shared dozens of meals at the three addresses where they lived, and the two houses we have lived in near Oxford. It is only fair to say that whatever the Bayleys ate when on their own, John did not normally feed Charles Arrowby’s dishes to their guests.

Notes

1. Guardian 20 December 2003.
2. Peter Conradi, *Iris Murdoch: A Life*, p. 524, and see pp. 414-15.

Fish and Foreigners: The Case of Hot Salmon in Early Modern England

Joshua Lovinger

ABSTRACT: Fish preparation and consumption have been used to differentiate self from other for thousands of years. Various classical Greek and Latin authors labelled a number of disparate peoples they encountered as *ichthyophagoi*, choosing to categorize them by a real or imagined pescatarian diet which set them apart from Europeans. From the sixteenth century until modern times, Western travellers commonly remarked on fish-eating in the Far Eastern lands. An unusual comment on fish-eating, related to one particular fish – salmon – can be found in several of the health and dietary manuals that became so popular in sixteenth-century Tudor England. Several of these works mention concerns related to serving temperature of several other fish species, but little explanation accompanied the warnings. These comments are unusual because pre-modern medical texts typically focused on the humoral qualities of foods, where cold and warm (along with dry and moist) referred not to the actual physical temperature of the items to be eaten, but to their elemental qualities.

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Fish-Eating and Self-Definition

Modes of fish preparation and consumption have long been used to differentiate self from other. Greek and Latin geographers, including Herodotus, Strabo, and Pliny, referred to disparate coastal peoples as *Ichthyophagi* (lit. ‘fish eaters’), choosing to categorize them by a real or imagined pescatarian diet which set them apart from Europeans. Though fish were, of course, consumed in the Mediterranean littoral as well, what marked these non-Europeans as *Ichthyophagi*, and hence foreign, ‘is the fact that they were...*monophagi* – that is, they depended on a single food source’.¹

The theme of fish eating as a boundary was not limited to classical times. In the sixteenth century, as the world of Europeans was expanding both west and east, this motif can be frequently found in the writings of travellers.

Lúis Fróis (1532-1597), a Portuguese Jesuit missionary, noted among his list of six hundred differences between the West and Japan that ‘People in Europe enjoy eating fish that has been baked or boiled; the Japanese enjoy it much more when it is raw’.² João Rodrigues (d. c.1633) – Fróis’ countryman, who served as his interpreter – imagined that the first instinct of a European encountering the Japanese manner of fish preparation would be disgust, though, upon actually sampling it, would find it tolerable – even pleasurable:

As we have said, nowadays at banquets they usually place three principal tables in front of each guest...The third table is placed on the left with...two other dishes, one of which will be their highly esteemed raw fish cut up into small pieces. Along with it there will be a dish containing a tart sauce or one that burns like mustard and thus takes away the rawness of the fish. For it is the general custom throughout the kingdom to eat a certain kind of esteemed fish raw. This may sound horrible to someone who hears about it from afar and is not accustomed to it. But anyone who becomes used to eating this fish with its appropriate sauce enjoys it and does not find it horrible at all.³

The Florentine merchant Francesco Carletti (1573-1636), on the other hand, was less open-minded, even to the point of claiming that this diet resulted in deleterious effects upon the health of the Japanese:

These things they use as relish to the fish, which is with them an ordinary article of diet, and which is so plentiful as to cost very little. They usually eat this in a practically raw state, after having dipped it in boiling vinegar. And as some of their fish are fleshy and full-blooded, and especially suitable for eating in this way, the result is that in these countries there are large numbers of people infected with leprosy.⁴

302 The choice of leprosy here – with its centuries-worth of associations in European thought – and the claim that this cursed disease was endemic in the Far East were not happenstance.⁵

Lest one think this focus upon fish was unique to the sixteenth century European encounter with East Asia, we can turn to early Western accounts of Native Americans. In *The Life and Deeds of the Admiral* (1571), Hernando (Ferdinand) Colón's (1488-1539) posthumously published biography of his father, Christopher Columbus, we find a description of the people near Cape *Gracias a Dios*, in Central America. This includes details that the people there 'are almost black in color, ugly in aspect, wear no cloths, and are wild in all respects. According to the Indian who was our prisoner they eat human flesh and raw fish [*mangia carne humana, & i pesci crudi*] ...'.⁶ In one breath the author equates cannibalism and consumption of fish sashimi-style, emphasizing how barbaric raw fish eating seemed to Europeans. The accounts of sixteenth-century explorers, many of them collected by Richard Hakluyt, abound in similar descriptions.⁷

Even in an earlier era, and within Europe itself, the British looked askance at consumption of raw fish.⁸ The twelfth century English chronicler, William of Malmesbury, described the enthusiastic response of Christendom to Pope Urban's 1095 exhortation to conquer the Holy Land. In his *History of the English Kings* William lists (unflattering) stereotypes of what the wild and uncivilized neighbours of England were engaged in prior to setting off on crusade – including consuming uncooked fish. These lands included areas

like Scandinavia where Christianization had occurred relatively late. And yet they too heeded the Pope's call to arms, just as the English, French, Flemish, Germans, and Italians:

The central areas were not alone in feeling the force of this emotion: it affected all who in the remotest islands or among barbarian tribes had heard the call of Christ. The time had come for the Welshman to give up hunting in his forests, the Scotsman forsook his familiar fleas, the Dane broke off his long drawn-out potations, the Norwegian left his diet of raw fish.⁹

Vernacular Dietary Handbooks in the Sixteenth Century

Unsurprisingly, in the vernacular health and dietary handbooks that proliferated in sixteenth century England there is a plethora of advice about which fish species are preferred and optimal techniques of cookery. These texts were dependent upon the Latin *Regimen sanitatis Salernitanum*, a work which, according to its opening line, was originally written for an English king.¹⁰ Derivative works in English like *The Governayle of helthe*¹¹ circulated in manuscript in the fifteenth century and already appeared in the incunabular era, printed by William Caxton and Wynkyn de Worde. In 1528, Thomas Berthelet printed an edition of the Regimen of Salerno along with the detailed commentary of Arnold of Villanova, translated into English by Thomas Paynell. Its subtitle indicated the purpose – to democratize medical knowledge about preserving one's health: 'This boke techyng *al* people to gouerne them in helthe.' In the opening, Berthelet printed a letter from Paynell to John de Vere, fifteenth Earl of Oxford (c.1482-1540) explaining the need for such a work in the vernacular.

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But what auayleth hit / to haue golde or abundance of riches / if one can nat vse hit?

What helpeth costely medicines / if one receyue them nat?

So what profiteth vs a boke / be hit neuer so expedient and frutefull / if we vnderstande hit nat?

Wherfore I / consydryng the frute yt myght come of this boke / if hit were translated in to the englishe tonge (for why / euery mā vnderstandeth nat the latine) I thought hit very expedient at some tymes / for the welthe of vnlernd persones to busy my selfe ther in.

For lerned persones and suche as haue great experiēce / nede no instructions to diete them selfe nor to conserue theyr helthe. Yet if suche other wyse and discrete parsones / as is your lordeshippe / by chance rede this boke: they may perauenture fynde that shall please them: and that besides theyr owne diete and custome of flyuynge / shall be for theyr corporall welfare and good helthe.¹²

A medical book in the vernacular could enable people to dispense with the need to consult with a physician and could potentially erode the authority of scholarly medicine. Naturally, such a shift provoked opposition from professionals, just as some doctors might be irritated when patients today use resources like WebMD or google their symptoms.

Thomas Elyot (d.1546), a polymath – lawyer, diplomat, and humanist – without formal training in medicine, wrote a self-help book of medicine, influenced by the Regimen of Salerno ‘whereby euery man may knowe the state of his owne body, the preseruacion of helthe, and how to instruct well his phisition in sicknes, that he be not deceyued’. Written in the span of two months upon discovering that his friend and patron was ill, and first printed in 1536,¹³ Elyot’s *Castell of Helthe* became one the bestsellers of the sixteenth century, appearing in at least sixteen editions before 1595.¹⁴ By the time of the augmented edition of 1541 Elyot had to include a preface (‘proheme’), responding to criticism from members of the Royal College of Physicians about his production of such a work in the vernacular. Elyot appealed to the history of medical literature in arguing that authoritative physician-authors of the past had not attempted to conceal knowledge of their art. More widespread knowledge of the principles of healthy diet would also improve prevention of disease.

Also to the intent that men obseruing a good order in diet, and preuenting the great causes of sicknes, they should of those maladies the sooner be cured. But if Phisitions be angry, that I haue written Phisick in English, let them remember that the Greekes wrote in Greeke, the Romaynes in Latine, Auicenna and the other in Arabike, which were their owne proper and maternall tongues. And if they had been as much attached with enuie & couetise, as some now seeme to be, they would haue deuised some particular language with a strange cypher or fourme of letters, wherein they would haue written their science, which language or letters no man should haue known, that had not professed and practised Phisicke...

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Interestingly, Elyot also wrote a Latin-English dictionary, dedicated to King Henry VIII.¹⁵ That century later witnessed a proliferation of similar popular works in the vernacular – what was controversial for Elyot, ‘both the originator and chief representative of this genre of publication’,¹⁶ became commonplace. Unlike these works, directed to the lay reader, scientific writing remained exclusively Latin.

Serving Salmon while Hot – A Dangerous Combination?

Two works of the genre pioneered by Elyot contain an unusual remark about salmon. Both were written in the late sixteenth century and were authored by practicing physicians (unlike Elyot). Thomas Cogan’s (d.1607) *The Haven of Health* (1584) comments:

Salmon though it be pleasant fish, and very sweete especially the belly thereof, yet it is not so wholesome as many others before mentioned, but much grosser,

more clammy, harder of digestion, and fuller of superfluity. And that it is not simply wholesome is proved hereby, *for that it is not used to be eaten hot, or immediately after it is boyled.* The Trout is of like nature, for it is the yong Salmon. The nature of the Salmon is to spawn in the fresh water, and after useth both fresh and salt.¹⁷

A similar observation appears in Thomas Moffet's (d.1604) *Healths Improvement* (1655), a work described as 'unquestionable the most eloquent, attractive and learned of a thriving tradition of English treatises on health directed at the layman'.¹⁸

Salmons are of a fatty, tender, short, and sweet flesh, quickly filling the stomach and soon glutting ... Some have pickled Salmon as Sturgian is used, and find it to be as dainty, and no less wholesom; but salt Salmon loseth a double goodness, the one of a good taste, the other of a good nourishment. *Hot Salmon is counted unwholesome in England, and suspected as a leprous meat, without all reason; for if it be sodden in wine, and afterwards well spiced, there is no danger of any such accident.*

As for Salmon peales (which indeed are nothing but Sea Trouts) howsoever they be highly commended of the Western and Welch people; yet are they never enough commended, being a more light, wholesom, and well tasted meat then the Salmon it self.¹⁹

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Moffet's family had engaged another physician, Christopher Bennet, to prepare *Healths Improvement* for publication half a century after Moffet's death. Despite the delay in its appearance, Bennet judged the work to be the best of its kind – 'I may safely say, upon this subject I know none that hath done better; and were *Platina, Apicius, or Alexandrinus,* with all the rest of Dietetick writers now alive, they would certainly own, and highly value this Discourse.'

Both Thomases share a concern with eating hot salmon.

Cogan's comments were copied without attribution into the seventeenth century encyclopedia of John Swan, *Speculum Mundi* (1635).²⁰ Moffet's discussion was lifted into the entry on salmon in Robert Lovell's (d.1690) *IIANZΩOPYKTOΛOΓIA. Sive Panzoologicomineralogia* (1661), who took the opposite approach of Swan, quoting numerous authorities all by name, among them sixteenth century naturalists like Conrad Gesner and Ulisse Aldrovandi.²¹ Lovell juxtaposed Moffet's concerns about the fatty nature of salmon, 'quickly filling the stomach, and soone glutting' with similar earlier comments that 'Maßarius preferreth them before all fishes; but they are to be eaten moderately, otherwise by reason of their excessive fatnesse, they cause surfeits'.²²

Fish and Leprosy

Cogan wrote that salmon was ‘not so wholesome’ but did not mention specific concerns that would stem from eating hot salmon. Moffet, on the other hand, and Lovell, following his lead, provided a much more precise fear among the English – that eating hot salmon would result in leprosy.

The association between fish and leprosy was perhaps an easy one to make. The discoloured and thickened patches of the leper’s skin could be thought to resemble the surface of a fish. In a popular late fourteenth century Middle English account of perhaps the most famous leper in the Middle Ages, Constantine the Great, the healing of the Roman emperor’s skin disease with his acceptance of Christianity was described as the leprosy falling from him ‘as if they were fishes’ scales’.²³ From the advent of modern dermatology and persisting to medical practice today there are a variety of genetic skin disorders still classified as ‘ichthyoses’ and physicians speak of psoriasis and other ‘scale diseases’. (Sufferers of leprosy were also encumbered by other non-ichthyological zoological eponyms like ‘elephantiasis’ and ‘leonine facies’.²⁴) Also, in the pre-refrigeration age, with uncooked fish prone to putrefaction, a similarity to the decaying body of the leper may have sprung to mind, as in Francesco Carletti’s linkage of the consumption of raw fish in Japan with leprosy. In an inverted form of the doctrine of signatures, consumption of a food that resembled the bodily defects from a particular illness was thought to trigger (rather than cure) the illness.

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In similar fashion to fish, the newly-discovered potato (and sweet potato) became known as a cause of leprosy in herbal literature.²⁵ ‘The white nodular tubers, with bulbous finger-like growths, may well have recalled the deformed hands and feet of the unfortunate leper.’²⁶ The sweet potato and then potato had also come to be seen as lust and lechery-inducing and this too engendered its connection to leprosy, a biblical punishment for vice.²⁷ Here too the shape of the edible root may have been involved. ‘Its shape, which is often of a somewhat elongated ovoid character, might suggest the likeness of a phallus, seeing that such fantasies are never difficult to conjure up... [Though] If the shape of a vegetable were the determining factor, then the carrot should have earned a like reputation centuries earlier...’²⁸ Similar thought processes likely lay behind the connection of fish and leprosy.

Seventeenth English authors commented that leprosy had become nearly extinct in Britain, persisting only in regions like Cornwall due to excessive fish-eating there, particularly from fresh (!) fish and fish liver. Richard Carew, in his history of the county of Cornwall, commented:

The much eating of fish, especially newly taken, and therein principally of the liuers, is reckoned a great breed of those contagious humours, which turne into Leprosie: but whence soeuer the cause proceedeth, dayly euents minister often pittifull spectacles to the Cornish mens eyes, of people visited with this affliction;

some being authours of their owne calamity by the forementioned diet, and some others succeeding therein to an haereditarius morbus of their ancestors: whom we will leaue to the poorest comfort in miserie, a helplesse pittie.²⁹

This dietary model of the pathogenesis of leprosy – emphasizing the role of individual health behaviour – was only one view.³⁰ Another one, prevalent in sixteenth and seventeenth century Britain, was to see leprosy as a foreign disease, imported to Europe by the Crusaders returning from the Holy Land. The most famous exponent of this approach was William Camden (1551-1623) in *Britannia* (1586), his influential and frequently revised and republished topographical and historical survey of Great Britain and Ireland.³¹ Classical authors like Lucretius, Galen, and Oribasius had noted that leprosy was endemic in Egypt. And Pliny, in the first century C.E., describing the arrival of leprosy to Italy, where it was not previously known, blamed the spread of the disease on the return of the army of Pompey from its Middle Eastern campaigns.³² The conception of the returning Crusader armies spreading leprosy in Europe after their return followed this earlier model.³³

The dietary and foreign import models of leprosy were fused in claims, like Carew's, that in Cornwall – the Cornish people like the Welsh, are an ethnically Celtic people, differing from the English majority – there was both excessive fish-eating and persistent endemic leprosy. Similar claims, as we shall see, were made about Ireland and Wales.

But what remains unclear is why, of all fish, salmon specifically would be linked to leprosy. Salmon may be spotted, but wouldn't all scaled fishes evoke the similarity to the leper's skin lesions? And why would the temperature of the fish matter? Leprosy, according to the humoural theory of medicine, was often associated with melancholia, combining *cold* and dry qualities. Most unsalted fish, like the water they were surrounded by, were considered to be cold in nature (referring to quality, not physical temperature). Why should *hot* salmon increase this?

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Salmon and Surfeit

In addition to concerns for leprosy, in their passages cautioning against eating hot salmon, Thomas Moffet and Robert Lovell had warned that salmon was 'quickly filling the stomach and soon glutting' and 'by reason of their excessive fatnesse, they cause surfeits'.

Surfeit was a major health concern for authors of medical works in sixteenth century England. Paynell, Elyot, Cogan, and the other scholars behind vernacular dietary handbooks were students of the Bible. Their works were informed by scholarly medical traditions, ancient and modern, with dutiful citations from Galen and Hippocrates, down to Paracelsus. But they also had a strong admixture of Christian concerns related to diet. In particular, the influence of Sirach (= Ecclesiasticus) 37:28-30 (in later versions, 37:29-31) on these dietary handbooks has been underappreciated. In the Geneva Bible of 1560, this passage appeared with the marginal note 'Of tēperācie [= temperancie]':

Be not || griedie in all delites, and be not to hastie vpon all meates.

For excesse of meates bringeth sicknes, and glotonie cometh into choliricke diseases.

By surfet haue manie perished: but he that dieteth him self, prolongeth his life.³⁴

At the beginning of his translation of the *Regimen Sanitatis*, Thomas Paynell included his letter to John, Earl of Oxford. Paynell asked why it was that the lifespans listed for figures of the biblical and classical past far outpaced that of his contemporaries. His answer was the immoderate diet of many in his generation, referring to this passage in Sirach, making his translation of the *Regimen* necessary:

Truely the prouerbe sayth / that there dye many mo by surfet / than by the sworde. Accordyng wherto ye wyse mā sayth: Surfet sleeth many a one: and temperance prolongeth the life. Surfet and diuersites of meates and drynkes / lettynge and corruptyng the digestiō febleth man / and very oft causeth this shortnes of lyfe.

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On the titlepage of Thomas Cogan's *Haven of Health*, immediately under the name of the author, we find a solitary verse quoted in full: 'Ecclesiasticus Cap. 37.30. By surfet have many perished: but he that dieteth himselfe prolongeth his life.' Paynell, Elyot, and Cogan all authored separate books dedicated entirely to extracts of important biblical verses. (Elyot's included other proverbs as well.) Wisdom from Ecclesiasticus served as a prominent source for these, and the verses above were cited as authoritative biblical sources on diet.³⁵ Thomas Moffet too dedicated a chapter to 'Temperance what it is' and explained that 'There be two vices equally opposite to this vertue; Surfeiting, when a man eateth more then either his stomach can hold or his strength digest; and Self-pining, when we eate less then our nature craveth and is able to overcome'.³⁶

The wealthy ruling class, who wanted for little, would be especially susceptible to this vice and Thomas Elyot's *The boke named Governour*, dedicated to Henry VIII and directed to the training of statesmen, noted that 'The prouerbes of Salomom, with the bokes of Ecclesiastes and Ecclesiasticus, be very good lessons' and he included a chapter 'Of sobriete in diete'. The need for this would have been well understood – two prior kings of England were reputed to have met their ends through immoderate eating – one through a surfeit of lampreys, the other from a surfeit of peaches.³⁷ The general populace was at risk for this too though, and bills of mortality from seventeenth century London, listing diseases with number of casualties caused by each, have surfeit as a prominent cause of death, alongside more well-characterized menaces in early modern England such as consumption, dropsie, smallpox, and the plague.

The caution against surfeit was also transmitted as proverbial wisdom. Thomas Cogan quoted the Greek poet Theognis that ‘surfeit hath destroyed mo than famin’.³⁸ A multitude of variants of this proverb appeared in Latin, English, Italian, and French in the late Middle Ages and in Early Modern Europe. One popular version (already found in the sermons of Jean Gerson [1363-1429]) was ‘Gula plures occidit quam gladius’ (the gullet [= gluttony] has killed more than the sword).³⁹ It appeared in a work of Petrarch (1304-1374) as well.⁴⁰ Other versions included: ‘They digge their Graves with their teeth’, ‘Meat kills as many as the Musket’ (once firearms became popular in Europe), and ‘The board kills more than the sword’.⁴¹ John Florio cited types of these sayings which suggest that surfeit was viewed by Italians as a particular problem among the English: ‘This cramming after the English fashion, and feasting as they doo is cause of manie diseases. Surfet, and excesse, kills more men in England than any infirmitie else.’⁴²

Here too, as with leprosy, it remains unclear why surfeit would be a concern specifically from salmon. While according to some authors other sea creatures like shellfish, including crabs and lobsters, were also described as ‘apt to Surfeit and putrifie in the Stomach’⁴³ there is no similar warning about eating them hot and recently boiled.⁴⁴

Salmon, Thornback, and Conger

Dietetic works did mention concerns relating to serving temperature for several fish species aside from salmon. This suggests that the warnings about hot salmon are not entirely unique, and seem to be solely a medical issue.

In the chapter immediately following his discussion of salmon, Thomas Cogan discusses ‘Of Ray and Thornebacke’ commenting ‘This fish also is thought unwholesome, *if it be eaten hote*, and to dispose a man to the falling euill [= epilepsy]. Which noyseome quality (as I thinke) doth rise thereby, for that it is so moist a fish and full of superfluity...’⁴⁵ Similar comments warning against consuming the thornback hot, like salmon, were made by Tobias Venner and an appendix to the 1634 edition of the *Regimen Sanitatis Salerni*. John Swan noted that consuming thornback could cause epilepsy, but did not link this specifically to consuming the fish hot.

Similarly, Thomas Moffet noted, akin to his comments on salmon, that the conger eel was ‘hard of digestion for most stomachs’ but here there were dangers in consuming it either hot or cold – ‘engending chollicks if they be eaten cold, & leprosius if they be eaten hot after their seething’.⁴⁶ As by salmon, Robert Lovell copied the passage from Moffet nearly verbatim.⁴⁷

Though the inclusion of temperature restrictions for thornback and conger alongside salmon, and the references to leprosy, epilepsy, and colic suggest that the concerns over hot salmon were entirely medical in nature, the standard medical works utilized by authors of the vernacular dietetic handbooks are silent when it comes to the temperature of foods.

Neither classical authors like Hippocrates and Galen, nor medieval ones like Isaac Israeli, Avicenna, Rhazes, and Ibn Abbas al-Majusi ('Haly Abbas'), nor Old Anglo-Saxon medical texts like Bald's Leechbook and the Lacnunga, mention medical concerns related to the temperatures of specific foods. And this should not have been expected – terms like hot, cold, moist, and dry according to the prevalent medical theory referred not to the physical, tactile qualities of a food, but to its essential qualities, its properties that influenced the humours. When sugar or salt were categorized in medical and dietetic texts as hot, this did not reflect a view suggesting that they would feel warm to the tongue, but how they fit into a system of cause and effect on the person consuming them.⁴⁸ One notable early exception was water, where the optimal temperature for drinking was debated.⁴⁹ Discussions of the physical temperature of foods were relatively rare.⁵⁰

Serving Temperature

Physical temperature was not only absent from medical texts. Serving temperature (apart from cooking temperature) was not a standard component of recipes in medieval and early modern times either, and thus has not been discussed much by culinary historians.⁵¹ When optimal service temperature of foods was mentioned it was typically linked to the method of preparation, rather than to the ingredients. Fried dishes, for example, would be best served while hot. The Catalan *Llibre d'aparellar de menjar* specified that fritters 'should be eaten hot, as they are worthless when cold'.⁵² Quite understandable, as freshly fried doughnuts are vastly superior to their cold counterparts late in the day at Krispy Kreme. The same was true for fish.⁵³ Fried sardines, for example, were preferred hot.⁵⁴ Some chefs left serving temperature up to the individual cook – it did not matter either way. Bartolomeo Scappi in over a dozen places concludes an otherwise precise recipe 'serve it hot or cold, whichever you like', while elsewhere expressing a clear preference for how a dish is to be served.⁵⁵ If there was a medical rationale for food temperature, would there have been options? In a later period, serving temperature was connected to the place and order of a dish within the meal, again, not to the primary ingredient.⁵⁶

This was regarding the upper classes, for whose chefs the medieval and Renaissance cookbooks were written. For everyday medieval people there may not have been as much of a choice on serving temperature. Martha Carlin suggests that for the poor, especially during the lean months of the year, 'hot meat, and even hot food, was a luxury', citing passages from Chaucer and William Langland's *Piers Plowman*.⁵⁷

Interestingly, an exception to the absence of discussion of serving temperature can be found in late medieval English culinary manuscripts. There we find a far more systematic discussion of temperature based in large measure upon the primary ingredient in the recipe. For the fish recipes in fifteenth century Beinecke MS 163 and Harleian MS 4016, the authors clearly specify whether to 'serve it forth cold' or 'serve it forth hot'.⁵⁸ Not all fish

are served at the same temperature. Thornback and conger do not appear in either recipe collection, but in Harleian MS 4016 we find ‘Salmon fressh boiled’ with instructions for after the cooking has been completed: ‘...And Þen ye shall serue hit forthe colde’ matching the temperature advice found over a century later in the works of Thomas Cogan and Thomas Moffet and their followers.⁵⁹ These recipe collections do not specify why certain fish are to be served hot and others cold, though the rule does not seem to be based upon gustatory concerns, as there is a consistency between prescriptions for serving found here and the various characterizations of the healthfulness of fish species in sixteenth century dietary handbooks, which deserves additional study. However, it is only the serving temperature of salmon, plucked from lists of a dozen other fish recipes, which survives in subsequent centuries.

Salmon, England’s National History, and Her Neighbours

The warning against hot salmon cannot be explained fully by concerns about leprosy and surfeit. Its focus on physical temperature, as opposed to humoural quality of hot, marks it as different from the typical health concerns of the era; unsurprisingly, such a warning is absent from traditional classical and medieval medical works. Systematic concern with the serving temperature of many species of fish can be found in fifteenth century English recipe collections, but this does not adequately explain why fears about salmon alone, with a linkage to a stigmatizing disease like leprosy (whose genesis in England was attributed to foreigners), persist in vernacular dietary handbooks until at least the mid-seventeenth century. This cannot be attributed to solely medical or gustatory considerations.

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One clue can be found in Thomas Moffet’s words that ‘hot salmon is counted unwholesome *in England*’ (emphasis added). Apparently, according to Moffet, outside of England, hot salmon *was* eaten, to the detriment of those who partook of it. In his *Irelands naturall history* (1652) – a book dedicated to Oliver Cromwell – Gerard Boate, a Dutch physician living in England, who for most of his life had never set foot in Ireland, dedicated a chapter to ‘the Diseases reigning in Ireland, and whereunto that country is peculiarly subject’. Following the Tudor conquest of Ireland, the English crown had confiscated Irish lands – the largest of which was the plantation of Ulster – and planned to colonize it with settlers from Great Britain. After the defeat of the Irish Catholic Confederation forces under Cromwell in 1652, the Act for the Settlement of Ireland promoted additional land confiscations.⁶⁰ Potential British settlers would be curious what to expect if they headed westward and Boate’s book, published posthumously, and prepared by Samuel Hartlib (d.1662) along with Boate’s brother, Arnold (d.1653), attempted to fill this need. He reported that leprosy had been endemic in Ireland in the past (just as Carew had claimed that leprosy had been endemic among the Cornish), a fact commonly attributed (presumably by the British) to the gluttonous consumption by the Irish of ‘boiled Salmons...hot out of the Kettle in great

quantity' without waiting for them to cool.⁶¹ (*Irelands naturall history* was printed in 1652, several years before the initial printing of Thomas Moffet's *Healths Improvement* in 1655; Boate's work is thus an independent witness for a widely held belief in a link between hot salmon and leprosy.) Boate himself, however, attributed leprosy in Ireland to the Irish eating salmon during the inappropriate season, when the fish are less healthful, taking pains to emphasize the ungratefulness of the Irish to the English who had outlawed salmon fishing during 'that unwholesome season', supposedly reducing the prevalence of leprosy there. Boate seemed surprised that despite this 'that hatefull people [the Irish] hath rewarded with seeking to utterly exterminate their benefactors [the British]'.⁶²

Samuel Hartlib, in a book of his own from 1655, repeated the claim that leprosy had been endemic in Ireland because of consumption of salmon during the wrong season. He referred to a Fish-Calendar printed in the Low Countries where 'under every Month are expressed in picture, without any names set by them, the several sorts of Fish fit to be then eaten'.⁶³ Examples of such calendars survive to this day from the fifteenth century onward.⁶⁴ Apparently, the Irish should have been sensitive to the information contained in calendars such as these to guide their fish-eating.

One of the Samuel Hartlib papers, preserved at the University of Sheffield (though not written in Hartlib's own hand), expands upon concerns related to eating salmon in the wrong season. Citing anecdotes from a 'Mr. Church', this undated 'Memo on Herring & Salmon Fishing' speaks of the poor quality of the spawning salmon in Lough Neagh, the largest freshwater lake in Northern Ireland, between Michaelmas (29 Sept) and Allhollandtide (1 Nov):

Now as the Salmon is weake and poore, not to bee eaten, a while before the spawning, soe after it hee groweth worse, yet Leaprous, and all over full of white spotts for all the world like a scalled head soe as it would loath one to see them; yet the Irish, if not looked to, will both before and after the spawning take them in abundance, (and eat them greedilie) not only in the day time, but alsoe in the night by lights; This poore and diseased Salmon continueth in the Logh till Ianuary ...⁶⁵

Here, the sickly appearing salmon, covered in white spots, recalled the pale sores of the leper, likely triggering the association between salmon-eating and disease.

Interestingly, what Moffet (and the English tradition regarding the Irish cited by Boate) recognized – that avoidance of hot salmon was uniquely English, distinguishing them from the Irish (and other Gaelic and Celtic peoples?) – points to the earliest possible source for this dietary warning in Moffet and Cogan. Surprisingly, it is not in a medical or culinary work. Disapproval of those who ate hot salmon can be found in several popular *historical* works, among them some of the most frequently reprinted books of the incunabular era.

These were brought to the press repeatedly by such famed early English printers as William Caxton and Wynkyn de Worde, indicating that they must have had a wide audience to merit the expense of republication.⁶⁶ These fifteenth and early sixteenth century chronicles, telling the national history of England, were based upon translations of the *Polychronicon* of Ranulf Higden (d.1364). There, we find a poetic section where the English author describes the Welsh and their customs, among them: ‘quod contra jussum physicum | edunt salmonem calidum’, in a fourteenth century Middle English translation of John of Trevisa (d.1402): ‘They eteþ hote samoun alway, | They phisik seie nay.’⁶⁷

This section on Wales is not without controversy, with some connecting authorship of the poem to Walter Map,⁶⁸ who claimed Welsh origins for himself, others linking it to Map’s more well-known contemporary, Gerald of Wales, author of famous twelfth century travelogues on Wales and Ireland, and still others to Higden himself.⁶⁹ Whomever the author, most scholars have assumed that this ethnographic description of the Welsh, the ‘Cambriæ Epitome’, is a summary of the contents of the *Descriptio Kambriæ* and the *Itinerarium Kambriæ* of Gerald. However, while the *Descriptio Kambriæ* does indeed contain a passage on the Welsh and the temperature of food – it actually says the exact opposite of what we would expect based upon this section of the *Polychronicon*: ‘Both sexes take great care of their teeth, more than I have seen in any country. They are constantly cleaning them with green hazel-shoots and then rubbing them with woolen cloths until they shine like ivory. To protect their teeth *they [the Welsh] never eat hot food*, but only what is cold, tepid or slightly warm.’⁷⁰ If, according to the Gerald, the Welsh avoid hot foods, doubtful that they would make an exception for hot salmon. The origins of the claim found in the *Polychronicon* / *Cambriæ Epitome* that the Welsh eat hot salmon remain unclear.⁷¹

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But it is remarkable that criticism of the eating habits of others with regard specifically to salmon, repeated by the English about the Irish in the seventeenth-century period of the Protectorate (shortly after Cromwell’s forces occupied Ireland), can be found already centuries earlier in English reports about the Welsh.

Hot Salmon and Celtic Mythology

While couched in the language of medical advice (‘quod contra jussum physicum’), it is possible that salmon loomed large in the minds of Englishmen when conceptualizing neighbouring Celtic and Gaelic peoples for entirely non-scientific reasons. Salmon symbolism figures prominently in the carvings on the Pictish standing stones of Scotland, all found adjacent to rivers and the seashore. Iconography of salmon adorns the Book of Kells. Interestingly, *hot* salmon figures prominently in the Fenian Cycle of Irish mythology, in the origin story of the hero, Fionn mac Cumhail, and in a parallel account in the Welsh stories collected in the *Mabinogion*. The tale of the Boyhood Deeds of Finn features the salmon of knowledge, a salmon that ate nine hazelnuts that fell into the Well of Wisdom.

Fish and Foreigners

The first person to eat of the flesh of the salmon would gain its knowledge, and so the poet Finnécés had spent years fishing for this salmon:

Seven years Finnécés had been on the Boyne, watching the salmon of Fec's Pool; for it had been prophesied of him that he would eat the salmon of Féc, when nothing would remain unknown to him.

The salmon was found, and Demne was then ordered to cook the salmon.

The youth brought him the salmon after cooking it.

'Hast thou eaten anything of the salmon, my lad?' says the poet.

'No,' says the youth, 'but I burned my thumb, and put it in my mouth afterwards.'

'What is thy name, my lad?' says he.

'Demne,' says the youth.

'Finn is thy name, my lad,' says he; 'and to thee was the salmon given to be eaten, and verily thou art the Finn.' Thereupon the youth eats the salmon.

It is that which gave the knowledge to Finn, to wit, whenever he put his thumb into his mouth, and sang through *teinm Iáida*, then whatever he had been ignorant of would be revealed to him.⁷²

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Fionn, in placing his thumb in his mouth to soothe the burn, tasted the juices of the hot salmon of knowledge. This enabled Fionn to become the hero of Irish legend. Could British chroniclers have had such foundational myths of their neighbours in mind when cautioning against the consumption of hot salmon, disguising it as a medical matter?

Disappearance of the Taboo

The concern about hot salmon did not last. Modes of salmon cookery changed between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Frequently reprinted English cookbooks of the sixteenth century directed that 'Eles, freshe Salmon, Conger...*never fryed* but baken, boyled, roasted or sodden.'⁷³ Already in the late fourteenth century romance, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, we find a list of methods of fish cookery. Absent among these is frying (and not just in reference to salmon):

Staff came quickly and served him in style

With several soups all seasoned to taste,

Double helpings as was fitting, *and a feast of fish,*

Some baked in bread, some browned over flames,

Some boiled or steamed, some stewed in spices

And subtle sauces to tantalize his tongue.⁷⁴

However, by the seventeenth century most English cookbooks now included recipes for fried salmon.⁷⁵ This shift may have occurred under French influence, where, as J.L. Flandrin has demonstrated, butter had suddenly become fashionable in the kitchen. Fried foods were best eaten hot, not cold, and fried salmon would have been no different.⁷⁶

Notes

1. Oddone Longo, 'The Food of Others', in: *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*, edited by Jean-Louis Flandrin & Massimo Montanari, trans. by Albert Sonnenfeld (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p. 159. Cf. Oddone Longo, 'I mangiatori di pesci: regime alimentare e quadro culturale', *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici* 18 (1987): 9-55.
2. Luís Fróis, *The First European Description of Japan, 1585*, trans. by Richard K. Danford, Robin D. Gill, & Daniel T. Reff (Routledge, 2014), pp. 130-131. For another English translation, see: Clive Willis, 'Captain Jorge Álvares and Father Luís Fróis S.J.: Two Early Portuguese Descriptions of Japan and the Japanese', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, third series, 22.2 (April 2012): 418.
3. Michael Cooper, ed., *João Rodrigues's Account of Sixteenth-Century Japan* (London: Hakluyt Society / Routledge, 2001), p. 267.
4. Bishop (Mark Napier) Trollope, 'The Carletti Discourse: A Contemporary Italian Account of a Visit to Japan in 1597-98', *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, second series, 9 (1932): 12. This translation is cited in part (omitting the section about leprosy) in: Michael Cooper, ed., *They Came to Japan: An Anthology of European Reports on Japan, 1543-1640* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965; reprint: Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1995), p. 191. For an alternate translation: Francesco Carletti, *My Voyage Around the World: The Chronicles of a 16th Century Florentine Merchant*, trans. by Herbert Weinstock (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), p. 110.
5. This association between fish diet and leprosy in Japan was reasserted at end of the 19th century by the American physician Albert S. Ashmead (1850-1911), basing himself upon the work of the English physician Jonathan Hutchinson (1828-1913) who crusaded about the dangers of a fish diet and its link with leprosy for half a century. Ashmead had taught at the medical school of the Tokyo Charity Hospital and served as foreign medical director of a hospital there for several years in the 1870s. Both Ashmead and Hutchinson were prolific writers and proselytized for the acceptance of their theories extensively, including for decades after the discovery of *Mycobacterium leprae* (which eventually demonstrated an infectious rather than dietary or environmental pathophysiology behind leprosy).
6. *The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus*, trans. by Benjamin Keen (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1959; reprinted Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), p. 234. (For another mention of raw fish, see p. 72.) For the original Italian text, see: *Historie Del S.D. Fernando Colombo; Nelle quali s'ha particolare, & vera relatione della vita, & de' fatti dell' Ammiraglio D. Christophoro Colombo, su padre...* (Venice: Francesco de' Francesci Sanese, 1571), p. 202a. On Hernando Colón and his biography of his father, see: Edward Wilson-Lee, *The Catalogue of Shipwrecked Books: Christopher Columbus, His Son, and the Quest to Build the World's Greatest Library* (New York: Scribner, 2018), esp. pp. 298-307, 337-339.
7. For characterization of peoples encountered by European explorers according to diets of raw fish or raw meat see: Richard Hakluyt, ed., *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation...* (London: George Bishop, Ralfe Newberies, & Robert Barker), Vol. I (1599), pp. 283, 491 (accounts of Giles Fletcher and the voyages of Richard Chancellor); Vol. III (1600), pp. 751, 807, 809 (accounts of the voyages of Francis Drake and Thomas Cavendish). For Giles Fletcher, see his: *Of the Russe common wealth...* (London: Printed by Thomas Dawson for Thomas Charde, 1591), p. 75. See also:

- Richard Hakluyt, ed., *Diuers voyages touching the discoverie of America...* (London, Thomas Dawson for Thomas Woodcocke, 1582); with notes by John Winter Jones (London: Hakluyt Society, 1850), p. 23 (account of the voyage of Sebastian Cabot); Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1563-1611), *Itinerario, Voyage ofte Schipvaert / van Jan Huygen van Linschoten naar Dost ofte portugals Indien...* (Amsterdam: Cornelis Claesz, 1596), p. 21 = *Ibid.*, *His Discours of Voyages Into Ye Easte & West Indies: Deuided Into Foure Bookes* (London: John Wolfe, 1598), p. 27; see the introductory section 'to the reader' – at the recommendation of 'Maister Richard Hackluyt, a man that laboureth greatly to aduance our English Name and Nation', the printer arranged for this work of 'John-Hugh Linschote' to be translated into English. These European accounts emphasizing foreigners eating raw flesh and fish had medieval antecedents. Cf. *Caxton's Mirrour of the World*, ed. by Oliver H. Prior (Early English Text Society) (London, 1913), pp. 70-71 (a fanciful account of the people of India), based upon the *Imago Mundi* of Honorius Augustodunensis (d. 1154).
8. While the opposition of the raw vs. the cooked could be profitably applied here (Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked* (Mythologiques, Vol. I), trans. by John & Doreen Weightman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983)), the focus here will be on why fish (rather than raw food in general) was used to distinguish between self and other. Consumption of raw meat was also frequently mentioned, but did not generally elicit as visceral response. Cf. Thomas Cogan, *Healths improvement* (London: Tho. Newcomb for Samuel Thomson, 1655), p. 47: 'What is raw flesh till it be prepared, but an imperfect lump? ...onely Oysters of all fish are good raw...Other fish being eaten raw, is harder of digestion then raw beife: for Diogenes died with eating of raw fish...As for raw flesh...who dare almost touch it with their fingers? Much less grind it with their teeth...' Ichthyophobia does not feature in Marvin Harris, *Good to Eat: Riddles of Food and Culture* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1998).
 9. William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, Vol. I, ed. & trans. by R.A.N. Mynors, completed by R.M. Thomson & M. Winterbottom (Oxford Medieval Texts) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), iv.348.2, p. 607.
 10. Patricia W. Cummins, 'A Salernitan Regimen of Health', *Allegorica* 1.2 (Fall, 1976): 82-83, l. 1 – 'Anglorum regi scripsit scola tota Salerni [The whole School of Salerno wrote for the English king]...'
 11. *The Governayle of helthe* (Westminster: William Caxton, c.1490); reprinted as: *Governall of helthe* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1506?).
 12. *Regimen sanitatis Salerni. This boke techyng al people to gouerne them in helthe, is translated out of the Latyne tonge in to englyshe by Thomas Paynell...* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1528).
 13. There is some controversy regarding the date of the *editio princeps*. See, e.g.: Andrzej Kuropatnicki, 'Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Castel of Helth* as an Example of Popular Renaissance Medical Literature', *Annales Academiæ Paedagogicæ Cracoviensis* (Studia Romanica II) 18 (2003): 157; John Villads Skov, 'The First Edition of Sir Thomas Elyot's *Castell of Helthe* with Introduction and Critical Notes', (PhD dissertation, UCLA, 1970), p. 4.
 14. Paul Slack, 'Mirrors of health and treasures of poor men: the uses of the vernacular medical literature of Tudor England', in: *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. by Charles Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 248. The early editions of Elyot's work were produced by Thomas Berthelet; during the same years, copies of Paynell's translation of the Regimen of Salerno were coming off Berthelet's press.
 15. Thomas Elyot, *The dictionary of syr Thomas Eliot knyght* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1538). See Gabriele Stein, *Sir Thomas Elyot as Lexicographer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). Elyot also dedicated a book about training statesmen to Henry VIII (*The boke named the Governour*, 1531; see: *A critical edition of Sir Thomas Elyot's The boke named governour*, ed. by Donald W. Rude [New York: Garland Press, 1992]).
 16. Slack, op. cit., p. 250.
 17. Italics mine. I have cited the fourth edition (London: Richard Field for Bonham Norton, 1596), p. 144. (*The editio princeps* was: London: Henrie Midleton for William Norton, 1584.)
 18. Victor Houliston, 'How Good Were Little Miss Muffet's Curds and Whey?' *Oxford Symposium on Food & Cookery, 1986: The Cooking Medium: Proceedings*, ed. by Tom Jaine (Prospect Books, 1987), p. 75.
 19. Italics mine. Thomas Moffet (d.1604), *Healths Improvement* (London: Printed by Tho. Newcomb for Samuel Thomson, 1655), pp. 186-187.
 20. John Swan, *Speculum Mundi. Or, a Glasse Representing the Face of the World...* (Printers to the Universitie of Cambridge, 1635), p. 387. The title links Swan's work to the encyclopedia tradition of the

- Middle Ages, from the *Speculum maius* of Vincent of Beauvais (13th c.). Swan's *Speculum Mundi* was reprinted in 1643, 1665, and 1670. Swan frequently cites anonymous 'authorities' but he also directly refers to Cogan as 'the author of the haven of health' (on pp. 244, 245, 269, 458), though not in the section on fish.
21. Robert Lovell, *ΠΑΝΖΩΟΡΥΚΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ*. [*Panzooryktologia*.] *Sive Panzoologicomineralogia. Or a Compleat History Of Animals and Minerals...* (Oxford: Hen. Hall for Jos. Godwin, 1661), p. 220 (quoting 'Muff'. = Thomas Moffet).
 22. Francesco Massari was a sixteenth-century Venetian physician who authored a commentary on Pliny's *Natural History*. See Francisci Massarii Veneti, *In nonvm Plinii De naturali historia Librium Castigationes & Annotationes* (Paris: Michaëlis Vascosani, 1542), p. 42 (an earlier edition was Basileae: Froben, 1537); Ulisse Aldrovandi, *De piscibus libri V* (Bologna, 1613), pp. 481ff. (he cites Francesco Massari on p. 484). Cf. Johannes Bruerinus Campegius, *De re cibaria libri XXII* (Lyon: Sebast. Honoratum, 1560), p. 1123; Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1621), p. 90 (1.2.2.1).
 23. *Confessio Amantis of John Gower*, ed. by Reinhold Pauli, Vol. I (London: Bell and Daldy, 1857), p. 275.
 24. Much more could be said about the history of zoological eponyms in medicine (and its effect on patients). See for now: William H.C. Burgdorf & Leonard J. Hoenig, 'Favorite animal names in dermatology', *JAMA Dermatology* 149.8 (Aug, 2013): 997; Nidhi Jindal, et al., 'Animals Eponyms in Dermatology', *Indian Journal of Dermatology* 59.6 (Nov-Dec, 2014): 631. For such eponyms in neurology: Shin C. Beh, et al., 'The menagerie of neurology: Animal signs and the refinement of clinical acumen', *Neurology Clinical Practice* 4.2 (June, 2014): e1-e9.
 25. Caspar Bauhin (1560-1624), *ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟΣ* [*Prodromos*] *theatri botanici* (Frankfurt am Main: Paul Jacob for Johann Treudel, 1620), p. 90; John Gerard (d.1612), *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes...very much enlarged and amended by Thomas Johnson*, Vol. II (London, 1636), p. 928 ('† *Baubine* saith, That he heard that the use of these roots was forbidden in Bourgondy (where they call them Indian Artichokes) for that they were persuaded that too frequent use of them caused the leprosy. †'); Jean Bauhin, *Historia plantarum*, Vol. III (Yverdon, Switzerland, 1651), p. 622. C. Bauhin had commented upon the consumption of potatoes in Burgundy already in his *ΦΥΤΟΠΙΝΑΕ* [*Phytopinax*] *seu Enumeratio plantarum...* (Basel: Sebastian Henricpetri, 1596), Appendix, note to p. 302, line 14. Concern about leprosy is absent from discussion of the potato in the first edition of *The Herball*, published during Gerard's lifetime (London: John Norton, 1597), pp. 780-782. For extensive discussion on the potato and leprosy with additional sources (e.g., John Ray, Robert Lovell, details of the legendary French ban on the potato, etc.), see: Redcliffe N. Salaman, *The History and Social Influence of the Potato*, revised impression ed. by J.G. Hawkes (Cambridge University Press, 1949; revised edition, 1985), pp. 108-114.
 26. Redcliffe N. Salaman, *op. cit.*, p. 112.
 27. E.g.; Thomas Moffet, *Healths Improvement* (London: Tho: Newcomb for Samuel Thomson, 1655), p. 226; Joan Fitzpatrick, *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dieters and the Plays* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 86; Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, Vol. II: G-P (London & Atlantic Highlands, NJ: The Althone Press, 1994), pp. 1079-1080; Redcliffe N. Salaman, *op. cit.*, pp. 425-429.
- For an interesting example of this belief in seventeenth-century England: As part of the celebration of the Sabbath it was customary for Jewish spouses to have conjugal relations on Friday evenings (*Shulban Aruk* O.H. 280). To enable this, the Talmud (bBQ 82a and yMeg 4:1) recommended consumption of garlic during the daytime on Friday or on Friday evening, as garlic was considered an aphrodisiac (R. Abraham Gombiner, *Magen Abraham* to O.H. 280:1; the advice to eat garlic was believed to be an ordinance enacted by the biblical Ezra and his court). (See, e.g.: Julius Preuss, *Biblical and Talmudic Medicine*, trans. by Fred Rosner [Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004], p. 461; Fred Rosner, 'Mandrakes and other aphrodisiacs in the Bible and Talmud', *Korot* 7.11-12 [June, 1980]: 277-284.) The Christian Hebraist Johannes Buxtorf the Elder (1564-1629) detailed this practice in his Jewish ethnography, originally published in German as *Synagoga Judaica Das ist Juden Schul* (Basel: Sebastian Henricpetri, 1603), p. 340 ('darumb essen sie knoblauch vor dem Sabbath'; knoblauch = garlic). This work became very popular and was translated into multiple other European languages. The Latin editions also correctly refer here to garlic (*alliis*). See, e.g., *Synagoga Judaica* (Basel: Ludovici König, 1641), p. 246. However, the English translation of the work replaces the Talmudic garlic with the potato – reflecting the contemporary European view that potatoes could induce lust and act as an aphrodisiac.

The lack of fidelity in translation here must have been intentional. *The Jewish synagogue, or, An historical narration of the state of the Jewes at this day dispersed over the face of the whole earth...*, trans. by A.B., Mr. A. of Q. Col. in Oxford (London: Printed by T. Roycroft for H.R. and Thomas Young, 1657), p. 157 – ‘Now seeing they will have the Sabbath to signifie delight, therefore their wise Doctors think it good, and as a great honor unto the day, if any married man, but especially one of the Rabbines, who is learned and well seen in knowledge, upon the Sabbath day at night, hug and kisse his wife a little more then ordinary. And this is the cause that *they eat store of potato roots* before the Sabbath begin, that they may become more valiant in the act of carnall copulation.’ (Italics mine.)

28. Redcliffe N. Salaman, *op. cit.*, p. 425.
29. Richard Carew (1555-1620), *The survey of Cornwall* (London: Printed by S. Stafford for John Jaggard, 1602), p. 68. Cf. Thomas Fuller, *A triple reconciler stating the controversies whether ministers have an exclusive power of communicants from the Sacrament* (London: Printed for Will. Bently for John Williams, 1654), p. 2 (‘I say generally, a Leper is a rarity, some few in Cornwell caused, as Phisicians conceive from the frequent eating of fish new taken out of the sea...’); *Samuel Hartlib His Legacy of Husbandry...* [3rd edition] (London: Printed by J.M. for Richard Wodnothe, 1655), p. 136 (‘...but Physicians say it came from eating of fish; for where most fish was eaten, there it most abounded; and eating of fish being left; that noisome disease (God be thanked) is even totally unknown, and all Hospitals for them dissolved...’).
30. It had a basis in earlier medical literature. Avicenna, for example, linked the consumption of ‘essentially bad food, whether from the kind of fish, or salted meat, coarse flesh, the meat of donkeys, and lentils’ with leprosy. See Luke Demaitre, *Leprosy in Premodern Medicine: A Malady of the Whole Body* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), p. 164.
31. William Camden, *Britannia, sive Florentissimorum regnorum, Angliæ, Scotiæ, Hiberniæ, et Insularum Adjacentium...* (London: Radulphum Newbery, 1587), pp. 338-339 (section on Leicestershire); *Britain, or A chorographically description of the most flourishing kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the ilands adjoining...*, trans. by Philemon Holland (London: Printed by F. K[ingston] R. Y[oung] and I. L[egatt] for George Latham, 1637), p. 522.
32. See, e.g.: Harold S. Snellgrove, ‘Leprosy in Ancient and Medieval Times, with especial reference to the Franks’ *The Mississippi Quarterly* 7.4 (July, 1954): 2; Luke Demaitre, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.
33. For some adopting the view of Camden: Thomas Fuller, *The Historie of the Holy Warre* (Cambridge: Printed by Thomas Buck..., 1639), p. 254; *ibid.*, *A triple reconciler stating the controversies whether ministers have an exclusive power of communicants from the Sacrament* (London: Printed for Will. Bently for John Williams, 1654), pp. 2-3; *ibid.*, *The church-history of Britain* (London: Printed for John Williams..., 1655), p. 280; Edward Chamberlayne, *Angliæ Notitia or the Present State of England Compleat* (London: Printed by T.N. for John Martyn, 1669), p. 38; *Samuel Hartlib His Legacy of Husbandry* (London: Printed by J.M. for Richard Wodnothe, 1655), p. 136 (citing ‘Camden’). See Timothy S. Miller & John W. Nesbitt, *Walking Corpses: Leprosy in Byzantium and the Medieval West* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014) on the increase in number of leprosaria following the First Crusade.
34. *The Bible and Holy Scriptures Conteyned in The Olde and Neue Testament...* (Geneva: Rowland Hall, 1560), p. 438, col. D.
35. *The piththy [sic] and moost notable sayinges of al scripture, gathered by Thomas Paynell* (London: Thomas Gaultier, 1550), p. 64a (Sir 37:28-30); Thomas Elyot, *The Bankette of Sapience* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1545), p. 14b, s.v. Diete (Sir 37:29); Thomas Cogan, *The Well of Wisedome: conteining chiefe and chosen sayinges... gathered out of the five books of the olde Testament, especially belonging to Wisedome, that is to say, the Prouerbes of Salomon, Ecclesiastes, Canticum, Sapientia and Ecclesiasticus...* (London: Thomas Vautrollier, 1577), p. 24, s.v. Diet (Sir 37:28-30). Cf. Jennifer Richards, ‘Useful Books: Reading Vernacular Regimens in Sixteenth-Century England’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (April 2012): 265 (but correct her reference from Ecclesiastes to Ecclesiasticus; these are two different biblical books, the latter is in the Apocrypha, otherwise known as Sirach).
36. Thomas Moffet, *op. cit.*, pp. 274ff.
37. On King John (d.1216), who had granted the Magna Carta but a year earlier, see: Roger Wendover, *Chronica, sive Flores Historiarum = Roger of Wendover’s Flowers of History...formerly ascribed to Matthew Paris*, trans. by J.A. Giles, Vol. II (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1849), p. 378: ‘...his sickness was

- increased by his pernicious glyttony, for that night he surfeited himself with peaches and drinking new cider, which greatly increased and aggravated the fever in him'. (This was among several accounts of his cause of death. Chr. Watson, in 'Replies: King John poisoned by a Toad', *Notes and Queries*, 10th series, Vol. IV, No. 103 [Dec. 16, 1905]: 492-493). On King Henry I (d.1135), see: Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People*, trans. by Diana Greenway (Oxford Medieval Texts) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. vii.43 and 491.
38. Thomas Cogan, *The Haven of Health* (London: Richard Field for Bonham Norton, 1596), p. 219.
 39. James Woodrow Hassell, Jr., *Middle French Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982), p. 256, G1 (Appendix. Proverbs in Other Languages).
 40. *A Dialogue between Reason and Adversity: A Late Middle English Version of Petrarch's De Remediis*, ed. by F.N.M. Diekstra (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968), p. 39: 'It is wreten þat for surfet many hath perched. 3e glotenye sleeth mo þan þe sweerd doth.'
 41. Samuel Clarke, *A mirrour or looking-glasse both for saints and sinners...* (2nd edition; London: Printed for Tho. Newberry, 1654), p. 98.
 42. John Florio, *Florios Second Frvtes...* (London: Printed for Thomas Woodcock, 1591), pp. 150-151. (He provides the Italian versions of these proverbs there as well.)
 43. John Floyer, *The Preternatural State of Animal Humours Described, by Their Sensible Qualities...* (London: Printed by W. Downing for Michael Johnson, 1696), p. 103
 44. For a similar report on the danger of eating fresh boyled salmon, a fish 'apt to surfeit', and criticism of the Scottish, see: Richard Franck (d.1708), *Northern memoirs, calculated for the meridian of Scotland...* (London, 1694), pp. 112-113 (the titlepage mentions that it was written in 1658): '...from the plenty of Salmon in these Northern Parts; that should the Inhabitants daily feed upon them, they would inevitably endanger their Health, if not their Lives, by Surfeiting; for the abundance of Salmon hereabouts in these Parts is hardly to be credited... for as Salmon is a Fish very apt to surfeit, more especially fresh Salmon, when only boiled; which if too frequently fed on, relaxes the Belly, and makes the Passages so slippery, that the retentive Faculties become debilitated; so suffers the Body to be hurried into a Flux, and sometimes into a Fever, as pernicious as Death...'
 45. Thomas Cogan, *op. cit.*, p. 144.
 46. Thomas Moffet, *op. cit.*, p. 149.
 47. Robert Lovell, *op. cit.*, p. 200.
 48. E.g., Ken Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 78-79.
 49. Massimo Montanari, *Medieval Tastes: Food, Cooking, and the Table*, trans. by Beth Archer Brombert (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 123-124. One physician, Brandan Dietrich Behrens, even wrote a dissertation, supervised by Heinrich Meibom and defended in 1689, on drinking warm water: *Dissertatio Medica De Aquae Calidae Potu*.
 50. For several additional exceptions, see discussions of chilled wine and meat served piping hot, cited in Ken Albala, *op. cit.*, pp. 176 and 278.
 51. Precise temperature measurements for cooking (e.g., to ensure that animal proteins were fully cooked) or for serving would have certainly been impossible. Though the first thermoscope was built in Galileo's circle, it was large and unwieldy, and application of temperature measurement to the kitchen took centuries. Also, in the pre-refrigeration age there were undoubtedly limitations upon how much food could be chilled and how quickly.
 52. *The Book of Sent Sovi: Medieval recipes from Catalonia*, Joan Santanach, ed., Robin Vogelzang, trans. (Barcelona|Woodbridge: Barcino-Tamesis, 2014), pp. 128-129 'Fritters' and pp. 200-201 (from *Llibre d'aparellar de menjar*, [Fritters without cheese]); Maestro Martino de Como, *The Art of Cooking: The First Modern Cookery Book*, trans. by Jeremy Parzen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 92 ('How to make every type of fritter'); *The Most Excellent Book of Cookery: Livre fort excellent de Cuyisine (1555)*, trans. by Timothy J. Tomasik & Ken Albala (Prospect Books, 2014), pp. 154-155 (Fritters [with fish]).
 53. One exception: 'Jewish fried fish', a predecessor to fish and chips, known as pescado frido or peixe frito, and brought to England by Marrano Jews after the expulsions of the Jews from Iberia, was typically eaten cold. (It is mentioned already by Manuel Brudo, *De ratione victus* [Venice, 1544].) The fish, usually cod, was deep-fried in vegetable oil and was a traditional Sabbath dish amongst Spanish and Portuguese Jews. Because it was the Sabbath, when cooking was forbidden by Jewish law, the fish would be fried in

- advance. On Brudo's work, see: António Manuel Lopes Andrade, 'Conrad Gessner Edits Brudus Lusitanus: The Trials and Tribulations of Publishing a Sixteenth Century Treatise on Dietetics', in: *Portuguese Jews, New Christians, and 'New Jews': A Tribute to Roberto Bachmann*, ed. by Claude B. Stuczynski & Bruno Feitler (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 189-205. John Shaftesley (and, following him, John Cooper) claim that Jewish fried fish could be eaten cold because Jews deep-fried in vegetable oils which did not congeal when cold, as lard, used by Christians, did; the presence of solidified lard would have made fish fried by Christians unappetizing when eaten cold. While true for Northern Europeans, where olive oil was in short supply and felt to have an unappealing taste, Christians living in the Mediterranean, who often fried in olive oil, still preferred to eat fried fish whilst hot, so this explanation may have limitations. (See Massimo Montanari, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-106 ['Condiment/Fundament: The Battle of Oil, Lard and Butter'].)
- On 'Jewish fried fish', see: Israel Zangwill, *Children of the Ghetto: A Study of a Peculiar People*, Vol. 1 (London: William Heinemann, 1892), pp. 112-114; Israel Zangwill, 'The Fried Fish of Judaea', *The Epicure: A Journal of Taste*, Vol. IX, No. 97 (Dec., 1901), p. 23; Cecil Roth, 'The Middle Period of Anglo-Jewish History (1290-1655) Reconsidered', *Transactions (Jewish Historical Society of England)* 19 (1955-59): 5; John M. Shaftesley, 'Culinary Aspects of Anglo-Jewry', in: *Studies in the Cultural Life of the Jews of England*, ed. by Dov Noy & Issachar Ben-Ami (Folklore Research Studies 5) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), pp. 392-393; John Cooper, *Eat and Be Satisfied: A Social History of Jewish Food* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1993), pp. 180-181, 240; Claudia Roden, *The Book of Jewish Food: An Odyssey from Samarkand to New York* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), pp. 112-114 ('Cold fried fish in the Jewish style').
54. *Cuoco Napoletano: The Neapolitan Recipe Collection*, Terence Scully, trans. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), p. 205. The rule for Martino de Como was that 'every type of fish is better when cooked whole, rather than in pieces or in any other way'. Hence, larger fish were boiled whole, while smaller fish, like sardines and smelt were fried. Cooking method could vary by species depending upon the size of the fish. When large, pike, perch, and tench and other species were boiled, but when small they were fried. And fried fish were best eaten hot. Maestro Martino de Como, *op. cit.*, pp. 99, 104, 107.
55. E.g., *The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi (1570): L'arte et prudenza d'un maestro cuoco (The Art and Craft of a Master Cook)*, trans. by Terence Scully (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), pp. 329, 330, 336, 341, 505.
56. Jean-Louis Flandrin, *Arranging the Meal: A History of Table Service in France*, trans. by Julie E. Johnson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 207-208, index, s.v. 'serving temperature'.
57. Martha Carlin, 'Fast Food and Urban Living Standards in Medieval England', in: *Food and Eating in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Martha Carlin & Joel T. Rosenthal (London: Hambledon Press, 1998), p. 41.
58. Beinecke MS 163 has appeared in print as: Constance B. Hieatt, *An Ordinance of Pottage: An edition of the fifteenth century culinary recipes in Yale University's MS Beinecke 163* (London: Prospect Books, 1988) and Daniel Myers, *Recipes from the Wagstaff Miscellany: A Transcription of Beinecke MS 163* (2015). Harleian MS 4016 has appeared in print in: Thomas Austin, ed., *Two Fifteenth-Century Cookery-Books: Harleian Ms. 279 (ab. 1430), & Harl. Ms. 4016 (ab. 1450), with extracts from Ashmole Ms. 1429, Laud Ms. 553, & Douce Ms. 55* (London: published by the Early English Text Society by N. Trübner & Co., 1888).
59. Thomas Austin, *op. cit.*, p. 102; Constance B. Hieatt, Brenda Hosington, & Sharon Butler, *Pleyn Delit: Medieval Cookery for Modern Cooks* (2nd edition; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), §61 (no pagination).
60. See, generally, Jonathan Bardon, *The Plantation of Ulster: The British Colonization of the North of Ireland in the Seventeenth Century* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2011).
61. Gerard Boate, *Irelands naturall history* (London: Samuel Hartlib, 1652), pp. 183-185.
62. For more on the *Irelands natural history*, the Boate brothers, Hartlib, and the colonization of Ireland, see: Patricia Coughlan, 'Natural history and historical nature: the project for a natural history of Ireland', in: *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication*, ed. by Mark Greengrass, Michael Leslie, Timothy Raylor (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 298-317; T.C. Barnard, 'The Hartlib Circle and the Cult and Culture of Improvement in Ireland', in Mark Greengrass, et al., *op. cit.*, pp.281-97.
63. *Samuel Hartlib His Legacy of Husbandry...* [3rd edition] (London: Printed by J.M. for Richard Wodnothe, 1655), p. 172.

64. Ria Jansen-Sieben, 'Viskalenders', in: *E Codicibus Impressisque: Opstellen over het boek in de Lage Landen*, ed. by Elly Cockx-Indestege (Miscellanea Neerlandica XIX) (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), pp. 291-300; Ernest Wickersheimer, 'Zur spätmittelalterlichen Fischdiätetik: Deutsche Texte aus dem 15. Jahrhundert', *Sudhoffs Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften*, 47.3 (Sept. 1963): 411-416.
65. The Hartlib Papers. Ref: 65/20/1A-4B. https://www.dhi.ac.uk/hartlib/view?docset=main&docname=65_20
66. *Here endeth the discription of Britayne...* (Westminster: William Caxton, 1480); *Prolicionycion* (Westminster: William Caxton, after 2 July 1482); *The descrypcyon of Englonde Here foloweth a lytell treatyse the whiche treateth of the descrypcyon of this londe which of olde tyme was named Albyon and after Brytayne and now is called Englonde* (Westminster: Wynkyn de Worde, 1498); *Tabula* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1502); *Here begynmeth a shorte and abreue table on the Cronycles...* (London: Iulyan Notary, 1515); *The Cronycles of Englonde with the dedes of popes and emperours, and also the descrypcyon of Englonde* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1528).
67. *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden, Monachi Cestrensis; together with the English translations of John Trevisa and an unknown writer of the fifteenth century*, ed. by Churchill Babington, Vol. I (London: Longman, Green; Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1865), pp. 406-407. A page earlier (pp. 404-405) Trevisa also translates a similar comment about the Welsh eating habits: 'They eteth brede, colde and hote', though the reference to temperature concerns in regards to bread is less clear in the Latin original of Higden. This passage from the Polychronicon was copied into another mid-14th chronicle, the *Eulogium Historiarum: Eulogium (Historiarum sive Temporis). Chronicon ab Orbe Condito Usque ad Annum Domini M.CCC. LXVI, A Monacho Quodam Malmesburiensi Exaratum*, Vol. 2, ed. by Frank Scott Haydon, *Eulogium Historiarum* (14th century) (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860), p. 135.
68. See 'Cambria Epitome', in: *The Latin Poems Commonly Attributed to Walter Mapes*, ed. by Thomas Wright (London: Printed for the Camden Society by John Bowyer Nichols and Son, 1841), p. 136, ll. 145-146. It is doubtful that any of these poems were written by Walter Map. See Lewis Thorpe, 'Walter Map and Gerald of Wales', *Medium Ævum* 47.1 (1978): 16 and 21 n. 100.
69. *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, James F. Dimock, ed., Vol. VI: *Itinerarium Cambriae et Descriptio Cambriae* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1868), pp. l-lii – 'It is perfectly certain, it seems to me, that he could not have written it. There is more than one passage in it, additional to Giraldus, which tells of a time long after Map was dead and buried...Moreover, if we compare these additional passages of the poetry with what Higden says in prose...we shall see that the statements of poetry so closely correspond with those of the prose, as almost necessarily to point to the same author. At all events it seems certain that this rhyming description of Wales must have been written in Higden's time, if not by Higden himself; and there is every reason for supposing that Higden himself was the author.'
70. Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales and The Description of Wales*, trans. by Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 238.
71. In an email communication dated 4 Jun 2017, Prof. Robert Bartlett at the University of St. Andrews, the preeminent biographer of Gerald of Wales, confirmed my impressions that 'there is nothing like that [comment in the *Cambriae Epitome* about hot salmon] in Gerald's works'.
72. Kuno Meyer, 'The Boyish Exploits of Finn', *Ériu* 1 (1904): 185-186. For additional sources, see: Tom Peete Cross (1879-1951), *Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature* (Indiana University Press, 1952), pp. 61 (B162.1) and 182 (D1811.1.1).
73. *A Proper neue Booke of Cokerye*, ed. by Catherine Francis Frere (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1913), p. 23; A.W., *A Booke of Cookrye...* (London: Printed by Edward Allde, 1591), p. 15.
74. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, trans. by Simon Armitage (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007), p. 81, ll. 888-893.
75. Robert May, *The accomplisht cook, or the Art and Mystery of Cookery* (2nd edition; London: Printed by R. Wood for Nathan. Brooke, 1665), pp. 335-336; *The English and French cook* (London: printed for Simon Miller, 1674), p. 72; Hannah Wolley, *The Gentlewomans Companion; or a Guide to the Female Sex* (London: Printed by A. Maxwell for Dorman Newman, 1673), pp. 153-154; *The compleat cook: or, the whole art of cookery...* (London: Printed by G. Conyers, 1694), p. 72.
76. Concerns about the optimal temperature of food, however, persisted and reached an apogee in the works of Thomas Tryon in the late seventeenth century.

The Hen that Laid a Tofu Egg

Priya Mani

ABSTRACT: A new category of plant-based, ‘free-from’ foods has created a multi-billion-dollar food industry – food, free from animals in known forms and familiar textures made not entirely from plants, instead defined by a lack of any animal part.

This paper aims to present the moments of transformation, the Eureka! in these kitchen trials. Investigating the inspirations, the serendipity and the creative process in designing these replacement and alternative foods reveals that the imagination lies in the contributions of many stakeholders. The quest for Godliness, health, animal-free protein sources, and meaty tastes have driven the dietary concerns of people with religious, health or environmental ideologies. Imagination in the animal-free kitchen has created a new culinary vocabulary of many modern-day foods and a particular modernist cuisine, marrying chemistry, technology, and creativity to create unprecedented gastronomic experiences.

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The millennial pastorals are pushing a new wave of imagined foods as innovators, creators, and consumers of plant-based foods driven by new ethics, sustainability, and wellness ideologies. Food has never been imagined so widely or ever so much in history. Many generations have pioneered new ideas for ‘animal-free’ food – the singular culinary pursuit of western ideologies of vegetarianism¹ and veganism.² One of the most peculiar, creative and imaginative trends for good or worse is the rise of plant-based substitutes for animal products.

With copious help from big science and most probably produced in a plant, these plant-based foods are catalysed by one ingredient – Imagination.

Imagination Is Key to Culinary Mimicry.

A completely new set of ingredients, many of which do not always belong to the conventional pantry, mimic eggs, honey, meat and milk products for a complete sensorial experience – in appearance, aroma, taste and texture. A deep dive into didactic sources- going beyond cookbooks, recipes and historic food trends to patents, war, theological discourses on diets and the protein race shows the rise of the vegan mindset from a fringe movement to the billion-dollar mainstream industry it has become.

Since Nuttose, the first meat analogue developed in 1896, most animal-free meat products have followed roughly the same formula.³ They usually contain a carbohydrate base, assorted proteins, fats, sugars, a source of fibre, antioxidants, emulsifiers, vitamins, minerals to meet nutritional guidelines, colouring agents to render them appealingly

authentic and preservatives. Added probiotics, digestibility enhancers, and enzymes can claim health benefits. Nevertheless, how do we imagine that combining them will lead to a remarkably familiar product? What were the key moments inspiring the creators and what questions did pioneers ask that led to creating these animal-free analogues?

Many Roads Lead to Rome – Decoding the Creative Process

Imagination and innovation lie in three distinct areas – the food lab, the food narrative driven by the market and the food ideologies that have shaped our approaches to dietary ethics and sustainability. The questions posed by actors in these areas spark the nature of their imagination and define their idea's impact.

Chefs and cooks are informed by their practice and borrow from each other's kitchen experiences – They seem to ask, '*What if...?*'

On the other hand, scientists were very imaginative in the food lab, often starting with '*How might we...?*'

The events that led to the discovery of aquafaba, a popular plant-based egg white replacement, are a great example.

In asking, '*How might we create a plant-based meringue?*', scientists Kent Kirshenbaum and Alizee Guegan explored the use of saponins in 2011 to primarily address vegan needs. Meringue is prepared from a mixture of saponin, sugar or sugar substitute, and water as a self-sustaining, baked product.⁴

Asking, '*What if a vegetable foam could be whipped like egg whites?*' led, vegan blogger Joël Roessel discover through a systematic investigation into vegetable foams in 2014, that liquid from red kidney beans and palm hearts can be whipped into a foam similar to flax mucilage.⁵ Joël built on two important previous developments – Miyoko Schinner's experiments with flax mucilage to replace egg white that she shared on her blog⁶ and Kirshenbaum and Guegan's patent from 2013.

Cookbooks and bloggers have established that whole eggs can be replaced with chia seeds, psyllium husk, bananas, apple sauce, prunes, pumpkin, flax, nuts, and garbanzos in recipes.⁷ These work well in recipes that call for whole eggs, but a similar whole-food approach to replacing egg white in recipes like meringues had been impossible.⁸ Commercially available egg and egg-white replacers for home cooks like Orgran, Ener-G, Bob's Red Mill contain processed starches, gluten, and concentrated soy proteins with varying degrees of textural and taste acceptance. However, the quest to find a plant-based replacement for egg whites had started on a chat forum seven years before Joel.⁹

Joel posted updates on the bean liquid-based experiments on his blog. Meanwhile, Goose Wohlt, a software engineer in the US, experimented with existing meringue techniques based on hydrocolloids to replicate egg whites. Inspired by a French video coercing the soaking liquid in canned chickpea to a mousse,¹⁰ Wohlt whipped a stable meringue and

concluded that soaking liquid *by itself* can act as a direct egg white replacer.¹¹ Goose created a virtual space for the experiment on Facebook and called it *aqua faba*, Latin for bean water.

The intense focus on novelty to create a plant-based meringue played out in the public sphere fuelled iteration in a participatory design process. Genuine novelty arose from the everyday interactions in the kitchen with cosmopolitan ingredients, techniques and ideas, and not from a scientist or star chef.

Recently, I prepared *batasha*, a traditional Indian sweetmeat that is very popular throughout the Indo-Gangetic plain. Traditionally, the soaking liquid of *aritha* (*Sapindus mukorossi*) is added to sugar syrup to achieve a light, 'brittle', or 'crunchy' texture.¹² Well-made *batasha* looks, feels and tastes like a meringue, easily achieved without eggs. In a moment of epiphany, I realized that Kirshenbaum and Guegan had inadvertently patented an old, popular Indian sweetmeat. Their patent acknowledged that their heat-stable meringue took reference from a Middle eastern dessert topping, *Natef*, prepared from saponin-containing. However, *natef* unlike *batasha*, is not heat stable.

Unlocking creative potential in learning from the past as a springboard for the future is crucial- like the potential of plant extracts trapped in unavailable (unrecorded, oral traditions) or inaccessible (due to language barriers) traditional knowledge systems: surely challenging inspiration and appropriation.

Who Were these Skeuomorphic Foods Created for?

Ideology and Markets in the Food Lab

Unlike in ethnically vegetarian groups, the ideas of a 'free-from animal source' diet link to strong ideologies that have stemmed from carnivorous societies as a sort of rebel and refuge. The western ideology of animal-free foods first emerged as 'vegetarianism' in Victorian Britain. Believers of better health through a plant-based diet or non-violence to animals followed a diet against the grain of their meat-eating cohort. Meat and dairy were considered essential to strength, vigor, and an aspirational diet, so early vegetarians used hygiene and poor animal husbandry to incite doubt.¹³ The dietary ideology was interested not in creating genuinely original food but in changing the ingredients used to prepare the dishes people already ate executed in new ways. The most critical factor for converting and staying on a diet seemed to be a struggle between psychological and social factors. Entirely new products would take much effort to educate and explain. Skeuomorphism remains essential to become meaningful to adoption and commerce.

In 1843, a Liverpool native wrote to the Editor of *New Age: Concordium Gazette and Temperance Advocate*, 'Quite convinced of the correctness of the principle in every variety of view, I am yet at a loss for substitutes for animal food – for tea, coffee, butter, eggs, milk, & cheese, necessarily precluded by the principles of abstinence from all animal food.'

The experience of those practically acquainted with this subject, would be of essential service to novices in these matters, who find nothing so perplexing or so difficult as the change of their daily habits in these respects'.¹⁴ It was essential to substitute meat in easy to replace, cost-effective ways in known preparations. With no precedence of a meat-free diet, much of the early literature addressed nutrition, protein intake, general wellbeing and hygiene concerns in farms. They introduced readers to new colonial ingredients, described ethnically vegetarian cultures to instill confidence, discussed meat substitution in recipes to encourage a new culture of preparing such foods. By 1896, the *Lancet* reported on the food served at the London Vegetarian Society's press conference: 'various dishes were composed entirely of vegetables and fruit, but such things as macaroni cutlet and dishes prepared a la Francaise, a la Normandy, ... bore some resemblance to the food eaten by the ordinary "corpse" eater.'¹⁵

Imagination Can Stretch only as far as People Are Willing to Eat It.

For people shifting to a plant-based diet, the journey starts with a few simple questions. Can we still have milk? Am I getting enough proteins? How can I feel the satisfaction of meat? These consumer driven questions forced scientists and the industry to create dietary 'essentials' with new techniques and ingredients.

Novelty in Reimagining the Archaic

To understand the creative process behind creating the plant-based food alternatives one needs to delve a bit into how satisfying these different pursuits became drivers for new food industries:

- The pursuit of Godliness for the ethnic and ethical
- The pursuit of plant-based fat & protein for the health-conscious
- The pursuit of the meaty taste and experience for the carbon-conscious

The Pursuit of Godliness for the Ethnically and Ethically Vegans

Religious ideologies use culinary doctrines for community building. Exclusion and inclusion are fundamental to this mechanism.

In India, where vegetarianism has a reasonably significant acknowledgement, there are two different culinary approaches: plant-based diets rooted in theology and non-violence are the ethnic identity and the other that offers plant-based meat analogues for people who periodically abstain from meat. Among most Brahmin communities from the subcontinent, vegetarianism has lasted many generations, and there may be a complete loss of memory of meat-eating if it ever was practiced amongst them.¹⁶ Strong kinship supported by a highly evolved culinary ecosystem allows for a shared culture and culinary identity.

Many mock-meat dishes have evolved for periods of religious abstinence or as vegetarian options in convivial gatherings. In east Maharashtra, *maaswadi* is a snack made to look

like bone, an outer covering of chickpea flour, and the ‘marrow’ mimicked with spices and lichen. Naatukottai Chettiars of South India have used banana flowers to replace spiny loach (*Lepidocephalus thermalis*) in *aayira meen kuzhambu*. A paste of black-eyed peas is steamed in the shape of a fish on a banana leaf and added to *meen kulambu* curry to replace mackerel. The Jain community follows a more rigorous approach to non-violence that includes avoiding root vegetables to preserve microbial life forms. Thus, different types of bananas replaced starchy tubers, and asafetida satiates the need for alliums. Today, *paneer* and soya chunks have become the de facto replacement for meat in many curries.

The kosher dairy laws forbid the consumption of dairy and meat in the same meal. Judaism advocates serving *pareve* foods – those made without milk, meat or their derivatives and upholds the dietary laws. Pareve foods are not vegan, for it allows the inclusion of fish. While the laws of *marit ayin* forbid eating a *pareve* food that appears like dairy is served with meat or vice versa, with the wide commercial availability of such pareve imitations of both dairy and meat foods, today this is permitted. Since the demand for foods free of dairy or meat among kosher-keeping Jews is high, the dilemma led David Mintz, an Orthodox Jew, to start his famous line of soy-based dairy-free alternatives, Tofutti, in 1981. Tofutti has found a vast following among vegans as the diet continues to grow in popularity.

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The modern ideology of animal-free diets gained momentum with the Seventh Day Adventists who rose from the ashes of the Millarite Movement after the ‘The Great Disappointment’ Shaped by her visions of Ellen G. White, one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventists, the Church called for health reforms. The Church became actively involved in vegetarianism by 1863 and, three years later, opened the Western Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek, later known as the Sanitarium. In 1892, Ellen White wrote to General Conference President O. A. Olsen concerning her need for a new cook: ‘Give me an experienced cook, who has some inventive powers, to prepare simple dishes healthfully, and that will not disgust the appetite. I am in earnest in this matter.’¹⁷

In a parallel development, vegetarianism evolved as an idea, gaining a foothold in 1842 with the Manchester Vegetarian Society (UK). The idea of eating a plant-based diet was also growing to be less alien as colonial life exposed the western world to new ingredients, cultures and markets.

The Church pioneered the efforts by directly owning institutions and factories like Battle Creek Sanitarium (USA), Nutana (DK) and Sanitarium Food Company (AU) or Adventists invested in their ventures seeing the market potential for plant-based analogues, enabling vegetarian reforms go mainstream. John Kellogg’s (an Adventist) vegetarian ideologies set the commercial stage for new foods and new ideas beyond the Church’s fold. He cooked out the preaching in the kitchen of the Battle Creek Sanitarium and established The Sanitarium Food Company to commercialize these products that include cornflakes, granola, nut and peanut butter (Kellogg’s patent), spurring competition and patent wars.

The Hen that Laid a Tofu Egg

In the 1930s, Rastalogy evolved in Jamaica as a calm, peaceful way of life with a dietary focus on cruelty-free eating called *ital* – from vital with an approach to natural foods discouraging meat substitutes. Interestingly, religious restrictions have forced people to make an alternate preparation in the historical context instead of ‘substitution or mimicry’.¹⁸ One exception might be the use of tofu as a meat substitute by Buddhists in Taiwan. Vegetarianism became prevalent among Chinese Buddhists in the 6th century when Emperor Wu urged monastics to stop eating meat. ‘Faux meat’ emerged as a culinary type catering to visitors to the monasteries between 10th to 13th century. Soy, native to the region, forms the base of this cuisine subculture and nuns who cook at the monastery have a deep understanding of it as a material. With limited technology, imagination has fired the flavors in bland tofu or seitan – from beef to pork and eel, monastic cooking can fake it all.

The Pursuit of Plant-Based Fat and Protein for the Health-Conscious Vegans

John Kellogg developed ‘Nuttose’ in 1896,¹⁹ for the Sanitarium’s patients suffering from intolerance to starch, a condition he describes as ‘amylaceous dispepsia’. In Nuttose, he found the perfect cognate for meat protein. Nuttose was inspired by tofu making – dried soybeans are soaked crushed, boiled and separated into solid pulp (*okara*) and soy ‘milk’. Added salt coagulants separate curds to make tofu. Kellogg soaked and ground peanuts into a paste before processing it with coagulant salts and shaping it in cans. The cans were steamed for 3-4 hours to ‘set’ the meat before using it.

Kellogg wrote of Nuttose:

For many years we dreamed of such a product, but had little hope of ever seeing the thing accomplished. A discovery, almost accidental, made some years ago, put us in the possession of the key to the situation, and long-continued experimental effort gradually perfected the method, until at last we have really mastered the art of meat making, and can compete with nature soy successfully as to be able to produce not only the real thing, but a better thing than the natural product.²⁰



FIGURE 1. *Maaswadi*, a mock bone snack.



FIGURE 2. *Ayira meen kuzhambu* uses banana flower to mimic Indian spiny loach and *Meen kuzhambu* uses black-eyed beans to mimic mackerel.

Kellogg declared it the ‘perfect substitute for flesh food,’ and said it resembled ‘cold roast mutton’. Kellogg did not patent Nuttose. But, his patent for peanut butter (1895), Protose (1907)²¹ and other literary sources show a familiarity and frenzy for nuts had set in.²² Many nut-based mock meat products flooded the market owing to the Sanitarium’s wild popularity. Grains, fruits and nuts find repeated mention in Ellen White’s writings too²³ -she writes of its rising popularity but is quick to warn of excessive consumption.²⁴ Nuts have since been the primary ‘healthy’ choice in replacing animal-based products.

Later that year Kellogg would famously say, ‘Nuts are unquestionably the vegetable analogue of meat and other animal foods.’²⁵ Protose became the first commercially available meat substitute that was on the market until 2000.

Soy-based products were also one of the early alternatives for plant proteins. Soy is very versatile, suited to diverse regions and very attractive to farmers and the industry. Soy first arrived as tofu and later fermented tofu in the Western world, imported mainly by Asians in 1878.²⁶ The pioneering work of Li yu-Ying, who arrived in Paris in 1903 brought Western food semantics to this Asian ingredient. Soy-based Roquefort, parmesan, gruyere, kefir & yoghurt consciously mimicked to the tastes of France with suitable ferments were patented. In 1908, he established the world’s first soy dairy, the Tofu Manufacturing Co. Li served vegetarian ham (*jambon végétal*), soy cheese (*fromage de Soya*), soy preserves, soy bread etc. at the annual lunch of France’s national *Société d’Acclimatation* in 1911, keeping with its tradition of introducing new foods from little-known plants.²⁷

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The growing discomfort among western vegetarians about inhumane emotions in using animal by-products like milk and eggs led Donald Watson to start the ‘veganism’ movement in 1944, defining their people as those who avoided milk and other animal products like leather, eggs, and honey. The search for an alternative to milk and meat only intensified. Early vegans were committed to generating knowledge and sharing best practices in the Vegan Magazine, published quarterly since 1944. Lively discussions of new ingredients to understand their potential as ‘replacements’ [nuts for meats regained popularity], taste enhancers [e.g. widespread use of nutritional yeast²⁸, miso], new options for coagulants and binders, probiotics [Rejuvelac²⁹, kombuchas etc.] were all shared forming a culture of collective ‘vegan practice’.

The Pursuit of the Meaty Taste and Experience for the Carbon-Conscious Vegan

Historically, after soy products supplanted peanut/wheat gluten blends, simulating the ‘chewiness’ of meat became the next technical frontier in ‘meat-like’ challenge. Robert Boyer patented a method to make imitation meat, summarizing the problem in his patent of 1954, ‘The stumbling block up to this point has been in the reproduction of the texture and appearance of natural meat, the texture of course involving a factor of ‘chewiness’. Wheat gluten offers a certain amount of ‘chewiness,’ but they do not duplicate the fibrous character of meat and the satisfaction derived from the mastication of meat.’³⁰

'What makes meat taste like meat?'

Pat Brown of Impossible foods says of his moment of epiphany, 'Humans have been eating meat from animals since we were living in caves. So, I was shocked to discover how little we knew about how and why we crave meat. Our team spent five years studying meat at the molecular level and were able to make fundamental discoveries before launching a product. Our archive of knowledge on this subject is one of the company's biggest assets.'³¹ Seven out of Impossible foods' fourteen patents address the meat-like taste components.

A new category of lab-reared, plant-based meat alternatives is on the rise that can be defined only by their lack of animal origin components. The Impossible approach takes a gene encoded with the characteristics of heme, a hemoglobin-like compound found in lentils and soybean and transfers it onto the common yeast, *S. cerevisiae*. It is a powerful vehicle for flavours and characteristics suited for large scale replication and production of leghemoglobin. Relocating the mouthfeel of muscle, the texture of meat has been another area of intensive competition.

Imagination in the Blogger Kitchens

Plant-based eating found its millennial readership in food blogs, and the influence of vegan food bloggers as recipe developers has spurred a new food culture. They echo a sentiment of personal health and discovering 'cleaner eating'. Over a decade, this rhetoric has given way to eating the 'vegan way'. Plant-based food from hyper-local traditional kitchens inspire their modern renditions often questioning the meaning of food within its geography. Sarah Britton set a frenzy for chickpea tofu inspired by Burmese Shan tofu.³² Her recipe for nut bread became one of the biggest trends to change the way home bakers made bread, introducing nuts to replace grains in bread. The nut and seed bread echoes Florence George's nut roast³³ and many of the Battle Creek-era recipes but fit right in with today's needs of high protein, gluten-free foods. Food bloggers of the last decade have borrowed heavily from the vegetarian and vegan literature of the last century, in part appropriating the efforts of many generations of pioneers – the Seventh Day Adventists, the early vegetarians in England, the vegans of the '50s and the Hippies of the 60s and '70s. Nevertheless, their contribution to the visual appeal of food through digital photography and social media is the most powerful, bringing plant-based foods from a fringe culture to mainstream consumption.

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New Frontiers in plant-based foods

Imagination sparked by new questions

An essential part of food science today is that most ingredients are broken down to functional building blocks- starch, fiber and protein often using a process called fractionation. Each plant-based ingredient can thus be a catalogue of derivatives and isolated compounds that

have physical and chemical properties distinct from the whole. These isolated parts are then selectively picked to fill in for the formula of a plant-based analogue.³⁴ Scientists are also asking, 'What if we could...'

Could we just change the process and not the food?

What if one could make 'animal-based' more efficient?

Eric Östman set out to make a vegan-copy of cheese for the booming vegan industry. Observing traditional cheesemakers, Eric stumbled upon a conversation on casein with a cheesemaker. 'If you could give me a bag of casein, it would help small farmers like us compete with giant cooperatives. Just give me a bag of casein!' This sparked a new approach, and Eric changed course to a super-efficient cheese. Synthesizing dairy protein by fermentation, Eric's casein is structurally identical to milk casein, just animal-free and its addition increases cheese yield by 50%. Eric is not alone. Hours after the idea hit him; he realized ReMilk, PerfectDay and many others across the globe are pursuing it. With a valuable intermediary product, Eric and his competitors have markets beyond food.³⁵

Imaginative Code for AI can still keep additives 'plant-based'

Companies such as Brightseed Bio, The Live Green and NotCo are actively scanning the plant kingdom to identify bioactive compounds identical to synthetic additives that have defined alternative foods from its start Using AI, their algorithms can scan thousands of plant-based compounds based on threshold values and qualitative terms to identify potential replacements. I dug deeper to understand how the algorithm worked. Notco 'plant-based' whole milk using its AI has these ingredients:

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Water, Pea Protein, Contains less than 2% of: Chicory Root Fiber, Sugar, Pineapple Juice Concentrate, Coconut Oil, Sunflower Oil, Virgin Coconut Oil, Cabbage Juice Concentrate, Natural Flavors, Salt, Gum Acacia, Gellan Gum, Calcium Carbonate, Monocalcium Phosphate, Dipotassium Phosphate, Vitamin B12, Vitamin D2. Contains coconut.

An array of flavour compounds mimics the taste of whole milk. The programmatic output feeds kitchen experiments that tweak the final recipe to taste. The method allows for exploration of untapped plant isolates.

Oatly, today's leading plant-based milk, lists its ingredients as:

Oat base (water, oats 10%), rapeseed oil, calcium carbonate, calcium phosphates, iodised salt, vitamins (D2, riboflavin, B12). Free from lactose, milk protein and soy.

Oatly uses diverse salts for the enzymatic action required for fluidity.

A comparison between the tastes of Oatly and Notco frames the dilemma of our time: Are we seeking plant-based alternatives or replacements?

Conclusion

The rigorous journey to find analogues to animal-derived foods has food science, novel processes, production techniques and unusual combinations of ingredients that do not belong to the conventional kitchen. Ideologies from religion, personal health to climate change have driven this thirst for substitution. However, one essential, secret ingredient is the *incredible imagination* of the unseen influencers who conjure up these seemingly impossible recipes or formulas to fulfil the need for ideological substitution. It is also worth noting that these creative processes are predominantly preoccupied with matching known concepts in animal-based derivatives, including taste, texture, aroma and cooking process. Difficulty in mass appeal or presumption of being assertively weird, hampers imagination into unknown frontiers of unique foods with new forms, tastes and feel.

These imaginative foods follow a pattern that consists of

(A) finding innovative substitutes for protein, fats, fibres, and binding agents – driven by the need for systematically scanning for scalable yet novel feedstock.

(B) innovative deconstruction and re-combination of supplemented material by proprietary process or novel catalyst ingredients – driven by the need to mimic known tastes, mouthfeel and form.

(C) Imaginative conceptual packaging of the outcome as a valid food for mass appeal – driven by the need to gain ideological acceptance often with the end goal of marketability and commercial success.

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These are not apparently discreet and have significant overlaps, but the general notion seems to hold true to most of the cases I have investigated. Temporal variance in ingredient availability, technology to synthesize a subcomponent and skills of the people driving the process i.e. food scientist's vs marketing guru – emphasize which aspect of the process gains importance.

It is also worth noting that the quest for imaginative synthesized food seems irrelevant to ethnically multi-generational vegetarians or vegans who have evolved a repertoire of culinary skills that simply avoid animal-based produce in their diet, thus have no need for mimicry. While the war years positively influenced the sale of meat alternatives, imaginative skeuomorphic foods didn't continue in the post war era.

The unsettling truth about these impossible foods is the drive to consume a 'guilt-free' diet that allows us to take pleasure in eating things, and in quantities that we would never want to eat otherwise. Food is a unique creative offering in that it needs to be eaten by people. It has an emotional and psychological need far beyond its function. The development of new animal-free and plant-based foods will remain a tussle between retrovation and innovation. The unending, vivid, chemical diversity of this culinary mimicry shows that food, like the mouth, is a victim of preadaptation.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. The expression *vegetarian* first appeared in the April 1842 issue of *The Healthian* magazine. There is etymological disagreement on whether the English word *vegetarian* comes from *vegetable*, or from the Latin *vegetus* (strong, vigorous).
2. Donald Watson, 'The Vegan News', November 1944. Issue 1, p.02.
3. <?> John Harvey Kellogg. 1896. Nuttose: A new food for brain and muscle building. *Good Health*, July 1896, p.195-96. First instance the term 'substitute for flesh!' refers to a meat alternative.
4. K. Kirshenbaum, A. Guegan. 'Meringue Composition And Methods Of Preparation' WO 2013/022750 A9, Feb., 13, 2013. (Patent filed on August 2011) (PCT)
5. Joël Roessel, 'Mousses végétales' <<http://www.revolutionvegetale.com/en/>> [accessed 13 March 2021]
6. Miyoko Schinner, <<https://www.artisanveganlife.com/intensely-baking/>> [accessed 11 April 2021]
7. On March 2, 2011, she wrote, 'I think the star of the week was my flaxseed meringue, which is an omega-3 packed mound of white fluff that can be folded into mousses and terrines and piled on top of pies, just like the stuff made from egg whites. This is just plain fun and amazing, sort of like a science experiment. Basically, flaxseeds are simmered for 20 – 30 minutes, strained, and the resulting goop chilled. Afterwards, it whips up just like meringue.'
8. Many cookbooks discuss such alternatives: Fay K Henderson, *Vegan Recipes* (H.H Greaves, 1946), 'The Golden Rule Cookbook: Six Hundred Recipes for Meatless Dishes' (Brown Little, 1912), Ella Kellogg, *Science in the Kitchen* (Health Publishing Company, 1892), Amanda Lambert, *Guide for Nut* (J. Lambert & Co, 1899)
9. Abu-Ghoush et al, 'Comparative Study of Egg White Protein and Egg Alternatives Used in Angel Food Cake Systems', *Journal of Food Processing and Preservation*, 34 (2010), 411-425.
10. <http://aquafaba.com/history.html>
11. Le Défi FUDA – BONUS #1 Mission Pois Chiches <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=allp_FUINZI&ab_channel=ONGFUDA> [accessed 12 April, 2021]
12. An archive of the Facebook conversation between Joel, Goose, aquafaba users and other vegans reveals the development of aquafaba- <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/VeganMeringue/permalink/383004105220595/>>
13. Modern day recipes listed online on various blogs and in cookbooks use soda bicarbonate to create the foamy structure.
14. Sinclair, Upton. 1906. *The Jungle* (New York, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co.)
15. John Davis, 'Extracts from some journals 1842-48 – the earliest known uses of the word 'vegetarian'', International Vegetarian Union <<https://ivu.org/history/vegetarian.html>>. [accessed on 3 April, 2021]
16. William Shurtleff, Akiko Aoyagi, 'History of Meat Alternatives (965 CE to 2014): Extensively Annotated Bibliography and Sourcebook' Soy Info Center, 2014, p.36 'This is the earliest English language document that mentions a meat alternative in the form of a 'cutlet''
17. Among the Saraswat Goud Brahmins, Kashmiri Pandits and Brahmins of Bengal and Orissa, meat eating is accepted.
18. <https://whiteestate.org/legacy/issues-vegetarian-html/>
19. The national meat bans in Japan imposed gradually (AD 675 – AD 872) still allowed fish..
20. John H. Kellogg, 'A doctor's chats with his patients: A new food for diabetes.' *Good Health*, 1896, p.248.
21. By 1896, seitan, tofu and casein based mock meats had been explored.
22. John H. Kellogg, 'Healthful Living: An Account of the Battle Creek Diet System' (Kellogg Food Company, 1908). p.44. p 45
23. John Kellogg, 'Food Product' US Patent No. 869371, Oct. 29, 1907.

The Hen that Laid a Tofu Egg

24. Ellen G. Smith, *The Fat of the Land and How to Live on It*, (1896). p.132 'Brazil nut meats eaten with beans are an excellent substitute for pork.' Also p.144
25. Ellen White, *Counsels for Diet and Foods*, Review & Herald Publishing, 1938), p. 92 'In grains, fruits, vegetables, and nuts are to be found all the food elements that we need "The grains, with fruits, nuts, and vegetables, contain all the nutritive properties necessary to make good blood.'
26. Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing*, (Washington: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1905), p. 298.
27. The first use of the word 'analogue' for meat-alternatives.
28. Doufu-ru (Fermented tofu) was first made in the Western world in San Francisco by Wo Sing & Co., which also made regular tofu (Wells Fargo & Co.) in 1878.
29. Shurtleff, William, and Akiko Aoyagi. 2015. *History of Soybeans and Soyfoods in France (1665-2015)* (Soyinfo Center)
30. 'In 1919, Li is granted patents for the world's first vegetable milk and its derivatives (British Patents No. 30,275 and 30,351) and two French patents, No. 424,124 concerning soy flour and its derivatives, and No. 424,125 concerning soy food products and condiments. The former is packed with original ideas, including various French-style cheeses and the world's first industrial soy protein isolate, Sojalithe.'
31. <?> *The Farm : Yay Soybeans! How You Can Eat Better for Less and Help Feed the World*. 1974. (Tennessee: The Book Publishing Co)
32. Rejuvelac is a kind of grain water that was invented and promoted by Ann Wigmore in the 1980s
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34. Allen, Mary. 2018. 'Impossible Foods : The Flavour of Meat,' *gfi.org* <<https://tinyurl.com/5f69nu7w>> [accessed 21 April 2021]
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36. George, Florence A. 1908. *Vegetarian Cookery* (E. Arnold)
37. Protein+ fibre+texturizer+ emulsifier+binder+probiotic+enzyme+protection.
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'My Dear Miss Eddington': Reader Letters and Early Twentieth Century Food Media

Emily Martin

ABSTRACT: Reader letters to early twentieth century women's print food media were quite common, though few such letters have survived. This paper investigates a collection of roughly 200 reader letters written to Caroline Maddocks Beard, food writer for the Chicago Tribune from 1910-1930, to consider the complexity and creativity of women's interaction with food media. I suggest that readers viewed such women's food media as more intimate, imaginative, and conversational than has previously been recognized.

334 When the *Ladies' Home Journal* shuttered its offices in 2016, the choice to close the 131-year-old magazine did not come as much of a surprise. The decision came two years after the magazine's owner, the Meredith Corporation, announced it would become a quarterly, newsstand-only publication. Commenting on the *Journal's* demise, Sally Koslow, editor of *McCall's* for its last eight years of existence, posed the question, 'What do we lose in losing the *Ladies Home Journal*?' Koslow remembered that the magazine, which published articles on cooking, housekeeping, and other aspects of domestic life, frequently received letters from readers sharing that 'you saved my life'.¹ Allison Pohle, a 2013 intern for the *Ladies' Home Journal*, recalls her role in answering such reader letters:

LHJ kept a copy of every reader letter. The intern responded to every single one. Sometimes readers asked for old recipes, ones they might even remember seeing in 'a spring issue sometime in the '80s.' I would track these down, copy them and mail them free of charge... Most of the time, however, the readers asked us to listen, to read their stories and to make sure they were heard.²

Pohle's observations about these twenty-first century reader letters point to an important part of the larger story of women's magazines, in which consumers responded to and interacted with these publications as a way to share their own stories, shape published content, and express their subjectivities as a part of a larger community of readers.

Reader letters have always been an important part of the *Ladies' Home Journal's* history and, more broadly, an integral part of women's print media history. As Rachel Ritchie points out in *Women in Magazines: Research, Representation, Production, and Consumption*, recent scholars of women's magazines have recognized that 'readers were not simply passive consumers of these publications and their contents', and that reader

letter pages 'provided a virtual community long before the advent of the digital world'.³ While of value, studies reliant on published letters are limited in what they have to offer as evidence of readers' engagement with a magazine. The challenge for historians is that – published or not – such quotidian letters have seldom been saved or else have been kept out of archives. When it comes to the *Ladies' Home Journal*, Jennifer Scanlon, a historian of the magazine, reports: 'these reader letters no longer exist.'⁴ As such, historians interested in women's magazines and women's food writing tend to overlook reader interactions or to rely on published missives – letters written to the editors or to advice columnists or other published reader submissions. Such analyses are necessarily constrained by source material – writers often carefully chose published letters to emphasize certain perspectives, experiences, or concerns.

This paper interrogates the role and importance of reader letters in early twentieth century women's food media through analysis of a collection of roughly 200 recently uncovered letters from readers of the *Chicago Tribune* written to Caroline Maddocks Beard or 'Jane Eddington', author the 'Tribune Cook Book' section of the newspaper from 1910-1930. While women's food media around the turn-of-the-century frequently reinforced domestic hierarchies by painting housewives as incompetent or in need of professional help or advice, the informal and unpublished missives written to Maddocks Beard reveal a far less hierarchical idea of professionalism and expertise extended both to reader and writer. I argue that reader letters exist as a more complicated site of identity formation than has been previously recognized. The ways that readers interacted with Ms Maddocks Beard and her work demonstrates reader investment in the professional framework women's writers and 'professional' housewives occupied. Readers used correspondence to assume this professional legitimacy for themselves and to imagine themselves as part of a larger community of women.

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I suggest that this is a significant and worthy example of imagination – not only to imagine recipes or new foodstuffs, but to imagine a culinary world where 'ordinary' housewives were equal to their professional counterparts and were part of a larger community of cooks and homemakers both eager to learn more and share their particular expertise.

Historians who have addressed reader letters to women's print media sources frequently note the importance of this reader input in shaping and guiding the messaging and content of women's print media around the turn of the twentieth century. Jennifer Scanlon writes that Edward Bok, editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal* from 1889-1919, understood that readers 'should help frame the discussion of housekeeping'.⁵ Soliciting reader letters became an important marketing and communications strategy for Bok. And letter writers would be rewarded for their efforts. A notice given on paystubs to columnists guaranteed that 'the author will give prompt and conscientious attention and reply to all letters from the readers of the *Ladies' Home Journal* that may result therefrom, irrespective of the time of receipt of

such letters after the publication of the article'.⁶ Bok himself would send out decoy letters to the *Journal's* columnists to ascertain the quality of their replies. In one letter he penned to columnist Christine Frederick, he wrote, 'I wanted to congratulate you not only on the quick reply which you gave to this letter, but upon the full and comprehensive manner in which you gave it.'⁷ High-quality responses to reader letters were essential to Bok's business model, which used the promise of personalized advice as a way to entice potential subscribers. During the last four months of 1912 alone, the *Journal* received over 97,000 reader letters; these numbers only continued to climb as the *Journal's* readership increased.⁸ As magazine historian Theodore Peterson writes, with this emphasis on correspondence, '[Bok] helped make the women's magazine an organ of service to its readers, a publication keyed to their interests and practical problems.'⁹

While Edward Bok was one of the first to integrate responses reader letters into his marketing strategy, reader correspondence with print media (and especially women's print media) was generally commonplace at the turn of the twentieth century. Rob Schorman notes that readers regularly bombarded early twentieth-century mail-order catalogues with letters seeking fashion and personal advice, with some mail order catalogues receiving up to 100,000 pieces of reader mail per day.¹⁰ Viola Paradise, writing in a 1921 edition of *Scribner's Magazine* commented on the volume and type of correspondence mail-order houses receive, described 'a heavy demand for advice and counsel and general information' in addition to the demand for products and product information.¹¹ Readers were eager to correspond with trusted publications and saw the potential for casual and familiar encounters through their exchanges.

These letters became an increasingly essential part of how women's print media functioned – women's magazines and women's print media more generally were meant to be intimate and encourage readers to feel connected to their favourite publications. The scarcity of surviving letters to women's publications, however, has limited historians' ability to have conversations about reader engagement with these works. Many historians of women's media have instead focused on conscious construction of domestic hierarchies that occurred during the home economics movement popularized in the early twentieth century. Glenna Matthews, a historian of housewifery writes that 'the birth of home economics as a discipline can only be understood as part of the larger pattern of development of the culture of professionalism in the late nineteenth century'.¹² More recent scholars, including Helen Zoe Veit, have built off of this argument, identifying the proliferation of the domestic sciences as part of an 'ethos of professionalization' that pervaded the domestic realm.¹³ Women's media played an essential role in selling this new professional image of housewifery, which has in turn led to the suggestion that women's domestic cookbooks and other food media of this era 'adhered to a rigid format and downplayed the author's creativity and sense of humor, presenting in their stead a didactic, matronly persona'.¹⁴ There was certainly a prevailing emphasis on

scientific norms in much of the food writing published in early twentieth century women's print media, but contemporary scholars have conflated the emphasis on such norms with an absence of creativity or the presence of only a rigid hierarchy.¹⁵ These letters push back against that framework and help recentralize the personality and agency of the women reading and interacting with early twentieth century women's media.

Reader letters written to Caroline Maddocks Beard, longtime food writer for the *Chicago Tribune*, suggests that women of the time did not view these spaces as particularly unimaginative or strictly hierarchical sites of identity formation. On the contrary, their letters reveal a spirit of collaboration and creativity, where they positioned themselves in conversation with Ms Maddocks Beard's writing. Maddocks Beard's food writing was heavily in line with the scientific standards and norms of the time: the author page of her cookbook, the *Tribune Cookbook*, described her as 'a firm believer in the doctrine that man can prolong life and maintain health over a long period of time by correct eating'.¹⁶ Unlike women who wrote occasional columns for designated women's magazines, she was the singular food writer for the *Chicago Tribune*, and was responsible for writing several articles per week for her column.¹⁷ Given the dearth of extant reader letters written to other authors, especially food writers, at other publications, Maddocks Beard's collection is an especially valuable window into how women interacted with favoured authors in reader letters to early twentieth century women writers.¹⁸

Caroline Maddocks Beard published several letters she received from readers in her column, or otherwise referenced them in her published writing. The October 8, 1928 edition of the 'Tribune Cook Book', contained an abridged version of one such letter from Mrs Charles Werro who explained that Maddocks Beard's column had been such a help in expanding her culinary repertoire, and is 'a great help to young housewives'.¹⁹ Maddocks Beard did not include the entirety of the letter, and chose to elide the section where Werro provided details about her own experience cooking a recipe for chicken and dumplings, instead reprinting only the sections that praised her skill as a teacher and writer. In another April 1925 article on baking powder in cakes, Maddocks Beard wrote that 'practically all letters which come to me from one of the cities where my articles are read are simply letters of commendation, no request of any sort being made'.²⁰ Another article complained of the number of letters she received expecting her to plan in full elaborate parties or weddings, suggesting that readers instead should be careful to be polite and not 'mandatory' in writing to her.²¹ These letters or portions of letters that Maddock Beard elected to publish played up her own culinary expertise and provided a suggested model of correspondence for readers interested in reaching her to follow. Letters she received from readers, however, did not strictly follow this deferential norm.

Many readers wrote to Maddocks Beard asking for kitchen help or culinary advice. But even when asking for help, these letters were often very conversational and informal, not

deferential.²² One of her readers, Margaret Belknap wrote her in January of 1929 addressing her as 'My dear Miss Eddington' and adding that 'I address you so informally because I've felt acquainted with you for so long!'²³ This self-referential and informal greeting suggests that some of her readers felt they had an intimate relationship with her because they had spent so long reading her writing about food. Being so acquainted with her work made her a part of their social circles. Belknap was excited to share that she had cooked a goose for New Year's 'carefully, according to your instructions', and requested recipes to make use of the remaining goose fat. She closed the letter to Maddocks Beard by asking whether she owned a copy of *The Belgian Cookbook* describing it as one of her 'very cherished possessions' and suggesting it might be a good resource for Maddocks Beard's own extensive cookbook library. In the span of two short pages, Belknap established a personal connection, shared her own culinary successes, asked for advice, and offered a suggestion for Maddocks Beard. This letter is fairly typical of others in the collection. Readers certainly sought her advice and saw her as a culinary authority, but they also saw her as a confidant or even a friend. She was a part of a broader network of people they could reach out to for assistance – favourite authors like Maddocks Beard were potential sources of advice and companionship.

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Another letter revealing of similar qualities comes from Thomas McManus, an 18-year-old boy, who disclosed that his mother had passed away several years ago. As a result of his mother's absence from his life, he said he 'looks five years older than I am, which I suppose is due to improper nourishment;' he hoped that Maddocks Beard, 'as a woman' would understand his situation. He revealed that he looks to her 'as a mother' and asks for her advice on proper nourishment, which he is confident she will provide 'as a woman with a mother's heart and understanding'. Thomas was likely not Maddocks Beard's typical reader, but his letter reveals the ways that readers projected their own personal situation and desire for relationships onto writers. Margaret Belknap saw Maddocks Beard as a dear friend, while Thomas saw her as a surrogate mother – both placed her in their social circle by sending such conversational notes.

Following a similar tone, Nelle J. Muir wrote that 'I'd love to meet you, and better still to work with you'.²⁴ Another reader, identified in her letter only as 'W.W.R.', wrote: 'My grandmother – descended from Pennsylvania Dutch ancestry taught me to cook when I was not yet twelve years old...Then came years of school, then years of work – never at home, months at a time without hearing a teakettle sing... but recipes have always fascinated me, yours especially.'²⁵ She compares the knowledge she received from Maddocks Beard's column favourably to the more familial education she received from her grandmother. Belknap, Muir, and W.W.R. imagine a more intimate and familiar relationship with 'Jane Eddington' than they had in actuality. But sharing these thoughts and praises of her work in their letters to her were part of a broader construction of a relationship between reader and author. W.W.R. closes out the letter, not with continued praise of her writing, but

with a culinary suggestion of her own – dropping half a dozen marshmallows into a pot of warm applesauce as it's being removed from the heat.²⁶ She credits Maddocks Beard and her grandmother together with much of her culinary success, but she is not afraid to offer her own tried and true recipe suggestion in this piece of correspondence. They helped her become a good cook, but she was a good cook of her own right. Receiving instruction in the art of cookery does not undermine her own achievements or successes in the subject.

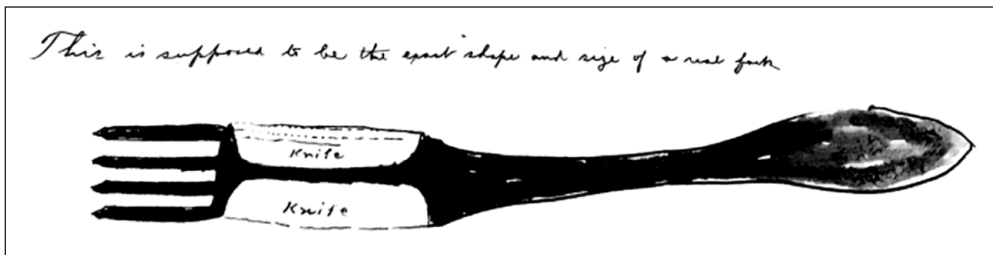
Other readers offered up their own recipes in their correspondence. Mrs Cora Mayell wrote to tell her, 'how much I have enjoyed your deep delving into the historical side of cookery', before sharing her own thoughts on making baked ham and offering her recipe for 'Swiss Salad', a warm German-style potato salad.²⁷ In addition to these occasional one-off recipe suggestions from readers, readers sent in dozens of recipes for designated recipe competitions hosted by the tribune. Several of the nearly '300,000 recipes of more than a thousand varieties' submitted to the Wartime Recipe Contest, including a recipe for a 'white globe cake' and another for 'potato bread sticks', survive in their manuscript forms in Maddock's collection.²⁸ While these were more formalized examples of reader interactions with Maddocks Beard's column, they suggest that readers were certainly eager to share their recipes and hoped to gain their publication in the *Tribune* and win up to \$500. The overall winner, Anne Rankin, reportedly entered her recipe for potato rolls because 'she saw in the potato a chance to help her country conserve'.²⁹ The sheer volume of entries suggests that such opportunities to express their culinary expertise were quite popular and well received; while only a few recipes survive from normal reader letters, this suggests that women were eager to have Jane Eddington test their recipes.

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Still other readers wrote to Maddocks Beard for networking purposes or to offer up their own ideas and, in one case, inventions. Dorothy Knight wrote her in August of 1918, identifying herself as 'a home economics graduate' with 'two years' experience in home economics fields'.³⁰ She hoped that Maddocks Beard would be 'so kind as to give her an interview' for editorial work in connection with '[her] training and experience'. Knight understood that her professional training overlapped with Beard's, a hoped she might be resource for her to continue her career. Another reader who wrote asking for a copy of her cookbook and added, 'I am graduating from the University of Illinois this June majoring in home Economics,' saying that she was interested in professional work her Maddocks Beard's department at the Tribune, since she knew that 'you have another one of our graduates assisting you'.³¹ Viola Wright, a student at Iowa State College, sent her a questionnaire on being a woman writer for her thesis in journalism, hoping she might be able to shed light on her career. In these cases, Maddocks was a useful contact because she was an expert in the field they all hoped to enter – but their letters to her treat her as a potential colleague or resource, and not merely a removed expert authority. More broadly, that readers so frequently wrote asking assistance – both on professional matters

such as these, and on more quotidian culinary disputes looking for recipe help – suggests that they saw a large range of questions and conversational topics as being appropriate to send, even as Maddocks Beard wrote on her frustration at the influx of letters she believed were beneath her. But the range of letters suggests that readers had their own ideas about what was appropriate to send to such a writer – these were questions they sincerely needed help with, so why wouldn't they ask for help from somehow who they already trusted on culinary matters? There was a genuine desire to learn more and solidify their own cooking skills – both by seeking work with Maddocks Beard and by acquiring a recipe for 'candied kumquats' or menu help for a five-course luncheon.³²

Yet another letter written to Maddocks Beard contained an original invention – a form/knife combo sent in response to an article called 'the Salad Fork' the reader thought Maddocks might have some helpful feedback on. In addition to the letter describing the invention, the writer included a rough sketch of the device at the bottom (see Figure 1), and requested 'will you let me hear from you as to your opinion?'³³



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FIGURE 1. Drawing of fork/knife sent to Caroline Maddocks Beard April 8, 1924

In these letters, the 'imaginative' flair of Maddocks' readers is most clearly on display. Her readers were not just housewives who looked to her only as a culinary expert. They were domestic scientists in their own right: home economics graduates looking for jobs and professional advice, inventors seeking feedback on their products, and cooks searching for another audience for their favourite recipes. In each of these cases, they recognize the expertise of Maddocks Beard, and understand her as an individual who might be interested in their own work and professional interests. They are attempting to open up a dialogue, viewing Maddocks Beard more as a mentor or potential collaborator than as someone who as somehow above them or superior.

There is some evidence that these letters were the starting points for exchanges of correspondence. By her own account in her column, Maddocks Beard did respond to many requests for help, advice, or for copies of clippings. Lorraine Harned wrote back to such a response to say 'you were precious to write so full and kind and answer to my query about cooking under glass'.³⁴ Another reader wrote, 'You might recall my name as the 'codfish lady' – this time I am sending you an S.O.S. and not a criticism.'³⁵ This reference to an

earlier exchange that has not been preserved suggests that Thompson felt comfortable both offering critiques of Maddocks' work and asking for assistance when she ran into trouble in the kitchen. Viewing these letters as exchanges of information, and not merely one-sided requests or praises of Maddocks Beards' column ignores the reciprocity embedded in these exchanges, which is largely erased in Maddocks Beards published letter excerpts or discussions of reader letters.

Despite the displays of culinary skill demonstrated in many of these letters, Maddocks herself was not necessarily a willing participant in her reader's claims to culinary expertise or authority. In one of the few surviving copies of a letter sent by Maddocks-Beard to one of her readers, she challenged 'Mrs. Wallace' for criticizing her writing about Creole food. While the original letter sent to Maddocks-Beard by Mrs Wallace didn't survive, Maddocks responded to the perceived slight on her intellect and understanding of Creole cooking, writing:

I should never have mentioned the word in the way I did but I am not an ignorant person and I think you are exceedingly rude to say that to anybody. As for me a degree from Wellesley, another from the University of Chicago, a place in *Who is Who in America* and a few other items of the same sort deny any such allegation. Besides I have been in the West Indies, bought Creole books in Cuba, etc. Who are you that you can afford to call anybody ignorant? [...] Tell people that are in error if you want but it is a mighty serious and ugly thing to say to anybody that they are ignorant and nine times out of ten it is a boomerang and the one who says it has but a narrow experience and is rarely an educated person. It is a favorite statement on the ugly lips of the angered illiterate.³⁶

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Maddocks was evidently quite insulted by the perceived slight on her intellect, responding to her reader not only with a list of her own credentials and accomplishments, but with the implication that Mrs Wallace herself was ignorant and an 'angered illiterate' for distrusting her credentials of authority. Maddocks Beard's response both emphasized her own superior knowledge, both of the topic and in general, suggesting that it was not a reader's place to critique or question her knowledge, especially in such a rude way. Readers were welcome to provide their own suggestions on her column, but she was certainly under no obligation to listen to their suggestions or cede her own authority in any way. There were limitations to her embrace or willingness to entertain of these non-expert opinions. Status and hierarchy were still of concern to her, even as her readers sent her friendly and familiar letters that emphasized a sense of personal connection over differences in qualifications.

These excerpts come from only a small selection of letters, which are nonetheless indicative of the broader collection, which contains many more requests of clippings, recipes, or menu-planning help. These letters push back against the straight-forward

narrative that letters offered only one-sided praised Maddocks Beard's culinary skills. They also push back against the idea that women's food media was uncreative or otherwise undynamic – these letters show a group made up of mostly young women who were eager to build connections, seek advice, and validate their own culinary progress or experiences. Further study of these letters – and a continued search for similar caches of letters – is necessary to construct a more detailed picture of reader interactions with women's food media. This paper is only a starting point, but it suggests that reader interactions with food media are more revealing than has been previously demonstrated.

Notes

1. Sally Koslow, 'What We Lose in Losing the Ladies' Home Journal', *The Atlantic*, 1 May 2014.
2. Allison Pohle, 'The Last Days of the Ladies' Home Journal', *The Hairpin*, 28 April 2015.
3. Rachel Ritchie, 'Introduction', in *Women in Magazines: Research, Representation, Production, and Consumption*, ed. By Rachel Ritchie, Sue Hawkins, Nicola Phillips, S. Jay Kleinberg (New York: Routledge, 2016) pp.1-18 (p. 17-18).
4. Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 244.
5. Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, p. 50.
6. Cambridge, Schlesinger Library, Curtis Publishing Company to Christine Frederick, 16 April 1912, MC 261 fol. 1.
7. Cambridge, Schlesinger Library, Edward Bok to Christine Frederick, 13 January 1914, MC 261 fol. 1.
8. Eventually, the volume of letters became so high that the Ladies' Home Journal outsourced the task of answering letters. See Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*.
9. Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), p. 12.
10. Rob Schorman, *Selling Style: Clothing and Social Change at the Turn of the Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), p. 55.
11. Viola Paradise, 'By Mail', *Scribners Magazine*, 69 (1921), 473-480 (p. 475).
12. Glenna Matthews, *Just a Housewife: The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 150.
13. Helen Zoe Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food: Self Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2015), p. 79.
14. Alice McLean, *Aesthetic Pleasure in Twentieth Century Women's Food Writing: The Innovative Appetites of M. F. K. Fisher, Alice B. Toklas, and Elizabeth David* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 2.
15. See Alice McLean, *Aesthetic Pleasure in Twentieth Century Women's Food Writing*.
16. Jane Eddington, *The Tribune Cookbook* (Chicago: Chicago Tribune, 1925)
17. The Chicago Tribune enjoyed a circulation of 650,000 in 1925, compared to the Ladies' Home Journal's circulation of nearly 2,000,000 during the same period. In addition to the Tribune's circulation, Maddocks Beard's column was syndicated in a number of smaller regional publication across the Midwest.
18. Maddocks Beard's papers were donated to Wellesley after her death in 1938. The collection was donated after her evidently unexpected death by her brother and was relatively unchanged from its original condition upon donation. The haphazard and disorganized condition of the nearly 60 box collection, which contained a number of paper scraps, blank pages and duplicate copies of her work suggests that the donated papers were not heavily culled or curated upon their donation, suggesting that this sample of letters is fairly representative of those she saved, and was not heavily altered for donation to Wellesley. Most letters seem to skew from later in her career, and do not address any particular topic. Despite these considerations, however, it is not certain that these are a representative selection.
19. Werro writes in her letter that 'I never kept house, not cooked, nor spoke English until three years ago when I came to this country', suggesting that Maddock Beard's column retained some popularity among local immigrant populations in addition to the middle-class native-born white women typically seen as

'My Dear Miss Eddington'

- the readers of such publications. Jane Eddington, 'Learning to Cook', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 October 1929, p. 38.
20. Jane Eddington, 'Baking Powder in Cakes', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 April 1925, p. 22. Of the letters saved, I would not say that 'nearly all are simply letters of commendation. Whether this is because she saved unusual letters, or because this statement is an exaggeration is an open question, though I would speculate it is the latter, given her evident fondness for sharing the contents of exclusively complimentary letters. It seems unlikely she would save relatively fewer of such letters if they truly made up 'nearly all' of the requests she received; more likely she considered conversational letters not asking for recipe help as strictly 'letters of commendation'.
 21. Jane Eddington, 'Clever Hostess Does All Her Own Planning' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 9 February 1929, p. 9.
 22. Since Maddocks Beard wrote under a pen name, a reader's personal familiarity with her can be seen partially through their address. Personal friends seem to frequently address her as Caroline most letters from readers address her as Jane Eddington. Some address her a 'Jane Edington', suggesting great enough familiarity that they know Jane Eddington is a pen name, though relatively few letters address her as such and not enough information on the letter writers is available to make any firm judgements.
 23. Wellesley, Wellesley College Archives, Letter from Margaret Belknap to Jane Eddington, 9 January 1929, MSS-011.
 24. Wellesley, Wellesley College Archives, Letter from Nelle J Muir to Jane Eddington, Undated, MSS-011.
 25. Wellesley, Wellesley College Archives, Letter from W.W.R to Jane Eddington, 18 August 1919, MSS-011
 26. Ibid.
 27. Wellesley, Wellesley College Archives, Letter from Cora Mayell to Jane Eddington, 21 January (no year), MSS-011.
 28. 'Prize Winners in the Wartime Recipes Contest' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 25 April 1918, p.B3; See recipes in collection at Wellesley, Wellesley College Archives, MSS-011.
 29. 'Prize Winners in the Wartime Recipes Contest' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 25 1918, p.B3.
 30. Wellesley, Wellesley College Archives, Letter from Dorothy Knight to Jane Eddington, 18 August 1919, MSS-011
 31. Wellesley, Wellesley College Archives, Letter from Dorothy Styan to Jane Eddington, 5 April 1925, MSS-011.
 32. Wellesley, Wellesley College Archives, Letter from Hazel L Powell to Jane Eddington, Undated. MSS-011.
 33. Wellesley, Wellesley College Archives, Letter to Jane Eddington, 8 April 1924, MSS-011.
 34. Wellesley, Wellesley College Archives, Letter from Lorraine Harned to Jane Eddington 18 March 1929, MSS-011.
 35. Wellesley, Wellesley College Archives, Letter from Gertrude Thompson to Jane Eddington 23 August, MSS-011.
 36. Wellesley, Wellesley College Archives, Letter from Caroline Maddocks Beard to Mrs. Wallace, April 1928, MSS-011. This letter seems to be in response to her article, 'A Creole Stew', published 12 April 1928.

Singapore's Rising Hawkers: Food, Heritage, Imagination, and Entrepreneurship

Keri Matwick

344 ABSTRACT: This paper describes Singapore's food scene at hawker centres, open-air complexes with food stalls serving local food. Hawker centres illustrate how 'heritage' is being reimagined as familiar foods and old techniques are being transformed by changing palates and modern technology. The recent UNESCO inscription of hawker centres on the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list has led to international exposure and revived local interest. Called to preserve their 'community dining rooms,' Singaporean youth have responded, setting up food stalls at hawker centres and bringing with them their business drive and tech skills. With modern production and marketing plans, these new hawkers include next generation hawkers who take on their family hawker stall, professionally trained chefs, burned-out corporate workers, and others willing to enter the labour-intensive occupation. An entrepreneurial spirit leads, resulting in hawker entrepreneurs, or 'hawkerpreneurs' (Tarulevciz 2017), entrepreneurs that have turned to food vending. The following analysis of these hawkerpreneurs is meant to open the discussion on how food, along with its preparation and marketing, is imagined as a 'living heritage,' and what the UNESCO inscription means within this shifting context. The paper argues that the essence of heritage is conserved by these new hawkers, who now must be savvy in business, digital marketing, and social media. The research draws upon ethnographic observations of hawker centres (old and new), government material, historical documents, local media, and documentaries.

Tiong Bahru Market & Food Centre

Early lunchtime, I am at Tiong Bahru, one of Singapore's oldest housing estates. Central to the neighbourhood is Tiong Bahru Market and its hawker centre on the upper deck, an open-air food court with cafeteria tables covered from the hot sun. The stifling heat from the tropical climate and hot woks is kept breezy with large fans (see Figure 1). Scanning the food stalls, I try to decide among the appetizing, wide array of dishes. Though just after 11am, queues are becoming long for Hong Heng Fried Sotong Prawn Mee (yellow noodles stir-fried with squid and prawns) and Tiong Bahru Hainanese Boneless Chicken Rice (poached skin-on chicken served with oily rice and cucumber, chili sauce and dark soy sauce). Peeling stickers of past Michelin Bib Gourmand awards are reminders of the glory days of these unassuming stalls, whose hawker chefs are too intent on their woks to



FIGURE 1. Tiong Bahru Hawker Centre, an open-air food court serving traditional Singaporean food.



FIGURE 2. Tiong Bahru's popular Hong Heng Fried Sotong Prawn Mee hawker stall specializes in a yellow noodle squid and prawn dish. Michelin Bib Gourmand awards are on display.

peer through the grease shield to see the long queue (see Figure 2). Steady orders are coming out from the stall Tiong Bahru Braised Duck, serving Roasted Duck Rice. Referring to duck rice as a 'sleeper dish,' Bjorn Shen, chef and judge of *MasterChef: Singapore*, describes on a travel food show of Singapore that the dish is commonly eaten by Singaporeans but not 'one of those top things to eat' like chicken rice or *laksa* (spicy coconut noodle soup).¹ There are other sleeper dishes too, such as the Western dishes being served at the stall over.

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New to Tiong Bahru hawker centre, Skirt & Dirt sells burgers and fries (see Figure 3). This modern offering may be surprising, given that hawker centres are known for their traditional Singaporean dishes. However, Tiong Bahru

has long been gentrified. In the early 1990s, the construction of a shopping mall, train (Mass Rapid Transit), and new public and private housing brought an influx of new residents, changing the greying population to a more youthful, diverse population.² Tiong Bahru is also popular for internal tourism and weekend visitors who cross the island to visit the market, hawker centre, and sprawl of cafes and bakeries. High-end burgers and craft seasoned hand-cut fries would appeal to the Western expatriates, youth, and middle-aged professionals.

After the initial survey of the scene, I *chope* or reserve a seat with a tissue packet, which also comes handy later as napkins are not provided. Then I join the queues for the self-service chicken rice and prawn mee dishes, gaining respect for the patience and passion Singaporeans have for good food. The last order is a burger from Skirt & Dirt,



FIGURE 3. Tiong Bahru's Skirt & Dirt hipster hawker stall serves artisanal burgers and fries and has strong branding and marketing.

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who offers table-service, giving me a buzzer as I take my seat. I begin the meal, alternating bites between tender chicken, spicy yellow noodles, prawns, and the juicy burger. Never had queuing, ordering, and eating seemed so delicious, delightful, and for an expat like me, entertaining, and for Singaporeans, ritualistic, as at a hawker centre.

I could see that there is more to just picking a stall to satisfy hunger cravings. Yet, the addition of a new stall and cuisine offered at the hawker centre signals changes. Is it the place or the food that makes a hawker centre? or maybe the people? I began my eating and exploring of Singaporean food in attempt to figure out what was happening in Singapore's hawker culture.

Hawker Centres as 'Living Heritage'

In December 2020, the UNESCO committee made a unanimous decision to inscribe hawker culture in Singapore on to the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity List. UNESCO refers to 'intangible culture' also as 'living heritage' and 'living culture,' the 'practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills handed down from generation to generation.'³ Of Singapore's proposal, the evaluation body noted: 'As a social space that immerses people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, hawker centres play a crucial role in enhancing community interactions and strengthening the social fabric.'⁴ The space



FIGURE 4. Tiong Bahru's Tow Kwar Pop has been serving *rojak* salad since 1965.

created by hawker centres is emphasized but the food is also important because that the very function of hawker centres is to serve food. Stalls such as Tiong Bahru's Tow Kwar Pop have been specializing in rojak for over 50 years (see Figure 4). Moreover, food is used as a metaphor to describe the ethnic mix of people. Sweet, spicy, and crunchy, *rojak* is a salad of peanuts, green mango, cucumber, and fried tofu, ingredients combined in the same bowl but remain separate.⁵ Further embellishing the metaphor, culinary historian Nicole Tarulevicz describes that 'the government binds the chopped salad together, and the dressing is part global culture and part cosmopolitanism.'⁶ Similarly, hawker centres are used to 'bind' the people together, now wrapped even tighter with the UNESCO label.

The 'diversity' of multiculturalism and class though may be over celebrated, as historically Singapore hawker centres began as a way to serve the multi-ethnic labour class with affordable, fast food. Chinese Hokkien mee noodles, Indian curry puff, and Malay chicken satay, alongside drink stalls of *kopi* (coffee) and *teh tarik* (pulled tea), satiated the diverse population. Because of this mandated food diversity, Singaporeans often taste the food of their neighbours for the first time, many of whom are of different ethnicity. Like government housing, hawker centres are designed to be representative of Singapore's multi-cultural, multi-ethnic heritage, an image proudly and politically protected by the

government with its CIMO (Chinese, Indian, Malay, Other) racial structure. Hawker centres have quotas of drink, halal, and CIMO stalls, yet there is an increasing number of international cuisines that can be found at hawker centres such as Pad Thai, Korean fried chicken, and yes, burgers. Taking an active role since its independence in 1965, the Singapore government continues to regulate, subsidize, and most recently, renovate the 114 hawker centres sprinkled around the island with a combined total of 6,000 stalls. Opened even earlier in 1951, Tiong Bahru Market & Food Centre currently has 83 food stalls, which have been recently renovated with lifts, escalators, and bigger stalls.⁷

However, the UNESCO inscription comes at a time when the hawker food trade is at risk. The average age of hawkers is 59, and more elderly hawkers are retiring, along with their specialized food trades. Rising costs are making it financially less feasible, and the steep learning curve and physically demanding work make it even less appealing to the educated younger generations. Health concerns and a demand for more comfortable seating further deter diners. There is a strong preference for international foods, sit-down restaurants, and modern cafes. American BBQ, Taiwanese Bubble Tea, and Korean ramen are among the latest trends alongside the global favourite McDonald's. Even with the latest national and international recognition of traditional hawker centres, there is the reality that Singaporeans, especially the youth, may not be interested in dining there. So, within this generational shift, what does the UNESCO inscription mean? How does an intangible heritage like hawker food remain 'living'? What is being preserved?

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Rising Hawkers: Innovation in Food Preparation, Branding, Marketing

One answer lies in the next hawker generation as younger family members take on their family's hawker stalls. They seek to preserve the family dish, but sometimes innovate new ones. A highly publicized example is the Netflix documentary, *Singapore Street Food* (2019), by the creators of *Chef's Table*.⁸ One hawker featured is Aisha Hashim, a 36-year-old next-generation hawker who continues her family's Malay food stall. The specialty is putu piring, steamed rice cakes filled with gula melaka (palm sugar), topped with shredded coconut and fragrant pandan leaves. Aisha modernized the labour-intensive method by using machines to grind the gula melaka cakes and shred coconut, speeding up the process from ten hours to two hours. Forming a central kitchen, Aisha began to grow the business, trucking the Malay snacks to the family stalls around the island. In the film, Singaporean food writer, Evelyn Chen, reflects about Aisha: 'She found a way to integrate her own ambitions while improving on the traditional methods, and that's really remarkable.' In this case, the hawker food stayed the same. The familiar taste of the putu piring was paramount and what convinced Aisha's parents to support her new methods. Instead, what changed was the way of making the food.

This move to centralized, off-site, and mass-produced hawker food is not unlike industrial food, effectively changing the type of labour involved in being a hawker.

Historically, manual labour has been the core of food vending as hawkers have churned out hundreds of the same dish a day to meet the volume required for profit. Skilled hands make roti crisp, roll out dough for translucent dumplings, and hand-cut curry rice, an art that is increasingly being replaced with industrial substitutes and machines. Instead, a new skill is emerging, one in technology and business.

Besides Aisha, there are other stories of next generation hawkers who return to help run the family stall and employ innovative methods.⁹ A headline in *Straits Times*, the flagship newspaper of Singapore, reads, 'Millennial Gives Up \$100K a Year Bank Job to Become Sambal Stingray Hawker'.¹⁰ Leaving a steady bank job, millennial Zhi Jie learned the trade and recipes from his mother, and after six months, opened his own barbecue seafood hawker stall. Initially business was brisk, but slowed down, maybe 'cos the novelty of the new hawker centre wore off,' he shrugs. The innovation in this case was the marketing and the new way of interacting with customers. Increased marketing efforts led to a steady customer clientele, and now he has taken over his mother's stall.

Indeed, branding and marketing are the 'highest priority' of young hawkers, claims food blogger Seth Lui.¹¹ For Skirt & Dirt, branding is strong with its modern black and bright yellow design and playful burger logo, a trendy look that has been called 'hipster'. Marketing through social media is also active. A quick check on Skirt & Dirt's Facebook (handle posted on the stall front) shows enthusiastic reviews for the Cheese Skirt Beef Burger with its 100% beef patty outsized by a larger patty or 'skirt' of Cheddar cheese. Another dish much Liked is Dirt Fries, thick crinkle-cut fries piled with bacon, peppers, pickled relish, and served with cheese sauce and mayo. A distinct and craveable menu is important to compete with other specialty burger joints on the island, such as Shake Shack and Five Guys.

Yet, Skirt & Dirt's menu had to go through several transformations. Led by Fabian Tan, who previously had worked as a chef for a restaurant tourism group, the stall had a difficult opening. The initial four months led to mixed reviews—soggy fries, not enough burger to cheese ratio, overly salty cheese—prompting Fabian to change his menu multiple times. This ability to change the direction of a business or 'pivot' may be part of the reason why the hipster stall survives beside stalls serving traditional Singaporean dishes of fish balls (fish paste seasoned with soy sauce, stock, and spring onions), *popiah* (spring rolls made of thin wheat skins and filled with cooked turnip, beansprouts, and hardboiled eggs), and chicken rice.

At the same time, I wonder at the business sense for Skirt & Dirt and other new hawkers. Integral to the identity of hawker food is being 'cheap and good food,' yet this makes it difficult for hawkers to sustain their livelihoods. They are unable to change government-regulated prices and there is local resistant to any increase in price.¹² So, Michelin-starred hawker stalls still undervalue their dishes, some even less than USD2.00, effectively continuing their role to 'moderate the cost of living' as described by Singapore's National

Heritage Board.¹³ Yet, Skirt & Dirt's USD5.00 burger would easily go for double the amount at a restaurant. Perhaps hawker centres are just stepping stones for these new hawkers.

Hawkerpreneurs: Hawker Entrepreneurs

This priority for business has given these rising hawkers a new title, hawker entrepreneurs, or 'hawkerpreneurs.' As Tarulevic emphasizes, 'What is clear is that hawkerpreneurs are not entrepreneurial hawkers; they are entrepreneurs who have become hawkers.'¹⁴ The low rent makes for an easy entry to gain business experience, test out the menu, get some press and followers, and then move on to their own restaurant. Franchising the concept comes next, further distancing these new hawkers from their predecessors. The dream is to become like Hong Kong's Din Tai Fung.

Yet, the Singapore government appears to recognize the ambition of young Singaporeans and makes that part of the appeal to draw them into the hawker culture. One such incentive is a 12-month Work-Study Certificate in Hawkerpreneurship offered at Temasek Polytechnic with the first class offered March 2021.¹⁵ Recent graduates from technical school or national service (notably excluding university graduates) can enrol in the program to gain classroom and on-the-job training to enter the hawker profession. Part of the application includes the advertisement that hawkerpreneurs can start with one stall but may move into the café and restaurant businesses.

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Hipster Hawker Centres

While Skirt & Dirt is embedded in a traditional hawker centre, there is another business model being tested at designated 'hipster' hawker centres. Consider Pasir Ris Central Hawker Centre, a dual dining concept of 42 food stalls with traditional hawker favourites on the first floor and more eclectic hipster choices on the second floor cheekily called Fare Ground. At Wild Olive, made-to-order Italian pasta bowls are popular, such as Sambal Seafood Spaghetti, as well as their Mushroom Rice. At Tasty Street: Our Little Red Dot, healthier Singaporean food is offered with mixed grain rice (brown & pearl rice), sous-



FIGURE 5. At Pasir Ris Central Hawker Centre, a hawkerpreneur, entrepreneur turned hawker, serving healthier and housemade Singaporean food.

vide chicken, onsen eggs, cooked daily greens, and housemade sauces like wolfberry wine sauce and truffle hotplate tofu sauce. The friendly hawkerpreneur taking my order and preparing the food was also the owner (see Figure 5). When asked how she became the owner, she said she had loved the food offered by the first owners and when hearing that the stall was going to close, she offered to buy it. She was quick to add that this was not her only job; she also runs other businesses.

Another hipster hawker centre, Timbre + (Timber Plus) describes itself as a 'food park.' Graffiti and spray paint art splash over the beige-coloured walls of the original hawker centre. Bar stools, wooden tables, and industrial chairs replace hard cafeteria-style orange tables and chairs. Edgy and provocative, industrial-cool, the décor matches the progressive approach taken to the food by the hipster hawker vendors. Two Wings makes chicken wings trendy with a Salted Egg treatment, and knowing its Millennial audience, serves it on an Instagrammable wooden board. This attention to the aesthetics and origin of food are concerns largely absent in traditional hawker centres like Tiong Bahru.

No, lah: Singaporean Youths Push Back

Over an americano at an Australian café, a Singaporean Millennial working in the tech industry told me that he rarely eats at hawker centres. Unhealthy food, questionable sanitation, and uncomfortable eating spaces with no air conditioning, these are all unappealing for business meetings and laptop work, he explains. I asked him about a newly renovated hawker centre that had added bar tables with electrical outlets.¹⁶ He laughs, "Too hard, the government is trying too hard." Trying to modernize an old hawker centre to catch up with Singapore's advancement seems impossible, even a laughing matter.

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Other millennials similarly push back from the government's call for new hawkers. 'No, lah,' one Starbucks barista told me when asked if he would consider being a hawker, the Singaporean English or Singlish particle emphasizing his aversion. 'Insulted,' he continued, explaining his resistance to the government pressure to take up the hawker career. While the youth do not want the hawking profession, they do buy into the government rhetoric and perceive hawker culture as 'culture,' a unique 'experience,' and 'Singapore.'¹⁷ Nor is a hawking career desired by their parents who sent them to university. Hawking is seen as a fall-back option, like a taxi driver, for those who cannot get a better job. Headlines about millennial hawkers such as, 'Covid 19 Upended His NY Internship, so He is Learning to Make Chicken Rice in Shunfu', frame hawker food as a last resort.¹⁸ The UNESCO inscription may help change the low status of hawking, yet pragmatism prevails over sentimentalism, highlighting the gap between Singapore youth's career aspirations and their professed passion for hawker culture.

It is not just the youth that push back to these changes in hawking. Older hawkers see this new breed of hawkers and innovative food as threatening the hawker environment

and resulting in a loss of heritage. Soya bean stall hawker Low Teck Seng remarks that he offers a sense of familiarity to his customers. He recognizes their order and knows their names, creating a relationship that makes the food court more than a place to buy and eat food. (Yet, this is not unlike one's favourite café or corner Starbucks.) Appeasing the older generation, Singapore's UNESCO nomination video gives reverence to past hawkers who embody 'culture,' 'legacy,' and 'Singapore.' How do hawkerpreneurs fit within this image? Can they? *Should* they?

Leaning into the Future

The UNESCO label gives hawker food a certain aura and recognition at local, national, and international levels. There are commercial and ideological reasons to promote hawker food: statement of identity, national pride, demand for public attention, and social or cultural capital. There is also the attempt to preserve something, which is elusive to Singapore who has undergone rapid transformation. The rising hawkers are trying to preserve the hawker culture, which has been identified as 'Singapore.' Yet, what *is* Singapore keeps changing. Food too keeps changing. Historically food is and has been always changing. Immigration, global trade, and technology have made hawking an occupation that has never been a stable occupation.

The production of food was traditionally only the concern of a hawker; now, new hawkers must be concerned with communicating their food and brand to their customers. The model of a food worker is not a mundane cook or ordinary food service worker but an entrepreneur. One must be 'innovative' and digitally savvy as a food vendor, even if it is venerated as traditional.

Whether and how long the UNESCO inscription remains valid, only time will tell. As people change, so must the ways they eat. For food to be 'living heritage,' it must be eaten. Rising hawkers are using their imagination to keep traditional dishes current or are inventing new ones for the next Singaporean generation whose palates are increasingly sophisticated, globally informed, and health oriented. Keeping traditional food appetizing to the next generation so it keeps being an everyday food is perhaps the best nomination a national cuisine can get.

Notes

1. *Somebody Feed Phil: Singapore*, dir. by John Bedolis (Netflix, Oct 30, 2020), Season 4, Episode 3. American travel documentary presented by television writer and producer Philip Rosenthal.
2. Alvin Chua, 'Tiong Bahru,' *Singapore Infopedia*, A Singapore Government Agency Website, 2010 https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1700_2010-08-11.html [accessed 3 May 2021]
3. UNESCO, Culture, Intangible Heritage. Available at: <https://ich.unesco.org/en> [accessed 2 May 2021]
4. UNESCO 2020, 'Hawker Culture in Singapore, Community Dining and Culinary Practices in a Multicultural Urban Context.' Nomination File No. 01568 for Inscription in 2020 on the Representation List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. [English] Available at: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/hawker-culture-in-singapore-community-dining-and-culinary-practices-in-a-multicultural-urban-context-01568> [accessed 21 December 2020]
5. Heritage' stalls such as Tiong Bahru's Tow Kwar Pop have been specializing in rojak for over 50 years.

Singapore's Rising Hawkers

6. Nicole Tarulevicz, *Eating Her Curries and Kway: A Cultural History of Singapore* (University of Illinois Press, 2013), p. 33.
7. Tiong Bahru Market's original name was Seng Poh Road Market, which was an immediate success for the residents during the rapid urbanisation period post-WWII. Historical information about hawker centres was gathered for the UNESCO nomination and posted on OurSGHeritage website. www.oursgheritage.sg Various communities, groups, and individuals were asked to contribute letters of support, including a letter by hawkers from Tiong Bahru Market & Food Centre.
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Persian Tahdig: A Canvas for Culinary Imagination, Innovation, and Artistry

Nader Mehravari

ABSTRACT: Persian *tahdig* is often described as the delicious, buttery, golden, crunchy layer formed at the very bottom of Persian-style rice pot. Some of the earliest references to the presence of tahdig in Persian cookery date back to the mid-1800s. Over the years, Persian cooks have introduced imaginative practices into the process of making tahdig. These creativities range anywhere from more efficient ways of cooking other elements of the meal (meat and vegetables) integrated with the tahdig in the bottom of the same pot, to using more pliable versions of tahdig as a bread substitute to make a range of sandwiches, to using the tahdig layer to create beautiful edible food art. This paper discusses some of these purposeful and imaginative practices.

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Persian tahdig... the most coveted treat at a Persian meal... at times referred to as the jewel of Persian cooking... or the holy grail of Persian cooking... or the *pièce de résistance* of the Persian cook... It is described as the delicious, buttery, golden, crunchy, round layer formed at the bottom of the rice pot (Figure 1). In reality, however, tahdig is much more.

Tahdig is often fought over by family members and guests during meals; life altering and addicting for some first timers; sparking fierce fury and competition among Persian home cooks; disappearing seconds after having been put on the dinner table; and praised by lovers of Persian food around the world. It is written about in such eminent newspapers as the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Guardian*, and *The New York Times*; featured in such culinary sources as *Cooks Illustrated*, *BBC Good Food*, *Saveur*, and *Bon Appetit*; discussed on National Public Radio (NPR) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) radio programs; seen in programs on such TV networks as Netflix and the Food Network; and discussed in such international scholastic forums as the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery.

Literally translated, the Persian word *tahdig* (in Persian: ته‌گندمت) means 'bottom of the pot'. The classic process to make tahdig involves long-grain rice going through the stages of being soaked in salted water for several hours, up to a day, parcooked in salted boiling water for several minutes, drained, rinsed with cold water, and then slowly steamed in a pot, with melted butter on the bottom over low heat for an hour or two, while covered tightly, during which the tahdig is formed at the bottom of the pot.

In more recent years, tahdig has become much more than the crunchy layer of rice at the bottom of the pot. Persian cooks – both home and commercial cooks – have introduced



FIGURE 1. Pieces of tahdig served on the same platter as the rest of the rice from the pot.



FIGURE 2. Potato tahdig.



FIGURE 3. Eggplant tahdig.

imaginative practices into the process of making tahdig. These creativities range anywhere from more efficient ways of cooking other elements of the meal (meat and vegetables), integrated with the tahdig in the bottom of the same pot, to using more pliable versions of tahdig as a bread substitute to make a range of sandwiches, to using the tahdig layer to create beautiful edible food art. This paper discusses some of these conscious and imaginative practices.

Historical Background

Some of the earliest references to tahdig in Persian cookery date back to the mid-1800s. A translation of an early cookbook in Persian, which was originally published in the form of a pamphlet in India in 1938, contains a reference to tahdig preparation.¹ A relatively recent academic research article shows the existence of the word *tahdig* as early as 1848, in the language of Persian people living by the Caspian Sea, where high-quality Persian rice is grown.²

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Information in these references is consistent with other historical narratives about the origination of tahdig and its entry into the Persian cookery landscape. Tahdig had been present on royal menus of fourth and the fifth kings of Iran's Qajar Dynasty who ruled the Persian Empire in 1800s. According to these narratives, the servants who worked in the king's residence would have their meals using the leftovers after the chef had served the king's table. One day, the servants started arguing

loudly over who would get the crunchy rice at the bottom of the pot. When the chef was asked about the commotion, the story of the crunchy rice eventually reached the king and he ordered that some it to be brought to him. The king enjoyed eating this crunchy, flavourful rice, and ordered that this be served to him in the future as an appetizer before the regular rice that accompanied the main course.³ These narratives have been confirmed

in scholarly works documenting the social life of the period, when by the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century, tahdig had become part of the diet of high-ranking and well-to-do families in Iran.⁴

Two of the earliest Persian cookbooks intended for Iranian urban housewives, written in Persian and published in early 1900s, include explicit instructions for making tahdig. The first of these cookbooks was ‘Tabākhi-é-Neshāt’ (in Persian: طاشن یخ‌ابط, literal translation: Cheerful Cooking) which was published around the time of World War I by a woman whose Qajar honorary name was ‘Neshāt-al-dowleh’ (in Persian: دل‌ودلا طاشن, literal translation: the delight of the state).⁵ She was the granddaughter of the French adventurer Jules Richard (1816-1891) who, around mid-1800s, served in high Iranian state offices.⁶ In her cookbook, Neshāt-al-dowleh, whose formal name was Josephine Richards, provides instructions for making basic tahdig as well as saffron, yogurt, and tomato paste variations. The second cookbook, published in 1938, is part of a three-volume set ‘Asāyesh-é-Zendegāni’ (in Persian: ین‌اگدن ز ش‌ی‌اس‌آ, literal translation: Comfort of Life) by J. Tara. In its second volume, the author provides instructions for making basic tahdig and for its presentation at a reception.⁷

Imaginative Ways of Taking Tahdig Above and Beyond
In the rest of this paper, we present a sampling of imaginative ways Persian cooks have taken traditional tahdig above and beyond its original form, shape, or purpose.

These samplings will collectively illustrate some of the drivers and techniques that have resulted in the associated innovations including:

- Creating crunchy dishes other than the original rice-centric tahdigs
- Home cooks desire to increase efficiency – in particular reducing the time to make tahdig and reducing the number of vessels required
- Facilitating the incorporation of meat and vegetables into the process
- Dietary restrictions and preferences resulting in, for example, the desire to use more pliable layers of crunchy rice as a substitute for bread



FIGURE 4. Pork Ribs tahdig.



FIGURE 5. Shrimp tahdig.

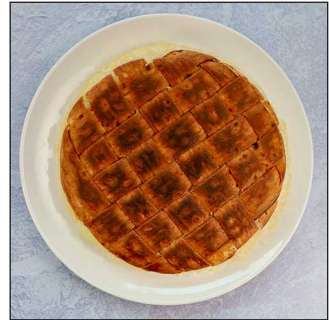


FIGURE 6. Flat bread tahdig.

Persian Tahdig



FIGURE 7. Chicken wings tahdig.

- Ever increasing popularity and craving for other (non-rice) crispy and crunchy accompaniments
- Maximizing the amount of tahdig generated per cup of rice
- The search for additional opportunities for Persian cooks to demonstrate artistry skills
- Finer control of levels of moisture, oil, and heat used in the tahdig making process
- Use of specialty electric rice cookers designed explicitly for making Persian rice dishes
- Increased availability of alternative cooking vessels



FIGURE 8. Oriental pot stickers tahdig.

Matters of Efficiency

Incorporating other components of a complete meal (e.g., meat and vegetables) into the process of tahdig making is a clever approach for reducing the required effort, time, and number of vessels used. In these instances, relatively thin (1 to 2 centimetres) pieces of meat and/or vegetables are arranged at the bottom of the pot – covering all or some of the surface of the bottom of the pot – before parboiled rice is added. Figures 2–5 illustrate such techniques where cooking of pieces of potatoes, eggplants, ribs, or shrimp are integrated with the tahdig making process.

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FIGURE 9. Lettuce tahdig.

Matters of Texture and Flavour

Satisfying the ever-increasing popularity and craving for crispy and crunchy accompaniments to a meal, without the need for such traditional techniques as deep-frying, pan-frying, or panini griddling, can be achieved by incorporating the relevant ingredients into the tahdig making process.

Figures 6-9 illustrate examples of creating crunchy flat bread, chicken wings, oriental post stickers, and even lettuce on the bottom of the rice pot. These techniques also enable new texture and flavour combinations not always possible with traditional methods. For examples, a chicken wing tahdig provides two distinct texture and flavour combinations. One side is golden brown, crispy, with salty and buttery flavours (salted butter having been used on the bottom of the pot) while the other side is soft, moist, and capturing the flavours present in the rice.

Matters of Technology

Good tahdig making can be time consuming – as much as 90 minutes to two hours of total cooking. It also requires a lot of practice – good tahdig making has traditionally been a measure of an experienced Persian home cook. There are specialized electric Persian rice cookers specifically designed to form basic tahdig along with fluffy Persian rice (Figure 10). These specialized rice cookers can produce good simple tahdig within one hour with very little active cooking time (Figure 11).



FIGURE 10. Persian rice cooker that generates good tahdig.



FIGURE 11. Rice and tahdig from a Persian rice cooker.

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Tahdig is often ‘fought over’ by family members and guests during meals because the traditional process does not produce very much of it. Moreover, even under situations where there might be enough tahdig for one meal – for example, where there is only two or three diners at the table – there will be lots of leftover, fluffy, rice. Under best circumstances, a 20-centimeter-wide pot can generate at most a 20-centimeter disk of tahdig from three to four cups of dry rice. In other words, the tahdig to rice ratio is relatively small. Another advantage of the specialized Persian rice cookers is that they can drastically increase the tahdig to rice ratio. For example, the author is able to generate a 17-centimeter-wide disk of good tahdig while using only three quarters of a cup of dry rice (Figure 12).



FIGURE 12. ‘Maximum Tahdig.’

Matters of Innovation

By controlling the levels of moisture, oil, heat, and cooking time more precisely in the tahdig making process, Persian cooks are able to generate somewhat pliable layers of crunchy rice as a substitute for bread. These less brittle forms of tahdig can then be used to make a range of sandwich-like dishes such as rolls and warps (Figure 13), taco-looking dishes filled with hot or cold fillings



FIGURE 13. Tahdig used instead of bread to make a wrap-type sandwich.



FIGURE 14. Tahdig used instead of tortilla to make a taco-like dish.



FIGURE 15. Tahdig used instead of a bun to make a hamburger.

The above sampling of imaginative ways in which contemporary Persian cooks have taken traditional tahdig above and beyond its original form, shape, or purpose are relatively new – relative to how long tahdig has been part of Persian cookery landscape. There is, however, another imaginative way that Persian cooks have used tahdig, that has been around for a long time – long enough that it is almost a forgotten practice.

(Figure 14), and hamburger-like dishes (Figure 15). Such innovative creations not only serve those with dietary restrictions or personal preferences who want to reduce or eliminate bread from their diet, but also those seek additional ways to satisfy their craving for tahdig.

Matters of Artistry

Persian cooks have been known for elaborate and fanciful ways of decorating their dishes, particularly for special guests and occasions. More recently, the tahdig making process provides yet another opportunity for Persian cooks to demonstrate their skills in creating edible art. A relatively simple set of examples of such tahdig art are shown below. They range from mimicking paintings (Figures 16 and 17), to generating geometric patterns (Figures 18-20), to taking advantage of natural patterns in plants and vegetables (Figures 21-24), to surprising one's valentine (Figure 25). Some of this tahdig art go above and beyond of just being artistic creations. For example, to the lovers of the popular board game *Settlers of Katan*, Figure 19 is the depiction of the Island of Katan, and the one shown in Figure 24 can be used by adults as a fun and attention-grabbing tool to teach young children to identify leaves of herbs. Interested readers can see much more sophisticated tahdig artistry by searching the Internet, or the Instagram platform, with keywords 'tahdig art.'

Matters of Kindness

Persian Tahdig



FIGURE 16. Tahdig art mimicking a landscape painting.



FIGURE 19. Tahdig art creating a hexagonal geometric pattern.



FIGURE 22. Tahdig art taking advantage of natural patterns in cabbage leaves.



FIGURE 17. Tahdig art mimicking a flower painting.



FIGURE 20. Tahdig art creating a circular geometric pattern using bucatini noodles.



FIGURE 23. Tahdig art taking advantage of natural patterns of parsley leaves.



FIGURE 18. Tahdig art creating a geometric lattice pattern.



FIGURE 21. Tahdig art taking advantage of natural patterns of fennel bulbs.



FIGURE 24. Tahdig art taking advantage of natural patterns in the leaves of different popular herbs.

Persian Tahdig



FIGURE 25. A Valentine's Day tahdig art.



FIGURE 26. Special tahdig crumbs treats.

Back when there were no nonstick cooking vessels, tahdig had to be scraped out of the bottom of the pot in small or large pieces. This process always created a small amount of leftover individual tahdig crumbs (individual crunchy rice kernels) at the bottom of the pot. Some home cooks, including my maternal grandmother, would throw a fistful of cooked rice onto the bottom of the pot to capture both the tahdig crumbs and the naturally remaining butter from the bottom of the pot. The cook would then put a few tablespoonsful of the mixture in the palm of one hand, close their fist, and form an oblong-shaped delightful snack approximately 2 centimetres wide and 4 centimetres long. In Persian, the common name for this scarce creation is 'Changāli' [in Persian: چل‌آنگن‌چ, literal translation: something that was formed by closing fingers towards the palm of the hand forming a fist] (Figure 26). If there were any 'Changāli' made, the cook would come out of the kitchen to the table after the rest of the meal had already been served. The cook would then give these special treats to her or his 'special people' at the table (as there would only be at most two or three of them) such as the younger members of the family. A double sign of love and caring of the cook – for not letting anything go to waste and for sharing the treats with the most loved ones at the table.

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Closing

This paper has been a broad, but not exhaustive, look at various ways Persian cooks have utilized the foundational techniques involved in tahdig making process to imagine and create other innovative delights, enabling tahdig to serve as a canvas for culinary imagination, innovation, artistry, and more.

Photograph Credit

All photographs shown in this article depict dishes prepared and photographed in a typical modern western home kitchen by the author.

Notes

1. The Khwan Niamut: or, Nawab's domestic cookery, ed. by David E. Schoonover, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), p. 27.
2. Habib Borjian, 'Nešāb-e Ṭabari revisited: A Māzandarāni glossary from the 19th century,' *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Volume 63, Issue 1 (March 2020), pp. 36-62.

'Broiling is the poetry of cooking': The Imaginative Symbolism of Gridirons and Broiling in Nineteenth-century Food Writing

Lindsay Middleton

ABSTRACT: Broiling meat on the gridiron faded from popularity over the nineteenth century but remained prevalent in food writing. This paper questions why, using a literary reading of nineteenth-century recipes to examine how the gridiron is imaginatively depicted in culinary writing, and the literary techniques utilised within that writing. Taking the theme 'Food and Imagination', I use my study of broiling and the gridiron to make a case for the consideration of foods and implements which are not routinely viewed as innovative or imaginative, and for the critical reading of recipes and food writing.

In a *London Magazine* review of William Kitchiner's cookbook *Apicius Redivivus, or, The Cook's Oracle* (1817), the reviewer describes broiling food as such: 'The lyre-like shape of the instrument on which it is performed, and the brisk and pleasant sounds that arise momentarily, are rather musical than culinary'.¹ The instrument being described is the gridiron, and this review captures how nineteenth-century recipes and food writing viewed the gridiron as more than a cooking implement. Not simply a grid of parallel iron bars with a handle, held over the fire to broil meat, the gridiron is elevated in nineteenth-century writings to become an imaginative cultural emblem which symbolised multiple things explored in this paper, including literary and cultural history, British national identity, and masculinity.

While histories of food and the kitchen from scholars like Andrea Broomfield and Sara Pennell outline how cultural and social changes altered the way foods were cooked, eaten, and thought of, there has been less attention paid to how food writing turned kitchen implements into symbols which expressed those changes.² In terms of culinary writing, critics including Susan Zlotnick, Margaret Beetham, and Natalie Kapetanios Meir have recognised the role cookbooks played in integrating ideologies like imperialism, domesticity, and cultural taste into the nineteenth-century home.³ This scholarship, however, tends to focus on the discussions cookbook authors included in the paratextual written material that surrounds recipes, rather than considering the literary strategies at play within recipes themselves. This paper builds upon existing scholarship by arguing that recipes enlisted cultural discourses and literary techniques to interpret changing foodways via interactions with culinary implements. Taking the gridiron as a case study through which to explore the theme 'Food and Imagination', I show how gridirons were depicted imaginatively in

recipes. In turn, I unravel the wider discussions recipes engaged in, highlighting those perceptions of culinary technologies and culinary writings are both inherently imaginative. That is, the meanings ascribed to kitchen implements and the written ways those meanings are communicated are dependent on acts of imagination: the creation of stories which give significance to the humblest parts of domestic life.

The evidence my paper draws upon is gathered from a survey of thirty nineteenth-century recipes which address broiling food on the gridiron.⁴ This process was prevalent in cookbooks, and typically involved holding a gridiron over a hot fire, greasing its bars with fat, placing a cut of meat like a chop on it, and turning the meat on the gridiron until cooked. Paying attention to the tropes common to broiling recipes, as well as the literary techniques like allusion and satire they employ, allows for a nuanced understanding of how they function as individual texts, seemingly written to instruct readers how to broil food. It also illuminates the places where authors gesture outside the recipe to other texts or sources. This happens in one of two ways. Firstly, within a recipe the author may refer to other sections within the overall text, be that periodical or cookbook, as when Eliza Acton writes 'the fire, as we have already said in the general directions for broiling (page 175), must be strong and clear'.⁵ This directs the reader to another point in the cookbook, so they gain a complete understanding of process. Alternatively, authors explicitly or implicitly allude to external sources, items, texts, or historical figures in their recipes. This could be as simple as Alexis Soyer suggesting 'a little Harvey's or Soyer's sauce is an improvement' in his recipe for broiled mushrooms, and steering the reader towards the purchase of a condiment.⁶ Yet allusions can also be as far-reaching as Isabella Beeton's lobster recipe in *The Book of Household Management* (1861), where she notes that when 'this fish was to be served for the table, among the ancients, it was opened lengthwise, and filled with a gravy composed of coriander and pepper. It was then put on the gridiron and slowly cooked'.⁷ Beeton's instructions are infused with historical resonance, so the reader following the recipe pictures themselves dining with 'the ancients' and the recipe envisions a world, and time, beyond the page. In this paper I focus on the latter form of expansion, highlighting instances in broiling recipes where authors employ allusion or engage with historicity. I utilise evidence from multiple recipes and cookbooks throughout and focus a portion of my paper on an article called 'Chops' from the periodical edited by Charles Dickens, *All the Year Round*, to reveal how gridirons became embedded in nineteenth-century culinary imagination.

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Broiling's Fading Functionality

As Beeton's 'ancient' broiled lobster suggests, what emerges from a close literary analysis of recipes is that nineteenth-century writers frequently used food and cooking to situate themselves within culinary and literary histories. These discussions often referred to how the materials and tools used for cooking changed over time. Food writers created teleological histories whereby changes

to cooking demonstrated their distance from or connection to the past. In another section of *Household Management* for instance, Beeton contrasts the use of fire cookery by the Ancient Greeks with the ‘simplicity of the primitive ages’, declaring that ‘the use of fire, as an instrument of cookery, must have coincided with this [Greek] invention of bread’.⁸ The use of heat and ‘instruments of cookery’ are framed by Beeton as things that distance Greeks and nineteenth-century readers from ‘primitive’ peoples, which speaks to a proliferating self-consciousness about food as a means of cultural separation from the past. Then when discussing baking Alexis Soyer describes the ‘air-tight chambers, called ovens, the best of which have the same form as in the time of the Egyptians’, while Arthur Gay Payne declares that global food trade is ‘the history of civilisation itself’ and asks ‘how our ancestors did so well without’ tinned foods, in the introduction to *The Housekeeper’s Guide to Preserved Meats, Fruits, Vegetables, &c* (1880).⁹ Nineteenth-century recipes and food writing are peppered with historical comparisons, and cooking and kitchen implements thereby came to symbolise a person’s place in civilisation.

When nineteenth-century recipes are concerned with the gridiron, their literary workings take on an intriguing temporal nuance. Gridirons had been cooked on in Britain since at least the fifteenth century, but during the nineteenth century open-fire cookery was gradually replaced for much of the population by enclosed ranges and stoves.¹⁰ These ranges required money and space, meaning they were not a viable option for the poor and working classes or those in rented accommodation. But when they could be afforded, ranges were more economic in terms of fuel and heat use than hearth cookery; they directed heat around ovens and stove tops so it was not lost into the kitchen.¹¹ In terms of broiling, seventeen of the thirty recipes that make up the sample for this paper mention how ‘bright’ and ‘fierce’ a broiling fire had to be. If the fire was not hot enough it would smoke, charring the meat. Burning a fire until it was ‘fierce’ required large amounts of fuel for adequate heat, and the author of *Mrs Beeton’s Everyday Cookery and Housekeeping Book* (c.1900) noted that broiling was ‘not an economical mode of cooking, as a great deal of fuel is needed for a good broiling fire, the meat loses weight, and only the best kinds can be submitted to this process with satisfactory results’.¹² ‘Losing weight’ refers to fat which dripped from the meat through the gridiron bars and into the flames, resulting in the loss of valuable flavour and nutrients, as well as undesirable smoke.¹³ The expense required for broiling and the potential for food waste meant cooking on gridirons became increasingly uneconomic as the nineteenth century progressed. Indeed, in an article called ‘Grilling and Devilling’ in the *Girl’s Own Paper* (1899) Dora De Blaquière wrote:

I have taken the trouble to look in the dictionary for the word ‘grill,’ and I find it is derived from the French word ‘grille’ – a grate or gridiron. But to-day, in point of fact, grilling is rarely performed in this manner, few people having the gridiron; and if not done in the oven, it is performed in an open frying pan. I have begun with this piece of information because some of my readers may say on seeing the word, ‘Oh, we can’t grill! We have no means of using a gridiron!’¹⁴

While this refers to grilling rather than broiling, and the notion that the author had to look up ‘grill’ adds a satirical tone, the publication of this piece during the last year of the nineteenth century signifies that cooking on gridirons was becoming less common. Here, kitchen implements still signified advancement from the past, but the gridiron was depicted as a primitive tool that was being left behind.

Despite their implied decline, however, gridirons remained prevalent in cookbooks and recipes until the century’s end – even cookbooks aimed at middle-class readers who probably owned ranges. But if using gridirons was so impractical, why did they keep appearing in texts? And what else did broiling on gridirons signify that made it a lasting process within writing? Pennell suggests that ‘[f]or every domestic manual cautiously welcoming technological change in the mid-Victorian kitchen [...] there was an influential defender of the flame, who trumpeted the taste as well as the traditions of food cooked over an open fire.’¹⁵ The notions of taste and tradition are pertinent to the gridiron, and broiling recipes show that gridirons were imaginatively woven into numerous traditions which the rest of this paper explores.

Gridirons, Historicity, and Imagination

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In his popular cookbook, *The Modern Housewife, or, Ménagère* (1849), Alexis Soyer includes a section on broiling which immediately engages with historicity: ‘Broiling is, without doubt, the earliest and most primitive mode of cookery, it being that which would present itself to man in a state of nature. It is one of the easiest parts of cookery, and therefore should be done well.’¹⁶ Like Beeton, Soyer uses ‘primitive’ to describe a cooking process. Here, however, it is not a disparaging remark indicating lack of civility, but highlights how longstanding broiling is in culinary history. This timeline connects the nineteenth-century reader to what is depicted as a masculine history of self-sufficiency through the reference to ‘man in a state of nature’, evoking images of ancient man cooking their quarry over open fires. The second part of Soyer’s evaluation refers to broiling’s simplicity. By simultaneously emphasising the age and ease of broiling, Soyer implies that because broiling has been done for centuries it must be a straightforward process.

Other nineteenth-century recipes, however, posit that broiling was not easy. In the fourth edition of *The Cook’s Oracle* (1822) William Kitchiner wrote in his broiled rump steaks recipe that: ‘It requires more practice and care than is generally supposed to do Steaks to a nicety; and for want of these little attentions, this very common dish, which every body is supposed capable of dressing, seldom comes to table in perfection.’¹⁷ This is a revision from the first edition, which lacks the statement about practice and care. Kitchiner has expanded his instructions between cookbook editions to emphasise how difficult broiling is. Then in an edition of *Warme’s Model Cookery* published in 1890, the author Mary Jewry

writes that 'much care, niceness, and skill are required to broil properly', and so even seventy years on, cookbooks were still warning readers that broiling was not uncomplicated.¹⁸ In an article called 'Leaves from the Mahogany Tree' in *All the Year Round* (1868), Charles Dickens writes that 'Broiling, to tell the truth, however, requires no common mind [...] a thousand impish difficulties surround the broiler'.¹⁹ These references to skill, intellect, and instinct highlight the challenges that faced the cook attempting to broil on a gridiron. Meat burnt if it stayed over the fire too long; it stuck to the gridiron bars if they were not rubbed with fat; dripping fat caused smoke that marred the meat's taste; and if a gridiron was not closely monitored, it only took seconds to ruin a dish. Indeed, the fact that instructions for broiling were so prevalent in nineteenth-century cookbooks accents that it was difficult, despite being longstanding. The precarious nature of cooking on the gridiron was perhaps another reason their popularity faded over the nineteenth century. But regardless of whether authors thought it was easy or difficult, it is telling that their discussions of broiling and gridirons repeatedly engaged with historicity, demonstrated by Soyer's primitive man. In most nineteenth-century recipes, however, this was not just a general history of cooking but a distinctly British history.

In Dickens's 'Chops' article, published in May 1869, Dickens plays with familiar recipe tropes to simultaneously illuminate and poke fun at the significance ascribed to broiled meat in nineteenth-century food writing.²⁰ Unlike cookbook recipes which are typically numbered blocks of text, or separated by line spacing, the recipe is part of the article's continuous prose. While it is a functional recipe, containing instructions on how to select and cut a chop, attend a fire and service your gridiron, it is clearly written to entertain. The recipe contains satirical jibes and comic instructions, as when Dickens declares it 'is generally a dangerous thing to touch the fire during cooking' and, 'The cook that would turn a chop by sticking a fork into it, and so letting out all its most delicious gravy, out to be treated in a precisely similar manner, and the broiled over a slow fire'.²¹ These farcical remarks are woven throughout instructions that otherwise read as if they have been lifted directly from a cookbook. For instance, Dickens notes that 'our chop should be put down over a bright, clear, and somewhat fierce fire', mimicking the language used in serious broiling recipes, like when Beeton writes that 'the cook must have a bright, clear fire'.²² Sometimes Dickens intentionally contradicts himself. He remarks that cooks are 'not to let a drop more of these doubly valuable juices escape us than is absolutely unavoidable', but later tells the reader to make sure the 'gridiron is placed well slanting forward, so the fat may trickle along the bars and drop into the fire away from the chop'.²³ This latter instruction is in direct opposition to Dickens's other mentions of fat, and to most broiling recipes. Kitchiner writes that 'Gridirons should be made concave, and terminate in a trough to catch the Gravy and keep the Fat from dropping into the fire and making a smoke, which will spoil the Broil'.²⁴ Dickens's playful inversion of the typical broiling recipe makes a

mockery of the detailed, even pedantic instructions that are recycled and repeated between cookbooks. But something needs to be culturally resonant to be laughed at, and so by satirising these features, Dickens draws attention to the literary patterns recipes rely upon for functionality. Recipe writers created and utilised a recognisable culinary vocabulary that was suited to their context. A nineteenth-century reader would know that a 'bright' fire referred to the fierceness of flame, and that dripping fat was to be avoided. It was these tropes and writing traditions that gave Dickens the material for pastiche, and the article that surrounds the recipe similarly plays upon the common discourses that surrounded broiling, foregrounding literary and culinary history.

Striking intertextual references and allusions dominate Dickens's 'Chops' article. He opens it with an exchange between Portia, Antonio and Bassanio from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Situating Shakespeare's characters in London, Dickens places them in 'the coffee-room of the Cock, in Fleet-street' and has them ordering broiled chops.²⁵ This allusion sets the tone for a discussion of chops that transcends culinary boundaries and transforms the chop from a cut of meat into a national emblem. Dickens then satirises Shakespeare's characters, writing that 'Portia is unhappily in delicate health – indeed, she never quite recovered from the fright that horrid Jew gave her'.²⁶ This refers to Portia's encounter with Shylock, when the latter demands 'a pound of flesh' from Antonio, but characterises Portia as a sensitive, delicate woman.²⁷ Dickens then uses bodily descriptions to draw comparisons between broiled chops and the mutilation that nearly befalls Antonio in the play, writing that 'the bare mention of' chops 'had frozen the very marrow in Antonio's bones, and curdled every drop of blood in his veins'.²⁸ Intriguingly, one of the first mentions of gridirons in the English language was in *The South English Legendary* published in 1290, where a 'gredire' was cited as a torture device.²⁹ Dickens therefore takes up the correlation between cooking meat over flames and human torture, and through these subtle yet grotesque allusions to a classic British play, highlights the power food and cooking have in the culinary and literary imagination as something that can instil pleasure and fear in equal parts.

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Through his allusion to Shakespeare and mention of identifiable London eateries, Dickens turns broiled chops into a symbol which is both imbued in literary history and framed as an integral part of life in nineteenth-century London. Indeed, though the reference is comical – the idea of Bassanio and Antonio eating chops on Fleet-street in the 1860s is bizarre – it sets the tone for the rest of the essay, which discusses the broiled chop as 'the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the best and the worst of British dishes'.³⁰ In keeping with the satirical overtone there is a touch of self-mockery here, as Dickens's repetitive phrasing is reminiscent of 'it was the best of times, it was the worst of times' from *A Tale of Two Cities*.³¹ What is pertinent, however, is that this entertainment value uses the cultural ubiquity of broiled chops as its imaginative currency. Readers in 1860s London

and wider Britain were so familiar with broiled chops that this comic accentuation of their national resonances would have been amusing. The gag would not operate, however, if broiled chops were not viewed as culturally and nationally symbolising 'Britishness' in the first place. By relocating characters from a play written and set in sixteenth-century Venice to London, and having them order broiled chops, Dickens is invoking 'the taste as well as the traditions of food cooked over an open fire' to return to Pennell.³² Though *The Merchant of Venice* had an Italian setting, it was written by Britain's most famous playwright, and by merging the cultural cachet of Shakespeare's name with London's chophouses, Dickens emphasises that British eaters were consuming a food that has been part of Britain's culinary identity for centuries.

The satirical tone that accompanies Dickens's description perhaps implies that as 'the last' and 'worst' of British cuisine, broiled chops marked the end of culinary prowess, suggesting a stasis in the development of new dishes or food trends. This may also be a satirical critique of the demise of British theatre since Shakespeare. But nevertheless, Dickens groups Shakespeare and broiled chops together as representations of quintessential Britishness. Moreover, the imaginative nature of Dickens's recipe and article demonstrates that even if broiled chops were occasionally the 'worst', they were still significant to both culinary and cultural imagination in nineteenth-century Britain. Dickens also emphasises this national importance in 'Leaves from the Mahogany Tree', writing that 'To broil, is to perform an operation which is the result of centuries of experience acquired by a nation that relishes, always did relish, and probably always will relish, broils'.³³ This statement invokes the history of broiling food on the gridiron, and simultaneously suggests that broiled foods would always have resonance in terms of British cultural heritage and identity. Not only is broiled meat imbued in literary history via Shakespeare then, but also in culinary, national, and masculine history - the food of successful men who symbolised British success and would 'probably always' relish a broiled chop.

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As Dickens's satire elucidates, many texts and recipes that addressed broiling enlisted an imaginative engagement with nationalistic historicity. In *Buckmaster's Cookery* (1874), Charles Buckmaster notes that '[t]he national beef steak and mutton chop have made us the best of broilers' with his use of 'national' laying indisputable claim to broiled chops, steaks, and the broiling process as a symbol of Britishness.³⁴ Beeton also ties chops to England's national identity, declaring that 'the beef-steak and mutton chop of the solitary English dinner may be mentioned as celebrated all the world over'.³⁵ An article by 'an Epicure' in *The National Magazine* (1857) notes: 'If a steak feeds one, it has its moral uses also; it suggests country, and calls to mind whole pages of Thomson, and Clare, and Carrington, and Tom Miller'.³⁶ This notion of 'country' and 'moral uses' suggests that consuming broiled foods is nourishing on a symbolic as well as nutritional level: to eat broiled steaks is to imbibe the essence of Britain. Once more broiled meats, famous men and literary culture

are aligned, and the humble steak signifies British intellectualism and masculinity. This article also includes the gridiron in its adulating praise: 'See the gridiron, with its geometric bars checking with black lines the ground-colour of incandescent charcoal; the steak itself nicely lined with oleaginous bark, frizzling for your good, and gradually changing from sanguinary red to palatable brown; then how the gravy runs from it in luscious streams.'³⁷ The repeated references to colour and shape in this description, paired with evocative and onomatopoeic words like 'sizzling' and 'luscious', have an ekphrastic effect on the image of the gridiron, elevating it to become an imaginative instrument or tool which creates art. Indeed, the above quote is reminiscent of the *London Magazine* quote that opened this paper, which continues its praise of broiling by stating: 'We are transported at the thought of the golden gridiron in the beef-steak club, which seems to confine the white cook in his burning cage, which generates wit, whim, and song, for hours together, and pleasantly blends the fanciful and the substantial in one laughing and robust harmony.'³⁸

While the flowery language in both articles again suggests satire, the gridiron is given symbolic weight, becoming a conduit for the imagination. Here, the 'golden', lyre-like gridiron evokes myth, with the reference to beef and lyres perhaps referring to the Olympian god Hermes. In Homer's *Hymn to Hermes*, the child Hermes creates a lyre from the shell of a tortoise and the innards of cows and sheep, before stealing Apollo's cattle and 'cutting their fat-rich / meat, / Transfixed on wooden spits he roasted together the flesh'.³⁹

370 This sensuous description becomes an in-joke that only those well-versed in the classics can enjoy. The gridiron is thus framed as a signifier of knowledge, and is transformed into an instrument the nineteenth-century reader can use to access the centuries of civilisation gridirons have been involved in. This mythical history is then tethered to British eating practices through the mention of the 'beef-steak club', much like Dickens's chophouse, and so the imaginative framing of the gridiron and broiling once more extends into British cultural belonging. All these texts, whether recipes in cookbooks or in satirical articles, use literary and historical allusions and nationalistic claims to carve a distinctive, symbolic place for gridirons and broiled meat in the nineteenth-century culinary imagination.

Conclusion

The writers discussed did not frame broiling or the gridiron as merely a cooking process and its accompanying implement. Instead, their recipes and discussions approached both things with inherent imagination. Broiling food on the gridiron is elevated in these writings to represent art, civilisation, myth, national success and belonging, and the epitome of British cuisine. Broiling remained so prevalent in nineteenth-century food texts because it was a cooking process repeatedly imbued with nostalgia and national pride. By placing broiled meats on a symbolic, imaginative pedestal, both food writers and eaters in the nineteenth century could indulge in nostalgia for simpler times and uphold the connotations of

strength, culture, and literary history that they inscribed onto broiling and its spoils. A cooking process that has been around for centuries carries with it a sense of proliferation, which can be translated into a sense of stability – even though broiling itself was anything but stable. Dickens, Kitchiner, and Jewry were amongst multiple writers who highlighted the precarity of using a gridiron within a discussion of the national identity of broiled meats. This suggests that while food writers acknowledged the difficulties of the process, they also sought to safeguard broiled meats and gridirons as cornerstones of British cuisine.

What this study has ultimately shown, then, is that gridirons, broiling, and broiled foods are inextricable from imagination – imagination which bound the cooking process to narratives of nationalism, historicity, masculinity, and literature. Through the creation of teleological histories, food writers established alternate realities where broiled foods and gridirons retained their place in British cuisine due to their symbolic resonances, despite fading from use. By embroiling this cooking process in their own versions of history, nineteenth-century food writers highlighted the symbolic power food has, and the way this symbolism was meticulously crafted in texts to signify, capture, and establish a place in time. Culinary imagination is thus not limited to the invention of the new but can turn to history and tradition to present a seemingly simple cooking process as a nuanced cultural symbol. Imagination is present in the simplest acts of cooking, and in the literary workings of the recipes which describe them. When we pay close attention to these corners of culinary history, it becomes clear that there is potent imagination behind even the most unassuming broiled chop.

Notes

1. No Author, ‘The Cook’s Oracle’, *London Magazine*, 4.11 (October 1821), pp. 432-439 (p. 436).
2. See Andrea Broomfield, *Food and Cooking in Victorian England: A History* (Westport: Praeger, 2007); Sara Pennell, *The Birth of the English Kitchen, 1600-1850* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).
3. See Susan Zlotnick, ‘Domesticating Imperialism: Curry and Cookbooks in Victorian England’, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 16.2/3 (1996), pp. 51-68; Margaret Beetham, ‘Good Taste and Sweet Ordering: Dining with Mrs Beeton’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 36.2 (2008), pp. 391-406; Natalie Kapetaneos Mier, ‘“A Fashionable Dinner is Arranged as Follows”: Victorian Dining Taxonomies’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 33 (2005), pp. 133-148.
4. While in North American English the word ‘broiling’ is still used today, the word has faded and become archaic as a cooking term in British English. In nineteenth-century food writing it referred to cooking meat over an open flame, using a gridiron.
5. Eliza Acton, *Modern Cookery for Private Families* (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), p. 186.
6. Alexis Soyer, *The Modern Housewife, or, Ménagère* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co, 1849), p. 322.
7. Isabella Beeton, *The Book of Household Management* (London: S O Beeton, 1861), p. 139.
8. Beeton, p. 26.
9. Soyer, p. 68; Arthur Gay Payne, *The Housekeeper’s Guide to Preserved Meats, Fruits, Vegetables, &c* (London: Crosse & Blackwell, 1880), p. iv.
10. Though stoves or ranges often gave the user some access to open flame, they were comprised of ovens and used enclosed fire to heat the stovetop.

'Broiling is the poetry of cooking'

11. Pennell notes: 'By the end of the eighteenth century, the fully closed range (with the fire shut away in a fire box), supplemented by an oven on one side and water boiler on the other, took the closure of the hearth to its logical conclusion.' There were exceptions to this rule, however, and later Pennell notes that cooking over flames in smaller hearths remained important for the poor and those living in lodgings. *The Birth of the English Kitchen*, pp. 67, 78.
12. Isabella Beeton died in 1867, though publishers continued to use her name to sell cookbooks; No Author, *Mrs Beeton's Everyday Cookery and Housekeeping Book* (London: Ward, Lock & Co, [1877] c.1900), p. lxxv.
13. Some gridirons were designed with slanted bars or reservoirs to collect juices from the meat. Many broiling recipes still warn against gravy loss however, suggesting it was a common problem.
14. Dora De Blaquièrre, 'Grilling and Devilling', *The Girls' Own Paper*, XX.1023 (August 1899), pp. 710-711 (p. 710).
15. Pennell, pp. 69-70.
16. Soyer, pp. 72-73.
17. William Kitchener, *Apicius Redivivus, or, The Cook's Oracle* (London: A. Constable, [1817] 1822), pp. 201-202.
18. Mary Jewry, *Warne's Model Cookery and Housekeeping Book*, peoples edn. (London: Frederick Warne and Co, [1879] 1890), p. 20.
19. Charles Dickens. 'Leaves from the Mahogany Tree', *All the Year Round*, 20.482 (July 1868), pp 127-131 (p. 129).
20. As there is no author attributed to the *All the Year Round* articles or the recipes within them, this paper credits them to Charles Dickens.
21. Charles Dickens. 'Chops', *All the Year Round*, 1.24 (May 1869), pp. 562-564 (p. 564).
22. Dickens, 'Chops', p. 563; Beeton, p. 264.
23. Dickens, 'Chops', p. 563, 564.
24. Kitchiner, p. 107.
25. Dickens, 'Chops', p. 562.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 562.
27. William Shakespeare. 'The Merchant of Venice', in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2007), pp. 388-415 (p. 410).
28. Dickens, 'Chops', p. 562.
29. 'Gridiron', in *The OED Online*, < <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/view/Entry/81386?rskey=AbhEn8&result=1#eid> > [accessed 22 July, 2019]
30. Dickens, 'Chops', p. 562
31. Charles Dickens. *A Tale of Two Cities*, ed. by P Merchant (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, [1849] 1999.), p. 3.
32. Pennell, p. 70.
33. Dickens, 'Leaves from the Mahogany Tree', p. 129.
34. Charles Buckmaster, *Buckmaster's Cookery* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1874), p. 203.
35. Beeton, p. 264.
36. No Author. 1857. 'An Epicure's Steak', *The National Magazine*, 1.5: 335.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 335.
38. No Author. 'The Cook's Oracle', p. 436.
39. Homer, *The Homeric Hymns*, trans. by M. Crudden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 47

The Spiritual in the Sensual, the Sensual in the Virtual: Modern-Day Spirituality through a Community-Supported Farm

Caitlin B. Morgan

ABSTRACT: This paper draws on empirical fieldwork done at Essex Farm, a full-diet, diversified, community-supported agriculture (CSA) farm in rural New York, USA and argues that the farm has become a source not only of food, but of place-based spiritual communion for both its members and farmworkers. Here, modern technologies and sensibilities underlie a spiritual devotion to a way of farming, eating, and living that is historically rooted and is, for some participants, largely abstract. Drawing on existing literature on the history of transcendentalism in homesteading and organic farming in the U.S. and Europe, and on sensory studies that show how media and technology extend sensory capacities past the traditional faculties of body, I explore how food becomes the point of contact for participants searching for significance and deep residence in their lives. This is an aspirational imagining of the food of the future (sustainable, community-based) through the past (low-input farming practices and connection to land) and the present (joyful, sensual culinary engagements).

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I was sitting in an apartment on the Upper West side of Manhattan, listening to an elderly woman tell me about the community-supported agriculture (CSA) farm of which she is a member. It was a beautiful, multi-bedroom home in a tall apartment building, and I imagined she had owned it for a long time, as the current New York City housing market is ferocious, and she was living on a fixed income. Outside were high-rises and traffic noise, but we were talking about fresh greens and farm-raised sausage. Every week, thanks to paying an upfront subscription, this woman receives a crate or two of food from a diversified farm 300 miles upstate. She can technically eat entirely from the CSA share, as the farm offers herbs, 50 varieties of vegetables, apples and berries, dairy, eggs, lamb, chicken, beef, pork, animal and vegetable fats, local oats and flours and cornmeal, and maple syrup. This 'full-diet' share has meaning for her, beyond the fresh and high-quality products that she can select and have delivered. She is Jewish and believes strongly in political action as part of her faith. Supporting the farm has become a practice for her. 'I'm in it now,' she told me, 'through an ethical belief...I cannot back out.'

The farm in question is Essex Farm, an 1100 acre diversified farm in rural, mountainous Essex County, New York. It was established in 2003 when a farmer and a journalist,

Mark and Kristin Kimball, moved to the sparsely populated and economically depressed region. In 2010, Kristin wrote a best-selling memoir, *The Dirty Life*,¹ and the farm gained international recognition. She wrote its sequel, *Good Husbandry*,² in 2019. Both Kimballs became sought-after public speakers. In the intervening years, the farm has grown from a two-person operation with six CSA members to employing up to 25 people during the summer months and providing the ‘full diet’ for around 100 families. Some of those families now include members in New York City, a five-hour drive south, many of whom have never been to the farm. Thanks in part to the Kimballs training young farmers who then move on, Essex County, which previously contained only dying conventional dairy farms, now boasts over 12 small diversified and specialized craft farms.³

I conducted a comprehensive case study of Essex Farm between 2018 and 2020. My fieldwork included ethnographic participant observation of farm labor and interviews of 20 farmers and 15 CSA members. One of the primary things I found was that through Kristin’s writing – and through Mark’s secular, ecological evangelism – the farm has become a source not only of food, but of place-based spiritual communion for both its members and farmworkers. This is true even for CSA members in New York City and whose only knowledge of the farm-as-place comes in the form of emailed newsletters and Instagram photos. The elderly New Yorker I spoke to had taken \$7,000 out of her savings to pay for her annual CSA share. Her upstairs neighbour, also a member, reads Kristin’s weekly Farm Note email to stay up-to-date on the farm, and said ‘It really makes a huge difference to me to know details about what’s happening on the farm. It may seem like a small thing, but it is not. It means that I appreciate the food on a different level.’ Both are very involved and committed to this place – but neither have ever been there. The first woman asked me if there were migrant laborers working on the farm, because she did not know who was raising her food. Such lack of transparency is not unusual in the U.S. food system generally, but it is an unexpected contradiction in a community-supported farm, where local members visit weekly, and for whom distant members are willing to dedicate so much of their time and money in mutual support. At Essex Farm, the desire to connect to the sensed experience of the farm, whether through taste buds or through social media, is part of a larger web of desire for connection that undergirds the entire farm community. The meaning of the farm is a daily experience, but a virtually-mediated one.

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A History of Agricultural Spirituality, Modern CSA Farms

To understand the patterns of commitment, spirituality, place, and agriculture present at Essex Farm, we have to go back about a century. Between the late 1800s and mid-1900s, the United States experienced a wave of homesteaders and back-to-the-landers who inspired others with their writings on nature, farming, and rural life. For homesteaders Scott and Helen Nearing, for example, working and living close to the land was about sacred economy: simultaneously resisting spiritual evil and its economic corollary, capitalism, by modelling an alternative way

of living. As Rebecca Kneale Gould writes in her ethnography *At Home in Nature: Modern Homesteading and Spiritual Practice*, people made ‘pilgrimages’ to famous homesteads, but did not necessarily adopt the lifestyle themselves. ‘For some, the *idea* of nature, or its accessibility through texts and occasional visits, was enough...readers could vicariously experience an intimacy with the natural world.’⁴ Similarly, Richard Robbins, an anthropologist and also a member of Essex Farm CSA, writes that the work of the founders of western organic farming in the late 1800s shared five key aspects: emphasis on soil health, a spiritual orientation to nature, appreciation of indigenous or peasant agriculture, motivation for social reform and resistance of technology, and conviction that farming methods reflect both the state of society and of the health of its members.⁵ All these aspects show up on Essex Farm.

Since and during the back-to-the-land movement, agricultural and rural landscapes changed enormously in the U.S. In fact, the movements may have been in reaction to these changes. In the early twentieth century, the country had many small, diversified farms; farming was labour-intensive; and half of Americans lived in rural areas. Now, farming is concentrated in an ever-decreasing number of large and specialized farms; technology has replaced much human labour and increased farm productivity; and less than a quarter of Americans live in rural areas.⁶ Many U.S. farmers have turned to sustainable practices in one form or another, motivated by policy supports, personal beliefs, and/or increased price share for products such as certified organic. CSA farms in particular are part of alternative agriculture’s stand against agrochemicals, monoculture production, and industrial methods.⁷ They are a form of community-embedded risk-sharing, where the customers usually pay farmers in advance in a subscription service, often at a rate lower than market price, so that farmers and members can both benefit from mutual support in producing food. The ideal is for CSAs and other forms of ‘civic agriculture’ to promote environmentalism and citizenship through active engagement with physical place and community.^{8 9}

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Thus, for some, small-scale farming is a way of stepping back from the ‘evils’ inherent in participating in the dominant economic system. The Kimballs follow other contemporary farms, notably ones across the lake that divides NY from Vermont, who wanted to change the world through organic and values-based agriculture.¹⁰ But the Kimballs go further – or, rather, further back, to established traditions. As a group, Essex Farm farmers and members embody a naturalized spirituality that exists in contrast with mechanical processes of modern scientific agriculture.¹¹ They do so in the tradition of homesteaders. And yet, they do so through commercial, not subsistence, agriculture, and in increasingly technological and physically distant ways.

Spirituality, Sensuousness, and the Imagination of Connection

Spiritual Connection Through Embodied Cycles

Farmers and members of Essex Farm CSA use sensual engagement with farm labor, cooking, and eating as a form of spiritual connection to place. The seasonality of work

and of food products connects them to landscape and life cycles. In a global food system designed for maximum, year-round choice, many members derive pleasure from the changing availability and the connection to seasonal rhythms. For people willing to deal with the August glut and winter limitations, the evanescence of both leads to a deeper appreciation of foods when they are in season. One of former member spoke fondly of the freezing and canning as part of the whole experience. 'I like the seasonality. I liked those weeks in the late summer when you're preparing for the fall and the wintertime. I like that sense.' Here, sense is the bodily knowledge of where one is in the year's cycle, firmly planted in one season, expecting another.

For farmers, connection to the system is about deep knowledge of the landscape. 'It was a never-ending cycle of longing and fulfilment, directly connected to our work, and learning to live this way was like hearing a tune I had known once and forgotten. It just felt deeply right,' writes Kristin.¹² Sensing a landscape, knowing a system, can be done not only through eating but also through work, which is itself 'a way of knowing nature; it requires an engagement of the senses and attention to the micro-geographies of landscape.'¹³ As part of the case study, I ran a small PhotoVoice project, in which participants took photographs that reflected their motivations for being part of the CSA. One new farmer, reflecting on her series of photos, described a feeling of deep kinship to place and to farm lifeforms:

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...this is where I need to be. These photos capture my love of animals, my adoration of tiny sprouting plants, and my kinship with the people that surround me. I work at Essex Farm because I feel a raw sense of truth and belonging every day. I love farming because I feel a deep connection with the food I consume and the land that I live on. I farm because this work makes me feel alive.

Not all of this connection is to the life of plants, animals, and seasons, however. Some of it is explicitly about the death of each. In her first book, Kristin tries to identify a way of eating that does not involve suffering and comes up short, even for vegetarianism. 'Don't let anyone tell you that growing vegetables is not a violent act. The muted sound of a plow tearing through roots is almost obscene, like the sound of a fist meeting flesh.'¹⁴ Todd LeVasseur, in an ethnography of contemporary religious agrarian communities in the United States, argues that the embodied act of farming brings with it wisdom, meaning, and wellbeing through contact with the cycle of life and death that are larger than any one farmer.¹⁵ For people I spoke with, working directly death, rather than avoiding it, was an important facet of how the farm expanded their consciousness. As one farmer wrote, 'Being in a work environment that so explicitly deals with the realities of life and death is refreshing, compared to the isolated nature of city life, when life and death are more related to crime instead of nature.' More than one PhotoVoice participant sent me a photo of animal carcasses in response to why they worked on or were a member of the CSA.

An additional way that people tap into senses, knowledge, and attendant meaning is through how Kristin and Mark communicate about these things, which functions a form of agnostic, agricultural evangelism. The farm exists thanks to its social relationships, because Mark and Kristin have convinced people to engage in their particular agricultural endeavour. It's common knowledge at Essex Farm that if someone expresses even minute interest in the share, Mark will immediately be on the phone with them, for as long as it takes to get them to sign up. He also consistently suggested that I quit graduate school and go work for him full time. He is, according to Kristin, a 'true believer' in sustainable farming as a method to combat environmental degradation and loss of rural culture. Or, as a member put it, Mark is 'a very typical charismatic leader' of the type you might see in communal or religious communities. At a Friday party for the members, Kristin said she had realized that the reason Mark farms is share the connection between 'the sun, the soil, the water, and the work,' a 'direct portal.'

Where Mark's evangelism is spoken, Kristin's is written. As Gould notes, many modern homesteaders come from upper- and middle-class backgrounds, which affects what they consider to be purposeful work, and creates a desire to 'articulate a moral vision for the self, and, in some cases, to 'evangelize' this vision with the hope of reforming American culture.'¹⁶ Religious imagery and mystical language suffuse Kristin's writings about the farm. (Kristin writes of praying to farm deities they don't believe in; of Adam from the Bible; of the reverence of corn; and of how children can interrupt an interior, spiritual life. She also writes about 'alchemical' agricultural processes; eggs as a 'special kind of magic'; and transformation 'in the cauldron of an animal's stomach.'¹⁷) Perhaps this focus is strengthened by the absence of formal religion, and thus need to find meaning elsewhere. The farm has replaced the church. Consider a quote from Kristin's first book: 'I cooked and ate it with a reverence that comes from understanding the whole picture, an appreciation that can be expressed equally well, I decided, with a ceremonial sage or with the careful preparation and enjoyment of an exceptional sage *stuffing*.'¹⁸ Holism, connection, reverence, and ceremony come together through the cooking and eating of food from her own farm. Kristin's first impression of the empty-seeming land that became Essex Farm was that it had 'no soul.' Mark insisted that it was not vacant but sleeping, because it was not being used. Agriculturally fallow land is spiritually fallow land, and the converse is that a farm with people working it is an alive farm with soul.

Global Ecological, Religious, and Culinary Imaginaries

While we might expect seasonal eating to connect people to place, sensually, members also identified knowledge and awareness as primary ways of re-integrating themselves into a larger, more sustainable food system, not only their local one. The farm operates with a vision of health, rotating up in scale from soil to planet, their motto being 'Healthy soil,

healthy plants, healthy animals, healthy people, healthy planet',¹⁹ conceptually connecting their own land practices and stewardship to the wider systems in which they exist, across scales. Again, such imagining can be seen as a way of tapping into meaning that is larger than oneself and even than one's immediate community.

In some cases, people's connection to the farm is overtly religious, rather than allusively so, and connects to long lineages and wide geographies of faith. The elderly Jewish member became interested in alternative agriculture as part of her religious social justice beliefs, and traced the connections back to scripture, where 'religion actually melds with farming.' She articulated spiritual connections to Native American beliefs about bison, a Mexican relative's food-decorated altar, Taiwanese religious celebrations with food, and Arab altars looking akin to Jewish ones, all in reference to cultural expressions of gratitude for crops and livestock. She sees her food choices as part of an inclusive, global web of spiritual and religious tradition. One of the farm's managers, a devout Christian, similarly pointed out 'really all of scripture is agriculturally referenced' and told me that 'being here, and being part of this team, and specifically supporting Mark and Kristin is as tangible of a [way] of the living out of my faith in Christ as I can find.' This question echoes the guiding question of 'what does it mean to follow Jesus in everyday life?' that Amish communities use to determine meaning and action,²⁰ an especially strong association given that several Amish families also work on the farm.

378 Connection to the global is underlined by how some people prepare their foods. Kristin writes that one way to deal with having limitations on what they can eat – because they do not purchase much food from the store – is to follow recipes from international cookbooks and bring some of the wider world into their geographically-constrained farm and kitchen. One member in Manhattan is Colombian and uses Essex products to make traditional meals from her homeland. The Jewish woman on the Upper West side called herself a 'Chinese cook,' by which I think she meant she cooks primarily Chinese dishes (although she did not say why). A thoroughly global understanding of cuisine, culture, and environmentalism emerge from these life choices, literally grounded in the soil of one place, but imaginably circling outwards in its relations and obligations.

Disconnections

Although all these ways of connecting across scales – to place and landscape, to the global ecosystem, to the universal – are present on the farm, there are also disconnections. Amish employees are deeply religious in a more traditional sense and do not interact more than necessary with the 'English' (non-Amish) farmers. Amish tradition also follows the idea of dedication to the physical world, and a way of connecting through work. Through work, their beliefs become embodied in social practices that reproduce religious views,²¹ a dynamic that can be seen on Essex Farm generally, as beliefs in sustainability, health, community,

and even spirituality become embodied and reinforced through shared practices of farming, cooking, and eating. On the other hand, in Amish culture, evangelism of belief is mostly eschewed, as it is seen as a repudiation of humility.²² The stability, quietness, and rejection of outward-facing promotion stands in contrast to Essex Farm's social fluctuations – as new farmers arrive and leave regularly – and visibility as a model for sustainable agriculture. The commitment to work, land, and community is shared between the Amish and English; the verbal and visual expression of what that commitment means in daily life could not be much more different.

There are also real differences between the embodied knowledge of farmers, compared with members who visit to pick up their food or receive it in a box. The dissonance is especially stark for New York City members, who live in a different landscape and a warmer climate. Social media and the Farm Note newsletter cannot make up for this distance in members whose only concept of the farm is imagined, through pictures, descriptions, and meals, instead of being cultivated through physical presence. NYC members do things like ask for flowers in the spring while the farm is still blanketed in snow, or lamb meat while ewes are still pregnant. They may feel like they understand what is going on the farm, but one farmer characterized it as 'misunderstanding,' because most of them have never visited the farm. '...they don't know what we're actually working with. Where, I think a lot of our local members see it...They're experiencing the same weather.' City members do not occupy the same place as local members, and the sociality of the share has fragmented somewhat as a result. One farmer described this as a disconnect in the 'C' of 'CSA.'

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The Limits of Extended Sensing

In other words, there are limits to one's ability to sense vicariously through others' accounts. Sensory ethnographer Sarah Pink discusses the small body of existing literature suggests that media is a way of extending our senses. Technology is not merely a method of disseminating information, it is itself sensory, allowing for different presence and qualities of experience.²³ At Essex Farm, the technological extension of senses works both in producing and sharing food, and it makes the entire endeavour possible. By texting his workers, Mark can lengthen his managerial reach to know about and weigh in on things happening across 1,100 acres. Instagram and the Farm Note allows members a way of 'seeing' the farm. With local members, it can be a way of calling for help – for example, with a sudden crop of perishable strawberries that require volunteer pickers. The images, captions, and stories convey a sense of being on the farm, knowing what is happening by the season, creating a connection that would be difficult or impossible without smartphones and email. As an interesting twist in the lineage of material mysticism, the farm, which many farmers see as an escape from office life and computer work, has become a 'digitally mediated' workplace.²⁴

The limits to sensing show especially when it comes to who must do the work. Despite the reliance on computers, the farm operates in a relatively low-tech manner, when compared to contemporary industrial agriculture, and requires much more manual labour. Again, being physically absent, city members require even more labour from the farm. Members have to process and cook food, but it is selected and packed for them, unlike for locals, who do this themselves. The knowledge gained in sensing through the labour is completely obscured when someone else does the work.

Lack of physical presence has also changed connections between people involved with the farm. The initial CSA community, which was a small group of people living in the immediate community was a 'spiritual community. We're all tied together, kind of an ethos. As in most religious communes,' said one long-term member. And in many communes, membership eventually wanes, as it has with Essex Farm's local membership, in part because the group feeling has dissipated and the priorities seem to have shifted towards serving far-away members. Mark appears to have an ambivalent relationship with this kind of fervour for the farm, 'when people literally talk about us almost the way they talk about their churches, right, as born-again Christian...how do we put [the farm's driving principles] in words in a way that doesn't sound like religion, or maybe does.' The deep belief is part of what keeps people with the farm when it is often a harder choice than traditional grocery shopping – but it is not necessarily permanent.

380 Interestingly, I did not sense that the relative lack *embodied* knowledge of the farm landscape necessarily limited how *spiritually* connected people felt they were through it. Echoing conversations I had with other members and farmers, the woman in Manhattan told me, "once you have an ethical feeling and the feeling for nature, it doesn't matter if you have an organized religious affiliation. But I think once you're sensitive to nature, that is spirituality."

Tapping into this, the CSA share is an aspirational imagining of the food of the future (sustainable, community-based) through the past (low-input farming practices and connection to land) and the present (joyful, sensual, and culinary engagements). All this at an intersection of seemingly juxtaposed modern trends in social media and CSA farming, and through continual reimagining of a nostalgic modernity.

Through food and farming, one may cross the boundary between embodied action and spiritual signals. Notions of transcorporeality – the porous boundaries of human bodies, in constant exchange with the environment²⁵ – may here expand to past the physical to the metaphysical. Gould argues, 'Physical ingestion becomes a means of incorporating one's deepest values and commitments into one's spiritual self.'²⁶ Eating a certain way can be 'an embodied practice leading toward spiritual experiences of transcendence or communion.'²⁷ Homesteaders (and, I would argue in this case, CSA participants) "are particularly apt to embrace – indeed, to celebrate – embodiedness, this-worldliness, and the materiality of the natural world. Yet operating alongside these explicit gestures embracing the body and the

earth are other gestures of resistance, gestures that suggest a certain longing for immortality, even while mortality is being affirmed as the most natural of processes²⁸. Through food and farming, one may cross the boundary between embodied action and spiritual signals.

The geographer Edmunds Bunkše describes the idea of connection, to and through place, in the essay “Feeling is Believing, or Landscape as a Way of Being in the World.” He argues that imagination is the most important human ability to sense and interpret landscape. By this token, eating (tasting) from a place and imagining that place (perhaps through virtual aids) connect what Bunkše refers to as the interior and exterior landscapes of human life. The result is connection or being at home in the world.²⁹ At Essex Farm, and perhaps in other values-based agricultural projects, personal and collective meaning-making as the motivation for continuing in a labour-intensive lifestyle that contradicts broad trends of convenience and access in contemporary food systems. To fully understand what such farming systems bring forward in our modern world, we may need to look past the ecological and social to the mystical and universal.

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The Cookbook Whisperer: How Maria Guarnaschelli's Powers of Imagination Redefined Recipes

James Oseland

ABSTRACT: Cookbook editing requires many different skills, but there's an important one that often gets overlooked: An editor's ability to summon their powers of imagination when working on an author's manuscript. Few cookbook editors in modern history have been more skilled in this regard than Maria Guarnaschelli, who passed away this year. During her storied career, she edited numerous cookbooks so imaginative that they went on to impact the culture of international home cooking. This paper examines the innerworkings of a handful of Guarnaschelli's books, including *The Zuni Cafe Cookbook*, *All About Braising*, *La Gran Cocina*, and *The Food Lab*, with interviews with their authors.

In the recipe for roast chicken with bread salad that appears in *The Zuni Cafe Cookbook*, the book's author, the San Francisco-based chef Judy Rodgers, translates a signature dish on her restaurant's menu for the home cook. From the first lines, it's clear that it is not an average recipe.

'The Zuni roast chicken depends on three things,' Rodgers explains in the page-long headnote, 'beginning with the small size of the bird. Don't substitute a jumbo roaster – it will be too lean and won't tolerate high heat, which is the second requirement of the method. Small chickens, 2¾ to 3½ pounds, flourish at high heat, roast quickly and evenly, and, with lots of skin per ounce of meat, they are virtually designed to stay succulent. Your store may not promote this size for roasting, but let them know you'd like it.'¹

Rodgers applies the same calm authoritativeness and attention to detail to the prepping of the chicken. It should be patted 'very'² dry, inside and out, and she explains why: 'a wet chicken will spend too much time steaming before it begins to turn golden brown.'³ When it comes to the cooking, Rodgers urges readers not to just put the chicken in the oven and walk away, but rather to stay alert and use their senses to better appreciate what's occurring inside that hot box: 'Place [the chicken] in the center of the oven and listen and watch for it to start sizzling and browning within 20 minutes. If it doesn't, raise the temperature progressively until it does.'⁴

At one point in the recipe, Rodgers refers the reader to a multipage section called 'The Practice of Early Salting'⁵ In it, she tells the story of how, when she was a young cook in a Paris restaurant, she was won over by the technique of salting certain foods well ahead of cooking them. She also describes in technical yet colourful detail the many different varieties of salt chefs use, from *fleur de sel* to kosher salt, and how home cooks can learn to use them too.

In the end, this recipe, which clocks in at nearly five pages, isn't just a guide to making the most delicious, crackly-skinned roast chicken that you've ever eaten. It's a thorough but friendly invitation to become a more knowledgeable cook. No wonder it has become a cult classic.

Published in 2002, Rodgers's cookbook – the only one she'd write – went on to win every major American cookbook award in the categories in which it was nominated. A few years later, after I had become the editor of *Saveur*, I had the good fortune to have a meal with her in San Francisco. We talked about the book's decade-long creation. 'It was a labor of love with Maria,' she told me over appetizers. She was referring to Maria Guarnaschelli, the legendary American cookbook editor who was the book's shepherd. 'She expected a lot, but in the end I had the great advantage to have her.'

In 2001, Guarnaschelli – who had recently joined W.W. Norton, the publisher where she'd spend the last part of her career – bought a proposal I'd submitted for a book called *Cradle of Flavor*. It was to be a comprehensive exploration, through recipes, of the culinary links between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, a part of the world where I had lived off and on for years. It was my first book. Naively, I thought I would finish it within a year or two. Instead, under Maria's demanding tutelage, the process of researching recipes, developing them, and writing three radically different drafts took nearly six years.

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Maria was unlike any other editor I'd worked with. Her physical presence was forceful, but her opinions, delivered by way of a sharp baritone, were even more so. She insisted on a level of discipline and detail in my writing that was a jolt to a first-time book author like myself. She told me again and again to consider my reader. She wanted me to imagine someone who had never been to rural Java but, through the precision of my writing, would be able to master an authentic *opor ayam*, a definitive Indonesian curry. 'How can you translate such mysterious cooking for a person who knows nothing about it?' she once asked me.

Among the award-winning cookbooks that Maria edited in her decades-long career are such diverse titles as *Gran Cocina Latina* by Maricel Presilla, *The Cake Bible* by Rose Levy Berenbaum, *The Splendid Table* by Lynne Rossetto Kasper, and *The Food Lab* by J. Kenji Lopez-Alt, along with literally scores of others. Maria's influence on culinary publishing over the last five decades – and on my own work as a writer and editor – is immeasurable. Her death in February of this year inspired me to reconsider what it was that gave the books she edited their magic.

All About Braising

In 2004, around the time that I was wrapping up the last draft of *Cradle of Flavor*, the writer and cooking teacher Molly Stevens was publishing *All About Braising*, also edited by Maria. Like so many of the volumes that Maria had a hand in, it went on to win every major cookbook award in its category. And as with many of Maria's collaborations, the process to get there was intense. I asked Stevens to tell me about it.

‘I think I realized from the beginning what a master class I was getting,’ she said. ‘Maria would pick a recipe that was particularly troubled, or that was an illustrative example, and then she’d go deep on that one.’

One recipe Stevens proposed was initially called ‘Chicken Legs Braised with Prunes, Green Olives & Lemons.’ Upon my prompting, she searched through her archives and unearthed three separate manuscript drafts of that recipe, each scrawled with Maria’s theatrical yet always clear handwriting. Seeing those pages brought on a rush of memories from the years I worked on *Cradle of Flavor*. I practically broke out in a sweat.

Poring through those manuscript notes, I instantly recognized a fundamental trait of Maria’s editing style: She pushed her writers to make their own improvements, refusing to rewrite the book for them. Consider the fate of this anecdote Stevens included in the first draft about how the lemony chicken recipe had been inspired by one in the *Silver Palate Cookbook*: ‘While I applaud the inclusion of green olives in the Silver Palate original,’ Stevens’s original headnote read, ‘I’ve always wanted something less sugary (it contains 1 cup of brown sugar).’⁶

Maria’s note, written in the manuscript’s left margin, doesn’t mince words: ‘This sentence makes no sense if you don’t know [that] recipe at all. Please fix and briefly get to your point.’⁷ The anecdote is absent in the second draft.

Stevens explained to me what she took away from that edit: ‘Going back and looking at these pages reminded me of something that I still struggle with as a food writer,’ she said. ‘This whole thing about *The Silver Palate Cookbook*, it doesn’t matter to the reader and it doesn’t help them. I had it there because it’s how I got to the recipe. So much of my early process is my internal process: How did I get to this recipe? But as a food writer, your internal process is not necessarily something you need to share with everybody. That might not be what’s helpful to them to bring them into a recipe. Maria said that without really coming out and saying it, which is indicative of how she edited.’

In her second-draft notes, Maria is even more direct. Here’s one of her handwritten edits to the revised headnote: ‘wordy detailing of cheff-y balance/taste/whatever stuff will have your readers turning the page before they discern how quick it is in the end para!’⁸

Maria frequently tells her author she needs to communicate more precisely. In one note, the editor recommends replacing the generic-sounding verb ‘give’ with the subtler ‘lend’, ‘impart’, or ‘contribute.’⁹ She dismisses the phrase ‘seems just right’ as ‘too vague.’¹⁰ Always anticipating the questions a typical home cook might ask, Maria takes aim at Stevens’s suggestion of serving the chicken with buttered egg noodles: ‘Will the noodles soak up the sauce?’¹¹ Another note admonishes Stevens for being less than totally precise about which cut of chicken to use: ‘Wherever you can be concrete it helps! Vague general comments are NOT good.’¹²

Stevens recalled that Maria’s edits pushed the author to focus on her own basic knowledge of the dish. ‘Maria always reminded me that I was writing this book because

I'm an expert,' she said. 'One of the things she said over and over in her notes was 'Get rid of the waffling. We're here because you know and we want to learn from you.' When I was working with her, very rarely would I say 'I don't know' to her because that was not a good answer. Every question had to be answered.'

The pursuit of precision continues in the third draft, where Maria writes in response to the now-twice-rewritten headnote, 'You're being somewhat ponderous, over explaining every element, yet we still don't have a clear picture. Can you get the prunes and olives to one sentence?'¹³ By now, the recipe's name has been changed from the wordy original to 'Quick Lemony Chicken with Prunes and Green Olives.'¹⁴ The title telegraphs two of Maria's prime imperatives: First, emphasize the recipe's ease and deliciousness, then highlight its versatility. Much of the information in the original headnote has been relocated to a Cook's Note at the end of the recipe, a hallmark of Maria's structural style.

'I feel like Maria saw value in annotating text, having sidebars and appendices, information that made it feel like it was very much a resource,' Stevens said. 'I think she was also sensitive to information buried in a headnote that was an actual tip or takeaway. She loved "aha!" moments. If she learned something from your text, she'd be so excited about it, so she was always looking for new bits of information.'

In the end, Maria and Stevens got the headnote down to a concise and friendly 67 words. Here's the published version:

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This easy chicken braise simmers on top of the stove for about 35 minutes, making it ideal for a quick weeknight dinner. But don't let that stop you from making it for company. The winning combination of sweet prunes and green olives in a lemony braising liquid makes it distinctive enough for a fancy dinner party. Serve with mashed potatoes, a potato gratin, or buttered egg noodles.¹⁵

While concision was important to Maria, length in and of itself was not. 'If it was just padding, she'd get rid of it,' Stevens recalled. 'But at the same time, if you needed to write a three-paragraph instruction procedure on how to cut chicken thighs, she was like, "Write as long as you need to there." She always encouraged specificity in the instruction. There's a lot of work that goes into writing a recipe that makes a reader go, "Oh, I really want to make that." Especially when they're just starting out as a cook. It takes a lot of work to get something that feels neat and tidy and effortless.'

Gran Cocina Latina

Another book that Maria edited was the 902-page *Gran Cocina Latina*, an encyclopedic guide to the food of Latin America written by the Cuban-American scholar and chef Maricel Presilla. The book was published in 2013, nearly twenty years after Presilla and Maria had initially discussed it. Presilla and I recently talked about the book's long road to publication.

‘I met Maria in Spain in 1992, after I gave a talk about Latin America at a conference we were both attending,’ she said. ‘In 1993, I went to her office and I brought her the idea I had for a cookbook, starting with where I come from. Immediately, Maria said, “This is too narrow.” She asked to see the material that I had on Latin America, and she loved it and said, “This is the book that we should write.”’

The method by which that book came to exist was unusual, to say the least. ‘We developed this process where I would pick her up from her apartment in Manhattan and then we would drive out to her house in Pennsylvania,’ said Presilla. ‘We would be there for the whole weekend. I would write a chapter and print two copies, and then I would read it to her, and she would say, “Okay, let’s change this, let’s change that.”’

At Maria’s behest, the two agreed early on that the book should not be structured around individual chapters exploring each country in Latin America; organizing the book in that fashion wouldn’t be useful to the average reader looking for a weeknight recipe. Instead, Presilla divided the recipes into chapters with titles such as ‘The Tamal Family’ and ‘Tropical Roots and Starchy Vegetables.’¹⁶ Not bucketing the recipes by country also allowed Presilla to highlight the interconnectedness of the region’s diverse food cultures, showing readers, say, the difference between Guatemalan tamales made from nixtamalized corn and fresh corn tamales from the Mexican state of Michoacán.

‘Maria understood the consumer,’ Presilla told me. ‘She understood that Americans, for whom this book was written, want categories, and that would be the clearest way to present the food. That master plan worked really well. But she understood that I didn’t just want to do a book of recipes. The scope was always going to be larger. She trusted me because I was an academic.’

Like other authors that Maria worked with – including me – Presilla was surprised by the level of detail her editor demanded. When Presilla began working on the book, she was not a professional recipe writer trained to create super-precise instructions. Maria required that she measure every single item in every single test and, as with Stevens, write each step in a way that would make sense even to relatively inexperienced cooks.

‘She liked my writing, but she thought that I needed to go deeper into each recipe,’ Presilla said. ‘She demanded so much detail from me. What kind of pot? What’s the size? What’s happening inside the pot? Is it bubbling or is it not? I had to measure everything. I would say eight ears of corn and she would say, “What do you mean eight ears of corn? How big are the ears?” She drilled me on that. She made me go deeper.’

Presilla completed the first draft of *Gran Cocina Latina* around a decade after she and Maria had first discussed the book; the manuscript was more than 2,000 pages long and was delivered to Maria’s office in multiple boxes. The next step was to edit it down to a publishable length. ‘We cut three things that I saw as essential: a beautiful chapter with pizzas and pastas, a much bigger chapter on ingredients than what was published, and a 40-page bibliography,’ Presilla said.

Despite sacrificing that material – or perhaps thanks to doing so – Presilla and Maria went on to create one of the best books of their respective careers. Maria’s guidance was essential in helping Presilla interweave personal experiences with recipes, science, geography, history, and rigorously researched culinary information in order to bring all of it together in a vital mosaic of pan–Latin American cooking. At the outset it had seemed an impossible task, but they nailed it.

The Food Lab

Even as culinary publishing entered the social-media era, when so many publishers are seeking to parlay a writer’s Instagram following into a flash-in-the-pan success, Maria knew how to take a creative gamble on first-time authors whom she sensed had something enduring to contribute to the lineage of American cookbooks.

One such author was J. Kenji Lopez-Alt, a columnist for the website *Serious Eats* who in 20TK sold Maria his proposal for a book called *The Food Lab*. ‘Maria was one of the last people to make an offer,’ Lopez-Alt told me. ‘But she was the first person I talked to who seemed interested in the book beyond a business move. A lot of other people I talked to said things like, “Oh, we can package it this way and it’ll look like this.” Maria said, “This is a special book proposal. I want this book, and I’m not going to take no for an answer.”’

As with Rodgers, Stevens, and Presilla, Maria worked intimately with Lopez-Alt to bring his book to life. Over the five-year writing and editing process, *The Food Lab* went from the 350 pages that Lopez-Alt originally envisioned to a nearly 1600-page draft that the two considered publishing in two volumes. That idea was quashed by W.W. Norton and the manuscript was ultimately pared down to comprise a single volume of about a thousand pages. The format worked: The book has sold TK copies to date and is one of the most-admired cookbooks of the last decade.

‘I was always afraid Maria would say no to me,’ Lopez-Alt said. ‘But usually it was the opposite – she would say, “Do more.”’ He recalls that she was always encouraging – and always willing to get on board with new ideas, no matter how unusual they were.

‘Maria was good at identifying people with unique perspectives,’ Lopez-Alt continued. ‘She had a very good sense of what was going to work before the rest of the cookbook world knew that it was going to work. I think she knew what readers wanted before they knew they wanted it.’

That same uncanny foresight almost certainly played a role in Maria’s decision to take a risk on me and *Cradle of Flavor*. After all, what other established cookbook editor would’ve taken on a newbie whose topic was one of the world’s least-understood culinary regions? And yet, I like to think that it was her genuine personal curiosity and imagination, as much as any crystal ball, that ultimately drove her to acquire a book.

Molly Stevens had a similar take. ‘I think Maria *was* the reader,’ she told me.

She learned to cook through the books that she edited. She cooked more of my recipes than anyone I ever worked with. I always knew that when I was turning something in that she might take that recipe home and make it, and

if it didn't work, I was in trouble. She was the ultimate user of the book. And that's why she was so intense about not underestimating the reader, but also not assuming they have your knowledge.

It is marvellous to think that this erudite and well-travelled Manhattanite whose books have won dozens of awards was, in the end, her own 'everyreader'. From the initial proposal to the final galley proof, she was intent on placing herself inside the reader's experience, even if it meant turning on the stove and pulling out the pots and pans.

Back when I was working on the second draft of my book with Maria, she deduced how much I was struggling to explain these foreign cuisines to American readers. Virtually everything I was writing about – from basic cooking techniques to core ingredients such as palm sugar and tempeh – was a potential minefield of unfamiliarity for the typical home cook here. 'You should teach cooking classes,' Maria suggested at one point. 'That way you could better understand how to translate these things.'

Within weeks, I'd acted on her advice, signing on to teach Indonesian-Malaysian-Singaporean cooking classes at New York's Institute for Culinary Education and the New School. Many of the courses took a hybrid format: I would meet students at an Asian market I liked – an opportunity to show them how to identify and choose ingredients that might otherwise be mysterious – and then we would go back into the kitchen classroom and make dishes from those ingredients. I quickly began to see firsthand the sorts of things that were confusing to my students. They would ask simple yet utterly logical questions like, 'Is this paste ground finely enough?' or 'Is this bok choy fresh or not?'

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Maria's advice had been spot-on. In fact, it was one of the best suggestions I've ever been given about anything I've undertaken in my life. All of a sudden, I knew who I was writing my book for.

Notes

1. Zuni
2. zuni
3. Zuni
4. Zuni
5. Zuni
6. Braising draft
7. Braising draft
8. Braising draft
9. Braising draft
10. Braising draft
11. Braising draft
12. Braising draft
13. Braising draft
14. Braising draft
15. All about braising
16. Gran Cocina Latina

Chicken Legs Braised with Prunes, Green Olives & Lemon

The French have long known that chicken and prunes pair magnificently. The prunes, together with a bit of wine, give

the sauce a subtle honeyed note, and their silken texture seems just right alongside tender braised chicken. The

brininess of green olive balances all this good sweetness, and the lemon zest gives the whole dish a bright citrusy

punch. As good as lemon zest is here, I also like to play around with other citrus zest. I sometimes use tangerine,

for instance, or a mix of lemon and orange. Or, best of all, thin-skinned Meyer lemon with their delicate, sweet floral

perfume. Meyer lemons are only available for a few months

each winter, but they are not to be missed.

This tasty braise simmers on top of the stove for about 35 minutes, making it a quick weeknight dish - although it's

certainly elegant enough for company. For a darker, more robust, rustic-looking dish, use red wine in place of white, and switch to red wine vinegar as well.

Serve with mashed potatoes, a potato gratin, or buttered egg noodles to soak up the tasty sauce.

Serves 4

Braising time: 35 to 45 minutes

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Somewhere in this sentence you need to tell us you have shifted from a generality to a comment relating to this specific recipe.

transfer 2nd para. to beginning.
lend impact
Can we delete this sentence? contribute
Wherever you can be concrete, it helps! vague general comments are NOT good.
too vague
too much already!
Conflate this sentence into the previous one + make shorter.
because of their
put this in a cook's note at the end
I begin headline HERE
early put together?
distinctive a dinner party
with a darker substitute add for the
use red wine in place of white, for the white wine vinegar as well.
will the noodles soak up the sauce?
and tell us when (months) they are available.
wordy detail line of chef-y balance taste & balance stuff that made you bleed turning the page before they all come how quick it is in the 2nd para! Deal with the sauce stuff briefly.

FIGURE 1-1. Sample edit page from *All About Braising* by Molly Stevens.

4 whole chicken legs, or a combination of thighs and drumsticks (about 3 1/2 pounds total), rinsed and patted dry
 Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper
 All-purpose flour for dredging, about 1/2 cup
 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
 1/4 cup white wine vinegar
 1 cup dry white wine
 1 garlic clove, smashed
 4 strips lemon zest, removed with a vegetable peeler (each about 2 1/2- x 3/4-inch), or substitute orange, tangerine, or Meyer lemon (see ~~headnote~~)

cook's note ?

2 whole cloves
 3/4 cup ~~moist~~, plump, pitted dried prunes
 1/3 cup brined green olives, such as Picholine or Lucques, pitted

if they're plump, won't they be moist? also, ~~add~~ add a soaking-to-plump procedure?

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good T

separate the

1. If using whole legs, ~~cut each apart into a thigh and a~~ drumstick. To do so, turn the leg skin-side down and, with a sharp chef's or boning knife, cut along the line of yellow fat that ~~separates~~ ^{connects} the thigh ~~and~~ ^{from the to the} drumstick. This line will direct you to the exact spot where the 2 parts ~~connect~~ ^{are joined}.

? ^

all this to avoid using same words

2. *Dredging the chicken:* Generously season the chicken pieces all over with salt and pepper. Spread the flour in a

Need to pat pieces dry first?

FIGURE 1-2. Sample edit page from *All About Braising* by Molly Stevens.

wide shallow dish (a pie plate works well), and dredge half the chicken piece ^{1/3} one at a time by placing one in the flour, turning to coat both sides, lifting and patting lightly to shake off any excess.

3. *Browning the chicken:* Add 2 tablespoons of oil to a large, deep skillet or saute pan (12- to 14-inch works well) over medium-high heat. Heat until the oil shimmers. Place the dredged chicken pieces in the pan, skin side down, and cook, without disturbing, until one side forms a nutbrown crust, about 3 to 4 minutes. Turn the chicken with tongs, and brown on the other side, another 3 to 4 minutes. While the chicken is browning, dredge the remaining pieces. Remove the seared chicken to a large plate, and brown with ^{good!} the remaining pieces. Set these aside with the others, and discard the flour. ?

4. *The aromatics and braising liquid:* Pour off the fat from the pan and quickly wipe out any black specks with a damp paper towel, being careful to leave behind the ^{valuable/essential} good browned bits. Add the vinegar, wine, garlic, zest, and cloves to the pan, and stir with a wooden spoon to scrape up the ^{rose} prized browned bits stuck to the bottom of the pan. ^{good!}

5. *The braise:* Return the chicken to the ^{skillet} pan along with any ^{and be sure to add} juices that have accumulated on the plate, arranging the pieces so they fit in a snug single layer. Scatter over the

FIGURE 1-3. Sample edit page from *All About Braising* by Molly Stevens.

prunes and olives. Cover tightly, and reduce the heat to low. Braise at a gentle simmer, basting occasionally and turning the pieces with tongs halfway through, until the chicken meat is tender and pulls easily away from the bone, 30 to 40 minutes. When you baste, check to see that the liquid is simmering quietly; if it appears to be simmering too vigorously, reduce the heat or shift the pan onto a flame tamer.

6. *The finish:* Using a slotted spoon or tongs, transfer the chicken to a large platter with out stacking, and cover loosely with foil to keep warm. Skim any surface fat from the sauce with a wide spoon. Raise the heat under the pan to high, and reduce the pan juices for a 2 to 3 minutes to concentrate the flavor. The sauce should be the consistency of a thin vinaigrette. Taste for salt and pepper. ~~fish~~ out the whole cloves and zest, if you like. Pour the juices over the chicken, and serve.

ok?
 lift the lid to
 first for vivid specificity

piece under
 "shift"
 suggests another burner

them visible
 obvious

flame tamer.

sift

Fish out is

not so graceful a word.
 I'd use sparingly

FIGURE 1-4. Sample edit page from *All About Braising* by Molly Stevens.

1754

Chicken Legs Braised with Prunes, Green Olives & Lemon

The French have long known that chicken and prunes ^{pair} make a magnificent ^{by J} union, but it was the broad reach of the Silver Palate Cookbook in 1980's that ^{compelled} influenced discriminating American ^{cooks} ~~hosts and hostesses~~ to add ^J to this combination to their repertoire. Chicken Marbella became, and remains, one of those enduring sure-to-please party ^{dishes} recipes that turn up everywhere. [While I applaud the inclusion of green olives in the Silver Palate original, I've always wanted something less sugary (it contains 1 cup brown sugar).] So I eliminated the sugar and rely on the prunes for sweetness along with the floral perfume of lemon zest - use Meyer lemons if they're in season. The fruit and the wine work together to give the sauce a subtle honeyed note, and the olives and vinegar harmonize the whole with their brininess and acidity.

This tasty braise simmers on top of the stove for about 35 minutes, making it a quick weeknight dish - although it's certainly elegant enough to serve to company. For a darker, more robust, rustic-looking dish, use red wine in place of white, and switch to red wine vinegar, too.

Serve with Parsley-Flecked Mashed Potatoes (page 00) or Buttered Egg Noodles (page 00).

This sentence makes no sense if you don't know the recipe at all. Please fix and deeply get to your point.

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FIGURE 2-1. Sample edit page from *All About Braising* by Molly Stevens.

Serves 4

Braising time: 35 to 45 minutes

4 whole chicken legs, or a combination of thighs and drumsticks (about 3 1/2 pounds total), rinsed and patted dry

Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper

All-purpose flour for dredging, about 1/2 cup

2 tablespoons olive oil

1/4 cup white wine vinegar

1 cup dry white wine

1 garlic clove, smashed

4 strips lemon zest (preferably Meyer lemon), removed with a vegetable peeler (each about 2 1/2- x 3/4-inch)

2 whole cloves

3/4 cup moist, plump, pitted dried prunes

7 1/3 cup ^{drined} ~~pitted~~ green olives, such as Picholine or Lucques, ^{pitted}

1. If using whole legs, cut each apart into a thigh and a drumstick. To do so, turn the leg skin-side down and, with a chef's or boning knife, cut along the line of yellow fat that separates the thigh and drumstick. This line will direct you to the exact spot where the 2 parts connect.

Need to tell us when you redo the headnote why a Meyer lemon is something we should try to do of the mix of lemon + orange do the job

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FIGURE 2-2. Sample edit page from *All About Braising* by Molly Stevens.

2. Generously season the chicken pieces all over with salt and pepper. Spread the flour in a wide shallow dish (a pie plate works well), and dredge half the chicken piece one at a time by placing one in the flour, turning to coat both sides, lifting and patting lightly to shake off any excess.

3. Add 2 tablespoons of oil to a large, deep skillet over medium-high heat. The pan should be just large enough to hold the chicken pieces in a single layer (12- to 14-inch pan works well). Heat until the oil shimmers. Place the dredged chicken pieces in the pan, skin side down, and cook, without disturbing, until one side forms a nutbrown crust, about 3 to 4 minutes. Turn the chicken with tongs, and brown on the other side, another 3 to 4 minutes. While the chicken is browning, dredge the remaining pieces. Remove the seared chicken to a plate, and sear with remaining pieces. Set these aside with the others, and discard the flour.

4. Pour off the fat from the pan and wipe it quickly with a paper towel. Add the vinegar, wine, garlic, zest, and cloves to the pan, and stir with a wooden spoon to scrape up the prized browned bits stuck to the bottom of the pan. Return the chicken to the pan along with any juices that have accumulated on the plate, arranging it so it fits in a snug single layer. Scatter over the prunes and olives. Cover tightly, and reduce heat to low. Braise, basting

a saute pan

size please

?

clean

it

What about the wiping thing up above?

The

at a saute easy simmer

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FIGURE 2-3. Sample edit page from *All About Braising* by Molly Stevens.

occasionally and turning the pieces with tongs halfway through, until the chicken meat is tender and pulls easily away from the bone, 30 to 40 minutes. When you baste, check to see that the liquid is simmering gently; if it appears to be boiling too vigorously, reduce the heat or shift the pan onto a flame tamer.

5. Using a slotted spoon or tongs, transfer the chicken to a platter and cover loosely with foil to keep warm. Skim any obvious surface fat from the sauce. Raise the heat under the pan to high, and reduce the pan juices for a 2 to 3 minutes to concentrate the flavor. Taste for salt and pepper. Fish out the whole cloves and zest, if you like. Pour the juices over the chicken, and serve.

would it
be
very saucy?

FIGURE 2-4. Sample edit page from *All About Braising* by Molly Stevens.

BRAISING/Poultry & Game pg. 2

Quick Lemon Chicken Braise
with Prunes + Green Olives

Chicken Legs Braised with Prunes, Green Olives & Lemon

1st sentence was dizzying and had me stopped. Avoid too many ideas jammed into a sentence. That makes it

This easy braise simmers on top of the stove for about 35 minutes, making it ideal for a quick weeknight dinner — although it's distinctive enough for a dinner party. The prunes contribute a subtle honeyed note to the sauce, and their silken texture is luxurious alongside the tender braised chicken legs. The briny green olives and sharp citrus balance all this good sweetness.

I make this chicken braise often, and I've discovered that the recipe is open to variation as long as you respect the general proportions. For example, you can substitute white wine for red wine in place of white, and switch to red wine vinegar as well. I also like to play around with the citrus flavor, by substituting tangerine zest for the lemon zest, for instance, or a mix of lemon and orange. Or, best of all, try it with thin-skinned Meyer lemon because of their sweet floral perfume.

Serve with mashed potatoes, a potato gratin, or buttered egg noodles.

Serves 4
Braising Time: 35 to 45 minutes

GLOBAL: (including things)

- 4 whole chicken legs, or a combination of thighs and drumsticks (about 3 1/2 pounds total)
- Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper
- All-purpose flour for dredging, about 1/2 cup
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Think when you say whole chicken legs you need to set in the fact that "thighs" are part of what you mean.

Handwritten notes:
 - "Sauce needs an adj. - lemony. also to play against honeyed"
 - "What's the good sweetness? The brines? you're being somewhat ponderous overexplaining every element yet we still don't have a clear picture. Can you get the prunes + olives in one sentence?"
 - "Too adjectival please reword"
 - "I combine zest with zest if you can find them"
 - "Hope you like the edits. This was a tough one for me. In this case less is a lot more"

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FIGURE 3-1. Sample edit page from *All About Braising* by Molly Stevens.

1/4 cup white wine vinegar

1 cup dry white wine or dry white vermouth

1 garlic clove, smashed

4 strips lemon zest, removed with a vegetable peeler (each about 2 1/2- x 3/4-inch), or substitute orange, tangerine, or Meyer lemon (see Cook's Note, page 00)

2 whole cloves

3/4 cup plump, pitted dried prunes (If you can't find plump prunes, see Cook's note, page 00)

00)

1/3 cup brined green olives, such as Picholine or Lucques, pitted

1. *Separating chicken legs into thighs and drumsticks:* If using whole legs, separate the thigh from the drumstick. ^{to do so} turn the leg skin-side down and, with a sharp chef's or boning knife, cut along the line of yellow fat that runs between the thigh and drumstick. This line will direct you to the exact spot where the 2 parts are joined.

2. *Dredging the chicken:* Rinse the chicken legs in cool water, and dry thoroughly with paper towels. Generously season all over with salt and pepper. Spread the flour in a wide shallow dish (a pie plate works well), and dredge half the chicken pieces one at a time by placing in the flour, turning to coat both sides, lifting and patting lightly to shake off any excess.

3. *Browning the chicken:* Add 2 tablespoons of oil to a large, deep skillet or saute pan (12- to 14-inch works well) over medium-high heat. Heat until the oil shimmers. Place the dredged chicken pieces in the pan, skin side down, and ^{brown/sear} ~~cook~~ without disturbing, until one side forms a nutbrown crust, about 3 to 4 minutes. Turn the chicken with tongs, and

Good!

Thanks so much for all your FABulous details

I put in variations
let this braise be
a crowd pleaser:
Semour

FIGURE 3-2. Sample edit page from *All About Braising* by Molly Stevens.

brown on the other side, another 3 to 4 minutes. While the chicken is browning, pat dry the remaining pieces again and dredge them in the flour. Remove the seared chicken to a large plate without stacking, and brown the remaining pieces. Set these aside with the others, and discard the flour.

? 1 or 2 1/2 or platter

hard to not stack with

4. *The aromatics and braising liquid:* Pour off the fat from the pan and quickly wipe out any black specks with a damp paper towel, being careful to leave behind the valuable browned bits. Add the vinegar, wine, garlic, zest, and cloves to the skillet, and stir with a wooden spoon to scrape up those prized browned bits stuck to the bottom of the skillet.

Rep ↓

by sample of food held in one sentence.

5. *The braise:* Return the chicken to the skillet, and be sure to add any juices that have accumulated on the plate, arranging the pieces so they fit in a snug single layer. Scatter over the prunes and olives. Cover tightly, and reduce the heat to low. Braise at a gentle simmer, basting occasionally and turning the pieces with tongs halfway through, until the chicken meat is tender and pulls easily away from the bone, 30 to 40 minutes. When you lift the lid to baste, check to see that the liquid is simmering quietly; if it appears to be

pieces
Nigella and legs

is simmering too vigorously, reduce the heat or place a flame tamer under the skillet.

6. *The finish:* Using a slotted spoon or tongs, transfer the chicken to a large platter to catch the juices, and cover loosely with foil to keep warm. Skim any visible surface fat from the sauce with a wide spoon. Raise the heat under the skillet to high, and reduce the pan juices for a 2 to 3 minutes to concentrate their flavor. The sauce should be the consistency of a thin vinaigrette. Taste for salt and pepper. Retrieve the whole cloves and zest, if you like; they can be an unpleasant surprise to bite down on. Pour the juices over the chicken, and serve.

serving

strips of

I think now it is terrific

with the suggested changes

I frankly like them. It's somewhat contradictory to say "if you like" in the previous paragraph and then call them unpleasant. Just delete.

400

FIGURE 3-3. Sample edit page from *All About Braising* by Molly Stevens.

Cook's Notes

Meyer lemons

I adore the ~~fragrance and~~ ^{floral} flavor of Meyer lemons and eagerly anticipate their season each winter. A relatively new arrival on the produce scene, the Meyer lemon is a cross between a lemon and a mandarin orange that was developed over 100 years ago as an ornamental tree in China and then grown in California. But it wasn't until the 1980's that California chefs ~~tasted Meyer lemons and discovered the goodness of these pretty fruits.~~ ^{as a professional cook}

~~At first glance, Meyer lemons resemble ordinary lemons (like the Eureka and Lisbon varieties), but on closer inspection, you'll see that Meyer lemons have thin, smooth yellow skins and are a bit larger, rounder and less oblong. If you're at all unsure, scratch the skin, if it emits a sweet fragrance of citrus blossoms, it's a Meyer lemon. In addition to this lovely fragrance, what's really remarkable about Meyer lemons is the taste of the fruit, juice and even the skin. Although not quite sweet enough to eat out of hand like an orange, chopped up Meyer lemon can be added, peel and all, to salads, braises, stews, and other dishes. Since much of the floral character resides in the peel and it's thin, don't be shy about including it.~~

Like most citrus, Meyer lemons ~~are~~ a winter fruit. Look for them from November to March. Select ones that feel plump and heavy for their size with smooth skin. Because of their thin skins, Meyer lemons are more delicate than standard varieties. Store them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator and use them within a few days. Meyer lemons are grown on small farms and not usually sprayed or dyed, but it's always a good idea to wash the outside of fruit before using. Rolling the lemon back and forth on a countertop before juicing will yield more juice.

IMHO
Meyer lemons are bigger than Eureka + Lisbon + they are + thin skinned, to me they look like small grapefruits.

floral

as a professional cook

what a great choice

varieties in the Supermarket.

? come to us in bloom in the

FIGURE 3-4. Sample edit page from *All About Braising* by Molly Stevens.

Molly

be playing around
with the citrus.

~~#~~ Use the wine + vinegar
(red or white) be affected
by the change of citrus? if so,
I'd put this para. at the end
of the recipe and elevate it to
full variation status. I have always
found this para. too loaded with
switches anyway. It's never a good idea
to give people too much freedom. Choose
1 or 2 variations. That's really best I think.
Make 10 of them Meyer Lemon Chicken since you've
got the note.

FIGURE 3-5. Sample edit page from *All About Braising* by Molly Stevens.

New York's Artisanal Oyster Farmers: Creating the Wild(ish) Oyster

Charity Robey

ABSTRACT: In Jonathan Swift's telling, the first bold man to eat an oyster did so many thousands of years ago and was joined by so many other bold men and women that by the twentieth century, most of the oysters in the world were no longer wild, but farmed.

Today, cultivated oysters account for at least 95% of the oysters consumed in the US, and an intense culture of connoisseurship has grown up around them. In New York, historically the largest oyster-consuming city in the US, restaurants and bars take pride in offering oysters from a list of local producers, opening and serving them live as a separate course. Discerning patrons pay attention to the oysters' flavour profiles, places of origin, size, shape and colour.

The taste may evoke a stormy ocean beach, but these bivalves are decidedly not wild. This paper takes a look underneath the water, before the oysters are harvested and shucked, to uncover the art and technique that Long Island's artisanal farmers employ in the creation of cultivated oysters.

Long Island oysters are sold with a completely transparent chain of identity and responsibility. A person eating an oyster at 8 p.m. in Greenwich Village would have no trouble the next day tracing the origin of that oyster to the bay where it grew and the farmer who planted and tended it from the time it was spat. This paper uncovers how at every stage of cultivation, farmers intervene to shape the development of their bivalves toward an ideal of shape, size, flavor and fragrance that is unique to their location and brand—the oysters of their imaginations.

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History of Oyster Farming in New York and the Rise of Connoisseurship

Down by the sea lived a lonesome oyster
Every day getting sadder and moister
He found his home life awf'ly wet
And longed to travel with the upper set...

— Cole Porter, from *The Tale of the Oyster*

In the nineteenth century, New York was the centre of the oyster-eating world, with 12 million oysters sold in markets annually by 1860. Gnarly, muddy piles of wild and farmed oysters were sold and slurped in great quantities at oyster shacks, and shucked oysters were served in bars and saloons as well as fine restaurants. (See Figure 1 and 2.)

New York's Artisanal Oyster Farmers

Everybody, high and low, ate oysters, which were cheap and abundant, especially in the winter months, when keeping oysters cool enough to transport from oyster bed to oyster bar was easier.

In the early twentieth century, oysters were wild and sexy-looking things, often long and banana-shaped with a substantial meat that could be more than a mouthful. Most were harvested using mechanical dredges that hauled up clumps of oysters that had grown together into reefs. Individual animals were broken off with hammers, and those that could not be separated were shucked in situ and then canned or bottled. (See Figure 3.)

As is true today, New York oyster eaters were often served at stand-up bars or from outdoor carts, the curved part of the oyster's shell serving as plate and bowl. In the 1870s–1880s, wealthy people enjoyed oysters served as a first course on exquisite plates that replaced the unsightly shells. (See Figure 4.)

Banquets sometimes featured centrepieces replicating entire oyster reefs, with the shells opened and resembling conjoined twins.

Large-scale oyster consumption and industrial pollution led New York oysters to become scarce by the mid-twentieth century. When Sandy Ingber, executive chef at the Grand Central Oyster Bar, started buying oysters for the restaurant in the 1980s, there were only a handful of oyster producers left in New York, and the most recognizable New York oyster, the Blue Point, was no longer raised in the waters of the Great South Bay. Ingber has presided over the last thirty years of oyster-eating history, including the astonishing rise of oyster connoisseurship and along with it, a new kind of artisanal oyster-farmer.

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In the 90s I would go to the Boston Seafood Show in March, and if I came back with one new oyster it would be a complete success. In summer, we had a very difficult time finding oysters that were not spawning. I had maybe two kinds. And then the dot coms crashed and everyone went into artisanal oyster farming. Come 2000, oyster farmers were popping up all over the place. By 2005 I had 25 different oysters on my menu, 2/3 East Coast, 1/3 West Coast.

Characteristics of Great Oysters

All of the characteristics of a great oyster (meaning an oyster that pleases a human being) occur naturally in wild oysters. Farmers marry their understanding of how oysters develop and thrive with artifice and expedients to bring out the best in the oysters they raise. Humans have mindfully influenced shellfish development for as long as we have been eating them. Some of the modern farmer's techniques, such as encouraging larval oysters to set on sand or shell, are ancient, while new ones are developed – particularly in the genetic manipulation of oyster seed.

Oyster farmers start with seed, and those who farm on Long Island mostly buy seed by the hundreds of thousands at a time from one or two of a handful of seed-producers in

New York's Artisanal Oyster Farmers

coastal Connecticut, on Fisher's Island, NY, and in Southold, NY. These seed producers all grow the same species, *Crassostrea virginica*, and breed for disease resistance. (See Figure 5.)

Physical Characteristics of a Supremely Edible Bivalve

With oyster connoisseurship in the United States came a preference for small oysters whose shell was thick at the shucking end to avoid the heartbreak of disintegration during the opening. Today most American chefs and home-shuckers prefer a bivalve of about 8 centimetres (3 inches). Easy to open, they can be eaten in one slurp. 'My philosophy is get 3-inch oysters. You put half a dozen on a plate and it's beautiful,' said Ingber. 'I go with the wow effect.'

Also desirable is a deep cup of an inch or more and meat that is slightly firm and tender but not watery. As the cup grows deeper, the oyster's body grows down into it. (When the shell grows shallow or long, the body of the animal spreads out, creating a less appealing shape.) (See Figure 6.)

Harold McGee, in his recent book *Nose Dive*, described a good oyster as one of 'the sea's tenderest morsels, the marine equivalent of penned veal or the fattened chicken, which just sit and eat.... a full, complex flavor and suggestively slippery moistness; and its delicacy is a striking contrast the encrusted, rocky shell'.

The ideal Sandy Ingber looks for is 'a beautiful round thick body with great mouth feel; that's how you get the full flavor of the oyster'. Related to cup depth is the ratio of meat to shell, which Ingber calls coverage: 'If you open the oyster and there is a big shell and a long skinny, thin oyster that's not much coverage.'

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For the six weeks or so when oysters are spawning, they are unpalatable. An entire farm will generally spawn at the same time, triggered by water temperature. During this period the oysters' bodies swell and remain flabby until they release the eggs and sperm, after which they are thin and watery for several weeks until they regain their form. Oysters can switch genders at will, as MFK Fisher explained delightfully in her 1941 story, *Consider the Oyster*:

Almost any normal oyster never knows from one year to the next whether he is he or she, and may start at any moment, after the first year, to lay eggs where once he spent his sexual energies in being exceptionally masculine. If he is a she, her energies are equally feminine, so that in a single summer, if all goes well, and the temperature of the water is somewhere around or above seventy degrees, she may spawn several hundred million eggs, fifteen to one hundred million at a time with commendable pride.

Light grey meat is considered the ideal. Dark meat can be a sign of post-spawn exhaustion. And oyster meat with a green cast is the specialty of a handful of farms with specific growing conditions: a pond-like environment and the right kind of algae. Green

New York's Artisanal Oyster Farmers

oysters (meat, shells or both) are unfamiliar to Americans, and the East Coast farmers who produce them rarely market them. (See Figure 7 and 8.)

But as Ingber notes, 'I would never in the past sell oysters with a green tint. Its only in the last year or two people are starting to think that they are sexy. Sometimes the Martha's Vineyard oyster has a green tint and we return them.'

Meroir: The Environmental Effects of Water Temperature, Salinity, and Plankton on the Life Cycle of the Oyster and on its Flavour and Aroma

Connoisseurs, consumers, and experimental taste panels often differ on which oysters tend to be saltier, stronger flavored, finer flavored, and even whether they are distinguishable. This is just another manifestation of the predictable unpredictability, which itself is something to be savored.

— Harold McGee, *Nose Dive*, p 394.

There is no generally agreed-upon ideal of flavour and aroma for an oyster, yet no subject brings out the oyster knives faster. Because the taste of an oyster is a direct reflection of its environment, debates about what flavors are most palatable quickly get personal, as in 'my hometown waters taste better than yours'.

406 There are myriad factors pertaining to taste that farmers must either accept or exploit, depending on their imagined ideal of oyster flavour. Foremost among these factors is the level of salinity, which is about 35 parts per thousand in ocean water and less in the bays and brackish creeks in which oysters are often grown. To tolerate a saline environment, the tissues of most marine animals make chemical adjustments. McGee writes, '...their body tissues adjust mainly with sugars and dissolved amino acids, notably taurine, sweet glycine and alanine, bittersweet proline, and bitter arginine. In addition, the "shell liquor" that they retain when harvested begins as a sample of the water they grow in. So, the taste of oysters is more intense in oysters from high-salinity waters.'

Water temperature is also a factor in oyster-growing. As the temperature of seawater increases, salinity decreases, affecting the flavour profile of oysters who grow there. Also oysters growing in deeper, colder waters grow much more slowly than the same animals in warmer water.

Another factor is the depth at which oysters are grown. The plankton that oysters filter and consume occur in greater numbers in light-filled shallow waters, and more species of plankton are available to oysters that live where sea water circulation is greatest.

The oyster's diet is reflected in the flavour and aroma of its body. Phytoplankton (consisting of microscopic plants) contribute fruity, sweet or grassy flavours to the tissues of an oyster who consumes them. Harold McGee describes oyster giving off 'molecules that produce the 'green' smells of crushed leaves, that scent melons and cucumber, that create mushroominess. Strange, that they should also be prominent in sea animals, so that oysters can smell like cucumber...'

A Great Oyster Has a Great Name

The perception of oyster flavour and aroma is so complex and so subjective that oyster-eaters who can choose will look for a recognizable name. 'A great oyster has a great name,' according to Ingber. 'And for New York oysters, Blue Point is the most common name, the best known. We sell five times as many Blue Points as any other oyster. They are also the least expensive oyster on our menu. Personally, I like oysters with more brine than a Blue Point.'

Before the rise of oyster bars and oyster connoisseurship in New York around 2000, the only names that most customers could recognize were Wellfleet, Cape Cod, Kumamoto, (a West Coast oyster) and Blue Point. Now there are many more, and a memorable and evocative name – especially one that refers to the place where the oyster was grown – is essential to the ideal oyster.

Four Artisanal Oyster Farmers and How They Use Art and Science to Influence the Attributes of their Animals

The cultivation techniques that are used by artisanal oyster raisers in New York waters to create distinct oyster brands from genetically similar animals take a number of environmental and geographic factors into account. Some farms are located in deep, cold water, and others in shallow, relatively warm water. Some farms use mechanical devices to trim and shape their oysters, and others use wave action. Some farms are flooded at times and dry at others, and some experience more water flow than others. In the following case studies, I describe how four oyster farmers use different techniques and ways of managing their animals to achieve the ideal oysters of their imaginations.

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Ben Gonzalez, Southold Bay Oysters: The Perfect Oyster Is Raised Deep and Briny, with the Full Flavours of Southold Bay

Ben Gonzalez had a successful career in marketing before he and his partner, Dave Daly, took up oyster farming in 2013. Their farm is located in the Southold Bay, part of the Peconic Bay system, in about 20 feet of water. The bottom is sandy, the water cooler and the algae less abundant than in shallow water, so the oysters grow slowly – 18 months to 2 years – relative to shallow-water farms. The oysters grow in steel cages that Gonzalez and Daly haul out of the water with a crane attached to their boat *Pulpo* and transport to the land-based part of their farm for tending and harvesting. A shallow tidal creek flows around their boat dock and its quiet, relatively warm waters serve as an interim grow-out area for oysters that are too small to go into cages. 'The smaller ones I keep in the creek, a little more controlled environment.'

Every four weeks, Gonzalez puts the entire farm through the tumbler, a device that looks like a doorless, front-loading washing machine that sorts the oysters by size while washing and tumbling them against each other. This process breaks a thin layer of new shell off the lip of the oysters, stimulating the animals to grow a deeper cup and denser meat.

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'In a way, we are sculpting a live animal.'

Gonzalez takes advantage of the growing conditions on his farm to produce oysters that are full-flavored and briny. 'Three inches is a mouthful for most people, and they don't want to cut the oyster with a fork and knife.' (See Figure 10.)

Sue Wicks of Violet Cove Oysters: The Perfect Oyster Is Raised with Individual Attention and Care

Sue Wicks was born and raised on the Great South Bay of Long Island, the daughter and granddaughter of baymen. After a long professional basketball career that landed her in the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame, she returned in 2016 to the water and began farming oysters.

Violet Cove Oysters is one of three farms located in the shallow waters of the Great South Bay, wedged between a fast-moving current in the navigation lane and the shoreline of undeveloped public land. The depth of the water in the farm fluctuates from 71 centimetres to 2 meters (28 inches to six feet.) 'My dad used to scratch (rake) razor clams on this spot.' On the May day I visited, the water temperature was about 13 degrees Celsius (55F). Wicks expected a spurt of growth as soon as the water got above 16 C (60s F), an ideal temperature for growing oysters.

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Wicks does not use mechanical tumblers or other tools to keep the oyster's growth trimmed and pruned. Her oysters grow in floating mesh bags, attached with clips to allow movement and anchored to the sandy bottom so as to rise and fall with the tide. 'I create a gentle tumble for the oysters. Everything matters, the size of the bags, the weight of the clips, the floats that keep the bags at the surface and increase the wave action.' (See Figure 12.)

Wicks grows about 750,000 oysters in a year on a few acres of bay bottom, which is pretty good productivity for a boutique oyster farm. In the spring she tends her oysters at low tide, walking around to check each bag without taking it off the line. 'I'm looking to see if they have grown. I get out of the boat and walk, checking every single one. It's a nice way to farm. We'll have warm weather this week, and then they will explode. It's like magic.'

Wicks plants three times a year and harvests according to size and stage of development.

Some say the best time to eat them is January because they are filled with glycogen, but if you like that grassy finish, next month, June will be the time for some of these. Then in July, all their energy goes toward making babies, and then they are tired and then they regenerate. When you open up that little 7-centimeter (2.75 inch) Violet Cove, in the fall, it's going to have a lot of meat. Not long and wonky. Deep cup, thick shell, a lot of meat with a creamy nutty middle flavor, from the muscle. That oyster will have complexity and meat.

Some years Wick's oysters develop a purple stripe in their shell, for which she named the farm. 'You sometimes get that purple color in the summer with a healthy well-fed oyster, and it seems to persist here. The nutrients here make the purple more pronounced – we are over springs here, that may be why. I like the name Violet.'

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'This is a boutique farm. I have that luxury of paying attention to every single one. I touch them five times before I sell them. Sorting them, harvesting them, maybe I take 50 and the rest go back. That's part of getting a perfect oyster. I don't want to do it mechanically.'

Phil Mastrangelo of Oysterponds Oyster Company: The Perfect Oyster Is the One that Chefs Covet

Phil Mastrangelo worked on Wall Street for 25 years before leaving in 2013 to farm oysters full time. 'Oyster farming is where capitalism meets environmentalism. There are very few things that I could go into that would satisfy me on both counts.'

The farm produces just under a million oysters a year, with about three million at different stages of development. They start their filtering career in a shallow tidal creek, where the baby oysters grow in bags in a few feet of water until they are moved to nearby Pipe's Cove to finish in about 25 feet of water. Mastrangelo says the oyster farmers' mantra is, 'You have to have flow.'

During the growing season, every oyster goes through a mechanical tumbler where it is sorted and its new growth is trimmed, resulting in the firm shell, deep cup and compact meat that chefs want. (See Figure 14.)

'The tumbler shocks the oyster, and improves the shell coverage of the meat,' Mastrangelo notes. 'If you looked at one that we missed you'd see the meat is translucent and loose, not dense. If you try to shuck an oyster and the shell crumbles, that's a sign that the oyster was not tended to properly.'

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Oysters are living things, but the chefs Mastrangelo works with are seeking a steady and reliable supply of oysters, consistent in size and quality. 'Our high season is the summer, and all the oysters on a farm spawn at the same time according to the temperature,' To avoid a six-week hiatus in harvesting oysters during the spawn, Mastrangelo purchases seed for a variety of *Crassostrea virginica* that does not reproduce, called a triploid.

When the oysters are big enough, Mastrangelo moves them from the tidal creek to the bay to continue growing, in part to increase their brininess. 'The salinity of the creek is 28 parts per thousand and the bay is just under 30 parts per thousand. Baby oysters prefer brackish water, but I prefer the brininess. You get that in the bay in 20 feet of water.'

In the spring sometimes, the oysters growing in the creek will turn green, with a grassy taste from feeding on shallow-water algae that are photosensitive. 'One spring, when we had a lot of green oysters, and I got a call from a restaurant saying, I'll take as many as you have up to 40,000 for St. Patrick's Day. I didn't have anywhere near that many. I've also had them sent back to me. One chef asked me to come to the restaurant to take back an entire shipment. He had it placed in an area for hazardous materials.'

Mike and Isabel Osinskis' Widow's Hole Oysters: The Perfect Oyster Is Jewel-Like

Mike and Isabel Osinski got into oyster farming when they discovered by accident that they owned a few acres of bay bottom adjacent to their summer home in Greenport, NY. It was 2001, their kids were young, and they were ready to move on after making a bundle writing the mortgage securitization software that helped create the 2008 financial crisis.

The Osinskis set out to produce the most beautiful oyster possible, show it to chefs at the most refined New York restaurants, and establish a consistent and enduring brand they called Widow's Hole after a tiny creek adjacent to their home and farm.

Sue Wicks, whose Violet's Cove Oysters could be considered competitors to Widow's Hole, respected Mike Osinski's pitch: 'He'd walk in to a chef and say, look at this, it's perfect, it's not a wild thing. It's going to look great on a tray.' Two decades later, some of the best-known restaurants in New York are customers, including the Grand Central Oyster Bar and Le Bernardin. 'We don't clean those,' Mike Osinski said, and pointed to a tray of pristine oysters just before shucking them for me to taste. 'That's how they come out of the water.'

Mike and Isabel Osinski work in shallow-water and use a system of floating bags like the farms in the Great South Bay, but their oysters are grown with a difference. The bivalves tumble in purses with floats that accelerate the wave action. The purses snap onto lines, and the lines snap onto a cable that is suspended over the water on wooden beams. (Figure 16) The oysters feed at the surface where algae is abundant. When the weather is mild enough, the suspension system allows the purses full of oysters to dry as the tide goes out. Allowing the oysters to dry out eliminates most predators and enhances the spotless appearance of the shells by burning off the algae.

Eliminating predators also allows the Osinskis to grow a few of their oysters for much longer than the typical 18 months or so. These so-called 'knife and fork' oysters are five years old, and prized by New York chefs.

Inspired by a Japanese technique called Kusshi (it means 'precious' and creates a small bonsai-type oyster) the Osinskis' son, who is currently an engineering student at Yale, designed the farm set-up in part because he thought running a boat around a more conventional bag system was too much work for his parents.

Mike Osinski estimates that their revenue from oyster farming over the years has amounted to enough income to pay for their son's tuition at Yale as well as their daughter's at Cornell.

Conclusion

Creating the perfect oyster certainly involves science, but the small-yield oyster farmers working in New York waters are artists too, coaxing nature to achieve a distinctive vision of oyster perfection that is different at every farm. These oysters are sophisticated products of each farmer's craft and labour as well as imagination.

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The way that oysters have inspired the likes of Jonathan Swift, M.F.K. Fisher and Cole Porter is testament to the hold they have on the human imagination. Eleanor Clark, winner of the National Book Award in 1964, wrote in *The Oysters of Locmariaquer*, 'You are eating the sea, that's it, only the sensation of a gulp of sea water has been wafted out of it by some sorcery, and are on the verge of remembering you don't know what, mermaids or the sudden smell of kelp on the ebb tide or a poem you read once, something connected with the flavor of life itself.'

Notes

Cole Porter, *The Tale of the Oyster*, 1929.

Mark Kurlansky, *The Big Oyster*, p. 184.

Harold McGee, *Nose Dive*, Penguin, 2020, p 227.

Harold McGee, *Nose Dive*, Penguin, 2020, pp. 394, 382.

M.F.K. Fisher, *The Art of Eating*, Wiley, 2004, p125.

Interview with Sandy Ingber Grand Central Oyster Bar, April 2021.

Interview with Ben Gonzalez, owner of Southold Bay Oyster, April, 2021.

Interview with Phil Mastrangelo, owner of Oysterponds Oysters, May, 2021.

Interview with Isabel and Mike Osinski, owners of Widow's Hole Oysters, May 2021.

Interview with Sue Wicks, owner of Violet's Cove Oyster, on 26 May, 2021.

Eleanor Clark, *The Oysters of Locmariaquer*, 1964, p. 6.



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FIGURE 1. A New York oyster cart, circa 1890.
Courtesy of the New York Historical Society

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FIGURE 2. An oyster saloon next to the Academy Hotel in New York, 1876-1914.
Courtesy of the New York Historical Society

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FIGURE 3. Processing reefs of wild oysters.
Courtesy of the Southold Historical Society



FIGURE 4. Oyster platter. Courtesy of Museum of the History of New York



FIGURE 5. Oyster spat attached to grains of sand.



FIGURE 6. Deep cup, strong shell.



FIGURE 7. Fin de Claire Verte – Oysterator web site

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FIGURE 8. In early spring Oysterponds oysters can be a little green around the gills.

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FIGURE 10. Ben Gonzalez holding an oyster with new growth (left) and one that has had the growth broken off by the tumbler (right).



FIGURE 12. Sue Wicks tending her farm at low tide.



FIGURE 14. Frequent tumbling encourages a deep cup, strong shell and compact meat.

The Birth of a Legend: Mole de Guajolote and Mestizo Identity in the Imaginary of Post-Revolutionary Mexico

Ana Karen Ruiz de la Peña Posada

ABSTRACT: *Mole de guajolote* is one of the most typical dishes of Mexican cuisine. Legends about *mole de guajolote* were written in a context in which the elite of the post-revolutionary era sought to construct an imaginary that defined Mexican cuisine. This imaginary was underpinned by the mestizo discourse that gave the national cuisine its identity with *mole de guajolote* as its crowning jewel.

The origins of Mexican cuisine as it is known today have their roots not just in the history of Mexico, but also in the imaginary, constructed over the course of different stages in the life of the country by men and women eager to meaning and identity from their own context. In order to speak of the identity of Mexican cuisine, the imaginary surrounding it and its typical dishes, it is first necessary to put into context the process by which it came about as well as the factors that contributed to it.

416 The construction of the Mexican national identity and what is Mexican was a process that took several centuries. The connection to the world through the colonial ties to Spain, a war of independence, several foreign interventions and a generally unstable political outlook meant that the official discourse and ordinary Mexicans found it difficult to say what made Mexico a nation. During the nineteenth century, after achieving independence, several attempts were made to define it, however it was not until the Mexican Revolution that did away with the regime of Porfirio Díaz, who had been in power for more than thirty years, provided an opportunity to debate what would thereafter be considered Mexican using nationalist discourses that were prevalent during the first decades of the twentieth century.

The ruling elite began to define the avenues for national discourse to encompass all domains of Mexican life, thus arriving at cuisine. Since cuisine was an excellent representation of a part of what was considered Mexican, despite the fact that, at the time, it was still difficult to conceive a unified idea of national cuisine due to the regional differences in a country as large as Mexico, some authors saw the importance of pointing out that there was a dish that could bring together all of the characteristics of what was beginning to be laid down as Mexican cuisine in the imaginary of the era:¹ *el mole de guajolote*, or turkey mole,² the roots of which can be found in the history of Mexico and a base component of which was a food that distinguished Mexico in the collective imaginary: chile peppers. It should be noted that this history did not at first go back to the Mesoamerican era but

rather to the colonial era, from which another idea conforming Mexican identity was also taken: *mestizaje*. *Mole de guajolote* was defined as a dish that represented the meeting of two worlds with a series of ingredients brought from different corners of the globe, showing it was not just a mestizo dish, but also its cosmopolitan one.

The transcendence of mole is a result not only of the tangible elements, which in and of themselves make it a wonderful dish: its preparation method and the use of *metate*,³ the enormous variety of ingredients such as dried chiles, spices from all over the world such as cloves, cumin and cinnamon and how they combine with other local products such as tortilla, chocolate and turkey and its presence in daily life and at holidays; but the mythology created around this dish is also relevant. For *mole* to be considered important, it first had to be given a story and history that was worthy of being told⁴. The creation of legends about the origin of *mole de guajolote* and the subsequent transmission of such legends gave *mole* the privileged place it occupies in the pantheon of Mexican cuisine.

Imaginary and Imagination

To be able to study the world of legends about *mole de guajolote*, the concepts of the imaginary on which this work will be based must first be defined. They will mainly be based on the work of Dominique Kalifa, an author who has brought concepts about the imaginary and how it is to be used in by historians in their endeavours back to the table in recent years.

According to Kalifa and for the purposes of this investigation, it is understood that:

The imaginary, such as it is understood by historians, is composed of facts that can be observed, analyzed and measured using real, very material sources. It is a part of the history of *representations*, a term which refers to tangible, material forms of expression that are part of cultural history, shaped by broadcast media and by the media limitations and techniques.⁵

From this perspective, the imaginary corresponds to the myths, stories and even dreams as privileged media in which it is expressed. The world of the imaginary to which myths and legends, as a product of fantasy, belong is also a significant part of how signifieds about reality are constructed,⁶ because it is influenced by the cultural, political and social context of the time at which it is created, in such a way that collective imaginaries expressed through this sort of narrations are a reflection of how different groups of humans that make up societies perceive themselves and the elements thereof.

To return to Kalifa, the theory of the historical imaginary which includes both the temporal and spatial concepts of the imaginary, two key concepts in the study of history, will be used, as exemplified below.

As regards the temporal imaginary, Kalifa focuses on chrononyms, artificial divisions of time that allow a period with certain characteristics to be defined and that, according to him:

these denominations of time, particularly when they take the form of chrononyms, (the Renaissance, the Middle Ages [...]) bring with them an entire imaginary, a theatricality, even a “sense of drama”. To unravel a temporal imaginary [...] is to understand how societies care for, interpret and occasionally reinvent entire segments of their past.

The post-revolutionary period, beginning with the promulgation of the Constitution of 1917 and culminating in the 1940s with the consolidation of Mexican political institutions is considered to be a chrononym.⁷ The imaginary of the post-revolutionary period fits with this definition because reinventing a chapter of the past is exactly what the creators of the different versions of the *mole de guajolote* origin myths did.

Concerning the spatial imaginary, Kalifa says that ‘[there are] places [that] are vested with social appropriations (in the sense that they produce social interactions), giving them strong historical significance (and are therefore shifting, inscribed in a diachronic movement and can be analyzed historically)’. Such places imply beliefs, representations and practices. In the collective imaginary, convent kitchens are considered a melting pot for dialogue between Spanish and indigenous cuisine that resulted in mestizo cuisine which, in the discourse and imaginary of these post-revolution period authors, was the basis of the national cuisine.

418 The Legends

Legends are powerful tools for transmitting the culture of a country or society. In the case of Mexico, legends associated with cuisine and food left a profound mark on the collective imaginary and paved the way for the idea of what is thought of as Mexican national cuisine to be constructed in the minds of Mexicans. As stated above, one of the first legends that arose with regard to the cuisine of the country was about *mole de guajolote*, which is now a symbol of Mexico.

The invention of the legend of *mole de guajolote* is commonly attributed to chronicler Artemio de Valle-Arizpe, however, the most recent investigations have shown that Poblano chronicler Carlos de Gante published the first legend about this dish in the newspaper *Excelsior*, and that later versions are based on his work.⁸ In a piece titled *Santa Rosa de Lima y el Mole de Guajolote*,⁹ de Gante gave a nun, Sor Andrea de la Asunción, credit for the creation of the renowned dish that was garnering more and more prestige.

According to the legend, Sor Andrea, who was known in the Santa Rosa convent and in Puebla, the second most important city in New Spain for her skill in the culinary arts, was charged with coming up with a dish to honour bishop Manuel Fernandez de Santa Cruz, who was visiting the city and had to be impressed with a unique delicacy that distinguished the cooking of the nuns of the convent from that of the others. We know that, during the colonial period in Puebla, the different convents in the city set up a competition to create

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the best dishes for very important guests, both from the government and the church, who came through the city. The dilemma of what to serve the bishop was therefore given to the nuns at Santa Rosa. After going back and forth in the kitchen and rejecting all of the suggestions from the sisters of the convent, as if by divine inspiration, Sor Andrea gathered a set of ingredients, starting with dried chiles, spices brought from Europe and Asia, turkey which is native to America, pork lard and chocolate, she began to combine them as the other nuns looked on, flabbergasted, as mole was born before their eyes. The mole was then served to the clergyman who was quick to sing its praise. Carlos de Gante's legend shows the intimate relationship between cuisine and religious inspiration, an idea that would go on to be reproduced in other legends about *mole de guajolote*.

Spatial and temporal imaginaries play an important role here. Firstly, the spatial imaginary is represented by two types of spaces: convent cuisine as a space for culinary experimentation and Puebla, considered one of the most important cities in the colonial era, it was a settlement that was already illustrious for its cuisine and because it was a well-travelled meeting point between various cultures, as not only did indigenous and Spanish cultures live there, but it was also a stopover for those traveling east to west. It is well-known fact that during the colonial era, the kitchens of convents, both of monks and of nuns, became a sort of laboratory where they conducted experiments with the full range of native and foreign ingredients that were available to their pantries, and creating the most extraordinary recipes to impress locals and foreigners alike. One of the main duties of these kitchens was to put on a celebratory spread for important guests to the city such as viceroys and bishops, who held the highest positions in the social hierarchy of New Spain. It is also thanks to convent cuisine that the first written recipe books of New Spain were preserved. The recipes in these books have transcended generations, seeping through the brick-built convent walls, first to be enjoyed in the houses of high-class New Spain houses and eventually being cooked and reinterpreted in every home of what is now Mexico. This narrative of convent kitchens was useful to post-revolutionary Mexico as it lent credence to the idea that the identity of Mexican cuisine and Mexicans themselves was mestizo.

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In the version of the legend by Melitón Salazar Monroy in his work *La típica cocina poblana y los guisos de sus religiosas*,¹⁰ he tells the tale of how the convent recipes came to be appropriated by the Mexican pueblo. 'Sor Andrea de la Asunción had triumphed mightily with her invention of *mole*. Other convents asked for the recipe for such exquisite a dish, which quickly became vogue in the houses of the rich, and then reached the masses who made it a mainstay at celebrations.' Here Salazar Monroy is expressing another idea about *mole de guajolote* that would remain engraved in the collective imaginary: that it is a holiday dish. Today, *mole* is considered part of the Mexican diet, it can be found in supermarkets where industrially produced versions are sold, in markets and cornershops, but *mole de guajolote*, still prepared using traditional methods, continues to be associated with big family celebrations, weddings, quinceañera parties and baptisms; it is eaten at

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patronal festivals and celebrations such as Día de los Muertos, where *ofrendas* dedicated to the departed often also bear *mole*, and at Poblano tables at Christmastime.

Legends about *mole* express stereotypes about Mexico that began to dominate the thinking of many figures in post-revolutionary Mexico. In the version by José Miguel E. Sarmiento, *mole de guajolote* is accompanied by other foods that are typically Mexican, such as *tamales* and beans. It is also significant that it is served on a Talavera plate. Talavera is a pottery technique that was brought to Puebla by Spanish settlers of Muslim heritage that has since been made an honorary Poblano handicraft. Again, cuisine appears in a role charged with significance in the imaginary of the origin of *mole*. The cuisine of the Santa Rosa convent represents, in the imaginary of Mexicans, principally Puebla natives, the place where a nun was inspired in an act of God to create the national dish. It is noteworthy that it was not just any kitchen, but a kitchen lined with Talavera tiles; the same material as the plate on which the *mole de guajolote* was served to the world (Figure 1).

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FIGURE 1. The Santa Rosa convent kitchen was all decorated with Talavera Tiles.

Picture taken by the author, 01 June 2021.

The collective imaginary has given credit for the *mole de guajolote* origin myth to Artemio de Valle-Arizpe but, as stated previously, Carlos de Gante was in fact his precursor. Valle-Arizpe changed the version created by de Gante to make the guest honoured by the



FIGURE 2. Some of the *antojitos* that are part of Mexican cuisine. (Illustration by Pictoline.com)

mole de guajolote Viceroy Tomás Antonio de la Cerda y Aragón, giving the first man to taste the national dish a higher political status and thereby according the dish itself a greater role in the nascent pantheon of Mexican cuisine. In his tale, the chronicler lists the dishes that other convents in Puebla sent to dignify the Viceroy. His description of the dishes sent out by a convent whose name he does not mention is striking: ‘from another, platters of *molotes* with enchiladas, with *chalupas*, with quesadillas, with *tostadas* of various compositions, and with flawless *pambazos* made with unambiguous flair.’¹¹ All the dishes mentioned here are considered authentically Mexican cuisine. The majority of

them are made of maize and considered part of what are commonly known as *antojitos* (Figure 2).¹² We can therefore say that these dishes were already part of the national culinary universe in the imaginary of Artemio de Valle-Arizpe.

The tale goes on to describe the nuns’ dilemma and their concerns about which dish was worthy to be served to the Viceroy. The author writes, ‘Sor Andrea wanted to send His Excellency a delicious, exquisite dish, with the spirit of Mexico beating in all its alluring fineness within it.’¹³ This version of the legend is adorned with literary language that beautifies the story and gives it a halo of mysticism, elevating the serendipitous creation of *mole de guajolote* to the Mexican imaginary.

Carlos de Gante, Artemio de Valle-Arizpe, and all the authors who retold this fantastic story, not Sor Andrea de la Asunción, were the ones who left their mark on the postrevolutionary imaginary and gave the history of Mexican cuisine one of its greatest origin myths. *Mole* was, and still is, one of the most refined and elaborate dishes in the oeuvre of Mexican national cuisine, but its most significant impact has been to give visibility to the immense value of made-in-Mexico cuisine.

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Notes

1. It seems pertinent to note here that the prevailing imaginary of the time was not wholly formed in all of society, in light of which we turn to the ruling elite because the power they possess influences and determines the imaginary of an epoch. This idea is supported by the work of Juan Camilo Escobar who, in his work *The Imaginary Between Social Sciences and History* which establishes that the domination of a social class fundamentally depends on imaginaries.
2. *Mole de guajolote* is just one of many varieties of this dish that exist in Mexico. Almost every state has one typical *mole*. Varieties of *mole* include *mole negro*, *mole verde*, *mole amarillito* and *mole de caderas*. The mole about which the legends were written is known today as *mole Poblano*, and was originally an accompaniment to the Mexico's native poultry, the turkey. The mix of sweet and spicy flavours in *mole Poblano* make it stand out from other *moles*.
3. The metate is a cooking utensil similar to a pestle and mortar used by Mesoamerican cultures to grind grain, seeds and some other ingredients and is currently still an essential party of traditional Mexican cuisine.
4. María Elsa Guadalupe Hernández y Martínez, *El mole poblano, platillo prehispánico logra su inmortalidad en el siglo XVII*, (Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla-Dirección de Fomento Editorial, 2017) p. 83.
5. Dominique Kalifa, 'Escribir una historia del imaginario (Siglos XIX-XX)', *Secuencia*, 105, (2019) http://secuencia.mora.edu.mx/index.php/Secuencia/articulo/view/1757/1905?fbclid=IwARoUA2yFt_6XHmnffLYAoWwYsHW3dLUv2AiYrmGT6GFsgbf_hOTcxRNJLY [Accessed 20 may 2021]
6. Ángel Enrique Carretero Pasín, 'La relevancia sociológica de lo imaginario en la cultura actual', *Nómadas*, 9 (2004) <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=18100906> [Accessed 20 may 2021].
7. Luz María Uhthoff López, 'La construcción del Estado Posrevolucionario en México. Una aproximación desde la administración pública', *Diálogos Revista Electrónica de Historia*, Vol. 20, 2, (2019) <<https://www.redalyc.org/jatsRepo/439/43959529005/html/index.html>> [Accessed 20 May 2021]
8. Few texts concerning legends about *mole de guajolote* acknowledge the contribution of Carlos de Gante. One of the most recent works that unearths this legend is the article by the researcher José Luis Juárez López entitled 'La leyenda de la creación del mole de guajolote de Carlos de Gante'. El gran mito de la cocina mexicana published June 2018 in *Academia, Ciencia y Cultura* of the AAPAUNAM.
9. Carlos de Gante, 'Santa Rosa de Lima y el mole de guajolote', *Excelsior*, México D.F., 12 de diciembre de 1926, pp. 4-5
10. Melitón Salazar Monroy, *La típica cocina poblana y los guisos de sus religiosas*, (México: Impresos López, 1945) 145 p.
11. Artemio de Valle Arizpe, 'El mole' en Hernández y Martínez, , *El mole poblano, platillo prehispánico logra su inmortalidad en el siglo XVII*, pp. 91-97.
12. *Antojitos* are a type of Mexican street food, generally eaten as an appetizer and made of maize. They range from high-fat fast food to a more nutritious meal.
13. Hernández y Martínez, p. 93.

Food Reimagined: Diasporic Identity and Authenticity

Shayma Owaise Saadat

ABSTRACT: Food is seen as a marker of culinary identity for those of us in the diaspora. This paper focuses on how food has allowed those of us in the diaspora to create an identity, but as times have progressed, for the younger generation, the markers for identity have also evolved. I have drawn upon the works of Edward Said, Razia Parveen, and others, to analyse the discourse and narratives around food, diasporic identity, and authenticity. In this paper, I examine the notion of authenticity and what it means. This paper focused on the following areas of significance: (i) the nexus between food, nostalgia and identity; (ii) the Orientalist lens through which diasporic food is judged; (iii) how we, the diaspora; the children of immigrants, have reimagined the cuisine which our ancestors created and what that means going forward.

When does our collective sense of culinary consciousness begin? Was it in the womb, when my mother's mother fed her pregnant daughter hot parathas sprinkled with sugar, and dollops of chilled malai? Or perhaps it was 9 years later, when my mother sent me to school with my lunch box? Two shami kebabs, scented with clove and cinnamon, made with poached beef and lentils, formed into patties, dipped into egg wash, and shallow fried, till crisp. When cool, she sandwiched them between mayo-slathered bread and crisp lettuce leaves. Into my lunchbox it would go.

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Food, Nostalgia, And Identity

The instructions are clear: to ½ kilogram of ground beef, I am to add 20 black peppercorns. Roll them into small orbs, and gently transfer into the cumin- and turmeric-spiced tomato-yoghurt sauce. Allow to simmer. Serve warm, with sufaid chawal and raita. This recipe for Pakistani-style koftay was created in the kitchen of Zubaida Sultana, born 1922, my mother's mother, in Lahore, Pakistan. The same recipe made its way to America with my mother, who crossed the ocean as a young bride, to make her new home in America, with my father and me, her almost-2-year-old daughter.

It was these kinds of matrilineal recipes which helped foster a sense of continuity for my Ami, my mother, in a new country. For Ami and the women who became my beloved Aunties over the years, it was a collective cultural memory of food and their respective mothers' traditional recipes that tethered them to their past and to their homeland – Pakistan. The recipes they made in the kitchen of their suburban Washington, DC homes were not reimagined. Their recipes were traditional and replicated, in memory of what they had left behind.

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As Razia Parveen shares about her mother and friends who migrated from Punjab, Pakistan to Lockwood, United Kingdom:

They repeated the cultural practices of the homeland in the diaspora and through this repetition and the process of mimicry, alongside the transmission of these practices from the homeland to the diaspora, made a significant contribution to the maintenance of their cultural life and to the formation of an identity. By their very nature, memory and nostalgia are individual but through the presence of a community with a shared history the memory and nostalgia became collective.¹

For older generations, such as Ami and the women she met upon her arrival to a new country, replicating the recipes in their adopted homes allowed them to anchor themselves in the past, but also affirm their identity in the present, '[...]narratives weave together a fragile identity within a community, thereby bringing cohesion to a disparate group of people.'²

Till today, cooking remains a way for communities in the diaspora to participate in original cultural practices to preserve and recreate a sense of belonging with the home they left behind.

Interestingly, Parveen refers to 'fossilisation' of cultural practices; in which the old generation wants to preserve, but the new generation, influenced by popular culture and a world of TikTok, wants to change.³ Does this mean that the culinary identity the older generations strived to create in the diaspora will dissipate, or will it continue to evolve? There is that gentle and constant push and pull between the old and the new generation, in what Parveen refers to as static versus dynamic culture – the desire to maintain the aspects of the home we left behind.⁴ As such, the food that many of us, from the new generation make is a reflection of modern influences and our views on what sets the parameters for traditional food.

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Reimagined Homes

And though food can be seen as a marker of identity there is also romanticisation and mystification of the past; the longing for a time and place which may not exist anymore, which Salman Rushdie refers to as 'Imagined Homelands'.⁵ And with these nostalgic interpretations of the past, there is a longing for a dish, a method of preparation, a tool, and a landscape – which may not even exist anymore.

By idealising the past, we are looking back at it through fragments, through a broken mirror, as Salman Rushdie writes about emotively, in *Imagined Homelands*.⁶ This lends a soft light to the past, with nostalgia recreating a home which may not have existed in the manner that it is remembered. A fragmented memory, and like Rushdie's thoughts, these food memories are reconstructed and pieced together to recreate the home that has been left behind, to find comfort in one's adopted home:

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[...] it was precisely the partial nature of these memories, their fragmentation, that made them so evocative for me. The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were remains; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities. There is an obvious parallel here with archaeology. The broken pots of antiquity, from which the past can sometimes, but always provisionally, be reconstructed, are exciting to discover, even if they are pieces of the most quotidian objects.⁷

On Authenticity, Orientalism, and Colonialism

When I arrived in Canada in 2009, I intended to cook all the matrilineal dishes which were passed down to me through an oral tradition. I was not to modify these recipes; like children who learn multiplication by rote, I was to do the same with these recipes. Changing them meant loss: loss of identity. It meant I was disrespecting the women of my Pakistani-Afghan-Persian heritage. I was not to reimagine or recreate; I was meant to replicate and preserve.

But unlike my mother, who had lived in Pakistan till she married my father and moved to Washington, DC, I had lived all over the world as the daughter of an international banker. The flavours of my childhood, though predominantly influenced by my heritage, were a confluence of the pantries and landscapes of the countries I had lived in: Bangladesh, Italy, Kenya, Nigeria, and the United Kingdom. The way I cooked was a reflection of that.

As an aspiring food writer, when my first article was published in a prominent food magazine in Canada, I proudly shared it with my mother. She looked at the recipe, which her mother, my Nani Ami had created. Perfunctorily, she said, 'But these are not Ami's koftay. Ami never added paprika.' My Ami disapproved of my dish, because I had added an extra ingredient to her Ami's dish. I had tampered with its authenticity.

This pursuit for the authentic, based on notions of nostalgia, becomes a marker for cultural identity in the diaspora. The dish is not to be contaminated by using extraneous ingredients. In his study on authenticity, anthropologist Dimitrios Thedossopoulos explains that there is a presupposition of authenticity being something inaccessible inside us, and according to Rousseauian philosophers, cannot be contaminated by the modern world.⁸

But this puritanical pursuit of authenticity exists outside of the diasporic community, too, in which food is judged through the white gaze, in a quest to find the best and most traditional version of a dish. And though aspiring to create authentic recipes has been a way for children of the diaspora to pay homage to the recipes of our ancestors, having to follow a perceived idea and taste of authenticity also constrains and stifles our creativity and sense of self. It is that reductionist notion of authenticity, the colonialist trope of a demure, exotic woman in her decrepit kitchen in Punjab, dust settled on the windows, rolling pin in hand,

forming perfectly round chapatis, as the aromas of ginger and garlic rise from the karahi on the stove; the sounds of a rickshaw walla outside.

The construction of these stereotypes, which Edward Said critiqued in his classic book, *Orientalism*,⁹ delved deep into the Occident's (the West) views of the Orient's (the East) people and cultures as backwards and submissive. It is this view through which food of the diaspora is still widely scrutinized, judged, and (mis)understood. There exists a false binary of authentic versus inauthentic cuisine, with the West romanticising the food and the people of the East. Restaurants serving Chinese or Pakistani food are often declared inauthentic, or not authentic enough; based on the narrative of the woman rolling chapatis in the kitchen, or some archetype of nineteenth century stories. This othering of our food and culture falsely creates an image of a faraway, magical place, flattening the experiences and talent of food made and sold by the diaspora, in restaurants.

As our food is relegated to otherness, Orientalism still exists and is the lens through which the recipes and culinary creations of the diaspora are wrongly judged. When we reflect on the complex structures in society, the question arises as to who has agency, and are these Orientalist views of culinary othering being applied to the gastronomic lives of the diaspora? Colonialism has worked not only through conquest and armies, but through exoticizing the East, and relegating it to a caricature of otherness. This sort of discourse has further emphasised that the binary of authentic versus inauthentic food is false. As John Paul Brammer argues in his piece on authenticity:

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Heritage and tradition are important, there's no doubt. But it's also important to free our imaginations from the tyranny of authenticity. That's not entirely possible in a consumer culture, of course. But in looking at our lives through a different lens, a lens that is more our own, we can give ourselves more room to be. We can see something that is closer to the truth.

Our culture – any culture – isn't static. It is a living thing. It pulls from its surroundings to adapt in a world that in equal turns marginalizes and fetishizes it. The truth is, I see myself more in Taco Bueno, in my abuela sacking the salsa bar, in the Parmesan crispy taco, than I do in whatever Yelpers think is authentic.¹⁰

The murky definition of authenticity circumscribes what immigrant cooks are expected to serve in their restaurants.¹¹ Demands for authentic cuisine places undue pressure on immigrant cooks, who have to tend to this idea of recreating a far off, exotic land, in a modern-day New York restaurant kitchen. It places the burden on the immigrant cook, to live up to racialised myths, and recreate an environment for the customer, who wants to feel like the tourist, meandering through the ancient streets of Lahore, in search of the puri halwa serving karak chai eaten by the roadside, overlooking the Badshahi Mosque.

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These expectations play into pre-existing biases and stereotypes of the food of diasporic communities. Theodossopoulos believes: ‘Discovering authenticity in the far away often involves a certain obstacle, a hurdle or a self afflicted rite of passage: long-distance travel to in accessible (perceived as isolated) communities, infiltration into backstage realms of social life, and/or penetrating self analysis and introspection.’¹²

Change and Innovation

‘When immigrants adapt to their new surroundings, the most immediate way this happens is through the food they make: They look around at what’s available and try to make it into something they can recognize.’ – Soleil Ho¹³

When Navreet K came to Canada as a student at Centennial College in 2019, from Punjab, India, she was in awe of all the different types of tomatoes she saw at the farmers’ market. ‘I saw 6 different varieties,’ she exclaims, ‘it opened up my world, I imagined all the different tomato chutneys I could make – even a unique yellow one!’ When I asked her how she felt about innovating the dishes she learnt from her grandmother back in India, she grew more enthusiastic, and explained, ‘My Biji [grandmother] would be disappointed, because their emotions and values are tied to these dishes, they cook to remember their mother, and their mother’s mother. But I am in Canada, and I am excited about the produce here, and I can still bring the taste of India to the table. I just use local ingredients.’

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Navreet went on to talk about risk, and how the women in her family labour hard in the kitchen, but they seek comfort, whereas Navreet wants to experiment. ‘I want to take risks and make a bhujia with purple broccoli. Just don’t tell my Beji’, she laughs. The first time I met Navreet, she was my student, in a course I was teaching, entitled, Recipe Research, Development, and Writing. She created a typical Punjabi dish of a velvety, roasted aubergine called baingan ka bharta, but she added slices of Italian buffalo milk mozzarella on top. She pushed it under the broiler, after which the dish emerged with a bubbly, bronzed crust, perfect to scoop with naan or crackers. ‘Through food, I want to open up my world,’ Navreet enthused.¹⁴ As Soleil Ho writes:

Unlike ‘fusion,’ which is often focused on aesthetic innovations and mashups, these immigrant dishes are more like culinary fugues, organically building upon a kernel of a memory over the course of generations and developing into a complicated and layered narrative. Like with any immigrant story, this style of cooking is all about telling the story of a family through its subtle gestures, quirks, and out-of-place ingredients.¹⁵

For the newer generation, for children of the diaspora, times have changed. We have reimagined the recipes of our ancestors. Harleen K, a production chef at a Toronto-based

catering company also came to Canada in 2019, in the hopes of carving out a culinary career for herself. 'I just created a Vegan Tofu Tikka Masala and Butter Chicken Pot Pie, I will bring it for you,' she tells me with great pride. Harleen was my student in the Post-Graduate Food Media Certificate programme at Centennial College. I ask her how she feels about making changes to the recipes of our ancestors. As a fellow Punjabi, she understands what I mean. 'Food is art. It is not one thing. It is not one recipe,' she starts to explain, 'our culture isn't diluted because we made a pie out of a classic Indian dish. We have to infuse our flavours into local dishes, to make the dishes more inclusive.' I nod my head over our Zoom call, and we laugh, sharing a cup of cardamom tea over the ether.

This is how I cook, too, adding the knowledge I inherited from my Ami and my Khala, my mother's sister, to create the dishes in the place I now call home, Canada. I think of a pot pie I can make, with my mother's classic Pakistani-style ginger chicken. Harleen reminds me of gulab jamun cheesecake, which is so popular on Instagram right now. In her enthusiastic tone she quips, 'everyone loves a good, creamy NY cheesecake, and add a rosewater-fragrant gulab jamun to it, well, now you are tasting two cultures.'¹⁶ As de Camargo Heck argues in her piece:

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The transformation and adaptation of recipes follow strange trajectories and the origins of certain foods becomes, at times, difficult to pinpoint. The style of cuisine fixed in the recollections of some of the interviewees has been difficult to reproduce. New ingredients, the daily contact with another food culture, the evolution of the family embracing other ethnic groups creates a peculiar style of cuisine. Traditional recipes and food habits are often modified through this process of negotiation and incorporation. Often the legacy of an immigrant cuisine is a pot-pourri of cuisines encountered by the family during their collective history and their recollection of the trajectory of their experience in settling down in a new country.¹⁷

The idea that innovation dilutes our identity is one that we should reexamine. 'And what would your Mumma think of this, Harleen?' I teasingly ask. 'Back in India, Mumma has vanilla ice cream with gajar ka halwa, that's not very traditional now, is it?' Harleen laughs.

For this younger generation, innovation and creativity takes precedence over replicating the classic recipes they grew up learning to make in their mothers' and grandmothers' kitchens. It is their way of saying, we are here.

'Being respectful of the tastes and flavours is important. But don't stop innovating.' That's why I came to Canada, to learn, to share my knowledge, and to create new dishes,' Harleen confidently states. And as Edward Said argued in his book, *Culture and Imperialism*, identity is, after all, dynamic:

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No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental. Yet just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about.¹⁸

Bashir Munye is a Toronto chef and food advocate who dislikes labels. 'I believe that flavours and spices are imprinted in my DNA, and though cultural anchors are important, I don't like labels like traditional and authentic,' he says, emphatically, 'Because if the way we cook is changing, and if recipes are changing, this is a good thing. I like the intersection of local and tradition.'¹⁹ Bashir migrated to Canada in 1994, and believes that food must evolve; it is like a river, he says, constantly changing its course.²⁰ His innovative dishes incorporate the flavours of his childhood in Italy, and his mother's pantry in Somalia. His identity, like so many other Canadians today, is not a monolith; he uses local ingredients to create dishes which are a reflection of his past and present: 'These recipes travelled with me, as a young boy at boarding school in Italy, and after moving to Canada – over two decades ago – they remain a part of me. At the end of the day, I need to eat food that is culturally appropriate to me. I want deliciousness from fresh ingredients.'²¹

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Given how, for many of us in the diaspora, identity is tied to the stories and recipes of our ancestors, I ask Bashir if he believes this loss of identity is something he is worried about. He confidently responds by saying what is most important to him is to be part of the local environment, and to eat food which is culturally appropriate to him. 'There is no reason why I cannot support local food without losing my own identity.' I ask Bashir what authenticity means to him, 'To me, authenticity is caring about my local environment, and bringing the flavours of my heritage into these dishes.' Bashir sends me a photo of a salad he made using local Ontario vegetables: okra (a vegetable he ate in Somalia), pepper, tomato onions, and fresh chillies. As Bashir weaves stories of his life into his dishes, that is about as authentic as it gets.

I was born in Lahore, Pakistan. My father is half-Afghan and half-Pakistani, with Persian heritage on his mother's side. My mother is Pakistani. I grew up all over the world: Washington, DC; Lagos; Nairobi; Lahore; Cambridge; Dhaka; Rome and now, I call Toronto my home. Lahore is also my home, and to me, food has been reimagined as a way to belong, in my multi-hyphenated identity as a Canadian. As a food writer and

recipe developer, my work focuses on culture and identity. Like Bashir, I create dishes using the spices of my heritage, paired with local produce. It is perhaps my mother's biggest nightmare, these dishes reimagined, like Ontario peaches grilled with ghee and a scattering of cardamom; this mish mash of the old and new in my kitchen! But I am not seeking security from my past, rather, I am looking for positive change, and growth – tied to my fluid identity as a multi-hyphenated Canadian. As Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson notes, 'Because it is a social construct that is of our making, "authenticity" is not the property of an object as such. Which is precisely the dilemma of national identity. What is it? Who fixes it? Then, how does identity accommodate change? If clear definitions provide security by the same token they arrest change.'²²

Conclusion

430 I do wonder, if with innovation and creativity, we will lose what was, along with our culinary identity, and think about my mother and all the women before her, who preserved our heritage. But if we are to look at identity as something which is dynamic and fluid, this will be ever changing. I spent several years in Italy before I moved to Toronto in 2009. I lived on one of Rome's 7 hills, in Aventino, and would walk down to the butcher in Testaccio to buy chicken for making my Ami's murghi ka saalan; her chicken tomato-based curry. I had all the ingredients, the fresh ginger, garlic – I even went to Piazza Vittorio to buy fresh coriander, but the Roman tomatoes, sweet and candy-like, did not make for a good Pakistani-style curry. At the market one day, in Testaccio, I asked the fruttivendolo to help me with my mother's dish. The tomatoes cannot be sweet, I told him. He placed 3 large green tomatoes in a paper bag and smiled, 'Tell me how the curry tastes when you come back next Tuesday.' That night, I made Ami's murghi ka saalan. The colour was a dull green; it looked wrong. But the taste was perfect, with a hit of acid from the tomatoes.

When we cross borders, we reimagine our cuisine in ways we have never had to do before. This dish structured memories of home for me. As borders have blurred, with it, our culinary identities have evolved and changed, too. As de Camargo Heck writes, in her work on *Adapting and Adopting: the migrant recipe*: 'The adaptation of their native culinary habits, as well as the adoption of new eating habits, has consequences regarding the food of the immigrant families, but at the same time, it intervenes in the host community, mixing and modifying both culinary cultures'²³

For those of us in the diaspora, being able to reframe what authenticity means has allowed us to reclaim our culinary narratives. Perhaps our generation is more secure in ourselves, we are here; we are strong. Being a part of the diaspora is a privilege, it expands our worlds. It also provides me with that sense of belonging that perhaps my young, 27-year-old mother didn't feel at the time she came to Washington, DC. Maybe we are tired of talking about our trauma and loss and want to move forward. I know that I want to talk

about food and my identity, but I don't want to talk about the trauma of my childhood otherness, and the lunchboxes anymore. Maybe by talking about reimagining our food and our recipes, we have also reimagined our world. And with adaptation and adoption of our cooking and eating habits, we are expanding our world, and making it a more delicious place: 'This adaptation and adoption of eating habits has consequences in the food of the immigrant families but, at the same time, it intervenes in the host community mixing and modifying both culinary cultures.'²⁴

My identity and sense of belonging is, as Edward Said wrote shortly before he died, like a cluster of flowing currents:

I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self, the identity to which so many attach so much significance. These currents, like the themes of one's life, flow along during the waking hours, and at their best, they require no reconciling, no harmonizing. They are 'off' and may be out of place, but at least they are always in motion, in time, in place, in the form of all kinds of strange combinations moving about, not necessarily forward, sometimes against each other, contrapuntally yet without one central theme. A form of freedom, I'd like to think, even if I am far from being totally convinced that it is. That skepticism too is one of the themes I particularly want to hold on to. With so many dissonances in my life I have learned actually to prefer being not quite right and out of place.²⁵

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Notes

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'Bileti' to 'Desi': Global Foodways and the Re-imagining of Bengali 'Modern' Cuisine in Late Colonial Bengal

Samapan Saha

ABSTRACT: This paper explores the cultural amalgamations that led to the creation of iconic Bengali-language cookbooks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century colonial Bengal. It looks into the role of gastro-politics in the making of Bengali 'Modern' cuisine. The circulation of the European culinary science, new world crops and vegetables went through a process of negotiation with Hindu culinary philosophy and local Bengali taste. The Bengali-language cookbooks written during this period bear testimony to this process of transition. The cultural politics of taste and its mediation with the traditional culinary philosophy became a very vital aspect of Bengali 'Modern' cuisine. A space for experimentation and innovation of new recipes was created through the restructuring of the Bengali kitchen. The Bengali-language cookbooks written by authors like Bipradas Mukhopadhyay and Prajnasundari Devi attempted to contextualise the global theories into local practices. The desire of Bengali middle-class for a global taste found the voice of self-representation through new Bengali-language cookbooks.

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The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the period when the European nation-states were struggling with the question of 'National' cuisine. Around the same period, the colonial Indian middle-class was also trying to address similar kind of questions. This paper follows the trajectory that led to the construction of European 'national' cuisine. It attempts to imply the trajectory in the context of colonial Bengal to identify the factors that contributed to the making of Bengali 'Modern' cuisine.

The robust print culture in late nineteenth-century Bengal facilitated the process of circulation of European culinary ideas, new world vegetables, and new recipes. The Bengali-language periodicals played a crucial role in this process in the British colonial capital of Calcutta. The periodicals helped to create the consciousness of urban Bengali community. The Bengali-speaking Hindu urban middle class (will be referred to as *bhadraloks* or Bengali middle-class, hereafter) attempted to 'modernize' the Bengali cuisine through the periodicals. Innovative authors like Bipradas Mukhopadhyay and Prajnasundari Devi introduced these ideas through their writings and attempted to construct a 'Modern cuisine'¹. Their writings were compiled into Bengali-language cookbooks subsequently.

The authors had multiple roles in the process of cookbook writing. They were the mediators between global ideas and local traditions and customs. They had a deep

understanding of the Hindu culinary philosophy, local Bengali taste and preferences. These authors liberally borrowed the recipes and traditions from the traditional Indian high cuisine and put an innovative spin on them by incorporating novel ‘foreign’ vegetables such as potatoes (introduced in Calcutta by the Dutch in early nineteenth century) and tomatoes (introduced post-1850s in Calcutta), which had become recent local staples as a result of India’s colonial encounter. The naming of new hybrid Bengali dishes written in Bengali cookbooks highlighted the role of the author as the mediator. The authors used the global influences by using adjectives like ‘French,’ ‘English,’ ‘Jewish, etc., to re-imagine the humble, everyday middle-class Bengali cuisine as a ‘cosmopolitan’ cuisine to signify a ‘refined taste’². The original and hybrid recipes combined with local and global elements led to the creation of innovative dishes such as ‘*Armmanni* Pudding’ (Armenian Pudding) and ‘*Ingraji Arhar Dal*’ (English Yellow Split Pigeon peas) by Devi, and ‘*Ihudi Machh Bhaja*’ (Jewish Fish Fry), or ‘*Aloor French Ball*’ (French Potato Balls) by Mukhopadhyay.

However, this turn towards a global platter meant the gradual inclusion of several prohibited food items in the household kitchen. During this time, the traditional Bengali (Hindu) intelligentsia was constantly under the pressure of maintaining a food habit that adhered to the existing notions of restrictive caste (*varna-jati*) traditions and taboos. New-fangled recipes with their foreign elements and ingredients often challenged the strict orthodoxy of the Hindu palate. The assessment of Bengali-language raises critical question on the cultural politics of taste emerging during this period.

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This paper also attempted to establish the Bengali-language cookbook of late colonial Bengal as a significant historical source. Due to the paucity of primary evidence on domestic eating habits, the Bengali-language cookbooks examined in this research are important sources to evaluate the transition to ‘Modern’ Bengali cuisine. The food history of this period – as evidenced by the new cookbooks bears within it the markers of gradual yet lasting social change in colonial Bengal, seen most prominently in the embracing of formerly-prohibited food items as staples of the turn-of-the-century urban middle-class Bengali kitchen.

Public Print Culture and Recipe Writing Tradition in Colonial Bengal

In the late nineteenth century, Calcutta became one of the major urban centres of the British colonial empire. The flourishing popular Bengali print culture created the space and the scope for the circulation of colonial scientific knowledge³. The Bengali intelligentsia was actively involved in the process of ‘modernizing’ themselves. The process involved recipe writing as a way of manifesting the evolution of local Bengali taste. It was only not limited to recipe writing, but also involved topics like household management.

In 1863, Umeshchandra Dutta begin publishing a periodical called, *Bamabodhini Patrika* to educate and modernise the Bengali community⁴. *Bamabodhini Patrika* is one

of the earliest Bengali-language periodicals to address issues related to Bengali women and many female authors regularly published writings related to domesticity, cooking, and recipes. Other journals like *Punya*, *Mahila*, and *Antahpur* were being published in the Bengali language and most of these journals had a separate column for recipes. Recipes column first started appearing in *Bamabodhini Patrika* in 1884. *Mahila* and *Antahpur* had a dedicated food column from 1895 and 1900, respectively⁵. In 1883, Bipradas Mukhopadhyay, a Graduate from Sanskrit College (Calcutta)⁶ started publishing a monthly journal *Pak-Pranali* (The Methods of Culinary)⁷. In 1886, he published a cookbook with the same title in three volumes⁸. He was also the editor of a periodical on domesticity called *Grihasthali*⁹. In 1897, a journal called *Punya* (The Virtue) was published by Prajnasundari Devi¹⁰. She was the editor for the first two editions and wrote recipe columns in them. Later, she published the collection of recipes along with a long introduction as a cookbook titled, *Amish o Niraamish Ahaar*¹¹ (Non-vegetarian and Vegetarian Foods) in 1900. This remains one of the most circulated and widely read cookbooks in the Bengali language. *Pak-Pranali* and *Amish o Niraamish Ahaar* represent a new tradition of cookbook writing.

The *bhadraloks* did not limit themselves with writing on domesticity and recipes. They wrote extensively to popularize scientific agricultural practices and on New world crop and vegetable¹² cultivation. Journals like *Krishitattva* (Theory of Agriculture), *Krishak* (The Farmer), *Krishi-gazette* (The Farmer-gazette) concentrated on news and information related to agricultural science, agricultural experiments with new world crops and seeds and promoted them. They also focused on publicising the health benefits of these new crops and vegetables. Bipradas Mukhopadhyay was the editor of *Krishitattva*. It was the organ piece of a nursery called, Paikpara¹³ Nursery. The Paikpara Nursery was an initiative of Bengali individuals¹⁴ who experimented with the new world crops and seeds. It is noteworthy to mention that the authors wrote about the poor condition of farmers of India and they blamed *bhadraloks* for it¹⁵. In one such piece, the author criticised *bhadralok*'s apathy towards agriculture and their general attitude to look down upon cultivation as a menial job¹⁶.

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High cuisine in Nineteenth-century Bengal

The flourishing Bengali print culture in late 1870s facilitated the reprint of a very important manuscript cookbook, *Pakrajeswar: artha amishadi bibidha drabya paka karaṇera niyama*¹⁷ (The Emperor of Cooking or How to cook nonvegetarian and various other materials). In 1873, the second edition¹⁸ of this manuscript was republished and the third edition¹⁹ was republished in an appendix in 1880. It is very important to discuss the history of this cookbook to understand its significance. In 2004, this manuscript was republished by *Subranarekha* and Nikhil Sarkar²⁰ wrote an introduction²¹ for it. According to the Introduction, Bisweswar Tarkalankar was the author of *Pakrajeswar*, and a later edition was

compiled by Gaurishankar Tarkabaghis, under the patronage of the Raja of Bardhaman²². *Pakrajeswar*, not only represents the tradition of high cuisine²³ of the nineteenth-century Bengal, but it also reflects the earlier tradition of Bengali-language cookbook writing.

In the late nineteenth century, the Bengali-language cookbook went through a major transformation. The publication of recipes or collection of recipes was not a new phenomenon in Bengal as Arjun Appadurai argues in this context, '[T]hat is, while there is an immense amount written about *eating* and about feeding, precious little is said about *cooking* in Hindu legal, medical, or philosophical texts.'²⁴ The new cookbooks attempted to change the earlier tradition by introducing the idea of 'modern' culinary science. The authors of the new cookbooks used the English-language cookbooks and household management guides as the source to learn the discourse of European culinary science. The English-language cookbooks and household manuals were in circulation in the English-speaking world from as late as the seventeenth century and with the foundation of British Raj in India (after the rebellion of 1857), there was a gradual transformation in the English-language cookbook writing. This was the time when more *memsahibs* started coming to India and the opening up of Suez Canal also contributed to this factor.²⁵ Several prominent household guides were written for the 'Eastern Empires' to educate the *memsahibs* on how to run an efficient and hygienic kitchen. A kitchen capable enough to produce sophisticated European recipes²⁶.

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Global ideas on domesticity and the restructuring of Bengali kitchen

English-language household management/guides followed the method of segregating the culinary space into smaller units of kitchen, storeroom, and listing of utensils necessary for day-to-day cooking as well as special recipes²⁷. The English-language domesticity was modified according to the space, local climate and local condition of India and this process of restructuring of Bengali household are reflected in Bengali language cookhouses. The Bengali household culinary space was to be segregated into the kitchen and storeroom.

The definition of kitchen or space of cooking is defined differently in the cookbooks. The culinary thoughts associated with every cookbook can be analysed and interpreted through the differences of approach towards the kitchen. *Pakrajeswar* begins with on kitchen or 'cookhouse', but it provides very little information about the space itself, except that the *chullah* should be facing east or west and there should be a window to emit the smoke²⁸. The common fuel for cooking in Calcutta was charcoal²⁹. It generated so much smoke that maintaining proper ventilation was essential. However, the influence of European culinary science is evident from Devi's projection of a clean hygienic kitchen.

The storeroom is defined as a space to store staples, spices, pickles³⁰. It should be located within the close vicinity of the kitchen as it would allow smooth and efficient functioning of the kitchen³¹. Any household that could not spare a room for storing the supplies, could use "chest made out mango wood" as an alternate option³².

The list of cooking utensils that are mentioned in *Pakrajeswar* is exhaustive. The list is categorised according to the health benefits of the metal used for utensils (except earthen wares), and it explained which metal is suitable for specific cooking. However, the intended reader or audience of *Pakrajeswar* was the nobility and the golden and silver utensils indicate that it was not written to cater for the royal household, not the urban middle-class household³³. The list of cooking utensils mentioned in *Pak-Pranali* indicates that the intended audience of Mukhopadhyay was *bhadralok* household. The list of utensils is followed by health hazards and health benefits associated with every material and how to clean and maintain the durability of the utensils³⁴. The uniqueness of Devi as an expert in the field of culinary science is reflected through her list of prescribed utensils and equipment. Unlike the other two authors who had different motives for writing the cookbooks, Devi has explained minute details of every equipment which can come handy for any Bengali household³⁵.

Making of 'Modern' Bengali cookbook cuisine

Inclusion of New world vegetables in Bengali cuisine

The authors of new cookbooks introduced the new world vegetables like potato and tomato into the Bengali *bhadralok* cuisine through their cookbooks. The potato was widely available in Calcutta by the 1860s³⁶, but whether it was widely consumed by the Bengali community or not remains a major question. In the second edition of *Pakrajeswar*, there is no mention of potato. But in the third edition, two recipes on potato are included. The first one is *aloo'r dum* (Steamed spiced potato) and the second one is *aloo'r kofta*³⁷ (Potato Kofta). In Bipradas Mukhopadhyay's *Pak-Pranali* several potato recipes are mentioned and Prajnasundari Devi mentioned more than 20 recipes on potato. Within twenty years, the use of potato had increased manifold and it was incorporated into the Bengali household kitchen.

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Tomato was gradually becoming a part of Bengali cuisine by 1880³⁸. It was known as '*Bilayti begun*'³⁹ in Bengali. Devi mentioned two recipes cooked with tomato as an ingredient to bring tartness – '*bileti begun'er ambal*' and '*bileti begun patla ambal*'⁴⁰ (light tomato tart soup).

The inclusion of new vegetables into the cookbooks went through a process of negotiation and the common linguistic identifier was the most common method in use. The authors also compared the new vegetable with a similar-looking vegetable that is already widely used within the community. In the case of potato, it was probably compared with sweet potato (sakarkand *aloo*⁴¹) and it was introduced as '*gol aloo*'⁴² (round-shaped potato). The health benefits and methods of preserving the vegetable were elaborately discussed.

Inclusion of new recipes and naming of the new recipes

The naming of new recipes was a very important aspect of the new cookbooks and the process of naming reflects the ingenuity of the authors. It reflects the connection between

the author's understanding of the taste and preference of the intended audience. For instances, *Pakrajeswar* did not mention any European recipes, except '*frang roti*' or '*pao roti*'⁴³ (Tandoor baked chapati). Taxonomy of the food items gives the impression that Mukhopadhyay had included Mughlai or Muslim dishes, European dishes like Carb cooked in the British style, Italian meatball, English Kebab, German stew, Irish stew. He had named some foreign dishes in Bengali like '*topeshe machher english fry*' – "they (British) call it mango-fish" or '*aloor french ball*' (French Potato Ball)⁴⁴.

However, Devi's *Amish o Niraamish Ahar* stands apart from the other two works. Her work suggests her involvement with food and her deep understanding of culinary science as well as her ability to innovate new recipes. Her style of naming recipes like '*Rammohan Dolma Polau*'⁴⁵ signifies her commitment to the Bengali heritage and history.

The culinary philosophy of 'Modern' Bengali cuisine

The three cookbooks discussed in this paper represents a period of transition. *Pakrajeswar* represents an older tradition of cookbook writing. In that tradition, the authors were simply compliers of recipes and gave no or little instruction on the cooking itself. However, the inclusion of recipes into the cookbooks depended on whether the recipes were in use in the Royal kitchen or not. The new cookbooks represented a very different objective.

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Bipradas Mukhopadhyay depicted a picture of the formative phase of Bengali 'Modern' cuisine. The period of 1880s lamented the early phase of the transition to Modern cuisine. New world vegetables were gradually being received within the community. Based on the limited recipes on potato and absence of recipes on tomatoes, and a hypothesis can be drawn that the Bengali community was gradually learning the use of these vegetables and experimenting with them. His writing indicates that his inclusion of recipes was more symbolical than for practical purpose. Although, Mukhopadhyay claimed that his intention was to 'educate' the Bengali women the art of cooking. He hardly did so, apart from introducing new vegetables and new recipes into the cuisine of Calcutta. The recipes mentioned in the text were operating within social and religious boundaries of traditional Bengali society, except some minor relaxation like the instance of inclusion of fowl. Some communities of Bengali Brahminical thoughts prohibits the consumption of bird and Mukhopadhyay's inclusion of fowl into the Bengali platter indicates the softening up of traditional social norms. However, he used traditional medicinal texts (*Vaidya-shastra*) to prescribe fowl as a diet for sick⁴⁶. While describing a fish recipe, he mentioned that 'consumption of fish on Sunday is prohibited by the Hindu scriptures.'⁴⁷ In his introduction, he touches upon several subjects which are related to food ranging from role of women in cooking⁴⁸ to healthy eating habits. The primary concern of Mukhopadhyay was to address well-being of the Bengali body through food.

Prajnasundari Devi's intervention is represented through her approach to culinary and her perception of culinary as scientific knowledge. Her language of writing is simple,

descriptive, and contextualises the cooking of every kind of recipes. Unlike Mukhopadhyay who wrote in a normative style and wanted to 'educate' the Bengali women about cooking just by introducing recipes to them. Whereas Devi's perception was to teach Women the methods of cooking and introduce to the regional Bengali recipes along with European recipes.

Devi belonged to the family of Noble Laurate Rabindranath Thakur and believed in idea of global humanity and had a very liberal and tolerant worldview. Her religious philosophy of Brahmo monotheism⁴⁹ is reflected in her perception of cuisine and culture. She propagated theories on ancient origins of food⁵⁰. She has emphasized on the ritual significance to Fire (Agni) and claimed that Vedic ritual of yajna paved the way for cooking⁵¹. She has cited historian Romesh Chandra Dutt to corroborate the significance of ritual fire⁵².

Devi is one of the very few Bengali food writers who claimed that meat-based dishes are an integral part of Indian cuisine, same as vegetarian dishes. Although, she referred to Hindu Vedic texts and constructed a binary by connecting vegetarianism with *Devata* (God) and non-vegetarianism with *Asura*⁵³ (Demon). She tried to establish the link of commonness by connecting the origins of food with Hinduism and argued that the differences in the cuisine are construction⁵⁴. She referred to the Vedic food habits to legitimize her claims and gave a climatic theory for the 'unpopularity' of meat-eating India. She rejected the claim that meat-dishes are the cuisine of the '*melachhas*'. In fact, she propagated that the meat-dishes are a part of Indian cuisine and claimed that the recipes had gradually circulated to Europe and Central Asia. She had mentioned multiple pork recipes.

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She tried to establish a common link between the West (*Praschatya*) and India through linguistic similarities and cited some examples from Sanskrit vocabulary and compared them with English words.⁵⁵ She compared German words with Sanskrit words and mentioned words like dinner and breakfast can be found in Vedic text of *Grihasutra*, where they are called *shaymash* and *pratara*⁵⁶ respectively. She has tried to find a common link between Vedic society and Islam. She connected with the Vedic ritual and monotheistic practices and correlated with the Zoroastrians of Ancient Persia and their practice of monotheism.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to look into the making of a 'National' of an emerging colonial middle-class through the prism of culinary history. The period of late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the period when the anti-colonial nationalism was gradually becoming more dominant in Bengal (also India). The paper has argued that the process of 'modernization' of Bengali cuisine went through multiple mediations and negotiations. Bengali language played a very crucial role in this process. The modernization was not westernization but a negotiation between global ideas and commodities and local traditions and local taste.

Notes

1. The term is borrowed from historian Rachel Laudan. Rachel Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History*, University of California Press, 2013. *ProQuest Ebook Central*. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ashoka/detail.action?docID=1390810>.
2. Utsa Ray. "Eating 'Modernity': Changing dietary practices in colonial Bengal", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2012, 703-730. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41478327>
3. Anindita Ghosh, *Power in Print: Popular Publishing and the Politics of Language and Culture in a Colonial Society, 1778-1905* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 19-25.
4. Bharati Ray cites the term 'Brahmo youth' in this context. *Nari o paribar: Bamabodhini patrika (1270-1320 Bangabda)* ed. by Bharati Ray, (Kolkata: Ananda Publishers, 2002, repr. 2014), 1.
5. 93. Sengupta, Jayanta. "Nation on a Platter: The Culture and Politics of Food and Cuisine in Colonial Bengal." *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 1, 11, 2009, pp. 81-98. doi:10.1017/S0026749X09990072
- 6.
7. Ishani Choudhury. "A Palatable Journey through the Pages: Bengali Cookbooks and the "Ideal" Kitchen in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century," *Global Food History*, 3:1, 24-39, (p 25) DOI: 10.1080/20549547.2016.1256186.
8. Bipradas Mukhopadhyay, *Pak-Pranali*, (3 vols) (Calcutta: Bipradas Mukhopadhyay, 1887; repr. Kolkata: Ananda Publishers, 1987; repr. 2007).
9. first published in 1884.
10. Devi 2017: Introduction. She was the daughter of a chemist, Hamendra Nath Thakur.
11. Prajnasundari Devi, *Amish o Niramish Ahar*. (2 vols) (Calcutta: Prajnasundari Devi, 1900; repr. Kolkata: Ananda Publishers, 1990; rept. 2017).
12. The discussion for this paper will be limited to two new world vegetables i.e. potato and tomato.
13. Paikpara is a place located with in Calcutta.
14. Rajendranath Das, Rajendralal Singha, Radhashyam Gui were few Bengali individuals who were involved with this nursery. They regularly contributed to *Krishitattva*. *Krishitattva* 4th edition, vol 1, 1288-1289 B.S./1881-1882.
15. Ibid, 125-128; 167-170; 193-196.
16. Agriculture is not the work of poor farmers but of the educated and wealthy. Indian agriculture can only prosper if the educated and wealthy actively took part in it and only then the country can prosper. Ibid. 21-25.
17. The text will be addressed as *Pakrajeswar* from hereafter.
18. Pakrajeswar: 1873, 2nd edition.
19. Pakrajeswar: 1880, 3rd edition.
20. Nikhil Sarkar is a prominent Bengali social historian. He wrote with the pseudonym of Sripantha.
21. The first edition was published in 1831, but it was never found. Introduction to *Pakrajeswar ebong Byajan-ratnakar*, edited by Sripantha, Subranarekha: 2004.
22. There is confusion with the authorship from the second edition onwards as the first edition has not been found yet. It is difficult to determine whether Tarkabaghish, while compiling the second edition, had modified the original content from the first edition. Introduction to *Pakrajeswar O Byajan-Ratnakar*, ed. By Sripantha, 2004: 12-14.
23. The term high cuisine is used in the context of the Mughal culinary tradition; The Hindu Brahmanical tradition is represented through Sanskrit manuscripts; The textual reference includes Sanskrit manuscripts, *supashastra* (cookbook) [Bengali translation is titled as *Khemkutubal*]. The dining habits of Mughal-Persianate tradition is reflected from as *niyamat khana* [The actual text mentions 'niyamat khan' in the Introduction, but Sripantha calls it an error]. The culinary practices is inspired from the royal kitchen of Emperor Shahjahan and Nawab Mahabat Jang. Translated from *Pakrajeswar*, 1280 B.S./1873: Introduction.
24. Arjun Appadurai. "How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, no. 1, 01 1988, pp. 3-24 (p 11.). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/179020>
- 25.
26. Isabella Beeton's *Book of Household management* is one of the finest examples of this tradition. Beeton's work is "a combination of recipe book and household management", quoted from Cecilia Leong-Salobir. *Food Culture in Colonial Asia: A Taste of Empire*. Routledge, 2011 p 23.

27. Mrs Isabella Beeton. *The Book of Household Management*. (1861: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.) pp. 25-38. <https://archive.org/details/b20392758/page/n9/mode/2up>
28. Pakrajeswar 1280: 1.
29. Steel, F.A. and G. Gardiner. *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook: Giving the Duties of Mistress and Servants the General Management of the House and Practical Recipes for Cooking in all its Branches*. (1898; William Heinemann, 1902) p 41. <https://archive.org/details/b21528640/page/n9/mode/2up>.
30. Mukhopadhyay 2007: 39.
31. 'The storeroom should be located close to the cookhouse. It will be convenient to cook if the storeroom is stocked properly.' Translated from Mukhopadhyay 2007: 39.
32. Quoted from Devi 2017: 66.
33. 'Earthen ware is the cheapest and most affordable and it also has major health benefits. Unlike the utensils made from *iron* which can have serious health hazards but in the absence of earthen ware, it can be used. *Bell metal* is also considered good for cooking and keeping food. Pure *copper* utensils should be avoided at all cost as it may cause ulcer. Utensils made from *gold* and *silver* are recommended for the rich household. Wares made from *wood* also mentioned but only selected items like sweetmeat, green leafy vegetables, ghee/clarified butter should be kept in it.' Translated from Pakrajeswar, 1280 B.S.: 1 – 4. Emphasis added by the author of the paper.
34. Mukhopadhyay 2007: 40-41.
35. Devi 2017: 60-62. It included rural household as well.
36. K. T. Achaya, *A Historical Dictionary of Indian Food* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 194.
37. Pakrajeswar 1880: pp. 109-110.
38. Achaya 2002: 253.
39. Devi 2017: 364.
40. Devi 2017: 264; '...*ambals* will provide the refreshing touch of tartness to make the tongue anticipate the sweet dishes.' Quoted from Chitrita Banerji, *Life and Food in Bengal* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), 19.
41. Pakrajeswar 1880: 16.
42. Mukhopadhyay 2007: 43.
43. Pakrajeswar 1880: 43.
44. Quoted from Mukhopadhyay 2007: 199.
45. Devi 2017: 102. It was her tribute to Raja Rammohan Roy He is a social reformer from nineteenth century Bengal.
46. Mukhopadhyay 2007: 56.
47. Quoted and translated from Mukhopadhyay 2007:197.
48. Mukhopadhyay 2007: 27.
49. Followed monotheism and worshipper of Brahma.
50. Due to the desire to consume *rasa* (*RASA-AHARAN*), human began to look for food.
51. Devi 2017: 36.
52. Devi 2017: 40.
53. The meat eating Asura and vegetarian God/Devata. Devata/s consumed fruits, *som rasa*, milk, and ghee. Devi 2017: 26.
54. Devi 2017: 52-53.
55. Devi 2017: 32.
56. Devi 2017: 39.

'Coming from a Place of Impossibility': Imagining a World without Taste

Anna Seecharan

442 ABSTRACT: This paper explores the relationship between food and imagination through the lived experiences of people living with smell disorders. It challenges the common misconception that taste happens in the mouth and examines the fundamental role sense of smell plays in our ability to experience the flavours of food. Using current theories in psychology and neuroscience, I develop the argument that the way in which food aromas are processed by the brain as episodic smell/taste (or 'flavour') memories is key to understanding how the flavours of food are subjectively experienced in a highly emotional and autobiographical way. When we remember, we re-imagine the past. I propose that rather than taste preceding imagination, imagination, through memory, in fact constitutes taste. Losing one's sense of smell not only affects the ability to experience the flavours of food, it also prevents access flavour memories. Because flavour memories connect us to the people, places, and events of our lives, they contribute to our very identity. For people with anosmia, losing the ability to re-imagine these events can have a life-changing impact on sense of self and emotional wellbeing which, likened to being bereaved, can take a lifetime to navigate.

Food and Imagination. For any food-lover, simply the mention of these two words together surely elicits a pulse of excitement at the manifold forms of creativity food inspires. This is the power of imagination. And yet, we tend not to question the status of food as the material substance to which imagination is added, perhaps assuming that food is, simply and unproblematically, the basic matter which we transform with imagination, adding layers of meaning and complexity to it. In this paper I challenge the idea of imagination as an 'added extra' and question the very foundation of our sensorial relationship with the materiality of food. I propose that imagination is more essential to our engagement with food than one might think. To illustrate this, I invite you to imagine what food would be like if imagination were stripped away – to go on a journey into a world without taste.

During the summer of 2018, I carried out research with thirteen people who experience smell disorders to investigate the impact of their condition on their relationship with food. The general term which refers to the loss or lack of sense of smell – anosmia – fails to reflect the diversity of olfactory (sense of smell) disorders, which can include both congenital and acquired anosmia, and can range from a total loss to experiences of sensory reduction, distortions to smell/taste, and even 'phantom' smells. The loss can be permanent, but

olfactory nerves are also able to regenerate, sometimes in unpredictable ways. The only constant I found was that no two experiences of anosmia were the same. What did become quickly clear was that losing or lacking one's sense of smell affects the way that food is experienced in a fundamental way.

In 2018, anosmia was a doubly-invisible condition. Not only is anosmia literally unseeable and particularly difficult to convey to others, it was also absent from medical and public discourses. Participants frequently recounted feeling that their condition had been dismissed by the medical profession and that there was little or no information available, nor wider recognition within public discourses. In 2020 much changed. As one of the three defining symptoms of Covid 19, the number of people experiencing smell and taste loss increased exponentially alongside the pandemic, and almost overnight both the medical profession and general public have become more aware of smell disorders. Since then, a steady stream of news articles have been published, primarily describing the symptoms of parosmia (parosmia is a distortion of smells which is commonly related to upper respiratory tract infections, and therefore the form of anosmia which has witnessed an increase during the pandemic). While the recent dramatic rise in case numbers and visibility will have evident impacts for health services and for professionals dealing with anosmia as a medical condition, my research provides a timely intervention by supplementing biomedical knowledge with an anthropological approach that aims to understand the lived experience of losing one's sense of smell, and the often life-changing impact this can have on one's relationship with food and beyond.

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I will share first-hand accounts of what it is like to live in a world without taste. As one of my participants Grace¹ tells me, loss of sense of smell is so hard to convey that 'it's kind of a futile exercise to try and talk about it... I am now at a point where I realize that it's coming from a place of impossibility'.² Through the accounts of people living with anosmia, I challenge the concept of taste. While the flavours of foods are often understood to be objective, inhering in the material properties of food substances (and accessed through our senses), I propose that what we think we taste when we experience food actually happens inside our heads – the smells and tastes of foods are stored as flavour memories, and memory itself is a process of imagining. In a very literal sense, then, imagining is itself that which constitutes tasting.

I then discuss why this is important by going beyond taste to consider how we imagine ourselves and our worlds through food. I explore the inextricable connection between memory and imagination and the extent to which they constitute our sense of self. That smell/taste memories are not only powerfully emotional, but also autobiographical, suggests the role of imagination, through food, as an important contributor to identity. We will see that food contributes so much more to human experience than simply nutrition: our ability to smell/taste shapes our sense of who we are. As we will see, the condition of anosmia highlights how

the loss of this ability – both to experience food flavours and to access the sensory memories attached to them – can affect sufferers in profoundly personal and emotional ways.

The Impossibility of ‘Tasting’ without Smell

To understand the role that imagination and memory play in how we taste food, we must first define what we mean by taste. The chemical senses are comprised of three systems: the olfactory system (sense of smell); the gustatory system (sense of taste); and the trigeminal system (which deals with touch and pain sensations in the face).³ In the strictest sense, taste refers only to the five taste sensations (salt, sweet, bitter, sour and umami) on the tongue. Though we commonly talk about what foods ‘taste’ like, we are really referring to the flavours of food. What is not widely understood is that food flavours are almost entirely dependent upon our sense of smell. Herz refers to the misconception that flavour is experienced in the mouth as the ‘olfactory location illusion’.⁴ In contrast to tastes on the tongue, aromas are the volatile molecules of physical things in the world which break free from objects and disperse into the air, where they may be inhaled into the nose. When we smell something, it is because inhaled odour molecules reach the top of the nasal cavity, are dissolved into the olfactory epithelium and transmitted via olfactory nerves to the olfactory bulb. The chemical structures of these molecules are then processed by the relevant brain areas which encode their specific molecular patterns and store them in the memory for later recognition.

444 Human beings are the only species to have an airway which is not separate from the foodway, which means that when we chew (in a process called *retronasal olfaction*), air forces aroma molecules up the back of the throat so that they reach the olfactory epithelium by an alternative route. When we eat, food molecules are therefore processed simultaneously by both the smell and taste centres of the brain, and it is this combined smell/taste that we experience as flavour. As omnivores with generalist food habits, our sense of smell gives us the ability to identify and differentiate between a wide array of potential foods. Rozin notes that ‘the challenge of procuring food, and selecting a balanced diet, with a low level of toxins, was surely one of the major selecting forces in early human evolution’.⁵ When our senses of smell and taste function seamlessly together we are largely unaware of the role aromas play in determining flavour, however when sense of smell is lost or absent, the magnitude of its importance in how we experience food becomes clear. According to leading UK Consultant ENT Surgeon, Professor Carl Philpott, ‘true gustatory (taste) dysfunction is rare. Although many [anosmia] patients complain of a “loss of taste”, this is actually due to their loss of retronasal olfaction, where 80% of the flavour of food is derived from its aroma.’⁶ Briget, who suffered a total loss of her sense of smell when she was run over by a car five years previously, is keen to emphasise the distinction:

I’m always emphatic and a bit pedantic about when people say you still have some residual taste... you don’t. My sense of taste is, I can detect the five flavours – I can taste

sweet and salt and bitter and sour and umami – I can detect them. But detecting a taste isn't the same as flavour at all.⁷

The testimonies of people who suffer from anosmia illustrate what it is like to lose one's access to the flavours of food, and this experience can vary dramatically depending on the type and duration of smell disorder.⁸ Amanda suffered from a total and permanent loss of sense of smell when her olfactory nerve was removed as part of an operation to remove a brain tumour. It had been a year since her operation when we spoke, and she was still learning to navigate the loss: 'I try so hard... I can't smell anything. Everything smells like air. Sometimes I try and, like... this cup of coffee, I'll try real hard, and I'll think I can smell it, but I think I'm just hallucinating... I can't smell it. It's so sad; it's like I'm living, but I'm looking through a window.'

Kate also suffered total and permanent loss from a head trauma when she fell from a ladder. Despite being seven years into living with anosmia she still struggled with the change every day. A passion for food and cooking was a hobby she used to share with her husband, but now she says that for her 'a risotto with loads of beautiful flavors in... it's... it's just nothing. It's nothing. It's just... desperate'.⁹

The total and permanent loss of sense of smell described above is more common in instances where olfactory nerves are completely severed and unable to grow back, however under other circumstances it can be possible for the nerves to regenerate.¹⁰ In the case of parosmia, aromas may still be detected but are experienced as distorted. In one extreme case, Sandra had experienced only unpleasant flavours for the last 16 years:

It's horrible. Nothing smells good; at best it smells of nothing. I am virtually anorexic. I live on whole milk and chocolate chip cookies. Yesterday I had three McVities cheddars, four chocolate chip cookies, and about two pints of milk. The milk makes me feel full, and I only drink it at night [because it] helps me get off to sleep.

Not only are the interconnected sense of smell/taste crucial in enabling us to enjoy the material properties of food, they are also important in motivating us to eat. My research suggests that appetite and satiation are not governed, as one might expect, by physical hunger. Rather than seeking food when we need energy and feeling satiated when we have consumed sufficient calories, appetite appears instead to be the measure of our anticipation of eating something that will please us, and satiation is the pleasure reward (in the form of dopamine released by the brain) that we get when we have tasted it. Smell and taste therefore make a much wider range of edible foods not only palatable but, more importantly, *pleasurable*.¹¹ Without the stimulus of food smells, we are less likely to be prompted to eat. John, who has been anosmic since the age of 10, noticed that: 'When I'm eating, I don't get that kind of "tasty smell". I never really feel that hungry. I do sometimes go to bed realising

that I haven't eaten anything all day... when I eat it's because I feel that I have to eat, rather than wanting to eat.¹²

The olfactory system which has evolved uniquely in humans is crucial for our survival. The physical pleasures (and displeasures) of food and eating are often taken for granted, yet without a sense of smell the materiality of food is experienced in a fundamentally different way. The biological imperative of eating to stay alive demands that we engage with food on a daily basis, however for anosmics this process can be fraught as they are forced to engage with food even when the act of eating provides little depth or pleasure. Without access to food flavours, eating can be reduced to a functional necessity, as Briget observes: 'If you watch, say, a farming programme, [the animals] just get this food dumped down, and they just eat it, and they carry on. I think that's how my eating habits are – the food is there, I eat it, and I carry on.'¹³

Smell, Memory, and Imagination

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Firsthand accounts from people with smell disorders demonstrate that the ability to fully experience food flavours depends on the ability to detect aromas, and in the previous section I highlighted the implications for appetite and satiation – in other words, for physiological engagement with food. However, the reason importance of food flavours goes beyond the physical and speaks to the profound effect that flavour memories have on our psychological and social wellbeing. The sense of smell combines dual aspects which are both objective and subjective. Aroma molecules have chemical properties which can be identified, catalogued, and even synthetically reproduced – though I will not discuss this here since Harold McGee's recent *Nose Dive* is surely the authoritative 'field guide to smells', achieving the truly exceptional task of taxonomizing what he delightfully calls the 'osmocism'.¹⁴ Instead, I hope to touch upon the other side of the coin to understand what happens when these odour molecules are encoded by the brain. This takes us into the slippery realm of the subjective.

In their examination of the structure of memory, Verbeek & van Campen analyse Proust's 'madeleine moment' from a neurological point of view, demonstrating how the brain processes sensory stimuli and why the act of smelling is intrinsically subjective.¹⁵ They argue that smell/taste memories are highly individualised because they are processed by episodic (also known as autobiographical) memory.¹⁶ This means that we encode specific chemical odour patterns along with other information about the 'episode' during which they were experienced, for example, the time, place, context, people, our emotions at that time, etc. This makes smell memories autobiographical, since they connect us sensorially to the events and experiences of our own lives. The meanings that we attach to certain smells – or in this case the 'sense' that we make of food flavours, – is therefore personal and unique. They are not inherent in the food's odour molecules, but unlocked by our own biographies, and we each depend upon our own memory to recall food flavours and what

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they mean to us. Furthermore, research carried out by psychologist Rachel Herz suggests that a particularly strong emotional intensity is attached to remembered smell episodes so that olfactory stimuli, more than any other sense, invoke memories which are emotionally *felt*, rather than simply cognitively recalled.¹⁷

It is important to note, however that smell memories can only be recalled in the presence of a stimuli, and that without the stimuli, an important means of accessing those memories is lost. If flavours call to mind particular events in our lives, what are the implications for anosmics who can no longer access those flavours? As Briget explains:

When you smell something, it's never just the smell, it links to memories... you'd remember the time that you did something, and "do you remember when...?", and you're making all those links. How do you get those memories back? They're still in there, and perhaps something else would make me think those things, but perhaps it never will, so actually it's like that didn't happen and that memory, and that either sad or happy feeling that you would have had, has disappeared.¹⁸

In his work, *Pieces of Light. The New Science of Memory*¹⁹ psychologist Charles Fernyhough examines the links between memory and imagination. Current neuroscientific research conjectures that one of the key functions of memory may be its role in allowing us to conceptualize and carry out short- to medium-term future actions. If this is the case, then memory may be as much about the future as it is about the past.

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Fernyhough also returns to Proust and his madeleine, but considers in a slightly different light the moment in which the taste of the madeleine invokes the 'immense edifice of memory'.²⁰ The smell/taste does not, immediately and on its own, summon up the memory of Aunt Leonie, but rather, it prompts 'a cascade of remembering',²¹ in which pieces of the memory must be sought out and pieced together. Fernyhough challenges traditional understandings memories as static records of events which are archived in the brain as "snapshots" of events, which is to say, as fixed moments in time to be stored for later retrieval. Instead, he supports recent reconstructive accounts of memory according to which, each time we remember we reassemble memories anew, drawing together diverse fragments of information connected to a particular event. A memory may be made up of various different elements, such as semantic (factual) information, episodic information (relating to a specific event), sensory information about visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory or taste sensations we have experienced, as well as information about our affective emotional state at the time. Rather than being stored together as one, complete memory, the reconstructive view proposes that different components are stored in different parts of the brain (for example, sensory memories may be stored in the relevant cortices for that sensory modality, while emotional content is stored in the amygdala, and semantic information in the hippocampus. Any one of these pieces of information can

provide a point of entry which might lead to a cascade of remembering, thus activating links to other snippets of information relevant to that memory and reassembling them in the present moment. Memory, then, is not so much about going back to a static past, but rather, how we recreate the past in the present. In this view, remembering is fundamentally an imaginative process, which can perhaps be seen as spatial rather than temporal, since the memory is reconstructed upon the 'stage' of the imagination. If memories are remade each time they are recalled, Fernyhough argues, each re-imagining can potentially be influenced by our present reality (goals, intentions, desires).²²

If we accept that remembering is a process of imagination, this challenges the common conception of taste. The nature of flavour memories is that we cannot experience a flavour from recollection alone, we can only recognise them in the presence of a stimulus. This would suggest that when we are tasting something, we do not taste it first and then add imagination, but the other way around. In order to taste, the aroma molecules must be recognised, which is to say, they must be remembered. Experiencing a food flavour is one and the same as remembering what a particular flavour means to us. Through remembering, imagination precedes tasting. It is not an 'added extra', but rather, without the imaginative process of memory, we don't experience flavours at all: there is no tasting without imagination.

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While fleeting flavour memories may seem like a series of ethereal or insignificant moments in themselves, they contribute to the flavour map of our personal histories. Being able to connect to the places and times in which meals were eaten, the occasions within which they were imbued with personal and social meaning, reinforces our sense of who we are. This is important not only for our individual identity, but also for our role within the wider structures of family and friends, and our place in the world. In the next section I consider how we imagine our worlds through food, and what happens to sense of self when access to this ability to imagine is lost.

Imagining Worlds through Food

In this section I explore the extent to which memory and imagination constitute our sense of self. I put forward the argument that we imagine ourselves through food. That flavour memories are not only powerfully emotional but also autobiographical suggests a role for imagination, through food, as an important contributor to personal identity. Food isn't everything – there are undoubtedly many other identity factors which shape how people understand themselves; Food is nonetheless a daily necessity, and a primary means through which people come together, making it 'a highly condensed social fact, [...] well suited to bear the load of everyday discourse'.²³

Fernyhough argues that memory is autobiographical because it holds together our sense of our selves unfolding through time.ⁱⁱ Our memories of what we have experienced in the past

contribute to our self-understanding of who we are in the present. In his view, what makes our memories ours is the distinctive feeling of ownership that we have over them – they feel real to us because we were there. As we encounter people, places, sensations, and emotions in the present, these experiences prompt recollections of similar past events, and each time we remember, the significance of that memory is reinforced. The more important memories are to us, the more likely they are to become sedimented as part of our identities, thus, our personal store of memories is what makes us who we are. If our memories are crucial to our sense of ourselves, then imagination is the bridge that provides a sense of continuity to our personal story. When we remember in the present, our imagined self not only looks back to the past but also projects into the future; the current sense of ‘who I am’ unpins the personal agency with which we approach the world and enact our future-oriented goals and desires.

In the context of food, when we experience flavour memories, the recognition of the smell/taste as meaning-laden reinforces the sense of ownership we have over all the associations it connects to. While a particular flavour and the recollections it revives will be unique to each of us, it is taken for granted that all bodies contain innate experiential knowledge of the ‘magic’ smells possess to transport us through space and time – that unexpected immediacy with which the madeleine incites Proust’s reverie. And yet, without the stimulus of smell, the ‘immense edifice of memory’ is not evoked. Smell/taste memories may remain buried forever.

For anosmics, the loss of sense of smell can have a profound impact upon emotional wellbeing. What is lost is not just the ability to experience flavours, but the ability to imagine personal worlds of meaning which were previously accessed through food memories. There can be no food worlds without imagination. When anosmics are suddenly deprived of not one, but – in real terms when it comes to experiencing food – *two* of their senses (smell and taste), they are robbed of a fundamental way of engaging both with the external world and with their inner lives. This loss is a daily lived reality for anosmics who, with every mouthful, remain detached from their own autobiographies.

Grace, a lawyer with a young family, was diagnosed with a head and neck cancer three years ago. She suffered from total and permanent anomia after the tumour, which directly affected her olfactory nerve, was removed. She described to me how she began to suffer from panic attacks following her operation:

Even now I don’t have panic attacks on a regular basis, but I find if I read something which is describing strong smells [...for example], my daughter likes to read a book about chocolate cakes and it describes the chocolate cake smell. I start to get panic attacks when I read that book just remembering what having a sense of smell is like and what those smells are associated with because I think my body just starts trying to navigate itself around – “oh, where’s...? Where’s the smell?” [...] my body starts to just go – “hang on a minute, there’s something really wrong here... you don’t have a sense of smell anymore.”

Flavours are not simply a tool through which we physically navigate the world, but also an instrument through which we enact our personal and social identities. The majority of participants noted that, over time, they have reduced the range of interactions they have with food, such as food shopping and cooking meals, and few would now choose to go out for a meal at a restaurant as a social activity. When an important part of your identity is practiced through food, it is more than simply the eating which is taken away, it could be your role as the 'feeder' in the family, or the way that you used to socialise with your friends. As Grace relates:

One of the most challenging things for me, three or four months in, was cooking pies for the family, which is... my family loves my chicken pies. I would set the timer, but I would generally go by how it smelled to work out when the crust was ready. Obviously I didn't have that trigger anymore so I burnt the pies, and for me that was one of the most horrifying little events that happened post- the operation. You know – this is something that is the way I express my love for my family – making the pies – and now I've burned them. I was just so sad, I burst into tears and cried.

For those with total, permanent anosmia, I was struck by the sense in which many felt their loss of smell as a bereavement. Kate, who didn't 'hit the wall with it' until about three-and-a-half years in, tells me of her relief when the specialist head injury nurse told her she should treat it as a bereavement: 'it really lifted a huge pressure from me, that was pressing right down on me. It just absolutely resonated.' With the support of a neuropsychologist, she was slowly able to learn to stand back from it: 'when you're sharing a meal or cooking, rather than just letting it just pull you down because you're not experiencing what you used to be able to, it's almost like [you have to] stand back and see it.' Like a bereavement, there is an acceptance that happens, however adjusting to the loss was often a difficulty journey that would take time – perhaps a lifetime – to come to terms with. She explains that when you smell,

450 you actually hold in your head "you." And that's gone. So it starts right at the heart of the matter, is there's no "you" anymore... Deep down there's a change, psychologically. It's quite big. [...] Whichever way you angle your thought process, it's there – it's there. And I'd be fibbing if I didn't say I didn't mourn the loss every day. And I guess the fact that you do have at least three meals a day, it's kind of like a reminder that just creeps in, yet again.

For those with parosmia, who are not able to eat without disruptions to their smell/taste and can often only experience unpleasant flavours, the sense of total loss, like a bereavement, was not as marked. However, the impact of not being able to enjoy food did have a very real impact on their mental health, and in particular their confidence and emotional stability, as Samantha, a teacher, told me, 'I'm not a depressed sort of person, but that's the closest I've felt to... I just felt like my world was falling apart. You think, "It's just food," [but] it plays such a huge part in everything you do.'

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For Sandra, experiencing *cacosmia* (only smelling bad smells) for sixteen years had affected her deeply. Despite coming across as an intelligent, engaged and interesting person (she had just taken up ‘steampunk’ as a new hobby and had started dressmaking costumes for ‘Victorian inventor-themed’ events), her outlook on life was despondent:

The way I see it, if you look at your life as being a funfair, I’m at the funfair now; I’ve been on all the rides I want to go on... I’m having an okay time watching everybody else, but if they come and say “right, time to close the funfair...” Fine. I’m happy to go. No reason to stay. No reason to stay. So, yeah... every morning I wake up, I breathe in and breathe out and my eyes open, so I know I’m still alive and, yeah – we’ll get through today and see how today goes, but I don’t make vast plans of what I’m going to do in the future because I don’t really care if I’m here or not... my life is miserable. [...] It’s another one of these bloody difficult things that I’ve got to put up with it, which I didn’t ask for, but it’s come my way. I’m sick to death of it myself, but it is what it is, and what choice have I got? I can either hit the paracetamol big-time and cause a lot of grief for everybody, or I can soldier on until it takes its course. I’m not a miserable person and I don’t, you know, worry about my coffin and my shroud and all that. It’s just... I want out.

Sandra told me that her condition makes her life so miserable that she has considered surgery to remove her olfactory bulb completely, so that she can smell nothing at all. However, she has not pursued this because of a phantom smell which she occasionally experiences:

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I have often pondered – would I be well-advised to go and just have my olfactory bulb completely removed and smell nothing – nothing at all? – and I don’t know... See, every now and again, and it doesn’t happen that often these days, is sort of trailing off, but I get what they call phantom smells [...] I can smell somebody cooking the most wonderful cinnamon apple pie. I can smell this pie, and I’m the only person in the room who can smell it: I hyperventilate because I’m taking in every molecule of the scent because it’s such a treat to smell something nice and then eventually it just... [trails off]. So, if I were to have my olfactory bulb completely removed, would I still get my phantom smells? Because as disappointing as they are, – it’s kind of like being shown a picture of your childhood and you look at it and go, “oh yeah, I remember when.. That day on the beach...” and then... it’s just the memory and that’s what my apple pie is. But I can’t eat apple pie now. It’s just not nice.

That she is willing to put up with so much to keep her one ‘good’ smell memory, even when she knows that the sensation is false, illustrates just how important food flavours can be psychologically for our sense of bodily and emotional integrity.

Conclusion

The lived experiences of people living with smell disorders critically illustrate the intricate link between the sensory capacities of the body and their fundamental role in how we are able to experience food. I have used these experiences firstly to understand the concept of taste. Challenging the common conception of taste as something that occurs in the mouth, I have argued that sense of smell is what drives our ability to experience the flavours of food. The way in which the brain processes the aromas of food as episodic memories is key to understanding why smells, and specifically food flavours, hold within them the power to connect to events of our lives in a uniquely autobiographical and emotional way. Rather than taste preceding imagination, I have argued that when we recognise food flavours we are actually undergoing a process of remembering which is itself imaginative. Imagination, therefore, constitutes tasting. Finally, I elaborated on the role that imagination plays in contributing to identity. As the flavours which are most meaningful to us become sedimented as part of our personal histories, they inform who we are in the world. Each time we eat in the present, we both reinforce our connections to our past and consolidate the idea of our self which we project into the future. For those living with anosmia, the loss of sense of smell not only makes it impossible for them to experience the flavours of food, but also prevents them from being able to imagine their worlds through taste. Without access to smell/taste memories, the impossibility of living in a world without taste has far-reaching, and often traumatic, implications for their sense of themselves.

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Notes

1. Pseudonyms have been used throughout.
2. Interview 13, Grace, 03.08.2018
3. The trigeminal nerve allows us to feel the sensations of heat from chilies and the coolness from mint. See: Syed, I. & C. Philpott. (2015a) What you need to know about Hyposmia. *British Journal of Hospital Medicine*. 76(3):41, and Syed, I. & C. Philpott. (2015b) Assessing the sense of smell. *British Journal of Hospital Medicine*. 76(3):38
4. Herz, R. (2018) *Why You Eat What You Eat. The science behind our relationship with food*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. p.64
5. Rozin, P. (1999) Food is Fundamental, Fun, Frightening, and Far-Reaching. *Social Research*. 66(1):12-3
6. Philpott, C. (2014) Smell and taste disorders in the UK: first experiences with a specialized smell and taste outpatient clinic. *Bulletin of the Royal College of Surgeons of England*. 96(5):156
7. Interview 11, Briget, 02.08.2018
8. The most common cause of anosmia (60%) is from upper respiratory tract infections, followed by (10%) as a result of head trauma. Congenital anosmia is rare (1%). While I do not discuss congenital anosmia in this paper, it should be noted that the challenges of negotiating food and identity without ever having had a sense of smell are of a different kind, and warrant further research.
9. Interview 6, Kate, 30.07.2018
10. Olfactory nerves are the only part of the human nervous system which is directly exposed to the external environment, and are the only nerves which have the ability to regenerate. (Ref)
11. For a discussion of flavour 'patterns of desire' see: Wilson, B. (2015) *First Bite. How we learn to eat*. London: Fourth Estate. (pp)
12. Interview 2, John, 10.07.2018

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13. Interview 11, Briget, 02.08.2018
14. McGee, H. (2020) *Nose Dive. A Field Guide to the World's Smells*. John Murray (Publishers): London.
15. Note explaining Proust's madeleine? See: Verbeek, C. & C. van Campen. (2013) Inhaling Memories. *The Senses and Society*. 8(2):133-48
16. Include diagram figure 1 as appendix? Source: Verbeek, C. & C. van Campen. (2013) Inhaling Memories. *The Senses and Society*. 8(2):136
17. Ref Herz, R. xxxx
18. Interview 11, Briget, 02.08.2018
19. Fernyhough, C. (2013) *Pieces of Light. The New Science of Memory*. Profile Books: London.
20. Proust, M. (1913) *In Search of Lost Time. The Way by Swann's. Volume 1*. (2003 Penguin Classics Edition) London: Penguin
21. Fernyhough, C. (2013) *Pieces of Light. The New Science of Memory*. Profile Books: London.
22. Fernyhough, C. (2013) *Pieces of Light. The New Science of Memory*. Profile Books: London.
23. Appadurai, A. (1981) Gastro-politics in Hindu South Asia. *American Ethnologist* 8(3):494

Have It Your Way: Elizabeth David and the Problem of Norman Douglas

Laura Shapiro

ABSTRACT: One of the most influential figures in the life of the great British food writer Elizabeth David was Norman Douglas, the man she considered her mentor, whom she met in 1939. Although they spent relatively little time together before his death in 1952, she wrote about him frequently and with enormous admiration, making clear how much in her culinary sensibility she owed to him. She knew, as did everybody in his enormous circle of friends, that he was an open and active pedophile; but she never alluded to this in anything she published. The ‘Norman Douglas’ who appears in her books and journalism was a work of the imagination.

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During the miserable British winter of 1947, Elizabeth David found herself stuck in a provincial hotel, unable to get back to London while floods ravaged the countryside. Day after day, the food that showed up was even worse than the weather. Rationing was still in force, and every meal – flour and water soup, dehydrated vegetables – was a monument to deprivation. During the war she’d been in France, Greece, and Cairo; and as her mind traveled back to those years in the sun, she could practically taste the lemons, the olive oil, the figs, the apricots. She picked up her pen and started to write. At the time it was hardly more than a list of what she longed to eat, but three years later it had become the first of her now-classic works, *A Book of Mediterranean Food*.

Elizabeth herself was the first to tell this origin story: it appeared in the *Spectator* in 1963 titled ‘How It All Began.’¹ Since then, journalists and historians have evoked it countless times; it’s now an indispensable touchstone in any account of Elizabeth’s career. A painstaking writer, and deliberately elusive when the subject was herself, she would have taken great care in composing this anecdote. Hence it’s worth noting exactly how she situated herself in relation to the Mediterranean – that is, at a vast, unbridgable distance. There she was in a bleak and hungry England, summoning to the page an array of entrancing ingredients so definitively out of reach that the only way to taste a dish was to imagine it. What’s clear now, looking at *Mediterranean Food* and much of the work that followed, is that she expected readers, too, to use their imaginations. Invariably she set recipes in a captivating swirl of history, literature, and storytelling, as if to signal that cooking was not the only way to bring this food to life.

But to understand more fully ‘how it all began,’ we have to pair this origin story with another one. A year earlier, also in the *Spectator*, she had published a piece called ‘South Wind’² – an homage to her beloved mentor, the novelist and travel writer Norman Douglas (1868-1952), on the tenth anniversary of his death. Courtly and charismatic, Norman was based in Capri and had a deep familiarity with food and cooking across the region. He was 70 when they met in 1939; Elizabeth was 25, still just a young food-lover and adventurer. The culinary sensibility we associate so strongly with her, a sensibility steeped in landscapes and people and traditional ways with food, a sensibility persistently at war with the ersatz – all this was activated in the course of walks and talks and meals with Norman Douglas. She owed him a great deal and honored him for the rest of her life – but obliquely, for he was famous in his time as an open, avid, and indeed proud pedophile.³

How, then, was she to memorialize him in print? With an extraordinary degree of tact. Today we would call it compartmentalizing. She never alluded to his sex life, though he himself paraded it cheerfully, showing up to meet friends in cafes with one or another young boy in tow. Rather, she portrayed him as a wry, contemplative source of timeless wisdom on food and life. The ‘Norman Douglas’ she created for the *Spectator* – and expanded upon in later articles – was a work of the imagination, true to her sense of him while profoundly incomplete. I’ve called him her mentor, and he did ignite the intellectual passion that would become her career. But he was also, in a way, her talisman. Norman lived at a delightful – to him – distance from the conventions he scorned, setting an example that Elizabeth cleansed of abusive sexuality and held close.

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It’s more than likely they never would have met at all, if Elizabeth and her then lover, a sometime actor and writer named Charles Gibson Cowan, hadn’t made the truly dumb decision to sail a ramshackle yacht from England to Greece during the summer of 1939. By the time they reached Marseille in September, World War II was underway. Two months later they managed to get to Antibes, and there they settled in for the winter. While they sorted through the problems and possibilities now facing them, Charles took the opportunity to make some money by helping a friend pick up a boat in Venice and sail it back to Antibes. Elizabeth stayed in Antibes, socializing with friends in the expat community; and before long she was spending as much time as she could with one of the most notorious expats on the Riviera, Norman Douglas.

“Always do as you please, and send everybody to Hell, and take the consequences. Damned good Rule of Life.”⁴ This was the inscription Norman scrawled in Elizabeth’s copy of his book *Old Calabria*, and she was charmed by the advice, so much so that she quoted it right at the start of a warm tribute to him she published in *Gourmet* in 1969. Fifteen years later she selected the *Gourmet* piece for inclusion in her essay collection, *An Omelette and a Glass of Wine*, and it is via this appealing portrait that most readers nowadays encounter Norman Douglas for the first time. Elizabeth may have been unaware, when she took to

heart his 'Rule of Life,' that Norman himself jettisoned this rule whenever it was about to become a nuisance. Yes, he always did what he pleased – but he scrambled like mad to avoid the consequences.

Born to a wealthy Scottish family, owners of an immense cotton factory in Austria, Norman grew up near Bregenz as well as in Scotland and England. He hated his various schools and ended up largely self-educated, with an early passion for natural history that led to his publishing several articles in scientific journals. Eventually he decided on a career in the British diplomatic service and was posted to the embassy in St. Petersburg in 1894. At the time he was still having affairs with women, one of whom was an aristocrat from the powerful Demidov family. When she told him she was pregnant, he finagled his way out of the diplomatic service in a hurry and left for Naples, never seeing her again. Soon after, he married his cousin, Elsa FitzGibbon, in London; and the two of them lived mostly in Italy and Austria for the next few years while two sons were born. The marriage ended in a vicious divorce, with Norman winning custody of the boys chiefly because the British judicial system favored the husband. He had no intention of raising his sons – once the court had ruled, he handed over the two children to friends in England and made his own home in Capri.

456 Around that time he began to focus on writing as a way to support himself, and over the next several decades turned out more than twenty books, most of them heavily researched and clogged with obscurantist references to history, literature, and mythology. The books drew some attention in their day and earned a number of admiring reviews; but he never won a lasting readership; and fairly quickly his work dropped out of sight. His only genuine success was *South Wind*, a novel satirizing the bohemian expats on Capri, which came out in 1917 and sold well for many years. Lighthearted amorality was the driving feature of *South Wind*; and it was given a warm welcome by the Bloomsbury circle and other free spirits of the time.

But far more than work, what preoccupied him was the pursuit of boys and occasionally girls. Southern Italy and especially Capri were popular destinations for pedophiles, and Norman had no difficulty – legally or socially – living just as he wished. Around 1912, however, he ran short of money, so he accepted an editorial job at the *English Review* and moved to London, where he was based for the next five years. One day he picked up a sixteen-year-old schoolboy in a museum, took him to a tea shop for cakes, and brought him home. Afterwards the youth reported him, and Norman was arrested. Rather than face trial, he jumped bail and fled to Italy. In 1937 he again ran into trouble with the police, this time over a young girl in Florence, and quickly escaped to France, where he hoped to stay only until the Italian authorities forgot about him. This plan collapsed with the outbreak of war, and that's when Elizabeth showed up. She was entranced immediately.

Norman was on the lam, but he certainly wasn't an outcast. In Antibes and everywhere else, he had an enormous circle of friends and admirers. Some of them loved his work, others respected his wide learning, and they all relished his general air of hedonism. Many were writers, including Joseph Conrad, D.H. Lawrence, Graham Greene, Rebecca West, Compton Mackenzie, E.F. Benson, and Sybille Bedford. Several were rich – the radical activist and philanthropist Nancy Cunard, the arts patrons Muriel Draper and Brigit Patmore – and he tended such friendships with special care. It's possible he categorized Elizabeth as another of these women with money, despite the somewhat raffish way she and Charles were living, for her upper-class speech and bearing were unmistakable. At any rate, he was happy to welcome her to the entourage.

Elizabeth used to say she was 24 when they met, and he was 72 or 73. Actually their ages were a bit closer – 25 and 70, as we've seen. This was an uncharacteristic mistake on her part, for she was scrupulous about facts; but perhaps she let the age difference expand in memory. The many years that separated them were fundamental to the way she felt about him, and to the way she evoked him after his death. She rarely portrayed him as an equal; more often she cast him as an oracle, a kind of culinary zen master with herself as the disciple.

Their immediate point of contact was food – a safe space, morally speaking, where she had no need to acknowledge his disquieting sex life. Food was also a world she had been eagerly exploring on her own for some time. Although she had grown up on the stodgy meals favored in many affluent British households, once she left home she began acquiring cookbooks and teaching herself to cook. On her frequent trips abroad she made a point of stockpiling notes and memories of local meals, and before long she had enough of a recipe collection to assemble a handwritten cookbook for a flatmate. She continued gathering recipes during the voyage with Charles, and managed to turn out impressive meals from their galley kitchen even when wartime shortages became acute. There was a chicken *en casserole* for Charles's birthday, a lobster mayonnaise when they managed to acquire a lobster; and one day she came back on board with half a goat, which was the only meat she'd been able to find. She cooked her way through it for the next week.

Norman himself rarely cooked, but when it came to the raw materials, the flora and fauna that are the elements of cuisine, he was at home. A lifelong fascination with natural science gave him the habit of acquiring his knowledge of place from the ground up, hiking and exploring, investigating a pond or a grove of trees or a flutter of insects for everything they could tell him. That was also the way he picked up his knowledge of kitchen traditions – by being there, in the restaurants and markets, and paying attention. Elizabeth had mastered the basics on her own; now she learned to think about food more deliberately, as Norman did, and to focus on it as an expression of time, place, and people.

Apart from a couple of coy, faux-erudite collections of aphrodisiac recipes, Norman's books touched on food only sporadically. His idiosyncratic expertise emerged in talk – the

observations, advice and rants for which he was famous among his friends. Charles, who took copious notes throughout his trip with Elizabeth, recorded a typical outburst about the pasta in a local cafe. "Muck, my dear, muck! Every day I tell them that spaghetti must be cooked exactly twelve minutes and then allowed to stand for a further three minutes in its own water, no more. Good God! It's simple enough. They don't have to start till we get here, but the barbarians think that it can be cooked in the morning and heated up. Muck, that's what it is, muck."⁵

After she and Charles left Antibes in May 1940, Elizabeth didn't see Norman again until she visited him in Capri in 1951. He died a year later. By then she had published *A Book of Mediterranean Food* and *French Country Cooking*, and she was at work on *Italian Food*, which would appear in 1954. The following year she published *Summer Cooking*, and in 1960 *French Provincial Cooking*. Norman popped up frequently in these books—she quoted him, thanked him, acknowledged him – in fact she mentioned him so often in the first draft of *Mediterranean Food* that readers of the manuscript had to persuade her to cut most of the references. During this spectacularly productive decade she was also contributing regularly to *Harpers Bazaar*, *Vogue*, *House and Garden*, and the *Sunday Times*. She had become the most acclaimed food writer in England, and the very sight of her name evoked the European cuisines of the sun.

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Then her life took a sharp turn. Early in the 1960s a longtime lover suddenly revealed that he had become engaged to another woman, and the news was devastating. Soon after, she suffered a mild stroke and temporarily lost her sense of taste. But even while she was recovering from these setbacks she launched an entirely new enterprise – Elizabeth David Ltd, the kitchenware shop she opened in 1965 with four partners. There she held court regularly, chatting with customers and dispensing advice in a salon-like setting that she greatly enjoyed. It turned out to be an excellent restorative. Meanwhile, back in 1961 she had started writing regularly for the *Spectator*, long a showcase for some of England's best minds in politics and culture. Elizabeth quickly proved that she belonged in their company. The editor had no interest in traditional recipe stories but encouraged her to pursue any aspect of cuisine, past or present, that fascinated her. What fascinated her, she discovered, was England. In 1970 she published her first book in ten years, and it was *Spices, Salts and Aromatics in the English Kitchen*.

The voice was still that of Elizabeth David – unmistakably so, in the wit and the easygoing intellect, the depth of the research, the delight with which she offered gleanings from centuries' worth of texts – but the sources of inspiration were different. It was as if she had gone back to that provincial hotel room and started dreaming of pickled ox-tongue instead of saffron and basil. And indeed, despite the different culinary terrain, *Spices, Salt* had a great deal in common with *Mediterranean Food*. Once again she was taking the first steps in an exploration that would go on for years as she searched the archives for

the wandering ways of culinary history. Once again the recipes were not meant to be an end in themselves but rather to carry on the conversation. And once again she included an affectionate tribute to Norman, though he was somewhat out of place in this book, since he openly despised England and its food. She managed it by putting him in the 'Savouries'⁶ chapter, where she praised his knowledge of herbs, spices, and other ingredients from the ancient world that had contributed to English cookery.

During this decade – the decade in which her interests were veering so markedly away from his – Elizabeth began writing about Norman in greater depth. Journalism was the vehicle she chose for this project, rather than inserting notes about him into cookbooks. She seemed intent on establishing an image of him that would exist outside the books, like a statue in a public square. 'South Wind,' the 1962 piece for the *Spectator*, appeared first; then came articles in *Wine & Food* and *Gourmet*. There was a fair amount of recycling from one piece to another, but together they amounted to the 'Norman Douglas' she favored for posterity.

Creating this portrait she focused directly on his speaking style, for it conveyed just what she wanted to emphasize: his homegrown wisdom and the charm of his company. In a café, she wrote, he would pull out from his pocket a handful of basil and send it to the kitchen for the pasta sauce. "Tear the leaves, mind," he would instruct. "Don't chop them. Spoils the flavour."⁷ When she brought him a basket of figs one day, he asked which market stall she had visited. He knew the nearby fig trees, he knew the soil, he knew who picked the figs too early and who picked at just at the right moment. "Next time, you could try Graziella. I fancy you'll find her figs are sweeter; just wait a few days if you can."⁸ When she saw mussels on a menu and considered ordering them – "Mussels? Of course, if you *want* to be poisoned ... You know what happened to the consul in Naples, don't you? ... But have it your way, my dear, have it your way."⁹

One of her tenderest accounts of their relationship appeared in *Wine & Food* in 1964, where she described taking a trip to Capri after Norman's death. She wrote that she didn't stay long at his grave but made her way to his favorite table at a tavern among the lemon trees. There she ate a chunk of bread with olive oil, drank a glass of local wine, and thought back on everything she treasured about Norman. A particular memory came to her, a remark that Norman had made many times, and Elizabeth quoted it with such passionate conviction you can almost see the highlighting on the page: "I like to taste my friends, not eat them."¹⁰

It's a peculiar image, and rather an unpleasant one, but the meaning is clear: Norman would never pry into anyone's intimate life, and he expected people to avoid prying into his. There could be absolutely no 'idle questioning, meddling gossip and rattling chatter' around the subject of Norman Douglas. Small wonder Elizabeth applauded this dictum: she guarded her own privacy ferociously, as many an interviewer had learned; and she wouldn't dream of crossing that line with Norman. 'The few who failed him in this regard did not for long remain his friends,' she added.¹¹ She would remain a loyal friend as long as she lived.

Elizabeth had chosen the Norman Douglas she wished to believe in, and the portrait that emerged in her journalism of the 1960s was a work of love as well as art. This Norman was an independent soul, the very embodiment of personal integrity, a man true to himself who simply ignored those standards of behavior and achievement for which he had no use. It's not a version of Norman Douglas that would strike many of us as credible today, but it was credible to Elizabeth. And it was necessary. Being with him in Antibes had taught her what mattered in life, and visiting him in Capri, as he neared death, made those lessons still more compelling. His sensibility inspired her recipes; his voice was always with her; he had a permanent place at that famous kitchen table where she did her writing. Those of us who tell the story of her life can't leave him out even if we wish we could – because the one good thing he ever did was give us Elizabeth David.

Notes

1. Elizabeth David, 'How It All Began', *Spectator*, 1 February 1963, p. 146.
2. Elizabeth David, 'South Wind', *Spectator*, 16 February 1962, p. 218.
3. For background on Norman Douglas, see two major biographies: *Norman Douglas*, by Mark Holloway (Secker & Warburg, 1976) and *Unspeakable: A Life Beyond Sexual Morality*, by Rachel Hope Cleves (University of Chicago Press, 2020).
4. Elizabeth David, 'Norman Douglas', *Gourmet*, February 1969, p. 28.
5. Charles Gibson Cowan, *The Voyage of the Evelyn Hope* (London: The Cresset Press, 1946), p. 56.
6. Elizabeth David, 'Savouries', in *Spices, Salt and Aromatics in the English Kitchen* (London: Penguin, 1970), pp. 227-228.
7. Elizabeth David, 'South Wind', *Spectator*, 16 February 1962, p. 218.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 219.
9. Elizabeth David, 'South Wind Through the Kitchen', *Wine & Food*, Autumn 1964, p. 27.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Making the Ordinary Exotic: The Role of Literary Imagination in the Rise of Gastronomic Tourism in Early Twentieth-Century France

Richard Warren Shepro

ABSTRACT: *Food and Imagination* can describe the conscious, creative process of inventing new dishes, but I focus on the literary and rhetorical imagination that can transform diners' perceptions of traditional, often regional, dishes from something mundane to something transcendent, making the ordinary exciting or even exotic and shaping a country's tastes in new ways.

In late nineteenth and early twentieth century France, both in fiction and in prose works, writers used their literary imagination to paint intriguing, vivid pictures of dishes that had previously been viewed as ordinary or known only as eccentric or folkloric regional dishes. This, I argue, may have done as much or more to encourage the rise of automobile gastrotourism and the appreciation of those dishes as did the fledgling Michelin guide.

These writers helped create a thirst for what others considered the mundane.

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Food and Imagination can describe the conscious, creative process of inventing new dishes, bringing to mind Brillat-Savarin's comment that the invention of a new dish adds more to human happiness than the discovery of a new star.¹ I would like instead to focus on the literary and rhetorical imagination that can transform diners' perceptions of traditional, often regional, dishes from something mundane to something transcendent, making the ordinary exciting or even exotic, and shaping a country's tastes in new ways.

In late nineteenth century and early twentieth century France, both in fiction and in prose works about gastronomy, writers used their literary imagination to paint intriguing, vivid pictures of dishes that had previously been viewed as ordinary or known only as eccentric or folkloric regional dishes. This, I argue, may have done as much or more to encourage the rise of gastrotourism and the appreciation of those dishes as did the fledgling Michelin guide.

Michelin

A conventional view is that the major impetus for gastrotourism were the guidebooks created by the Michelin tire company to increase the sales of tires by encouraging people to drive more, specifically to drive automobiles to distant restaurants.² Undoubtedly, Michelin's extraordinarily popular guides, always bound in red,³ did influence the



new dining population. Its denizens were a new kind of visitor, known by a new word – *gastronomade* – now more commonly thought of as a gastrotourist. *Gastronomades* were drawn to provincial restaurants where invention may have been limited but expert preparation of regional dishes became a drawing card that pulled automobile drivers from far away. The Michelin guide created its own evocative and novel symbolism and mythology – stars, a firmament, reasons to take journeys – but literary flair and storytelling by a few writers may have fired the imagination before the automobile boom began and filled in the essential details drivers needed to take an interest in the Michelin recommendations. An increased appreciation of dishes and regions that had been unappreciated or marginalized was a prerequisite to the Michelin recommendations being credible to the gastronomes who read the Michelin guide.

In 1900, the fledgling Michelin tire company began handing out to automobile drivers a free booklet containing maps of 13 provincial French cities and advice on how to

travel without problems. That year, a journalist writing in a new magazine *L'Auto* noted that he had driven from Paris to Marseille in four days and only came across two other cars.⁴ The guide gradually expanded its coverage and in 1923 began to alert drivers to restaurants in a few provincial cities, categorized by three and then five levels of quality, from ‘*premier ordre*’ (first rank) through ‘*modeste*’ and later ‘*simple mais bien tenu*’ (simple but well maintained). In 1932, it reclassified its ratings into three levels of stars, * for ‘*très bonne qualité*’, ** for ‘*d’excellent qualité*’, and *** for ‘*fine et justement renommée*’, (fine and rightly renowned), now covering all of France except Paris. In 1933, it began to cover all of France and listed restaurants using the categories still essentially in use today * ‘*une bonne table dans la localité*,’⁵ ** ‘*cuisine excellent, mérite le detour*’ (worth a detour), and what became a revered ultimate award, *** ‘*une des meilleures tables de France, vaut le voyage*’ (worth a special trip). There were initially 23 three-star restaurants, six of which were Paris. (See Figure 1 and 2.)

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FIGURE 1. Perhaps the first appearance of the character who became known as Bibendum, 1900. ‘Now, it must be drunk!! To your health. The Michelin tire drinks the obstacles.’

Making the Ordinary Exotic

The seventeen three-star restaurants outside of Paris were not particularly fancy or formal. For more than a century, French food had been written about and categorized, principally into the categories of the refined *'cuisine de cour'* or *'haute cuisine'* and two categories of *'cuisine populaire'*: *'cuisine bourgeoise'* and *'cuisine régionale'*. There was also a category of *'cuisine des pauvres'*.⁶ Two of the classic dishes of the *cuisine bourgeoise* relevant to our discussion are *pot-au-feu* ('boiled' beef, actually long-simmered, not using tender cuts, with a variety of vegetables, served with its broth) and *blanquette de veau à l'ancienne* (long-simmered chunks of veal, less tender cuts from the neck, shoulder or shin, combined with a creamy sauce made from the broth, simple mushrooms and separately cooked pearl onions, generally served with rice).⁷ Although the Guide Michelin at the time gave no descriptions of restaurants or their food other than the judgements indicated by the stars themselves, some of the restaurants outside Paris exemplified these (comparatively) simpler styles of food and regional cooking.

The Disparagement of Regional Food

At the turn of the century in 1900, regional cooking was not respected by the sort of people who could afford automobiles. There was pride in the richness of French agricultural produce, including specialties of each region. These were omnipresent in school classrooms using the characteristic maps of French regional specialties created by Deyrolle, the family also known for taxidermy and their museum-like shop on the Rue du Bac in Paris. (See Figure 3.) But regional foods, in general, were looked down on as peasant food suitable only for the backward people who lived deep in the regions and even disparaged by regional elites. There was a sense in sophisticated circles that bourgeois, rural and regional food were not gastronomic or worth examining except, perhaps, as anthropological curiosities. Moreover, there had long been in France a tension between regionalism and nationalism. It has been argued that appreciation of regional foods emerged around the time of the French revolution – within the regions--as an increasingly centralized government reorganized regional



FIGURE 2. Advertisement for the 1920 *Guide Michelin*, with another early appearance by Bibendum, the Michelin man, now with a more recognizable face.

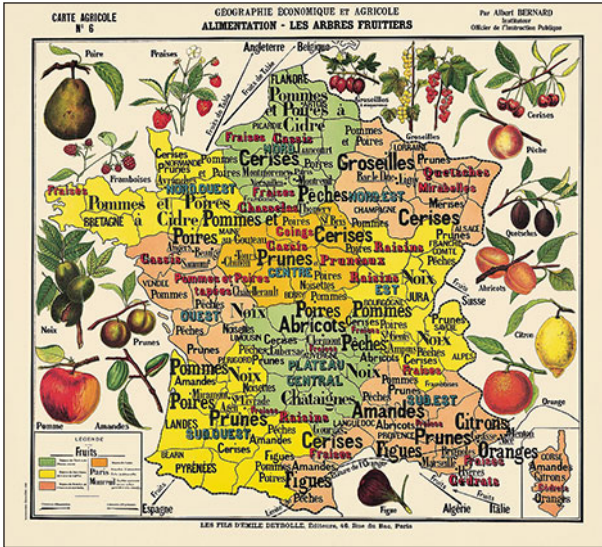


FIGURE 3. The Deyrolle map of French agricultural specialties.

boundaries and emphasized pride both in the nation and in the community, and that pride may have sparked the idea that some regional foods could be a success in Paris. There is even a year attached to the first appearance of the Provençal fish-stew bouillabaisse: 1786, when the aptly named brothers Provençaux moved to Paris and introduced bouillabaisse and its simpler cousin brandade to the capital.⁸ But their success introducing sophisticated Parisians to a particular provincial novelty does not mean that rural or

distant provinces began to be widely respected, and it is unlikely that the popularity of the automobile and the allure of ratings in an attractive guidebook were sufficient to change attitudes and assure the success of these restaurants and the popularity of their styles of food.

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The stereotype of the food of southwestern France, for example, was not focused on images of the luxurious partridges, truffles, foie gras and Bordeaux wine that later led to parts of the southwest being viewed as a mythical land of Cockaigne, but instead on deprivation, misery and the omnipresence of garlic as the principal vegetable eaten by people either very poor or entirely undiscerning.⁹ In *The Three Musketeers*, Alexandre Dumas presents the three southwestern musketeers and their friend D'Artagnan as eager, ambitious country bumpkins, unsophisticated but gallant and courageous, who drink wine immoderately and savour coarse but hearty foods.¹⁰

Far from celebrating bourgeois or regional French foods, mid-nineteenth century French writers often presented characters who were dazzled by foreign and exotic delicacies that were not even French. When the Count of Monte Cristo hosts a dinner party intended to be breathtaking, Alexandre Dumas has him emphasize the exotic and the expensive. The fish are imported, still alive, from southern Italy and from the Volga river in Russia, and there are fruits from China and Japan.¹¹ In Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856), the Normandy dinner party and ball that so transformed Emma Bovary's life was not full of local specialties one might admire in Normandy today (local seafood, cheeses and cream, apple products) but imported exotica: pineapple, pomegranate, Spanish wines and Rhine wines.¹² A pharmacist is made to seem small and provincial when he criticizes Parisian

restaurant meals he has never eaten that 'aren't worth as much, no matter what they say, as a good *pot-au-feu*' and declares he prefers '*cuisine bourgeoise*, it's healthier.'¹³

Alexandre Dumas was a serious gastronome himself, and like the composer Rossini he finished his life after astonishing youthful success as an artist not by writing more novels or operas but as an encyclopedist of a subject he loved, gastronomy. He died in 1870 with his huge encyclopedia unfinished, but it was published in 1873, based on what he had completed, as the *Grand Dictionnaire de cuisine*. It is a magnificent book, full of fascinating details of thousands of *haute cuisine* dishes, with drawings from early editions of Taillevent, the first French cookbook writer. Voluminous, it suggests Dumas had little interest in *cuisine bourgeoise* or regional cuisine. It does not mention *pot-au-feu* nor discuss the simple regional dishes that people began to travel to eat a half-century later, such as *cassoulet* in the southwest and *bouillabaisse* on the southeast coast. As to *blanquette de veau*, the *Grand Dictionnaire* describes 115 veal dishes including three that include the term *blanquette de veau* that are actually glorified leftovers--roast veal done up with a separately made creamy sauce, and a variant enriched with truffles. As Dumas was at the time the gourmand of gourmards and very serious about his *Dictionnaire*, it would appear that the interest of gastronomes of the time in *cuisine bourgeoise* or in regional cuisine was essentially nonexistent. Similarly, a practical cooking magazine for bourgeois housewives started in 1893 called *Le Pot-au-feu: Journal de cuisine pratique et d'économie domestique* gave strictly practical advice and did not particularly celebrate the dish *pot-au-feu*.

A Literary Change?

Attitudes began to change, however, with some writers later in the century. Guy de Maupassant wrote evocatively about an old country aristocrat and the details of his presiding over a dinner at which *becasses*, tiny birds locally hunted as game, were eaten, one small bird per person. The heads with their distinctive needle-like beak are then recooked by the host and eaten as part of a story-telling game after the rest of the flesh has been consumed as a main course: 'He took them one by one and grilled them on the candle. The grease crackled, the browned skin smoked, and the randomly chosen one crunched the richly cooked head, holding it by the neck and letting out exclamations of pleasure. And each time the diners, raising their glasses, drank to his health.'¹⁴ This is a rustic, country meal, with a hint of savagery, not at all like Brillat-Savarin's more stately discussion of his refined pairing of roast pheasant and fine Burgundy,¹⁵ presented as special, and delicious, but not particularly unusual in the eyes of the participants, emphasizing a rural tradition but describing the dish in a vivid way that intrigues the reader. In contrast to Flaubert, Maupassant does not appear to be satirizing the ways of these rural characters.

Two other late nineteenth century writers of fiction, Alphonse Daudet and Emile Zola, wrote extensive and memorable descriptions of simple and regional food. Like Maupassant, Daudet wrote a story about hunting, but his was written from the perspective of the

red partridges and quail being hunted!¹⁶ His other writings about food included vivid descriptions likely to be enticing to any reader. His description of a marine harvest in a Breton fishing village anticipates the enthusiasm of twentieth century gastrotourists: ‘You can’t really find anything more delicious, more secluded, than this small village lost in the middle of the rocks, interesting by its dual marine and pastoral side.’¹⁷ In a three-part story in the same volume, called *Gastronomic Landscapes*,¹⁸ Daudet submerges himself in local colour and shows his appreciation for both the highs (in Provence and Corsica) and lows (in Sardinia) of local food, beginning with *bouillabaisse*:

When the fishing was over, we landed among the high gray rocks. The fire was quickly lit, pale in the bright sun; large slices of bread cut on small plates of red earth, and we were there around the pot, the plate outstretched, the nostril open ... Was it the landscape, the light, this horizon of sky and water? But I have never eaten anything better than this *bouillabaisse* of *languoustes*. And what a good nap afterwards on the sand! A sleep full of the rocking of the sea, where the thousand shining scales of the little waves still fluttered with closed eyes.

And in the Provençal specialty of aioli, variants of which are found around the Mediterranean but which to a nineteenth century Parisian might merely have reeked of garlic, Daudet found this magic:

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Inside the hut where a fire of woody vine shoots shone, clear and sparkling, the cook religiously pounded the cloves of garlic in a mortar, letting the olive oil drop, drop by drop. We ate *aioli* around our eels that had just been skinned, seated on high stools in front of the little wooden table... Around the tiny room one could discern an immense horizon crossed by gusts of wind, hasty flights of traveling birds... while the surrounding space could be measured by the bells of the herds of horses and oxen, resounding and sonorous, grew faint in the distance, arriving like lost notes, blown away in a blast of the mistral.

Or as an even more star-struck gastrotourist in Algeria, eating a dish which was called at the time, in French, *kousskouss* :

From the large stately tent ... we could see a night of semi-mourning descending, a black-violet in which the purple of a magnificent sunset darkened; in the freshness of the evening, in the middle of the half-open tent, a Kabyle candlestick in palm wood raised at the end of its branches a motionless flame which attracted night insects, the rustling of fearful wings. Squatting all around on mats, we ate silently; There were whole sheep dripping with butter which were brought at the end of a spit, pastries with honey, musky jams, and finally a large wooden dish where chickens were spread out in the golden semolina of the *kousskouss* ... I thought that the Arab national dish might well be that miraculous manna of the Hebrews spoken of in the Bible.

His Sardinian main dish, by contrast, he found sadly wanting. Polenta, made of milled chestnut rather than maize, 'is awful. Poorly crushed chestnuts have a moldy taste; it looks like they had spent a long time under the trees, in the rain'... However influenced he may have been by the settings, Daudet was not undiscerning.

Emile Zola was less of a gastrotourist and more a chronicler of naturalistic scenes he invented and precisely described, particularly in his early novel, *The Belly of Paris*, which contains detailed descriptions of markets and foods. One of his more famous dinners appears in his 1888 novel, *l'Assommoir*,¹⁹ in which Gervaise, the mother of Nana (who grows up to be the protagonist of a later novel), decides to splurge on a special multi-course dinner, largely beyond her financial means. In addition to a roast goose, one of the dishes being considered is the *cuisine bourgeoise* classic (still a favorite today in polls of most-loved dishes by the French populace): 'Tall Clémence suggested rabbit, but that was what they ate every day ... Gervaise had a mind to do something more distinguished; when Mme Putois mentioned a *blanquette de veau*, they looked round at one another and started to smile.' Later, they decide to prepare the *blanquette de veau* the day before because, as modern cooks also know, 'those dishes are better if reheated.' However, the characters know that only the basic stew is best done in advance; the sauce is to be completed at the last minute. Presumably the garnishes of pearl onion and of mushrooms that define the *à l'ancienne* version of the dish²⁰ are also completed at that time: Gervaise and her friends do not prepare a dish of this sort often but they are careful and particular, and the description of the cooking process suggests an art form. The dinner ends in chaos but Zola shows appreciation and respect for the dish.

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In his 1903 novel *Histoire comique*, Anatole France has a character remark that the *fond*, or thickened broth of *cassoulet*, the decidedly regional southwestern bean and meat dish that many would have viewed at the time as heavy and vulgar, had a depth and savour that reminded him of treasured Venetian Renaissance paintings.²¹ In a more matter-of-fact way, the enormously popular mystery writer, Georges Simenon, had his main character Inspector Maigret, in 75 different novels, take frequent pleasure in the anticipation of the unapologetically *cuisine bourgeoise* dishes his wife would be making. Every evening, while hanging up his hat, Inspector Maigret would use his skills at ratiocination to work out what dish would be served: perhaps a *blanquette de veau*? Inspector Maigret's culinary ruminations are frequent, evocative and brief, showing deep respect for the simple, traditional dishes he ate at home and simple bistros. *Le Monde* food critic Robert Courtine, a champion of French traditional and regional dishes²² wrote a popular cookbook to bring to life Inspector Maigret's brief but endearing ruminations.²³

This literary imagination was not just presented in fiction. The non-fiction gastronomic writers of the period also had a different approach from their predecessors. Édouard Nignon, a restaurateur with a great gift for evocative writing, a favorite of intellectual modern French

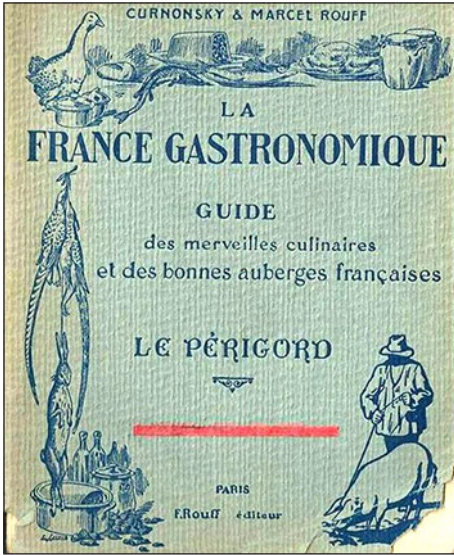


FIGURE 4. One of the many pamphlets by Curnonsky and Rouff that were compiled to create *La France Gastronomique*, showing a truffle-hunting pig, some game, some wine (perhaps from Cahors) and a goose.

chefs including Michel Guérard and Yves Camdeborde, wrote evocative, detailed literary descriptions of food from 1919 to 1933 with an inspiring delicacy and finesse very different from the curt, instructional directions of Escoffier and others.²⁴ The southwestern chef Prosper Montagné presented a vivid portrait of southwestern food in his 1928 book, *Le festin Occitan*, and his description of *cassoulet* and, especially, his description of three styles of the dish and his anointing Castelnauary, Carcassone and Toulouse as the ‘holy trinity of cassoulet’ were so memorable that it is quoted or paraphrased in essentially everything written about the dish even today.²⁵ This happened five years before Michelin began urging its readers to take detours or make special trips. A decade later, Montagné’s *Larousse Gastronomique*, the first edition of the first great culinary encyclopedia published

since Dumas’s, gloriously celebrated a wide range of regional and simpler cooking.

The greatest influence on the popular view of these *cuisine bourgeoise* and regional dishes was undoubtedly a successful novelist-for-hire who abandoned his craft as a novelist but used his literary skills to promote the regional cuisine of France. This was Maurice Edmond Sailland. He worked as a novelist for hire for the famous publisher Willy, the first husband of the writer Colette, who kept her locked up while she ghostwrote his books. Sailland and Colette were the main writers in the Willy *atelier*; Sailland wrote several best sellers for Willy under the name *Perdiccus*. In 1908 he went to work writing copy for Michelin under a new pseudonym he claimed to have invented, *Bibendum* (‘now it is to be drunk’), before Michelin applied the name to the Michelin man, the gourmand made of Michelin tires.²⁶

Monsieur Sailland did not stay long with Michelin, though, but adopted a final pseudonym *Curnonsky*, an exotic made-up name in a false Russian style beginning with two syllables in Latin: Cur Non. Sort of *Pourquoi Pas?* Or WhyNotSky? This actually fit with the nineteenth century tendency in France to equate countries representing eastern exoticism, including Russia, with the heights of gastronomy, instead of the existing, vibrant French regional cuisine that was unknown to many elites. There is some irony in his having

adopted this Russian-inspired name and under that name becoming the leading champion of French regional cuisine. This third pseudonym lasted him the rest of his life.

Between 1921 and 1930, Curnonsky, with his friend Marcel Rouff, wrote a series of 32 tremendously influential pamphlets about French regional cooking (See Figure 4.), 28 of which were later compiled as *La France gastronomique*,²⁷ the first of his many influential books. These were all published by Rouff's relatives at their influential family publishing houses. Curnonsky, a colorful and mysterious man, later became well-known as the 'elected Prince of Gastronomes'. Curnonsky's writing conveys genuine enthusiasm with a flair for the dramatic that also involved self-promotion and an early sense of public relations. When he wrote about a regional dish, like *bouillabaisse*, that may not have been well known outside its region, he had a knack for descriptions that people would remember and could influence their perception of what they ate, such as:

Bouillabaisse, this golden soup, this incomparable golden soup which embodies and concentrates all the aromas of our shores and which permeates, like an ecstasy, the stomachs of astonished gastronomes... and the miracle consists of this: there are as many bouillabaisses as there are good chefs or cordon bleus. Each brings to his own version his special touch.

His writing, at that time, focused on the essence and the excitement of the dishes, not on the restaurants and particularly not on the selection of the best restaurants, although he knew where to eat and where to do his research. He wanted to establish an inventory of the regional treasures of gastronomic France, many of which were little known outside their region. While Michelin told where to go, and began to rate restaurants in a hierarchy, Curnonsky explained unfamiliar dishes with a literary flair that led readers to greater appreciation.

Curnonsky was a showman, very easily identifiable in restaurants in his later years, where customers asked him to sign their menus. He admired the food aphorisms that had helped lead people to remember Brillat-Savarin's writing a century before, and Curnonsky's aphorisms helped people remember him, with enigmatic sayings such as "Cuisine is when things taste of themselves".

Sometimes tongue in cheek, he even popularized his own myths, claiming, for example, that it was often said that angels carried the first *bouillabaisse* from heaven to nourish shipwrecked saints. Julia Child was enraged (her word) by Curnonsky in his old age perpetuating a myth (one he may have created) about *beurre blanc*, a regional sauce associated with the Loire, 'how it was a mystery, and only a few people could do it, and how it could only be made with white shallots from Lorraine and over a *wood fire*.'²⁸

Marcel Rouff also wrote France's most celebrated gastronomic novel, *La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant* published privately in 1920 and then expanded and published for a wider audience in 1924.²⁹ Its most famous chapter describes the dish that Dodin-Bouffant has

prepared as the centerpiece of a dinner designed to dazzle his gastronomic rival, the Prince of Eurasia, who had recently hosted Dodin-Bouffant with a lengthy, extravagant display of *haute cuisine*. As a contrast and a lesson in simplicity, Dodin-Bouffant prepares a *pot-au-feu*, merely ‘accompanied by its vegetables’. His ‘fearsome boiled beef, scorned, reviled, insulting to the Prince and to all gastronomy’ turns out to be a triumph, ‘carved into slices of... mouth-melting texture ...aroma...of beef like incense with the energetic smell of tarragon.’ The Prince cheerfully admits his elaborate cuisine has been bested by a ‘humble dish’: ‘a profound psychologist, Dodin had calculated’ the effects of perfect purity and simplicity.

Rouff thus encouraged a change in perception of *pot-au-feu* from that of a meager dish for the downtrodden into something middle-class gourmands would actively seek out and appreciate for its being, as some began to say, ‘at the same time rude and refined.’ It could be said that Dodin-Bouffant cheated – this was not a peasant’s boiled beef but was enhanced with specially bred chickens, foie gras and sausages – but Rouff’s emphasis in describing the pleasure of the dish is not on those enhancements so much as the simple but profound aromas and tastes, the careful use of herbs, the delicacy of the cooking of the vegetables ‘lightly warmed in butter’, all together creating a ‘quadruple enchantment’ for each guest ‘to extract...as his share.’³⁰ Dodin-Bouffant did transform the dish by the addition of more luxurious ingredients, but he retained the basic structure of the dish and, most important, had a keen appreciation of its intrinsic taste and goodness.

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Conclusion

Changes in gastronomic taste involve many factors, including the desire to pursue novel pleasures, snobbery, the sense of pride in or curiosity about a region or a country, and the sense of pleasure in (as Brillat-Savarin noted) the discovery of a new dish – even when the dish is only new to the person trying it for the first time.³¹

There was plenty of luxury available in Paris so travelling for food was motivated by a different sort of attraction: what was worth driving for? (It was only later that Michelin stars became such a sign of luxury.) I suggest that the fiction writers I have mentioned inadvertently influenced taste and behavior, and that the non-fiction writers were successful in popularizing their views. This is a hypothesis, not a comprehensive examination of French literature and gastronomic writing, but Maupassant, Daudet, Zola, France, Simenon, Nignon, Montagné, Curnonsky, Rouff and others appear to have imparted to their readers both the information and the evocative literary prose that could lead *gastronomades* to embark on a quest.

The simple can become exotic and exciting. Evocative literary depiction can transform how people think about a dish even as the dish remains the same. These writers helped create a thirst for what others considered the mundane. And sometimes their new appreciation of an old dish itself has led to improvements or refinements of the dish. It is not a coincidence

that in 1965 one of the greatest and most poetic of culinary innovators, Michel Guérard, modestly named his first restaurant *le Pot-au-Feu*, indirectly drawing meaning from these literary themes and modern changes in taste, which set him on a path both to celebrate traditional dishes but also to flights of culinary imagination in creating many new dishes in the same spirit.³²

Notes

1. Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du gout* (Paris: A. Sauterlet, 1825).
2. See, for example, Pascal Ory, *Le discours gastronomique français des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Archives Gallimard Julliard 1998) pp. 113-142.
3. The green guides, for sight-seeing, came later.
4. Jean-François Mesplède, *Trois étoiles au Michelin: Une histoire de la haute gastronomie française* (Paris: Éditions Gründ 1998) 9-13.
5. Changed in 1956 to ‘une bonne table dans sa catégorie.’
6. These categories have been discussed since the beginning of gastronomic criticism in France, often thought to have begun with Grimod de la Reynière. A recent compilation of some of his work is *l’Almanach des gourmands, servant de guide dans les moyens de faire excellent chère* (Paris: Menu Fretin 2012), covering his writings from 1803-1812. Some recent examples are Alain Drouard, *Le mythe gastronomique français* (Paris: CNRS éditions 2010) and the essays included in Francis Chevrier and Laïc Bienassis, *Le repas gastronomique des Français* (Paris: Gallimard 2015). Much categorization of French cuisine has been covered in the many editions of the *Larousse Gastronomique*, beginning with the first edition of Prosper Montagné in 1938 through the most recent revision in 2017. The outstanding *Atlas Gastronomique de la France* created by Jean-Robert Pitte presents the regional dishes of France in detailed maps, along with the scholarly descriptions and historical analysis for which he is known. (Paris: Armand Colin 2017).
7. See the wonderful short book by Jean-Louis Flandrin, *La blanquette de veau: Histoire d’un plat bourgeois* (Paris: Jean-Paul Rocher 2000) and Julia Csergo et al., *Pot-au-feu, convivial, familial: histoires d’un myth* (Paris: Éditions Autrement 1999). The importance of these dishes, and the myths surrounding them, became important subjects for historians in the late twentieth century. See also the discussion of perhaps the third most recognized cuisine bourgeoise dish, *poule au pot* (boiled chicken), by Julia Csergo, ‘Entre mythe et utopie: la poule au pot,’ in *Pot-au-feu*. The chef Alain Ducasse considers *poule au pot* to be, historically and conceptually, a type of *pot-au-feu*. Alain Ducasse, *Dictionnaire amoureux de la cuisine* (Paris: Plon 2003) pp. 406-410. This makes sense when you consider related dishes such as the Austrian *tafelspitz*, which was called *pot-au-feu* at the Imperial Austrian court, and Italian *bollito misto*, which by definition includes multiple meats.
8. Julia Csergo, ‘L’emergence des cuisines regionales,’ in Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (eds.), *Histoire de l’alimentation* (Paris: Fayard 1996) pp. 823-841.
9. Philippe Meyzie surveys 18th and nineteenth century travelers’ accounts in *La Table du Sud-Ouest et l’emergence des cuisines régionales (1700-1850)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes 2007) p. 357 et seq.
10. Alexandre Dumas, *Le Comte de Monte Cristo*, <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/17989> (1844). In a sequel, though, one of the musketeers becomes, after long service in Paris, a gastronome able to charm Louis XIV with his food stories. Alexandre Dumas, *Vingt ans après*, <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/13952> (1845).
11. Dumas, *Le Comte de Monte Cristo*, Chapters 63-64
12. Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, Part 1, Chapter 8.
13. Part 2, Chapter 6.

14. Originally published as ‘La Bécasse’, 5 December 1882 in *Le Gaulois* and later compiled as *Contes de la Bécasse*. <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/11714>. Accessible in English translation at <https://madsimonj.wordpress.com/2014/09/29/guy-de-maupassant-the-woodcock/>
15. Brillat-Savarin. See Richard Warren Shepro, “‘Le mariage entre mets et vins’: On the Geographical and Historical Origins of Pairing a Food with a Particular Wine in France”, in Mark McWilliams (ed.), *Food and Landscape: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2017* (London: Prospect Books 2018) p. 353.
16. <?> ‘Les Émotions d’un perdreau rouge’ in *Les Contes du lundi*. (It should be remembered that hunting was not merely a sport). https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Les_Contes_du_lundi/Les_%C3%89motions_d%E2%80%99un_perdreau_rouge
17. ‘La Moisson au bord de la mer’ in *Les Contes du lundi*. https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Les_Contes_du_lundi/La_Moisson_au_bord_de_la_mer
18. ‘Paysages Gastronomique’ in *Les Contes du lundi*. https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Les_Contes_du_lundi/Paysages_gastronomiques
19. In Chapter 7, Émile Zola, *L’Assommoir* (1877). <https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/L%E2%80%99Assommoir>. The title is word for a type of drinking establishment without a clear equivalent in English – translated recently by Robin Buss as *The Drinking Den* (London: Penguin Random House UK 2000).
20. Flandrin, *La blanquette de veau*, pp. 28-30.
21. https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:Anatole_France_-_Histoire_comique.djvu/236
22. Robert J. Courtine, writing as La Reynière, *Cent merveilles de la cuisine française* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1971).
23. Robert J. Courtine, *Simenon et Maigret passent à table: Les plaisirs gourmands de Simenon & les bonnes recettes de Madame Maigret* (Paris: Robert Laffont 1972).
24. See Edouard Nignon, *Les Plaisirs de la Table* (1926, reprinted Paris: Menu Fretin 2016) and, especially, *Éloges de la Cuisine Française* (1933, reprinted Paris: Menu Fretin 2014).
25. To the consternation of inhabitants of certain other towns in the region with equally long traditions. Evocative writing about food can also be myth-making.
26. Curnonsky, *Souvenirs littéraires et gastronomique* (Paris: Albin Michel 1958).
27. Sailland, Maurice Edmond. *La France gastronomique: Curnonsky & Marcel Rouff. Guide des merveilles culinaires et des bonnes auberges françaises*. (France: F. Rouff, 1925).
28. Julia Child, *As Always, Julia: The Letters of Julia Child and Avis DeVoto*, quoted by Bill Buford in *Dirt* (New York: Knopf 2020) p. 353.
29. Marcel Rouff, *La vie et la passion de Dodin-Bouffant* (Paris: Stock 1924).
30. Chapter 4, ‘Dodin-Bouffant, pot-au-feu, his Royal Highness.’ Translation largely from ‘Claude,’ published in 1961 and reprinted in Marcel Rouff, *The Passionate Epicure* (New York: The Modern Library 2002).
31. The great French work of sociology about judgements of taste addresses all these issues, often in terms of choices about food, but does not address gastrotourism. Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit 1979).
32. See Michel Guérard, “Le petit prince” in *Mémoires de chefs* (Paris: Textuel 2012) pp. 86-119 and Michel Guérard, *Mémoire de la Cuisine Française* (Albin Michel 2020).

Food Looks like a Lady: Designing Gastronomy through Ritualized Seduction

Max Shrem

ABSTRACT: Cultural historians today are increasingly interested in the link between food and art. This subject matter has become particularly relevant after UNESCO exalted the ‘gastronomic meal of the French’ as an ‘intangible cultural heritage of humanity’ (2010). As one of the first historical figures who drew this connection, France’s first restaurant critic Grimod de La Reynière revealed the principal ways in which eating was initially aestheticized. This paper examines a passage from the second volume (1805) of his *Almanach des Gourmands* (1803-1812), scandalously entitled, ‘Advantages of Good Food over Women,’ and analyses the following: (1) the extent to which France’s first culinary maps were conceived as idealized projections of femininity and (2) the conception of terroir through the Demetrian symbolism of ‘nature mothers’. Exploring eighteenth-century libertine discourse as the missing link between images of the gourmand-glutton and the gourmand-aesthete, this study uncovers the language of seduction inherent in the conceptualizing of cuisine as fine art.

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Early nineteenth-century French food writers as varied as Brillat-Savarin, Charles Fourier, and Grimod de La Reynière legitimized gastronomy as a field of knowledge through a highly gendered eighteenth-century aesthetics of pleasure. Dissociating appetite and lust from consumption, these writers repositioned food as an object of intellectual scrutiny. Though they championed Republican ideals of brotherly love and though they promoted Enlightenment philosophies on the pursuit of happiness, they operated within an ideological framework grounded in libertine strategies of sensual mastery prioritizing ritual over reason and artifice over nature. The eight volumes of Grimod de La Reynière’s *Almanach des Gourmands* (1803-1812) not only comprise the earliest restaurant reviews in France, but also the first attempts at conceptualizing eating as an artform.

This paper analyses a passage from the second volume (1805) scandalously entitled, ‘Advantages of Good Food over Women,’ in which a ‘true gourmand’ claims that culinary dishes from France are superior to the attributes of the country’s most beautiful women. Grimod’s treatment of dishes as eroticized body parts paradoxically re-positions *gourmandise* as a scholarly topic to be cultivated. The ‘true gourmand’ projects an idealized image of femininity onto the French countryside advancing the culinary notion of terroir *avant la lettre*. This passage is therefore crucial in understanding the role that gender plays

in the development of France's first food maps. Analysing the linguistic overlap between women and food, I study the degree to which Grimod uses the language of seduction to (1) separate the gourmand from the act of gluttony, (2) link the cultural figure instead to refinement, and (3) depict the search for good food as virtuous.

Praising Gluttony by Pairing Comus with Venus

The commodification of culinary pleasure in postrevolutionary France reverted to a metaphysics of pleasure seen in eighteenth-century libertine literature. Nowhere is this more evident than in Grimod's parallel between women and food. Projecting an idealized eighteenth-century notion of femininity onto France's topography, Grimod describes the foods as geographical embellishments and decorative objects in a gustatory scenery. This passage suggests that the country is the ultimate lady seductress. The diners are completely omitted from the gourmand's discourse, and he depicts instead the landscape of France as a referential organism that must be mastered and worshipped. The parallel between good food and women alters the signifiers so as to divert the reader away from the association between foods and the table, place of consumption, and instead toward victuals and their place of origin. Borrowing from Jean Baudrillard's study on seduction as a strategy and ritual, this paper analyses the extent to which Grimod designed France's first culinary maps, and even the notion of *terroir*, as a food iconography in accordance with libertine thought.

474 Nineteenth-century eulogies to culinary revelry often coincide with hymns of praise to love. In Charles-Louis Mion's ballet héroïque *L'année galante* (1747) and Mondonville's opéra-ballet *Les fêtes de Paphos* (1758), Comus, the god of festivity, shares the spotlight with Venus, the god of love. Grimod's monthly gastronomic journal, launched in 1806 with the members of the Parisian dining society the Dîners du Vaudeville, is therefore fittingly entitled the *Journal des gourmands et des belles, ou, L'épicurien français*. Inspired by his *Almanach*, the journal includes culinary anecdotes, advice, correspondences, recipes, poetry, and songs, most of which Grimod refers to as 'gourmand literature'. However, unlike the *Almanach*, it reads like a songbook; for instance, the first three editions of 1807 contain well over 50 songs written by Vaudeville playwrights and well-known *chansonniers*, including Nicolas Brazier, Marc-Antoine-Madeleine Désaugiers, François-Félix Nogaret, and Armand Gouffé. Whether it's their praises of bacchanalian feasts or the mere attributes of an apple ('Eve's gift to mankind'), they oscillate between homages to women and food.¹ And yet, what makes them stand out from typical odes to festivity (*carpe diem*), from those of previous time periods, is not the synchronicity of both forms of pleasure, but the synthesis of Comus and Venus, the fusion of femininity and food.

The writers of this food journal put forth a gastronomic goddess, preceding the culinary mother goddess *Gastérea* from Brillat-Savarin's *Physiology of Taste* (1825). In the January 1807 publication, Gastermann (likely a pseudonym for Grimod who did not want his

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Almanach to be confused with the journal) starts off with a portrayal of *gourmandise* as a lifetime companion, comforting man in his old age and perpetually keeping his spirits high:

Love lasts but an instant, glory is but a flash, the reason for a useless annoyance; but Gluttony remains the faithful companion of old age; supplement of extinct pleasures, comfort of the weakened spirit, relief of the sagging soul, it consoles memories of youth, compensates for the whims of fortune, maintains illusions, and still procures friends by the virtue of a good spread.²

This personification of *gourmandise* does not remove the sinful component from gluttony; rather, it reverses the terms to establish the gastronomic event as a virtuous affair. Though the contributors of the journal do not go as far as Grimod in explicitly appraising food over women, they feminize food by associating it with amorous devotion. They also ritualize *gourmandise* by situating it within ceremonial acts and performances; be it feast days, carnival, or fraternal engagements. According to Baudrillard, the feminine poses a challenge to the established order not by outright objecting it, but instead by shifting its symbols (language) in the opposite direction of their semantic intent: ‘Seduction is this reversible form [...] an ironic, alternative form, one that breaks the referentiality of sex and provides a space, not of desire, but of play.’³ Conceptualizing food as a refined lady censures the ‘animalic character’ of the glutton thereby civilizing the palate.

Grimod’s passage ‘Advantages of Good Food over Women’ does not subvert the meaning of the signs for women and good food. In fact, as the title suggests, it only intensifies their objectification as consumable entities. The parallel however alters the signifiers so as to divert the reader away from the association between foods and the table, place of consumption, and instead toward dishes and their place of origin. We thus find the gourmand on an impressive roadmap of national gastronomic treasures, instead of being confined to the dining room. Grimod’s analogy of good food and women is told through an anecdote, in the words of a ‘famous gourmand,’ also referred to as a ‘true gourmand’. At a dinner, this character poses a long list of rhetorical questions asking whether the beauty of a *femme de lettres* (Mme Récamier) and three renowned actresses (Mlle Georges Weimer, Mme Henry Belmont, Mlle Emilie Contat), all celebrated for their beauty, could be worth as much as France’s finest foods:

Could a woman, as pretty as you suppose her, had she Madame Récamier’s head, Mademoiselle Georges Weimer’s demeanour, Madame Henry Belmont’s enchanting graces, Mademoiselle Emilie Contat’s splendour and appetizing plumpness, Mademoiselle Arsène’s mouth and smile be worth these admirable partridges from Cahors, Languedoc and Cévennes, whose divine aroma prevails over all the perfumes of Arabia?⁴

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At first glance, it seems as though the 'true gourmand' is personifying the partridges through their association with women. A cursory read of this passage shows Grimod degrading women by reducing them to physical traits and by suggesting that they are inferior to meats – pâtés, sausages, and poultry. Yet, the four pages of questions following this initial one prove that the hierarchy of pleasure – appetite over lust – is not actually about choosing one over the other. Instead, the analogy equates the quest for good food to courtship. A deeper analysis therefore provides further insight as to the role worship plays in gastronomy's conception. The foods are all geographic indicators in the same way that the women's characteristics are personal adornments, accessories for the actress' spectacle. Whether it's the foie gras from Strasbourg and mortadella from Lyon or sausages from Arles and mutton from the salt marches of Brittany, these delicacies become decorative objects in a gustatory scenery of France.

The meats are analogous to the women's fragmented body parts in that they too are given a superficial description. The dishes are mentioned without any details about the following: (1) the experience eating them, (2) where to eat them, and (3) how they are prepared. Culinary consumption is strikingly absent. It's as if the 'true gourmand' were moving away from his table and opening up an atlas to reveal the correct geographic codes for the finest foods: 'Which city and/or province correspond to each delicacy?' Anything but a gluttonous *pays de cocagne*, the reverse side of *gourmandise* challenges the diner to know and then locate the researched dishes. As such, gastronomy develops into a structured ritual highlighting the semantic links between the French words 'saveur' (savour) and 'savoir' (knowledge). It's not just about educating the palate but also developing a mental appreciation. The gourmand turns down the seductive finery of women in favour of culinary specialties that have put cities like Strasbourg, Toulouse, and Auch on the map because they bring greater honour to civilization. In a sense there's a reciprocal worship at play. Man pays homage to nature through cuisine and those dishes in turn glorify man by creating a culinary heritage:

Would you put them [the aforementioned women] in parallel with these goose pâtés of goose or duck livers, to which the cities of Strasbourg, Toulouse and Auch owe the best part of their celebrity? What is it then compared to these tongues stuffed from Troyes, these mortadella from Lyon, this Italian cheese from Paris, and these sausages from Arles and Bologna, which have brought so much glory to the person from the pig? Can you put a pretty little face next to these admirable sheep from Cabourg, Vosges and the Ardennes, which, by melting in your mouth, become a delectable meal?⁵

When speaking of this gastronomic delineation of landscape, it's important not to confuse the contrast of nature and artifice with contemporary food discourse on organic and commercial. Here we are dealing with the former. The very notion of *terroir* (site

specificity) indicates the redesigning of mother earth (*la terre*), crafting at once a consumable and organic view of nature. Although these pâtés, sausages, and mortadellas originate from precise animals in certain regions and then are crafted by charcutiers in specific cities, they do not exist without human intervention. Moreover, in the case of Grimod, these foods are consumed in cosmopolitan Paris entirely removed from their natural origin. Their overwhelming appeal however can be attributed to their simulation of nature allowing consumers to tap into a gastronomic imaginary of France.

Dressing up Topography in Specialty Foods

In his study of pre-Revolutionary seduction, Baudrillard sets up a binary paradigm desire/seduction that allows cultural scholars to make sense of the dialectic of artifice and femininity that are at the core of culinary aesthetics. Baudrillard defines the feminine as a metaphysical force that thwarts and challenges natural desire by converting it into ceremonial artifice and fantasy. In his words: ‘There is above all, a strategy of displacement (*se-ducere*: to take aside, to divert from one’s path) that implies a distortion of sex’s truth. To play is not to take pleasure.’⁶ Baudrillard contrasts seduction with desire by placing the former in the order of ritual and the latter in that of nature. Furthermore, he argues that what clashes in the feminine and the masculine is not some biological difference but rather these two orders. Operating from this level, gastronomy seduces the signs of *gourmandise* by transforming food into objects of knowledge that divert away from physical appetite and move toward the imaginary. Gluttony is to sex (function, making real, giving meaning) just as gastronomy is to seduction (strategy, making artificial, effacing meaning). Unlike the glutton, the gourmand creates aesthetic systems in which to play with and control the symbolic realm of cuisine. In this case the opposition between the glutton and gourmand could be conceptualized through Baudrillard’s contrast between masculine desire and feminine seduction.

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Grimod’s ‘Advantages of Good Food over Women’ is subversive because it rejects the notion of consumption as an end in itself (*jouissance comme fin*). Grimod envelops the democratization of the gastronomic sphere within libertine strategies of sensual mastery luring in his readers, newly enriched citizens of the First Republic and Empire. That is, he plays into their desires to consume culture and increase social rank by evoking a fantasy that eclipses social appetite – an image of France submerged in an overflow of delicacies. Bewitching his audience with a seemingly endless geographic catalogue of provisions, the *Almanach* guides the reader through a labyrinth of gastronomic acts, and not up a social ladder. In the preface of the first volume, Grimod condescendingly superimposes an historical opposition between himself and his audience, suggesting that the power shift between the Ancien Regime and the Republic represents a movement toward ‘purely animal pleasures,’ or what Baudrillard refers to as ‘the work of the body by desire.’⁷ Grimod

teases the nouveaux-riches' emphasis on capital and desire all the while creating a nostalgia for ritual, what he refers to as the old regime's 'most tender affections'.⁸

To make sense of Grimod's use of eighteenth-century seduction, I turn to Margot, the protagonist from Fougeret de Montbron's libertine novel *Margot la Ravaudeuse Par M. **** (1750). As a courtesan, the character learns how to transform her body into a 'proud device,' an object of display embellished with pomades and rouge, surrounded by sumptuous objects like watches, snuff boxes, and crystal bottles.⁹ Her control over the male gaze and power over men's pockets lie in her abilities to play with the signs of her own objectification. In fact, when she falls ill, her doctor attributes her sickness to a lack of self-discipline, and an overstimulation of the senses, 'the abuse of a too delicious life':

Your disease, which they knew nothing about, is not an affection of the body, but a disgust of the spirit, caused by the abuse of a too delicious life. Pleasures are to the soul, what good food is to the stomach. The most exquisite dishes become tasteless to us out of habit: they put us off in the end, and we no longer digest them. The excess of enjoyment has, so to speak, disenchanted your heart, and numbed your feeling.¹⁰

The doctor's medical advice is indicative of the eighteenth-century ontological association between sensuality and the soul. Margot's supremacy, and therefore her sickness, is not one of the body but instead of the spirit. The body is simply a tool with which to enchant and alter the emotions of men around her. The analogy between 'pleasure' and 'good food' emphasizes this conception of the refinement of pleasure as nourishment for the soul; hence, the libertine importance on ritualistic strategy. Grimod's passage 'Advantages of Good Food over Women' reconfigures the above analogy so as to reverse the connection between 'good food' and the 'stomach'. In Grimod's parallel between women and food, the latter enters this discourse on body as object of ritual rather than object of desire. *Gourmandise* is no longer characterized by an 'affection of the body' but rather by the old regime's 'most tender affections'.

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Admission to this culinary fantasy comes with a caveat: the sacrifice of *lady seductress*. The culinary remapping of France reflects the idealization of a country that naturally gives herself up for consumption. In the sixth volume of his *Almanach*, Grimod includes a drinking song entitled 'Dinners without women' in which he writes, 'Sweeter goods charm our souls, / Since on this solemn day / Fate unites us without women, / Around a fraternal banquet.'¹¹ As is often the case with fictional characters, Grimod uses his 'true gourmand,' like his 'gourmand poetry,' to express provocative and even blasphemous insinuations daring the reader to replace the lady's splendour with the finery of table. The gourmand's questions show that it's not about fundamentally eliminating women from the table, but rather displacing their enchanting authority. After all, he states that they too are subject to food's transformative powers:

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Who will dare compare them to those unspeakable river calves, from Pontoise and Rouen, whose whiteness and tenderness would make the Graces themselves blush? Who is the gourmand deprived enough to prefer a thin and puny beauty to these enormous and succulent sirloins of Limagne and Cotentin which inundate the one who cuts them up and make those who eat them swoon?¹²

The questions reveal gastronomy's celebratory appropriation of the corporal lexicon that is associated with seduction. The swap of signifiers 'women' for 'good food' gives this absurdly lengthy build-up of food sites a Rabelaisian sense of revelry and intoxication. This passage which Grimod aptly names 'Gourmand Folly' recalls Rabelais's onomastic word plays, from the list of young Gargantua's habits to the catalogue of chefs' names in the *Fourth Book*.

Rabelais often dilutes the importance of the signified with an abundance of phonemes – combination and repetition of suffixes and prefixes – creating what François Rigolot calls an 'auditory image'.¹³ The words' sonority eclipses their distinct meaning. Similarly, Grimod's reconfiguration of the signifiers, women and good food, creates an image of France that defies the reason and scientific order associated with the very idea of topography. Unlike the Michelin atlas, the first culinary maps drawn up of nineteenth-century France are reflective of Grimod's romanticized terroir. Indeed, the use of language is replaced with visual symbols. For instance, in , illustrations of a wild turkey and roasted duck are located between the cities Périgueux and Brive-la-Gaillarde.¹⁴ (See Figure 1.) Only the names of the cities are mentioned to help the viewer navigate from one culinary region to the next. Even its mid-nineteenth-century descendant the *Carte des productions gastronomiques de la France avec ses chemins de fer* (1850), is covered with images of wine barrels, fruit baskets, cows grazing, and rabbits frolicking. (See Figure 2.) These maps appeared in pedagogical travel guides, and as such, Julia Csergo links them to Grimod's monumentalizing of culinary specialties and promulgating of gastronomic nationalism.¹⁵ I would go a step further and argue that the use of symbols, over words, suggests an even deeper link with Grimod: the worship, cult, of terroir by means of a food iconography.

The early nineteenth-century fixation and endorsement of geographic culinary markers indicates an evolving ritualistic nationalism around food. A cursory glance at the history of this process can give it an allusion of being scientific, objective, and factual. Yet, Grimod's 'true gourmand' reveals that the topographical edifice of 'researched dishes' is built upon enchantment, one that he claims invigorates the body physically and emotionally. If he uses medical terminology (this is a typical feature of nineteenth-century gastronomic language), it often reverts to a ritualistic veneration of food, reinforcing its feminization. For instance, in this same passage, the 'true gourmand' highlights the effects of poultry upon the nervous fibres only to suggest its seductive dominance over women:



FIGURE 1. Charles-Louis Cadet de Gassicourt's *Carte gastronomique de la France* (1809)

What connection can you establish between this prickly, but tired face, and these hens from Bresse, these capons from La Fleche and Le Mans, these virgin roosters from the Pays de Caux, whose slenderness, beauty, succulence, and plumpness exalt all the senses at the same time and wonderfully delight the nervous and sensitive crest of any delicate palate?¹⁶

As we have already seen, the nouns used to characterize the foods from those exact locations ('slenderness,' 'beauty,' 'succulence,' and 'plumpness') and their special effects ('exalt' and 'delight') reflect those used to describe an attractive woman. Grimod's unusual humour however, in this sentence, lies precisely in accomplishing the inverse. That is, the woman is described with adjectives that can also apply to food – 'piquante,' translated here as prickly, can also mean spicy and 'chiffonnée,' translated as 'tired,' can mean 'crunchy'. Though he claims that the eighty-four foods are incomparable to women, his entire list is structured by this relentless 'nutritious parallel'. They are neither categorized by geography nor alphabetically. And though he refers to the parallel as 'nutritious,' there is never any mention of food as sustenance.

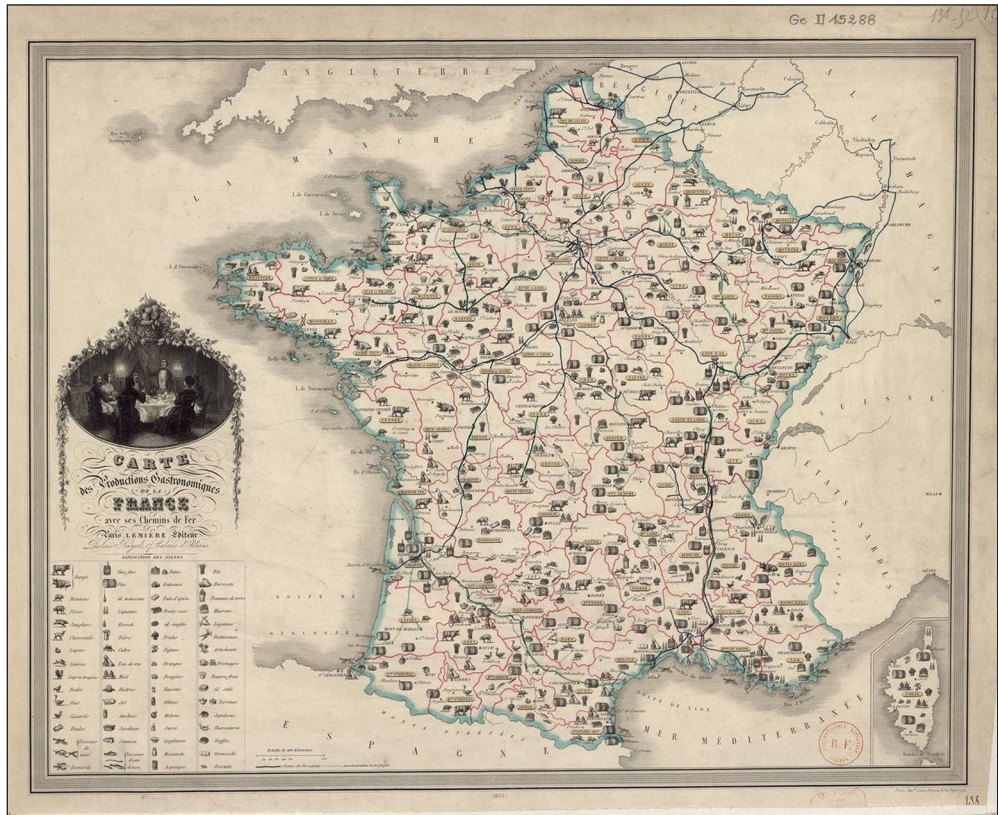


FIGURE 2. *Carte des productions gastronomiques de la France avec ses chemins de fer* (1850)

Seeking Mother Gastronomy

Grimod inaugurates a gastronomic world not only structured around seduction but also defined by an archetypal feminine virtue, reflective of eighteenth-century views on women. Grimod's idealized woman projected onto France's finest foods represents Jung's notion of 'mother-love'. Jung defines this archetype as 'the mysterious root of all growth and change; the love that means homecoming, shelter, and the long silence from which everything begins and in which everything ends'.¹⁷ As far as eighteenth-century philosophy is concerned, this archetypal phenomenon is hardly unique to Grimod's writings. Indeed, Enlightenment philosophers were fascinated by the maternal woman; from Joseph Desmahis's esteem for motherhood in his entry 'femme,' in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, and Rousseau's endorsement of maternity (breastfeeding) in *Émile* (1762) to lesser-known depictions of woman-nurturer, like those in Restif's *La Découverte australe Par un Homme-volant* (1781). In his *Réflexions philosophiques sur le plaisir*, Grimod praises the upbringing of women in Protestant countries, like Switzerland, where young girls are *not* brought up hidden from society in convents. Using the verbs 'enclose' and 'cloister' and advocating for a more liberal child rearing, he

evokes Diderot's critique of convents in *La Religieuse* (1796).¹⁸ Most importantly, Grimod argues that it's precisely this freedom during childhood that maintains a more innocent and virtuous happiness, one that produces a maternal wife and mother.

Rather than connote confinement and gender oppression, domesticity was venerated as the source – microcosm – of Enlightenment ideals. Assigning feminine authority to the household was, for Grimod, perceived as placing women on a pedestal of virtue. He states that in contrast to their French counterparts, these protestant women use their seductive authority exclusively on the domestic sphere, embodying a perpetual dispenser of nourishment and exemplifying the womb of life:

Happy Land, where innocence is the safeguard of morals, where beauty becomes a pledge of virtue, and where even coquetry never departs from decency! [...] A sedentary life devoted to domestic care makes her forget that there are other pleasures. She puts her happiness into making all that surrounds her happy; and convinced that, in her new state [as wife], one would no longer have the same indulgence for her, she observes herself with particular care, and becomes all the more circumspect, since she had been dissipated in her young age.¹⁹

482 When Grimod refers to the 'other pleasures,' those which the domesticated woman forgets, he is indicating the vices of aristocratic women who he perceives as corrupting society. It's as though the cult of domesticity creates an enlightened *feminine* dictatorship, a sophisticated form of seduction that mirrors Desmahis's utopian view of maternal intimacy. Desmahis's article on women states, 'She has a character of reserve and dignity which makes her respected, indulgence and sensitivity which makes her loved, prudence and firmness which makes her feared; she spreads around her a gentle warmth, a pure light which illuminates and enlivens all that surrounds her.'²⁰ By employing a lexicon of noble sovereignty and by repetitively rendering the woman the direct object pronoun, Desmahis reveals femininity to be, at the core, a strategy of objectification and ritualization, a method of enticing devotion, and as a result, a scheme for controlling and dictating the symbolic realm. It is not about the contemporary gender duality of passivity and dominance. In this sense, Desmahis's ethos of feminine dominance in the domestic sphere confirms Baudrillard's theory on seduction during this period.

Gourmandise is like this maternal seductress, generating as Grimod puts it 'the face of jubilation, the distinctive character of all children of Comus'. This association is made even clearer in a section from the sixth volume of the *Almanach*, entitled 'Brunette Dinners and Blond Dinners'. He assigns starters to two distinct culinary categories: dark-coloured dishes and light-coloured dishes. The former corresponds to women with a dark complexion; they consist of ordinary lowbrow meals (rustic cooking) that are easy to make, such as meat

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stews, stewed apples, chopped vegetables, turnip ragout, and braised meat and vegetables. The latter correspond to women with a light complexion; they consist of delicate refined starters (*haute cuisine*), including béchamel sauces, quenelles, chicken fricassee, poulet à la reine, and sautés:

If, on the contrary, he sees that this first course presents a combination of these delicate and fine starters, the color of which is closer to white than any other [...] including the most sought-after fish, the most tender meats, and the most delicate parts of poultry, he will decide that it is a blond dinner, fruit of the work and the meditations of a first-class artist. It is almost the same with the complexion of women.²¹

By focusing on femininity and the realm of appearances, he reveals that *haute cuisine* involves a ritualistic quest for good food that is analogous to courtship. Like the seductress who initiates men into an ongoing game of devotional proofs, fine foods pose a challenge to the chef who displays dedication by transforming them into sophisticated dishes. Grimod uses this analogy more to highlight the attributes of *haute cuisine*, rather than to literally guide his readers away from dark-coloured dishes.

The connection between ethics and aesthetics calls to mind Desmahis's discourse on domesticity, most noticeably the lexicon of nobility and reference to a 'pure feminine light'. The passage puts forth two culinary categories: the sinful 'brunette dinners' and virtuous 'blond dinners':

With a few exceptions, the colour blonde heralds a distinguished birth, a delicate mind, soft, thin skin, the kind of attraction that lovers treasure most, because it is as sensitive in the dark as it is in light: it is usually the sign of gentleness and all the qualities that please the most in this sex. A blonde seems to be humbly asking for your heart and a brunette seeks to grab it from you. However, we always prefer to receive prayers than orders.²²

The 'blond dinners' captivate, because they exude 'mother-love'. Grimod compares them to an ethereal angelic woman whose charms are even perceptible in darkness. The contrast of 'brunette dinners' and 'blond dinners' is inscribed in the semantic contrast between the verbs 'to ask/beg for' and 'to grab,' between the nouns 'prayers' and 'orders'. And as such, it reflects the Baudrillardian opposition between masculinity (nature/instinct) and femininity (ritual/spirit). 'Brunette dinners' are rough and barbaric; they represent consumption as an end. In the seventh volume of the *Almanach*, Grimod goes as far as comparing the dining table to a virginal bride whom guests approach with admiration. His linguistic framework for gastronomy as idealized femininity is significant because it leads

to his rules of gastronomic courtship, rules concerning dining room finery, everything from the appropriate usage of crystal, porcelain, and cutlery to flowers, furniture, and lights.

Grimod's gendered metaphor of fine food as a seductress re-orientes the gourmand toward an interiorized space built on rituality, and as a result it undermines the culturally normative depiction of the gourmand as an overweight buffoon. By emphasizing the aesthetics of the table and by omitting (and at many points in the *Almanach*, condemning) human interaction, it moreover destabilizes the sociability and Christian virtue inherent in the symbolic gesture of breaking bread. The gourmand becomes instead an aesthete dining alone or sitting in his food library. The classical image of sensual pleasure as a Garden of Eden (*honesta voluptas*) is supplanted by a degenerative version of seventeenth-century *préciosité* in which wit and intellect are reserved entirely to the dishes. Not only are the foods treated as props in a performance, but so too are the consumers. Grimod's discourse on the feminine is transgressive precisely because it upends seduction between diners and manipulates the pomp and ceremony of Christian ritual to glorify one of the seven deadly sins. Outrageously ironic and incendiary, Grimod's delivery make him stand out from other food writers of his time. That being said, he is not at all an anomaly when it comes to projecting matriarchal symbolism onto the French nation in the context of gastronomy. Brillat-Savarin puts forth an entire cult around his imagined gastronomic muse *Gastérea*, reflective of Rousseau's notion of civil religion and evocative of France's lady liberty *Marianne*.

484 In his *Nouveau monde amoureux* (1816), Charles Fourier also uses religious discourse to create a utopian society that opposes all restraints to corporal desire (monogamy and gluttony). His gastronomic system however is organized in a way that prioritizes sociability over rituality. Structured by amorous associations, households are reassembled so that people only dine with those whom their heart desires. The dynamic between the gastronomic realm as the seducer and the diner as the seduced may have been explicitly articulated by Grimod, but, afterward, it was also evoked by women gourmands themselves, most notably Elizabeth Robins Pennell and M.F.K. Fisher. Pennell advises the *gourmande* to be swept away by the beauty of cuisine and then to use its magic on others: 'Rejoice in the knowledge that gluttony is the best cosmetic. [...] Let her [the *gourmande*] learn first for herself the rapture that lies dormant in food; let her next spread abroad the joyful tidings.'²³

Conclusion

Libertine discourse on seduction is still at the heart of culinary aesthetics, in particular contemporary restaurant culture. Somewhere between the utopia of eighteenth-century agrarian communities and that of nineteenth-century dining societies, the restaurant emerged as a place to mediate between nature and culture. Falling in love with terroir is falling in love with make-believe. By projecting their idea of culinary landscape on their cuisine, chefs contribute to the pastoral imaginary. This comes across most clearly with

regional Michelin starred chefs whose restaurants have become national monuments. Chefs, such as Régis Marcon and Michel Bras, have transformed remote previously unheard villages into food destinations. Soil science aside, terroir is a mutable concept. For consumers, the present-day appeal of Marcon's business model lies in its meticulous understanding of the utopian potential inherent in gastronomy; that is its capacity to reconstruct micro-political spheres. Terroir is the protagonist of Marcon's natural wonderland, in which he and his idyllic family forage wild herbs and mushrooms. It could be viewed, to some extent, as analogous to the fictional relationship between Jules Verne's Captain Nemo and the sea. This relationship between fiction and *terroir* originated with the portrayal of appetite as an object of seduction, the table as the site of veneration, and foods as nature's ornaments. As such, Grimod paved the way for the meal itself to be treated as a storyteller and a piece of performance art.

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Incredible Edibles: American History in Chocolate, Cheddar, and Confectionary Forms

Nancy Siegel

ABSTRACT: Giant oxen, George and Martha, paraded through the streets of Philadelphia. A mammoth cheddar cheese, a mammoth pye, mammoth beets for Thomas Jefferson! An 800-pound cake in the shape of the US Capitol, the 2600-pound “Great Washington Cake,” a fifteen-foot tall sugar monument depicting scenes from the American Revolution, a 1500-pound chocolate statue of Columbus, and massive Election Cakes. Masterpieces from America’s farmers, confectioners, bakers, butchers, and home cooks using their imagination to praise and celebrate America’s abundant resources, civic pride, and confidence in the democratic process. This paper explores the history of the Early American Republic through ingredients and foods that were consumed, celebrated, and at times, contested, thus, linking political and culinary histories. Whether America was celebrated in cheese or chocolate, the domestic language of food was easily understood as part of a widespread but little studied language of political expression.

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Giant oxen, George and Martha, paraded through the streets of Philadelphia. A mammoth cheddar cheese, a mammoth pye, mammoth beets for Thomas Jefferson! An 800-pound cake in the shape of the US Capitol, the 2600-pound “Great Washington Cake,” a fifteen-foot tall sugar monument depicting scenes from the American Revolution, a 1500-pound chocolate statue of Columbus, and massive Election Cakes made with thirty quarts of flour, ten pounds of butter, and a quart of brandy. Masterpieces from America’s farmers, confectioners, bakers, butchers, and home cooks using their imagination to praise and celebrate America’s abundant resources, civic pride, and confidence in the democratic process. These public displays, so fantastical in design and proportion while seemingly comedic and bordering on the absurd, actually provided a platform for promoting republican ideals and engraining them in the public consciousness more powerfully than presidential addresses or ratified documents ever could. Since most rural farmers, culinary professionals, and home cooks had little political influence or presence in the establishment of policy and reform, baking a cake in replication of the seat of democracy, or producing an historical diorama in sugar was not merely a flight of fancy rather, such incredible edibles acknowledged, defined, and celebrated nebulous ideas such as American identity and democracy in the years surrounding the Early Republic.¹

My research posits that culinary creations of astounding size or extravagant ingredients are more than merely humor-driven with their easily recognizable foodstuffs. Commonplace

ingredients imbued with ceremonial status contained calculated political messages targeting an audience deeply invested in America's commercial success. As evidenced in newspapers, broadsides, and widely disseminated engravings, the comestibles employed to celebrate America and its founding figures expose subtexts that read as political and economic markers of trade and commerce. Giving material form to public opinion, these creations could be both celebratory or at times coded with political dissent toward a given political party or administration. Bakers, cheesemakers, and confectioners of the Early American Republic fashioned wondrous, massive food sculptures to manifest political ideals while serving as edible exemplars of American culinary imagination. By examining the intentions behind such creations and isolating ingredients that speak directly to the formation of nationhood, themes of consumption and criticism are unpacked and repositioned within the framework of chocolate, cheddar, and confectionaries.

This paper is part of my current research project, *Political Appetites: Revolution, Taste, and Culinary Activism in the Early Republic* which explores the history of the Early American Republic through ingredients and foods that were consumed, celebrated, and at times, contested, thus, linking political and culinary histories. At feasts and fêtes, these edible barometers of national pride were eagerly consumed by presidents, politicians, and the general public alike. Whether America was celebrated in cheese or chocolate, the domestic language of food was easily understood as part of a widespread but little studied language of political expression. These imaginative creations became increasingly popular from the late eighteenth century on in America as a means to communicate caution or approval of political figures, ideologies, and comestibles. From the boycotts of contentious commodities such as tea, prior to the Revolution, to a post-war reappraisal of food and drink in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, many Americans witnessed a significant change in culinary patterns as professional and amateur cooks increasingly curated and promoted recipes that acknowledged and celebrated the new nation. The more outrageous and fantastical the better!

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For example, while boycotts of commodities and tea were plentiful in protest of the Stamp Act of 1765 and the Townshend Acts of 1767, so too were celebrations upon their repeal. Likewise, as tea was dumped into Boston's Harbor at the famed tea party of 1773, recipes were developed for Liberty Tea – a homebrewed alternative included in cookbooks well into the nineteenth century. And from protest to consumption post-revolution, butchers, bakers, and confectioners – those invested in feeding the new nation – engaged in displays of American culinary prowess. In the field of animal husbandry, cattle, oxen, and sheep became symbols of national pride as they made their appearance at numerous patriotic events. In celebration of the formation of the Constitution, a "Great Federal Procession" took place in New York, July 23, 1788. The butchers of the city processed carrying a linen flag displaying their coat of arms with the motto: "Skin me well, dress me neat, And send me aboard the Federal fleet," and the striking scene was described thusly:

A *slaughter-house*, with cattle dressed and killing; a *market*, supported by *ten pillars* [for the ten states that had joined the convention], and another ‘partly up’ [representing New York who would join – but not Rhode Island or North Carolina], under which was written, “*Federal Market*,” supported by “*Ten*,” in letters of gold; “*Federal Butchers*,” a ship, with smaller vessels. The standard was carried on a stage drawn by four bright bay horses, dressed with ribbons; a boy dressed in white rode and conducted each; on the stage a *stall*, neatly furnished; two butchers and two boys on the stage at work, splitting the lambs [post non-importation/homespun now], cutting meats, and arranging this stall. This stage was followed by one hundred butchers, (mounted on fine horses,) with clean white aprons, and steels attached to their sides [the uniform – steel versus sword]. Then came a band of music, followed with two banners appropriately painted, with their coat of arms and motto – “Federal Butchers.”²

John Lewis Krimmel’s 1821 *Parade of the Victuallers*, serves as a striking visual complement to this description linking American food and patriotism. Krimmel’s formal procession celebrates the agricultural suppliers of Philadelphia, not New York – farmers, butchers, oystermen. Surely not every cow was treated to such fanfare as the one pictured on its way to slaughter, but as the motto of the Society of Victuallers declares, “We Feed the Hungry,” the production of food and provisions for the American public was indeed worthy of a parade.

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Likewise, from the late eighteenth century through the early decades of the nineteenth, cookbook authors in America created and promoted recipes that acknowledged and celebrated the new nation linking food to politics utilizing a vocabulary of esoteric terms such as “independence” and “democracy.” These became political ideals that were not only understood, but quite literally consumed. With names such as Election Cake, Independence Cake, Democratic Tea Cakes, Federal Cake, and Liberty Tea, women, in particular, became culinary activists. They authored recipes and cookbooks in praise of the new and fragile nation. For example, a modest text from 1796, *American Cookery*, was published in Hartford, CT. Its author, Amelia Simmons, is credited with producing what is widely considered the first cookbook written in America. Simmons introduced a new “American” vocabulary of ingredients such as cornmeal for “American Indian pudding,” “Johny Cake, or Hoe Cake,” and dishes for “pompkin.”³ Curiously, in her chapter for cakes and sweet breads Simmons provided basic, nondescript recipes for treats such as “Plain Cake.” But, in a second 1796 edition from Albany, NY, she added strategically-titled recipes such as “Election Cake,” and “Independence Cake.” By and large, politically themed recipes are for celebratory foods. While recipes for Election Cake appear as early as 1771 in Connecticut,⁴ Simmons’s recipe calls for:

Thirty quarts flour, 10 pound butter, 14 pound sugar, 12 pound raisins, 3 dozen eggs, one pint wine, one quart brandy, 4 ounces cinnamon, 4 ounces fine colliander seed, and 3 ounces ground allspice.⁵

WOW!! The sheer volume of this ample-sized cake suggests that events such as Election Day were cause for communal celebration and eating.⁶ Of Puritan origin, Election days replaced religious holidays which were banned, and included public gatherings, parades, visiting friends, drinking, and mustering or training exercises when local militia met to train prior to the Revolution.⁷ Townswomen made these cakes to feed the militia or sold slices on election days at polling places. With its precedent as the English plumb cake, Election Cake is truly a cross between a cake and raisin bread. The sheer volume of the ingredients suggests that they were free form and baked, by necessity, on the floor of community ovens. However, as mention of enjoying election cake at home often appears in letters and diaries, I suggest that the batter was also separated into smaller cakes, and baked at home in numerous pans.

In addition to Election Cake, President's Cake, Federal Cake, Democratic Tea Cakes, Republican Cake, Independence Cake, Freedom Cake, and Liberty Bread, we find reference to important political figures in Franklin Buns, Washington Pie, Jefferson Cake, Lafayette
490 Gingerbread, Madison Cake, Adams Pie, Jackson Jumbles, Van Buren Cake, Harrison Cake, and Tyler Pudding, to name just a few. In fact, there are hundreds and hundreds of politically-inspired recipes from both published cookery books and in handwritten receipt books.⁸ But let's leave the realm of sweet treats momentarily to talk about cheese. In particular, a 1,235-pound mammoth cheese presented to Thomas Jefferson to celebrate his electoral victory.

In a letter dated July 28, 1801, a gentleman from Berkshire, Massachusetts wrote to his friend in Albany, New York, "I have nothing new or strange to tell you, excepting of a MAMMOTH CHEESE which the Cheshire people are making, to present to the *Mammoth of Monticello*. It is now in the press; it measures four feet in diameter and eighteen inches in depth. 'Tis said to weigh from 12 to 1400 pounds. So patriotic were the inhabitants in bringing forward the Curd that, after filling the hoop, there was more than 300 pounds left."⁹ So reads the earliest known reference to what was called the Mammoth Cheese. A Baptist minister, John Leland, presented Jefferson with this widely publicized cheese from his congregation in Cheshire, Massachusetts. Made from 900 cows milked simultaneously (rumor has it), the giant 1,235-pound cheese was loaded onto a wagon in the fall of 1801, taken by boat as far as Baltimore, and delivered by wagon to the President's House while crowds gathered and cheered along the way. This was to be "the Greatest Cheese in America for the Greatest Man in America."¹⁰ John Leland was an elder in the

Baptist church and a vigorous advocate for religious tolerance. Working with Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, Leland was determined to see religious freedom secured within the Virginia States Constitution. Thus, when Thomas Jefferson became a candidate for president of the United States, Leland became a staunch supporter of his Republican cause and his congregation determined to show their approval of Jefferson's victory.¹¹

Although not the first presidential cheese (a 110-pound cheese "as big as a chariot wheel," was reportedly delivered to John Adams at the presidential mansion in Philadelphia from the citizens of Rhode Island),¹² great attention was paid in newspapers to the creation of the Mammoth cheese. Once plans for the cheese had been announced, a competitive and satirical spirit emerged among the surrounding towns in the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts, pitting Republicans against Federalists. Of particular note was the suggestion to the Ladies of Lenox to bake a "Mammoth Apple Pye" to accompany the mammoth cheddar cheese.¹³ Not only were the pye and patriotism proposed, but the baking and delivery processes were explained with great detail and humor. The mammoth pye wasn't the only intended edible of huge proportion; some proposed gifts straight from the garden. Such is the case of the "Mammoth Beet." An "American" from Boston wrote of "a curious Beet now sent; and have it kept in safe hands, until you learn when the Cheese is to start for the southward; and then, if you think it proper, to send the Beet with it. – I think it a striking specimen of the present government- a truly Republican Beet."¹⁴ Weighing over five pounds, this beet would have made quite the traveling companion for the cheese and the pye. Meanwhile, bakers in both New York and Washington planned "Mammoth loaves," "the breadth and depth of a large coffin,"¹⁵ to be presented once the cheese arrived. The mammoth pye was never baked, but the mammoth loaves reportedly were.

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By December 5th, the newspapers in Stockbridge, Massachusetts were reporting "The Mammoth Cheese Afloat." On December 7th, the *Otsego Herald* reported that the cheese could be seen aboard a sloop in Albany. Along the journey, concerns developed not just about the enormity of the cheese itself, but how would one slice the cheese? "No common instrument will be found sufficient to cut it up; that a guillotine is therefore getting ready, to be employed in this and other service, to which it may be found applicable."¹⁶ The famous cheese arrived in Baltimore by December 12, 1801. A British traveler, John Davis, who was in the city at the time of the cheese's arrival, commented on the public infatuation, "Baltimore was universally excited; men, women, and children flocked to see the Mammoth Cheese. The taverns were deserted; the gravy soup cooled on the table, and the cats unrebuked reveled on the custards and cream."¹⁷ Finally, the cheese arrived in Washington on December 29.¹⁸ On January 1, 1802, the Mammoth Cheese was presented to Thomas Jefferson. *The Republican* reported that the cheese was "conveyed from a house In Pennsylvania Avenue, on a dray drawn by two horses. We are told it was presented by the Rev. Mr. Leland, who was accompanied by two Clergymen, and many other persons. The president stood on his

door to receive it.”¹⁹ Jefferson gave Leland two hundred dollars from his personal account, perhaps to offset the expenses associated with the production and travel of the cheese or to remove any appearance of impropriety related to a gift to a public official.²⁰

Critics of Jefferson’s administration took the opportunity to use the cheese as a symbol of republican corruption. The cheese was rumored to have been full of maggots and rotting away, “It is confidently said that the Mammoth Cheese is full of skippers. Would to heaven that the Maggots in the heads of certain executive officers were as little detrimental to the public as those in the Cheese.”²¹ Republican papers countered this criticism by uncovering what they called the “maggot plot” unleashed by Federalist papers who reveled in their ability to use the cheese as a thinly veiled vehicle for their criticism of Jefferson’s administration. Newspaper accounts of sightings of the mammoth cheese continued for years. One account is that the cheese was finally consumed at a presidential reception, while still others believe it was dumped in the Potomac River.²² No one truly knows the fate of the cheese, but to honor its memory, the town of Cheshire, in 1940, created a concrete replica of the cider press used to form the mammoth cheese.

This cheese however, became iconic of American ingenuity, productivity, and abundance by America’s dairy farmers and other cheeses soon followed. James Madison received a 1,522-pound cheese in 1810, also from John Leland’s congregation. And, as an act of patriotic good-will, Colonel Thomas Meacham exhibited in Utica, a cheese weighing 1,400 pounds, and made from the milk of 150 cows, to honor the presidency of Andrew Jackson. It bore the inscription, “TO ANDREW JACKSON, President of the United States,” along with a “National Belt,” complete with a bust of the President, surrounded by a chain of twenty-four links, representing the unity of the twenty-four states.²³ Larger than Jefferson’s cheese, Meacham’s cheese sent in late November of 1835 did not travel alone. Colonel Meacham made five other cheeses, each weighing between 700 and 850 pounds. These he inscribed and had sent to Martin Van Buren, the Vice President; one to Congress; one to Daniel Webster; one to William L. Marcey, Governor of the State of New York; and one to the legislature of the State of New York. Each cheese was painted and decorated with “appropriate scenes,” mottos, and declarations. Like the Mammoth Cheese before it, Jackson’s cheese was paraded and displayed to much fanfare.

In addition to his cheese, individuals could show their support for Jackson by baking Jackson Jumbles (“5 cups of Flour, 3 of Sugar, 1 of Butter, 3 Eggs & tea spoon of Pearl in a cup. Cream. Baked quick”).²⁴ Within this role-call of presidential treats, cookbook authors also responded with recipes to praise the administrations of William Henry Harrison, Zachary Taylor, and James Buchanan. Harrison, unfortunately, holds the dubious distinction for having delivered the longest inaugural address (one hour and forty-five minutes) yet served the shortest term in office of any American president (31 days).²⁵ He hardly lived long enough to enjoy the gift of a six-foot-tall, nine-foot-wide, 800-pound

cake in the shape of the US Capitol to celebrate his presidency.²⁶ Apparently, this was not the only cake made in his honor. Reports from the Hagerstown (MD) *Torch Light* reported that a 112-pound cake from the bakery of Mr. William Brazier was sent to Washington to celebrate his inauguration. Its pyramidal sides were inscribed with the words, Liberty and Plenty, along with a bust of Harrison surrounded by 26 stars representing the 26 states plus an image of the Executive Mansion in miniature. And, “the whole tastefully iced, capped and wreathed and festooned with evergreens and artificials.”²⁷ Notably, in 1841, one could serve slices of William Henry Harrison Cake (“5 ½ cups flour, 2 cups butter, 4 eggs, 2 cups molasses, one cup milk, 2 lbs. raisins, tea-spoon saleratus, spice to your taste. Bake it in two middling size forms”) or Harrison Pudding on plates adorned with Harrison’s figure.²⁸ And, like Jefferson, a cheese was made in his honor but weighed a mere 194-pounds.²⁹

It is important to note that politically inspired recipes had a lifespan. While recipes for Election Cake endured for decades, Madison Cake and Taylor Cake, understandably, came and went. However, honoring the achievements of George Washington in the form of Washington Pie or Washington Cake went on for decades. In fact, in 1836, “The Great Washington Cake” was exhibited at John Pease & Sons in New York City. It weighed 2600 pounds and was 23 feet in circumference, *The New York Evening Post* described it thusly:

Ever grateful for the patronage bestowed upon us by the public and our friends in general, we solicit their attention to the exhibition of our Mammoth Cake for the Christmas holidays, which is now prepared for exhibition. It is one of the most extraordinary delicious compounds that has ever been presented to the public, consisting of the enormous amount of: 220 lbs. butter, 240 of sugar, 245 of flour, 400 lbs. of raisins, 850 of currants, 160 of citron, 4 each of cinnamon, cloves nutmeg, and mace, and 180 lbs. of eggs. Besides a vast amount of ORNAMENTAL Icing on the exterior, consisting of 100 lbs. sugar, and the white of 200 eggs, making in all a delectable compound of such gigantic size as to weigh nearly 2600 lbs.; *the largest ever known*. ... and we pledge ourselves that the interior shall be as delicious to the taste as the exterior is gigantically beautiful to the sight.”³⁰

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Now this puts Amelia Simmons’s quantities for Election Cake into perspective! While such presentations so mammoth in proportion seem humorous and perhaps somewhat absurd, they reflect much about the givers as well as the recipients. While most citizens were disenfranchised from the political process, there was great pride in acknowledging and celebrating the political process. Baking a cake or producing a mammoth cheese, these were not merely personal gestures, but national ones as well. While food historically serves as a means for communal gathering, these patriotic offerings also communicated approval,

celebratory wishes, and reflected support for the nation and its leaders in part through the time and expense required for such undertakings.

This desire for commemorative gestures continued to resonate throughout the nineteenth century. As Manifest Destiny spread and the Civil War approached, cookbooks from the 1850s and 60s included recipes for Railroad Cake, Ratification Cake, Lincoln Cake, and Union Pudding – meant to be shared with friends and family in celebrations both public and private. Centennials and World’s Fairs, too, were ripe for patriotic displays of nationalism including two of the most important cultural events of the latter nineteenth century, the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876 (an obvious anniversary year) and the 1893 International Exposition in Chicago. On display were examples of American ingenuity through scientific and agricultural advances plus some good-natured patriotism featuring culinary invention. At the 1876 Centennial Exposition, Henry Maillard, a manufacturer of “Fine Confectionary and Chocolate & Cocoa Preparations,” presented a large case filled with a 15-foot tall sugar and chocolate monument to American history including scenes from the American Revolution in the Agriculture Hall.³¹ Maillard also produced massive chocolate sculptures for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. Again, within an agricultural pavilion, the *American Druggist and Pharmaceutical Record* described Maillard’s multi-figural installation: “five figures of heroic size, each weighing about 1500 pounds, and made of chocolate. Four of the figures are at the corners of the pavilion, each pair representing Venus de Milo and Minerva. The fifth one, situated at one side, represents Columbus.” Make no mistake, Columbus and his cohorts did not stand out as the only display of culinary intrigue. An 11-ton cheese, the “Mammoth Cheese of Canada” was also present in the Agriculture Building.³²

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While imaginative and curious, massive cakes, cheeses, and sculptures of chocolate or sugar were designated as feats (and feasts) of agricultural, cultural, and commercial success. And while it is doubtful that Amelia Simmons, pastor John Leland, the housewife making Harrison cakes, or even Henry Maillard ever read the constitution, they certainly understood with profundity the value, enduring significance, and marketability of the American body politic. Who knows what presidential foods await us in our current election cycle? But, I leave you with the “mammoth” hope that in a post-Covid world we can all be together once again very soon and I will serve you slices of Election Cake and pour you cups of Liberty Tea. Until then, I wish you all good health and very best wishes. Biden Biscuits anyone?

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University; Massachusetts Historical Society; Historic Deerfield; Connecticut Historical Society; Yale University's Lewis Walpole Library; Lilly Library, Indiana University; and The New York Public Library.

Notes

1. Two important sources of scholarship on the topic of celebrations in the Early Republic are David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); and Andrew Burstein, *America's Jubilee* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001).
2. Thomas F. De Voe, *The Market Assistant*, (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867) 316-317.
3. See also Amelia Simmons, *American cookery, or, The art of dressing viands, fish, poultry, and vegetables, and the best modes of making puff-pastes, pies, tarts, puddings, custards and preserves, and all kinds of cakes, from the imperial plumb to plain cake, adapted to this country, and all grades of life* (Hartford, CT: Hudson & Goodwin, 1796; see also, Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1996, reprint of the 1796 Albany edition, with an introductory essay by Karen Hess).
4. My thanks to Ellen Shea, Head of Public Services at the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, for this reference to Hartford Election cake served during the May 1771 election ceremonies.
5. Amelia Simmons, *American cookery* second edition (Albany, NY: Charles R. & George Webster, 1796, second edition).
6. Election day was also called training day in the eighteenth century as a day for militia to parade as part of the day's events. See, William Woys Weaver, *America Eats, Forms of Edible Folk Art* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989).
7. This ban was lifted by 1681 but celebrating Christmas, for example, was not popular in Boston until the mid-19th century.
8. A cookbook collection of many of these recipes is forthcoming by the author.
9. "Extract of a letter from a gentleman in Berkshire (Mass) to his friend in this city," *The Albany Centinel*, July 28, 1801, vol. 5, issue 9, p.3. This casual reference predates the August 8, 1801 article in the *Impartial Observer* which was considered the first public mention of the mammoth cheese.
10. Burstein, *America's Jubilee*, 112.
11. A large wheel of cheese was apparently considered an appropriate presidential gift, since Andrew Jackson also received a huge cheddar from well-wishers in 1829. For a wonderful discussion of the Mammoth Cheese, see Jeffrey Pasley's chapter, "The Cheese and the Words," in *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic*, eds. Jeffrey Pasley, Andrew Robertson, and David Waldstreicher (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). See also, C.A. Brown, "Elder John Leland and the Mammoth Cheshire Cheese" *Agriculture History* 18 (1944): 145-53; and Daniel Dreisbach, *Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation Between Church and State* (New York: NYU Press, 2002)..
12. Margaret Brown Klaphor, *The First Ladies Cook Book* (Parent's Magazine Press, 1965), 28.
13. "For the Star. A Mammoth Pye," *Western Star*, September 14, 1801, 12, issue 43, p.3. Also, a small notice appeared in the *Washington Federalist* recalling the need for the apple pye.
14. "From the Columbian Crantinel. A 'Mammoth' Beet," *The Independent Gazetteer*, October 27, 1801, II, issue 95, p.1.
15. *The Independent Chronicle*, April 16, 1804; Extract of a Letter from a gentleman," *The Repertory*, April 6, 1804. "Communication. More of the Mammoth," *The New-York Evening Post*, December 29, 1801, issue 37, p.3.
16. *Albany Gazette* as printed in *Otsego Herald*, December 17, 1810, VII, issue 351, p.3.
17. Taken from Butterfield, "Elder John Leland, Jeffersonian Itinerant," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 62 (1932): 223 from the original source John Davis, *Travels of Four Years and a half in the United States of America* (London, 1803), 329-330.
18. As reported in numerous papers including *The New-York Gazette*, January 5, 1802 and *The Courier*, January 13, 1802.
19. *The Republican or, Anti-Democrat*, January 6, 1802, I, issue 5, p.3.
20. Jefferson's personal account book, entry on January 4, 1802.
21. *The Ploughman: or, Republican Federalist*, February 1, 1802.

22. Butterfield, "Elder John Leland, Jeffersonian Itinerant," 228.
23. "From the Utica Standard and Democrat," *Connecticut Courant*, November 30, 1835, LXXI, issue, 3697.
24. Handwritten recipe book of Susan H. T. Spalding, widow of Jason Spalding M.D. c1830. Volume 5. Cookbook Collection 1770s-1890s (15 volumes), American Antiquarian Society.
25. Some scholars have suggested that Harrison caught the pneumonia that ultimately killed him as a result of delivering the longest inaugural address in history (his second dubious distinction).
26. Margaret Brown Klapthor, *The First Ladies Cook Book* (Parent's Magazine Press, 1965), 73, from a report in *The National Intelligencer*.
27. "A Harrison Cake," appearing in *The Newark Daily Advertiser*, February 3, 1841, 2.
28. This recipe comes from a cookbook written by a 28-year old woman from Boston, c1830s. From the National Museum of American History, Dibner Library.
29. Mr. William from Beaverdam, PA. "The Harrison Cheese," *The Hampshire Gazette*, July 1, 1841, 2.
30. *The Evening Post* (New York), December 4, 1838, 2.
31. *Chocolate: History, Culture, and Heritage*, edited by Louis Evan Grivetti and Howard-Yana Shapiro (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 200. Maillard had his manufactory and offices in New York at 114 to 118 W. 25th St. 113 to 117 W. 24th St. and retail stores at the 5th Avenue Hotel and 178 Broadway. See Trade Cards: (Col. 9) 04 x 110.4, Winterthur Library.
32. Trade Cards: (Col. 9) 04 x 110.4, Winterthur Library. The trade card depicts 1500-pound chocolate statues of the Venus de Milo and Columbus in the Agriculture Building for the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, Ill. *American Druggist and Pharmaceutical Record* volume 23, July-Dec., 1893, pg. 65.

Reading the Cookbooks of Communist Romania: A Very Intimate Defence

Adriana Sobodoleanu

ABSTRACT: When the Romanian Communist party uses food as a propaganda tool while pantry shelves are perpetually empty, cookbooks become double agents. Relying on the theoretical tools of discourse analysis, this article explores the ways in which cookbooks of the Communist era were edited to work as power legitimation tools for the political regime while serving the escapist goals of fictional literature for the wider population. It will be argued that these books were intended to project the false image of a modern and well-provided for society, comparable to any Western Capitalist one, while also serving as pretexts for daydreaming and learning for the food-deprived people. The present study adds to the growing body of sociological scholarship about Romanian culinary culture with a focus on a personal consumption of Communist cookbooks.

My personal Stake in Cookbooks

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A few years ago I read a collection of food *memoirs* belonging to various Romanian *hommes de lettres*. Reading about a poetess who was reminiscing browsing through old French almanacs as a way of fending off cold and hunger, I remembered my own daydreaming over the 1983 and 1984 editions of the Almanac of Literature and Gastronomy. I realised that, decades and living conditions apart, we were both reading recipes to indulge in revery and resist the present.

According to Bracewell (2013), a ‘certain anticipatory imagination’ is set in motion when reading recipes, ‘a thrill, a positive emotion that can easily turn into frustration when said recipes are impossible to prepare. And impossible they were in Communist Romania! With the increased pressures around food provisioning that hit Romania in the 1980s (Petrescu, 2014), cookbooks became an escapist pastime. Younger readers, such as myself at the time, used recipes as leaps into fantasy land: I was not able to experience the real taste of a 50-egg brioche, so I could only imagine the splurge. For some adults however, the reveries brought back real memories that made a meagre toast & tea dinner more palatable. In the process, something else also took place – education, with cookbooks acting as silent teachers. Scholars of the Communist food discourse have noticed that the way things were presented in cookbooks was likely to induce a ‘dreamy predisposition in the reader and stimulated imagination but it might have also activated possible frustrations’ (Bracewell, 2013). To

Romanian philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu, born in 1942, 'misery [childhood]' foods' seemed normal, he confessed to having no recollection of a feast back then, which caused him to speak of a 'fall from Paradise' era for food in Communism (Parvulescu, 2012).

Why Study Cookbooks?

Food scholars recommend using cookbooks as historical sources because they are not mere recipe collections, but they provide hidden clues about politics, religion, food ideology, in a nutshell the prevalent 'world views' of a historical age and social group (Albala 2012, Neuhaus (x), Bracewell 2013). While Black & Goldwaithe view recipes as 'culture-keepers as well as culture-makers, both recording memories and fostering new ones'. (Black & Goldwaithe 2014), Bower defines them as 'maps of cultural and social worlds they inhabit' (Bower in Danciu, Radu 2014), which makes them a suitable medium for a social history study.

Drawing on the existing research on daily life under Communism, this study starts from the premise that cookbooks are never removed from political and economic realities and that they 'help legitimate the system that put all this bounty on the table' (Bracewell, 2013). My research is indebted to Skhrodova's work around Bulgarian Communist cookbooks (Skhrodova, 2019) and Keating's analysis of the culinary discourse as a tool that delivers the knowledge produced by and supports the State's power (Keating, 2018). My analysis also builds on Hofland's discussion around the Soviet's Khrushchev regime 'perceiving [...] domestic cooking as a public affair' (Hofland, 2016). In advancing the theory of the educational role played by cookbooks, this article also relies on the theory that new models of consumption can act just as observed for the Yugoslavian space as 'potential tools for eradicating backwardness and building a modern socialist citizenry' (Bren, Pence&Betts 2013).

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Methodology

In conducting this piece of research, my theoretical arsenal is twofold. First, I draw on my own childhood memories and observations as an avid reader and collector of cookbooks. Although there is no consensus on the defining traits of the auto-ethnographic method, I follow Carolyn Ellis's definition: 'research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political' (Ellis, 2004). This echoes Mills' 'sociological imagination', and its 'awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society' (Wright Mills 1959).

The second method I employed is the qualitative coding of over thirty-five cookbooks, from my own bookshelves and representative for the analysed period. Albala notes that cookbooks do not constitute proof of people's eating habits in a given period of time, as they are usually prescriptive in nature (Albala, 2012). However, he agrees that cookbooks can provide information if the researcher approaches them with a set of methodological tools (Albala 2012). In my research I followed historians' need to address five basic

questions to contextualize the information contained, namely ‘Who wrote the cookbook? What was the intended audience? Where was it produced and when? Why was it written?’. Content analysis and coding was also conducted on a collection of memoirs about food under Communism.

A Brief History of Cookbooks in Romania

Judging by the number of titles, cookbooks were a well-established publishing genre well before WWII. By the mid-twentieth century Bucharest was synchronising with the rest of Europe in terms of culinary books and experiences, gastronomy becoming a hard to ignore marker of civilisation (Pirjol, 2011). The interwar cookbooks were intended for the bourgeois mistress of the house, who employed a cook, a butler and had a refined culinary repertoire (see Bacalbasa’s 1935 recipes for crayfish soup, lobster, and chrysanthemum salad). That changed after 1947, with the new social order imposed by the Communist regime, designed to mimic its Soviet neighbour and guiding star. Part of building the new society was based on erasing the old order, purging ‘unhealthy’ bourgeois elements. The propaganda machine worked hard to shed a favourable light on the achievements of the Communist ‘new man’. Eating and cooking were also subject to this transformation. Social history recounts peaceful times when food preparation would be considered a private affair, an area that escaped the government’s interference being relegated to ‘the private space of domestic life, far from worldly noises’ (Giard, 1998). If the act of food provisioning was always political, cooking was usually relegated to the domestic sphere. Following the Soviet lead, the Romanian Communist regime perceived ‘domestic cooking as a public affair’ (Hofland 2016) and actively pursued its alignment to the party’s ideology. Moreover, who talked about food and how food was talked about or what remained unspoken was a matter of State policy (Annuk, 2013). Under the Communist rule, food was subject to governmental regulation and its production, distribution and prices were strictly controlled by the authorities (Keating, 2018). The party understood the power Official communication about food functioned as a semiotic system likely to shape mentalities and ideologies (Net, X), which turned food consumption into ‘a deeply political experience’ (Burell 2003).

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Communist Culinary Discourse over Time

The 1950s were based on an ‘enforced consensus’ modelled on Soviet patterns of nationalisation, centrally planned industry and censorship. The state took control over everything; this included printing so cookbooks too received the call to arms. Culinary literature from that time is brimming with principles of scientific nutrition. A healthy individual meant a healthy worker, therefore a useful citizen. Food became a tool to supply the worker with the necessary calories – it was, after all, the period of the great construction sites: the subway network, the Danube-Black Sea canal, etc. The new workforce (villagers

migrated to urban industrial areas) needed to be both educated and fed. Cooking was approached as a part of a wider social endeavour; rational eating was a social responsibility so cookbooks had extensive opening chapters describing how the human body works fuelled by the appropriate caloric input. The state advanced the idea of personalized menus, proposing models of calorie intake customized for different age/ gender/ line of work, with the needs of a mine worker differing from that of a retired senior or pregnant woman. Physiologists were asked to determine precise meal rations, nutritionists were invited to write lengthy introductions. Signs of rationalisation and standardisation could be found in all cookbooks as they offered pretty much the same recipes, without variation. This is justified by theories of taste that relegate it to the bourgeoisie's mental landscape and define eating as a rudiment of existence, since the primary role of food was feeding, not pleasure (Glushchenko, 2010). The purge campaign that intended to clean the society of retrograde elements extended over cookbooks as well. All traces leading to Western, imperial or simply decadent foods, foodways and language were erased. There were also small adjustments of the ingredients, such as tuna becoming generic fish, etc. Another study (Ghita, 2016:1) shows that 'quantities and ingredients in traditional recipes were scaled down as the ingredients necessary to make them became more difficult to procure (such as *cozonaci moldovenești*)'.

500 This crusade for total renewal was not original, the Soviets did it too and turned 'consommé Printanière' into 'stock with roots and greens' (Hoffland, 2016). Not all cookbooks renamed recipes; some just adapted their orthography preferring the Romanian phonetic pronunciation *sarlota* for charlotte, *bavarez* for bavaroise, *babe* for baba, etc. Others managed to keep the original orthograph such as Bouillabaise fish soup, butter a la Strasbourg, etc. Natalia Tautu's 1975 book gives recipes for *pain d'Espagne*, *mille feuilles* or *madeleines* and if in 1975 Silvia Jurcovan provides instructions for a white sauce, her 1987 edition openly names the concoction Béchamel. A 1984 culinary wall-calendar featured recipes from all over the world, including the Western Capitalist World.

The 1960s and especially the 1970s were the golden age of the East trying to catch up with the West (Stone, 2012). Social scientists agree that the European Communist countries became 'mass consumer societies' (Crowley & Reid 2010). The State paid attention to the consumer and the shops were filled with foodstuffs. A new educational goal was set and cookbooks obliged: a good housewife must be able to entertain at home, an idea which had to do with proving affluence and education, perks of a lifestyle comparable to the West.

However, in 1980 the EEC chose not to renew its trade partnership with Romania. Ceausescu took a highly nationalist approach that culminated with the need to be independent from the USSR and the West. In 1981 he decided to pay off the foreign debt estimated at \$10 billion by exporting gasoline, clothing, and several basic foodstuffs (Boia, 2016). The 1980s meant for Romania the rationing of meat, oil, and sugar; overnight queues appeared outside of stores for basic items, with bodies immobilized in food lines (Verdery, 1996). Eggs

Reading the Cookbooks of Communist Romania

were saved weeks in advance for Easter and Christmas menus. Real coffee was something one would keep to bribe doctors or any other provider of informal services otherwise; at home ersatz brewing was the norm. Ceausescu justified these measures on the basis of Romanian sovereignty and in the name of good health, promoting his program of scientific nutrition.

Nonetheless, local cookbooks did not follow life's realities. They lost their nutrition-centric approach and ideological weight and started offering substantial amounts of foreign recipes. Culinary literature illustrated a simple but satisfying cuisine ignoring the reality of food shortage.

Some Polish cookbooks, on the other hand, would indirectly acknowledge the grim reality of lack of resources by abandoning the game of pretence and by publishing austerity-driven recipes that also gave real useful advice on how to make do with limited ingredients (Keating, 2018).

Romanian Communist culinary literature is quite rich; I worked on 35+ such books. The most widely known source is Sanda Marin's Cookbook, her 1936 first edition being reprinted in abridged form until the late 1960s. Authors are mostly amateur cooks; some volumes do not have an author at all. Titles are generic, – 'Cookbook' or simple, and descriptive title – 'Practical advice for the housewife'. Unless they focus on a single food category, most are exhaustive, compendium-like tomes featuring hundreds of recipes, some reaching or exceeding a thousand. Special diets have dedicated chapters or entire books. Some of them have introductions signed by dieticians – supposedly in an attempt to give a more professional appearance to the advice being provided. I found recipes to portray a simple, standardized, fairly conservative and monotonous cuisine. The techniques are basic and so are the dishes, there is no 'ornamental cookery' (Barthes, 2013). I noticed the recurrence of the same recipes across volumes, in the introductions that outline the same, almost inexistent culinary creed(?), and in the identical structuring of the universe of ingredients and cooking techniques. A single, unified set of recipes thus reflects the propagation of a bureaucratic cuisine, likely to ensure the nation's proper nutrition. This secured both science-approved products and control for a higher uniformity of quality and quantity. The epitome of prescriptive cooking appears to be the national *Standard Recipe Collection for Food Products* intended to serve as the Bible of all restaurants.

Science-based nutrition had a longer history in Romania, though. Local cookbooks had hinted at it well before WWII. In 1935 journalist and *bon viveur* Constantin Bacalbasa argued that 'when it comes to feeding, as well as in politics, abuse is anti-constitutional'. In Communist Romania, the woman of the house was to bear the responsibility of understanding the nutritional needs of the family and to meet them at a minimum cost of time, materials and energy. Set against the background of food penury, this opens the door to substitutions and alterations. The results were the so-called economic recipes, cheaper versions of the printed ones. The reader would therefore write their own alternative

cookbooks, by hand, exchanging recipes within their social circle and editing the official ones (Skhrodova, 2019). Even some official cookbooks exceptionally included this type of substitute recipes. Probably the most famous is the fake fish roe salad one. Replacing roe with beans or semolina and adding fish paste resulted into something described as ‘imitate[ing] real fish row well’ (Jurcovan 1957). Silvia Jurcovan who, in her 1987 edition, followed up on her readers’ feedback by offering ideas, recipes and advice on how to use canned meat – a novelty at the time, which she referred to as ‘sterilized meat’ – a much more reasonable and readily available ingredient than fresh or frozen meat. Low-quality or substitute products became staples which prompted humour as a common way of coping; that’s when you would hear on Romanian streets about ‘chickenware’ (wings, heads and claws) and about ‘pork Adidas’ (pork hooves). Life acquired a ‘gradual redefinition of luxury’ (Crowley, Reid 2010).

Reading Communist Cookbooks Then and Now

502 While reading cookbooks as a child, I’d skip the info on vitamins, proteins, and the like, as those sections reminded me of biology class, while I saw food items as embodiments of the stories of the world. On the other hand, I was obviously attracted by practical examples – which foods should my mother, who worked as a clerk, eat? How should my grandfather, who worked in oil mining and would commute to work every day, be fed at the factory’s cafeteria? Apart from (arguably) educating me about nutrition, my cookbooks also taught me about planning and optimizing the use of resources. There were so many ways one could use a slice of stale bread. But, what really caught my imagination as a kid were recipes such as flavoured butters, eggs *a la Strasbourg* and American lemonade. I remember a complex, butter-rich, decadent French *mille feuille* pastry followed, a few pages later, by economic recipes based on cheaper ingredients like bread, potatoes, starch and marmalade. Though I did not give it too much thought back then, it now seems like the breeding ground of a cognitive dissonance.

There is something else my cookbooks taught me: the value of patience and imagination. Not having enough eggs to spare for recipe testing is how I understood what austerity meant. In the 1980s, Romanian food shops offered mainly toilet paper, Vietnamese shrimp crackers and canned beans stew displayed in a skilful way so as to fill the empty shelves. Therefore, when cookbooks proposed more international and flamboyant combinations, they also became useless or, at least, not functional.

From my cookbooks I learnt that women should cook while men and children will eat. Today I simply know Communist cookbooks were highly gendered. Woman, ‘this wonderful being who brings us the joy of days spent together through every meal she makes, masterpieces of her work’ (Olexiuc 1979) was, at the same time, the tractor-operating symbol of gender equality in the workforce (Boia, 2016). Despite claims that ‘Communism

will liberate woman from domestic slavery, so that her life can be richer, fuller, happier and freer' (Aleksandra Kollontaj as quoted by Hoffland, 2016), cookbooks appear to have promoted this multi-lateral, multi-tasking ideal that adds domestic work on top of official, paid work. Communism legitimized the double work day for women (Miroiu, 2014).

Communist culinary literature could also deliver lifestyle content. The gem of my collection is called *Gospodina si oaspetii familiei!* 'The housewife and the family's guests' (Neagu 1968/ 1977). It is a small, delicate book borrowed by my aunt in the 1970s and never returned to the village's public library. It features menus for specific events such as a small wedding, an anniversary, children parties, picnics, etc. These come with advice on style, plating, manners and hospitality as well as lots of sketches showing how to creatively fold a napkin, make a seating card or decorate a New Year's Eve aspic. Due to its focus on good taste and display and it taught me, as a child, that food is not simply about cooking. It is about planning, pairing, and presenting. The author believed the family meal educated participants by providing not only nutritional information but also by honing soft skills such as aesthetics, table manners, entertainment guests. It showed me a whole world outside the food I knew, and this started a lifelong interest in gastronomy. If cookbooks were meant to educate the masses this is a perfect example, especially since it was available in rural public libraries too. Reading this kind of cookbooks helped me challenge what I would be told about the material culture of the old world, the denigrated bourgeoisie (dining room vs all-in-one family room, silver cutlery vs nickel, foamy cotton tablecloths, Bohemia crystal glasses, etc). This is how I learnt about class, inequality, glamour, taste and political regimes. Later on, while going back to this book to do my research, the reference to silver cutlery brought up bigger questions – was it a slip, a tacit acknowledgement or an intentional move, part of the propaganda? Was the Communist party using the kitchen as a (distorted) mirror to cover up the shortages and pretend Romania had a normal existence? Was this the way to build the image of a rich, civilised, modern society, similar to if not even superior to any Western one? That is one possibility supported by cookbook authors such as Clementina Petra: 'the rising of lifestyle level is manifested throughout all sectors of our socialist society and it generates opportunities and superior needs. Eating has changed, aside from the higher caloric intake there is also a form of aesthetic display and consumption' (Petra 1969:).

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Then again, these empty references to a no longer existent or desirable conviviality model may have been one of the 'authorized breathing valves, part of a strategy that aimed at giving the illusion of freedom while keeping things under tight control' (Skhrodova, 2019).

What I treasure about my old cookbooks even today is the fact that they helped me build a culinary capital (Lebescco & Naccarato, 2012). Among hundreds of recipes featuring plain ingredients, I was able to effortlessly single out the oddities, meaning the rare to-inexistent-and-never-seen-in-real-life recipes. This is how I learnt about parmesan, chocolate, butter,

champagne, asparagus, coffee, truffles, sturgeon caviar, etc. Although absent in the pantry, these were not so shy in books – I found seven asparagus recipes in one book only. The availability of these ingredients in shops before 1947 is documented in culinary and non-culinary literature. I read those recipes with an intellectual appetite, no hunger, no cravings. Decades later, I would smile reading Bracewell's poetical definition of a recipe as being able 'to quench hunger, quick and efficiently but also to educate it, to shape it, to celebrate it; through the foreplay of reading and anticipatory imagination the recipe gives an ancillary taste to any dish' (Bracewell, 2013). Part of this educational process was also my familiarity with the Capitalist Other's food early on, even if in theory only. When capitalism and officially entered Romania after 1989 I was already versed, theoretically, in the international kitchen lingo. I knew the recipes for French pastry dough, Greek pastry sheets, Viennese *schnitzel*, Greta Garbo cake, ketch-up, *vinaigrette*, *choux a la creme*, Chantilly, pizza, etc.

Conclusion

504 Cookbooks presented an imagined, fictional cuisine – the cuisine of a normal, well-provided for society which Romania no longer was. There was no direct causality between cookbooks and pantry; both the local asparagus of my cookbooks and the exotic manioc from my Peruvian fairy tale books were unicorns. When the morning cup of coffee was actually made of roasted chicory but the cookbook's Drinks section featured a generous array of coffee recipes, the gap between reality and make pretend was hard to ignore. Even as a child I knew I need to treat my cookbooks as informative pastimes, yummy fairy tales; this makes the current introspection all the more unsettling and valuable.

I understand now they were a representation of the regime's duplicity and a cause of its trickle-down reproduction. Austerity trumped nutrition. Responsibility took the basic form of fending for oneself, while planning and optimisation allowed for alteration. The state lied; people pretended to believe. The publisher sought legitimation and indoctrination; readers looked for revery, loose inspiration and maybe the feeling of normal. These different usages somehow managed to coexist. I brought myself up as a gastronome learning about the (truncated) world around. There was almost no legitimacy of indulgence in food and cooking but that did not deter me and others from discovering it. In a Communist context the cookbooks was first an escapist tool, but later revalued in a personal context as educational tool that eased my immersion in Capitalism. My cookbooks taught me not only about cooking or what it means to be a woman, but also laid the foundation of my culinary capital (Naccarato, Lebesco 2013) part of what Bourdieu (1984) calls cultural capital. They opened the door to concepts of identity or belonging and difference even if these were indirectly touched. So even if, just like in other countries from the Eastern Bloc, the cookbook was a tool of 'cultural deceit' (Skhrodova, 2018) it proved to be a useful guide to me in my formation years.

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Stirring Up Historical Imagination: Promoting the Teaching of History through Food-Based Pedagogy

Nicholas Tošaj

ABSTRACT: This paper touches briefly upon the uses of food pedagogy in academia in recent years before describing my experiences teaching history classes with a practical culinary component. The content of this paper veers intentionally into the informal, relying largely on quotes from student work and anecdotes. My experiences teaching food history have run the gamut from cooking in teaching kitchens with commercial equipment, to improvising a kitchen with a hotplate, cafeteria table and odds and ends from a thrift store, to supervising pandemic cooking assignments over Microsoft Teams. As such, portions of this paper will dwell on the logistical and structural hurdles which I have encountered as an educator in my attempts to blend food with formal historical education.

Some degree of imagination lies at the heart of any meaningful understanding of history. Through our imagination history can come alive, become relevant and relatable - something that this symposium has achieved through the passionate discussion of food for forty years. However, anyone who has ever experienced a dry history lecture, or an indigestible textbook can attest to the fact that stirring up this historical imagination is not always easy. It is with this in mind that I strive to incorporate food into the teaching of history, sparking a sense of relatability and immediacy for my students by engaging their curiosity through their ability to taste, to smell, to remember and to imagine. This paper will delve into the role that food has fulfilled in prompting my students at both the college and university levels to engage their historical imaginations.

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I am far from being the first person to bring food into the classroom. Ken Albala, Jeffrey Pilcher and Donna Gabaccia are only a few of the accomplished historians who have successfully integrated food into their formal teaching. Despite these successes, food remains woefully underrepresented as a pedagogical tool in the field of history. Using food as a teaching tool is viewed as something of an anomaly, a quirk. While I am under no illusion that food will become a mainstream tool used in all history classes, my goal in writing this article is to reflect upon the role that we can play in raising the profile of food as a means for stimulating learning and to assist in carving a place for food history in curriculum development. As a junior food studies scholar my aim is to approach the place of food in the historical imagination, not from the perspective of a seasoned expert, but from that of a junior academic attempting to use food to address the gap bridging theory and practice in historical pedagogy.

This paper touches briefly upon the uses of food pedagogy in academia in recent years before describing my experiences teaching history classes with a practical culinary component. The content of this paper veers intentionally into the informal, relying largely on quotes from student work and anecdotes. My experiences teaching food history have run the gamut from cooking in teaching kitchens with commercial equipment, to improvising a kitchen with a hotplate, cafeteria table and odds and ends from a thrift store, to supervising pandemic cooking assignments over Microsoft Teams. As such, portions of this paper will dwell on the logistical and structural hurdles which I have encountered as an educator in my attempts to blend food with formal historical education.

These methodological and structural components will serve the same purpose as a stock might serve in a soup; forming a necessary base in which to situate some interesting morsels, the latter represented by examples of student engagement with history through food. Discussions of sensory approaches to food will tie into excerpts from student work submitted in my classes in which students discussed topics as diverse as colonialism, migration, industrialization, and globalization through dishes of their choice.¹ Be it a student hanging arctic char in her suburban garage in order to make traditional *pitsik* or a student dwelling on the place of globalization and imperialism in shaping the foodways of Kerala, anecdotes such as these brings a wholly different value to these personal and striking embodiments of the historical imagination. By encouraging students to dive into history palate first, we not only encourage them to create a sensory bridge between themselves, their ancestors, and important historical events, we also invite students to bring some of the conviviality inherent to sharing a meal into the classroom, even when that classroom is digital. In doing so, history becomes accessible, tangible and poignant - more relatable in many cases than distant battles and dynastic successions, without being any less meaningful. By promoting the use of food-based pedagogy when teaching history, I aim to connect students to the convivial pleasures that I have experienced at the Symposium and to teach students and educators alike that good food, like good conversation, is best shared.

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Teaching with Food: Context and Culture

A significant amount of work has been produced on the place of food in pedagogy. As well as on food as a method for teaching history. Within the academic context scholars such as Deirdre Murphy have expounded upon the use of food as an important base for interdisciplinary studies.² In their round table published in the *Radical History Review*, Daniel Bender, Rachel Ankeny, Warren Belasco, Amy Bentley, Elias Mandala, Jeffrey M. Pilcher and Peter Scholliers discussed the place of food in their courses.³ Ken Albala's blog has provided us with a wealth of knowledge relating to the use of food, cooking and kitchens, while Jonathan Deutsch and Jeffrey Miller's chapter 'Teaching with Food' provides important insight into food pedagogy supplemented by pedagogical exercises making use of food in the classroom.⁴ Michael Twitty, Paula Marcoux, Ruth Goodman and Jas

Townsend are but a handful of the personalities that have taught historical cookery online, in-person and on television, creating popular history content that captures the imagination of countless people impassioned by the ways in which food and history intersect.⁵

Anyone who has ever forgotten to write down a recipe can understand that recipes are at their very core, historical. They serve to record and impart knowledge, to map change and to inform. Recipes, kitchen tools and accounts of food shine light on lived experiences, providing us with insight into one of the acts most fundamental to human existence. As attendees of this symposium know so well, food and history are inextricable. Be it a discussion of Three Sisters agriculture in what we now call Canada, a dive into the origins of wheat in the Fertile Crescent or French rations in the First World War, food can captivate student imagination. For students who struggle with traditional methods of education, food provides a sensory entry into complex cultural topics. Be it in an academic or popular context, the use of food as a tool through which students can understand history is nothing new. However, despite popular interest in food history, using food to teach history remains relatively uncommon within formal pedagogical contexts. As institutions move to adopt active learning techniques and alternatives approaches to pedagogy, the use of food as a sensory tool remains woefully underrepresented.

In Quebec food has drifted out of the pedagogical realm relatively recently as seen with the absence of Home Economics from provincial curriculum from the 1997 educational reform on.⁶ As these courses were torn out of the provincial curriculum, so too were stoves and kitchen facilities from Quebec schools. Despite the often-problematic nature of Home Economics curricula, mandatory Home Economics courses provided students with an introduction to cooking, an opportunity to fire up ranges, to slice onions and to mingle around food of their own making. In so abandoning Home Economics as a mandatory element of curriculum, educational reforms de-emphasized the importance of food, simultaneously robbing students of basic life skills and of the opportunity to question their relationships with food. The removal of culinary infrastructure from educational institutions also meant that other courses that might have made use of kitchens were deprived of the opportunity to do so.

As a member of Quebec's last cohort of students enrolled in a mandatory Home Economics course, I was able to experience, albeit all too briefly, the joys of learning in the stimulating context of a teaching kitchen. Years later as a PhD student and teaching assistant at the University of Toronto working with my supervisor Daniel Bender, the tables were turned and I had the pleasure of teaching a history course titled *Edible History* in the Culinaria Research Centre's first teaching kitchen.⁷ Though the kitchen was only a dark windowless room, formerly the home of a popular pizza chain on campus, the experience of sharing the kitchen with students was an eye-opening one. The discussions, the conviviality and camaraderie within that kitchen space went far beyond anything that I had ever experienced as an educator up to that point.

Students were excited to come to class; one student confessed to me that he had skipped classes in every single one of his courses up to that point and claimed that this course, because of the time in the kitchen, was the exception. Students who mentioned that they had a difficult time following lectures claimed that the sensory aspects of the teaching kitchen helped them relate to the course's historical content. The recipes cooked in class were necessarily historical and global in nature, representing a wide range of historical experiences to a diverse and curious student population. A comparison of curries was a popular activity, whereby students cooked British coronation chicken, Japanese battleship curry and South African bunny chow and were invited to ponder the impact of globalization and colonization on our shared foodways. With access to multiple induction hot plates, a slew of equipment and a commercial dishwasher, teaching at the Culinaria Research Centre meant that groups of approximately twenty students could be accommodated comfortably, broken into groups of four or five people, each group having its own work station. Access to a commercial dishwasher meant that tidying-up was relatively painless, allowing us to hold practicums with four different tutorial groups in one day and even hosting a campus-wide pop-up kitchen. After leaving the University of Toronto's kitchen to teach at CEGEP John Abbott College in my native Quebec I was determined to continue using food as pedagogical tool.⁸

Food: History and Practice

510 From a methodological and infrastructure perspective teaching with food does require overcoming a variety of obstacles to be effective. Historical legitimacy, for instance, can be one of the greatest hurdles to surmount. The fact that tools, ingredients, and cooking methods have all changed over the *longue durée* of human experience is inescapable. Many plants used in cuisine today differ significantly from their historical ancestors. Similarly, how can a historical stew recipe making use of factory-farmed lamb and conventionally grown vegetables cooked in a stainless-steel pot over an induction burner truly capture the essence of mutton and homegrown vegetables cooked in cast iron over a peat fire? How can anyone claim that bread made of processed modern high protein flour is an accurate stand-in for the bread of yore made of hand-ground spelt? While careful sourcing of ingredients and recipes can help mitigate some of these issues, even the most judicious of choices cannot guarantee complete historical authenticity. In conversations with fellow food historians, these obstacles have oft been debated and are impractical to address, certainly as the college is unlikely to allow me to dig a roasting pit on its pristine quad in the name of historical authenticity. Instead of defacing the college lawn I have sought to use these historical inconsistencies as a teaching tool, asking students how they believe that modern kitchens facilitate the cooking of a dish or how the tools which they use might differ from that of the cook who wrote the recipe. In this context, comparisons to campfire cookery tend to strike a chord while discussions of who did the cooking have led to interesting discussions of gender in the kitchen.

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In terms of infrastructure one of the largest hurdles to clear is the absence of teaching kitchens or community cooking spaces from many modern campuses. A kitchen such as that of the Culnaria Research Centre is a rare blessing to anyone wishing to incorporate food into the teaching of history. This was abundantly clear to me when I took up my position at John Abbott College where kitchen space was lacking, despite staff and student interest in cooking. Initially in this kitchen-less context, food simply insinuated itself as a topic into my standard History of Western Civilization and Modern History courses; sugar and its place in shaping the Atlantic slave trade, salt and its importance in preservation, wheat as a cultural marker of Western identity among imperialist nations, all slid easily into a pre-existing curriculum. For some students, these examples were far more relatable than demographics trends, the spread of Christianity, and Papal intrigues. Samples of foods brought to class were useful in demonstrating technological shifts, with sourdough bread made from stone-milled flour standing in stark contrast to Wonder Bread, a testament to the changes brought by industrialization to our food system. The simple act of bringing food into the classroom made the topics covered in class more tangible and more relevant to the day-to-day experience of students. Three years after I first brought bread to class, students who have dropped into my office or checked in by email continue to reminisce on the place of food in their lectures.

In aiming to continue to teach with food, I was fortunate to be supported by my institution which has committed to adopting more approaches to active learning by stepping away from traditional lecturing and to producing more well-rounded students on a broad level. Bearing in mind the removal of Home Economics and its accompanying kitchens from Quebec schools, many students have no kitchen experience and have expressed the wish to learn basic culinary skills. The college's commitment provided me with the perfect opportunity to propose cooking as a pedagogical tool. It is with this in mind that my course *Food: History and Practice* was accepted into the college curriculum. The course is based on a one-hour lecture followed by a two hour practicum and has been taught for the past three semesters as an evening class offered through our school of Continuing Education. Despite my excitement that the course was accepted into the formal curriculum, the lack of a kitchen - let alone a teaching kitchen, remained problematic.

In the first iteration of the course, adaptation to kitchen-less cooking took the shape of a single two burner hot plate, some pots, pans, knives and other tools from the local thrift store as well as from my own kitchen. With a combination of careful negotiation and legal waivers the course was permitted to take place inside the cafeteria dining hall (but not the kitchens themselves) in order to have access to running water and tables. The class was mercifully small, numbering a dozen students who were divided into a rotating roster of roles taking their turn prepping, cooking and cleaning from class to class, with everyone participating in discussion. Though not as streamlined as a course taught in a

teaching kitchen, this improvised kitchen space served the purpose of pulling students out of the traditional lecture hall in favor of immersing them in cooking and discussion as they bustled around the hot plate elbow to elbow. Perhaps one of the most striking benefits of such a setup was the shifting of the hierarchy caused by the spatial re-imagining of the class. As we cooked together, blundering through historical recipes side by side, and making use of barely functional equipment, an environment of respectful camaraderie emerged, prompting students to feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences on class readings, recipes and dishes.

Food, History, and Pedagogy in the Digital Landscape

Unfortunately, my first semester teaching *Food: History and Practice* in our improvised kitchen space was cut short by the rolling tide of the global pandemic. As instructors scrambled to bring lectures online, *Food: History and Practice* also migrated to Microsoft Teams. On the one hand this presented new complications; how could we share in the conviviality of cooking when we were all isolated? How much would be lost by moving online? How could the sensory elements transition to the online context? The rest of the Winter 2020 semester as well as the Fall and Winter 2020-2021 semesters saw students of the course cooking in their own kitchens and sharing their results via online forum posts and documenting their historical recipes by taking photos of themselves alongside their dishes.

512 From a logistical perspective, students were provided with lists of recipes one week before the weekly cooking practicum in order to make sure that they had ample time to secure the requisite ingredients. With ingredients in tow, we would then all gather on Teams for a one hour lecture and discussion period followed by the students diving into their kitchens. Class topics covered the birth of cooking, the Columbian Exchange, food, and empire and even food and the Anthropocene. In order to maintain a level of connection, students discussed the readings and the dishes that they had prepared on a weekly basis and were invited to comment on each other's work, building off of each other's findings. While the move online lacked much of the personal connection which had been so precious in the kitchen context, it did overcome the material issues inherent to our improvised kitchen setup. In addition to this, there were some unexpected but welcome benefits to students cooking at home as family members became involved in the course adding a touch of humour and community to a pedagogical context otherwise marred by pandemic isolation.

Shared assignments in the form of online forum posts, classroom discussion and oral presentations were key to replacing the conviviality of the kitchen when working online. The diversity of student experiences and cultural traditions shone brightly in the recipes which they chose to cook. The setting, though less than ideal, still stirred the historical imagination of students. Examples from an assignment where students needed to cook a recipe of historical value to them or their family members provided some of the most

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striking examples of this. In one case when asked what her family members knew about the history of the chosen recipe a student made her favorite soup, Turkish tarhana:

I had to ask my grandmother to answer this question and she said that this dish originates from the Ottoman Empire but there are a lot of different versions of it made in different cultures, for example, in Iran, In Greece, in Armenia or even in India. I couldn't find which period it is from, but I asked my parents and grandmother and they all said that in Turkey, it's known to be one of the oldest "instant" soups ever made [...] plenty of women from the town would gather up together and make it for their families with the help of others. This dish was also an easy way to make a lot of, and it would also help with giving energy and it is also known for keeping people warm so it would come in handy in the old times during winter.⁹

In discussing tarhana, the student was able to dive into themes of gender, labour and technology, tying resource management and subsistence to today's convenience foods. In another case a student described the experience of preparing boiled arctic char. In her essay she reflected on indigeneity and alluded to the traumas of colonization, as well as to some of the changes wrought upon indigenous food systems in Canada's North:

Our diet has changed a lot, especially my parents and grandparents. But country food is still very much preferred. Most people just simply cook without spices because they are not used to them. It is hard to talk for my family about history. I cannot really say much because they never really talked about their history. All I can say is that my ancestors were hunters and gatherers. [...] Before colonialism, my ancestors did not know any other food, other than what was available to them. Their diet started to change when colonizers or explorers came to their land. And the way they hunted changed.¹⁰

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In another semester, the topic of arctic char and indigenous identity also surfaced in the work of Inuit student Isabelle Menarik. Menarik, who had been raised on the island of Montreal, related the experience of learning about *pitsik* from her grandmother, describing the history of the dish as follows:

It is difficult to find an explanation of the process to make *pitsik* because like with most Inuit and other Indigenous histories, it is passed on orally through the generations. After receiving fish (typically Arctic char), caught by the men of the community, the women would remove the bones, filet the fish with the skin still intact, rub salt on it, then hang it to dry by the tail of the fish. *Pitsik* is a country food (food "harvested locally") that can be easily made even by those living outside of Nunavik. Through the Hunter Support

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Program and Makivik Corporation, hunters in Nunavik are paid to provide meat such as caribou, char, and seal to those living in the south. This enables those living in Montreal to enjoy food that connects them with their culture, spirituality, and the land/nature.¹¹

When presenting her recipe to the class Menarik explained how she had never made the dish before and how speaking to her grandmother about *pitsik* and preparing it brought her closer to her culture. She also described some of the challenges that arose when making *pitsik* outside of the traditional context. These challenges included purchasing arctic char in Montreal, hanging the fish to dry in her suburban garage and foiling her beloved cat's attempts at attacking the fish.

For Sean Timmermanis one of the most striking attributes of making celebratory Latvian piragi was the place of the family matriarch in making piragi and the labour involved:

[...] in every Latvian family the Oma (Latvian Grandma) is and always will be the piragi guru. The only common denominator in the making of piragis is that the Oma will tell you that you are only done kneading the dough once your forearms and shoulders feel like they are about to fall off, and then you need to continue kneading for another ten minutes.¹²

514 Attempts by Timmermanis to track down the roots of the dish also taught him about the complications inherent to conducting historical research: "The history behind the Piragi is clouded and unsure although the history of the piragi through the Timermanis family is one of incredible family memories and one of love, it is a tradition that the Timermanis family will continue for years without an end in sight."¹³ A lesson also learned by Joey Bujold-Généreux when attempting to trace the roots of Quebec's version of shepherd's pie called *pâté chinois*:

Although we don't know exactly when shepherd's pie was created. One of the most thought hypotheses is that it was created in the late 19th century while Chinese workers were working on the railways in Canada due to the strong beef livestock and crops of potatoes and corn. While this theory might make sense and easy to believe, it may not be entirely true [...]¹⁴

For Sherin Thankamma Isac the use of food provided an opportunity to ponder the place the food systems that had led her grandparents to farm cassava in Kerala:

My great Grand Parents were farmers and tapioca were one of the common crops they cultivated and traded between other farmers in exchange for other crops. Polyculture was a common practice at that time. Banana, coconut, and pineapple were cultivated alongside tapioca. Thus, tapioca was the main

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food in all meals served in a variety of ways depending on the availability of different food sources in that period and the common way of serving back then was mashed tapioca with sardine fish curry (which was comparatively less expensive fish in that period) and a red chili shallot dip.¹⁵

In discussing tapioca and fish curry Thankamma Isac's essay delved into the history of cassava's arrival in India from South America and the place which the staple came to occupy as an affordable substitute for more expensive rice, especially in times of hardship. In her work, Thankamma Isac described how tapioca was stigmatized as the food of the poor, being associated with toddy shops and the workers who frequented them.

Themes of hardship and migration also surfaced in the work of Eli Côté-Ryshpan. Côté-Ryshpan described how her family recipe for apple pie, dating from her grandparent's emigration to North America from Poland in the years prior to the First World War, bore reminders of a time and place where sugar was an expensive luxury rather than a ubiquitous additive:

As the first world war began, food was now in short supply and my zayde's mother would be damned if some pesky government issued rations were going to stop her from fattening up her family. So, she improvised. They lived on a farm and so would trade their eggs with neighbours for things like flour and butter, but sugar was hard to come by. So, in the summer and fall, she would send the kids off to pick wild berries and cherries from the orchard and she would boil them down and create a syrup to use in her recipes in the place of sugar. She had rationed out her sugar and added just a touch to each batch to sweeten it up. She would store these in the cellar, and they would keep all year round. Of course, it would add a little berry taste to anything she baked, but my dad says my zayde preferred it that way and strongly disliked any dessert that didn't have that hint of a berry taste.¹⁶

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In today's industrialized food system, it can be difficult to imagine a context in which fresh berries were more accessible than refined sugar.¹⁷ Such insights into how rapidly the North American food system has changed in slightly over a century were shocking to Eli's classmates, providing an example of changes to our ways of life that were far more striking than statistics. The sharing of such information, even online, provided accessible narratives through which students could engage with history, gaining more insight into each other's cultures and a more democratic understanding of how historical trends changed the lives of everyday people.

Conclusion

These excerpts are a testament to how food can help students reframe their personal experiences within history. In doing so students not only learned fundamentals of

historical education by working on their historical thinking skills, acquiring a knowledge of the basics of proper citation techniques and honing their critical thinking skills, they also learned to relate wider historical trends and changes to their day-to-day existence. Discussions arising from student research, though sometimes difficult, fostered a climate of awareness, cultural openness and exchange encouraging students to share insights and perspectives, exchanges which would likely not have surfaced as easily in the context of a traditional history lecture. While I am under no illusion that food pedagogy will become the norm in historical education it is my belief that food serves as a deeply important tool for any educator willing to roll their sleeves up and get cooking be it in a teaching kitchen, a cafeteria dining hall or in the comfort of their own homes.

Notes

1. All references to student work are used with written consent. In some cases the students asked to remain anonymous. In these cases the student papers are referenced very broadly in an attempt to better preserve their anonymity. Quotes from student work are featured here without references in order to better integrate them into the body of the text. Beyond the removal of references excerpts from student work have otherwise not been edited, preserving their writing in its original state in an attempt to capture their unique voices.
2. Deirdre Murphy. "Toward a Pedagogy of Mouthiness: The Essential Interdisciplinarity of Studying Food." *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2013, pp. 17–26. JSTOR, jstor-jac.orc.scoolaid.net/stable/10.5325/trajincschped.23.2.0017. Accessed 28 May 2021.
3. Daniel Bender, Rachel Ankeny, Warren Belasco, Amy Bentley, Elias Mandala, Jeffrey M. Pilcher and Peter Scholliers, 'Eating in Class: Gastronomy, Taste, Nutrition, and Teaching Food History', *Radical History Review*, 2011.110 (2011), 197–216. <<https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2010-035>>.
4. Ken Albala, *Ken Albala's Food Rant*, 2021 <<http://kenalbala.blogspot.com.html>> [accessed 28 May 2021]; Jonathan Deutsch and Jeffrey Miller. 'Teaching with Food' in Jeffrey M Pilcher, *The Oxford Handbook of Food History* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
5. 'Afroculinaria', *Afroculinaria* <<https://afroculinaria.com/>> [accessed 28 May 2021]; Paula Marcoux, *Cooking with Fire: From Roasting on a Spit to Baking in a Tannur, Rediscovered Techniques and Recipes That Capture the Flavors of Wood-Fired Cooking*, 2014 <<https://www.yourcloudlibrary.com>> [accessed 28 May 2021]; 'Ruth Goodman - Historical Consultant' <<https://www.ruthgoodman.me.uk/>> [accessed 28 May 2021]; 'Townsend's', *Townsend's* <<https://www.townsend.us/>> [accessed 29 May 2021].
6. *Le Renouveau Pédagogique - Ce Qui Définit Le 'Changement'* ed. by Ministère de l'éducation du loisir et du sport (Québec, 2005), Collections Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec. <<https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/51343?docpos=2>> [accessed 26 May 2021].
7. 'Culinaria Research Centre' <<https://www.utoronto.ca/culinaria/food-studies-university-toronto>> [accessed 29 May 2021].
8. For readers unfamiliar with the Quebec educational system CEGEP refers to the *collège d'enseignement général et professionnel* system which is a publicly funded college that bridges the gap between high school and university. This system is distinct to Quebec and does not exist elsewhere in Canada. CEGEP resembles the UK sixth form/college, for those unfamiliar with the sixth form/college CEGEP is equivalent to the last year of high school and first year of university in the rest of Canada and much of the United States. As such, my CEGEP course *Food: History and Practice* is comparable to an introductory course at the university level.
9. Anonymous Student 1, 'Final Exam submitted to Food: History and Practice', Winter 2020 semester." (John Abbott College: Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, 2020.)
10. Anonymous Student 2, 'Final Exam submitted to Food: History and Practice', Winter 2020 semester." (John Abbott College: Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, 2020.)

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11. Isabelle Menarik, 'the History of Inuit Pitsik' (John Abbott College: Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, 2020) 1.
12. Sean Timmermanis, 'Piragi: the Sassiest Pastry' (John Abbott College: Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, 2021) 2.
13. Ibid, 3.
14. Joey Bujold-Généreux, 'Pâté Chinois (Shepherd's Pie) and its Mysterious History' (John Abbott College: Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, 2021) 2.
15. Sherin Thankamma Isac, 'Flavors of Kerala: Mashed Tapioca, Fish Curry and Chili-Shallot Dip.' (John Abbott College: Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, 2020) 2.
16. Éli Côté-Ryshpan, 'Not-So-Sweet Apple Pie', (John Abbott College: Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, 2020) 2.

Boundary, Body, Ban: Moral Transformation of Gamey Flavour (yewei 野味)¹ in China

Xinran Wang

518 ABSTRACT: The word ‘flavour and taste’ (*weidao*味道) expresses one perspective of Chinese culture: the texture and flavour of food should be digested philosophically (as *dao*道). Admittedly, ‘taste’ in English can be interpreted both as an appreciation of the delicacy and the evaluation of an art piece. In western tradition, from Plato treats aesthetics as the pleasure generated from visionary and auditory production, to Hegelian notion that sensory art is about seeing and hearing, then to Derrida’s deconstruction and reconsideration of the relationship between words and sounds, ‘flavour and taste’ has not entered into literary field nor considered as a philosophical category until Proust and postmodernist discovery of multisensory pleasure, and ultimately performs as a type of political power, ‘a peculiarly powerful semiotic device’, ‘a Gastro-politics’ (Appadurai 1981). In this sense, Chinese culture has a tradition to think through the flavour and the taste of food, to seek for an answer through their tongue. There is no intention to set a binary opposition between Chinese and the general western civilization. Simply pointing out the existed significance of taste in Chinese culture would allow us to reconsider the cultural and historical questions pertaining to consume the infamous *yewei*: what is, literally speaking, the ‘gamey flavour or the taste of wildness’ (*yewei*)? What does it belong to? If we say, ‘gamey flavour’ has nothing to do with the commonly used five flavours-pungent (*xin*), sour (*suan*), sweet (*gan*), bitter (*ku*) and salty (*xian*), but more of a phenomenological description with a blurring boundary or a complicated compound feeling hardly being evaluated, how should we define it, literally, culturally, socially, as it serves as a productive field? Or, to push it further, how could we comprehend the consumption of gamey flavour besides the physiological or sensory experience?

The tactics of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong ... lend a political dimension to everyday practices.

– Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*

Appetite for food and sex is nature (*shise xingye*食色性也)

– Mengzi 《孟子》 (Mencius)

The word ‘flavour and taste’ (*weidao*味道) expresses one perspective of Chinese culture: the texture and flavour of food should be digested philosophically (as *dao*道). Admittedly, ‘taste’

in English can be interpreted both as an appreciation of the delicacy and the evaluation of an art piece. In western tradition, from Plato treats aesthetics as the pleasure generated from visionary and auditory production, to Hegelian notion that sensory art is about seeing and hearing, then to Derrida's deconstruction and reconsideration of the relationship between words and sounds, 'flavour and taste' has not entered into literary field nor considered as a philosophical category until Proust and postmodernist discovery of multisensory pleasure, and ultimately performs as a type of political power, 'a peculiarly powerful semiotic device', 'a Gastro-politics' (Appadurai 1981). In this sense, Chinese culture has a tradition to think through the flavour and the taste of food, to seek for an answer through their tongue. There is no intention to set a binary opposition between Chinese and the general western civilization. Simply pointing out the existed significance of taste in Chinese culture would allow us to reconsider the cultural and historical questions pertaining to consume the infamous *yewei*: what is, literally speaking, the 'gamey flavour or the taste of wildness' (*yewei*)? What does it belong to? If we say, 'gamey flavour' has nothing to do with the commonly used five flavours – pungent (*xin*), sour (*suan*), sweet (*gan*), bitter (*ku*) and salty (*xian*) – but more of a phenomenological description with a blurring boundary or a complicated compound feeling hardly being evaluated, how should we define it, literally, culturally, socially, as it serves as a productive field? Or, to push it further, how could we comprehend the consumption of gamey flavour besides the physiological or sensory experience?

The entry for 'ye' (野) in the early etymological dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* (说文解字) explains that it means 'the suburban' (郊外也) – which refers both to the peripheral or the spatial outsider contradictory the centre *li* (里), as well as to the derivation as the cross-boundary illegality in compound words 'bastard' (*yezong* 野种) and 'gamey flavour' (*yewei* 野味), which more or less refers to the flavour contained in the gamey meat. Suggesting a physical Otherness, the boundary of desire, both individual and national, has been blurred in the gamey flavour discourse: from a positive standpoint, it represents the power of the ordinary people, belonging to the people and incarnated in the earthy nature; on the other hand, it continuously challenges the boundaries between human and non-human, the culture and the nature, the discipline and the desire, proffering the dialogical possibility and polemical battlefield.

This chapter suggests that in twenty-first century, uneven political power inner-China and internationally, combined with universalizing scientific critics towards the close relation between some zoonotic diseases and game meat consumption which has given gamey flavour a new moral meaning. In traditional Chinese medical and dietetic literature, game products had been, for the most part, a morally neutral substance. Medical and dietetic texts presented it as a food resource or medicine to some bodies-several northern ethnic minority groups ate those as an alternative protein resources, while weak or convalescent patient consumed those as part of the prescription. Historically speaking, wild game

products were never a common food ingredient for Han Chinese population whereas in the modern paradigm those products became into a panacea to treat sexual impotence, and many thought consuming gamey flavour would shake off the stereotypical China and Chinese man as the 'sick man of east Asia'. Entering into the twentieth century, eating wild game meat, and drinking medicinal liquor, therefore stand for certain unspeakable duty charged Chinese men with strengthening and bolstering their personal masculinity to the nation. In the process, round after round of zoonotic diseases, such as infamous SARS and COVID-19, has made the gamey flavour consumption a kind of Chinese *pharmakon*: it is a 'poison' that embodies an original intend to 'cure' the body. Above all, the gamey flavour has experienced the moral transformation from a morally neutral protein resource in ancient time, to a treatment to impotence, and finally being viewed as a morally bad food which represents the unruly personal desire and the danger to cross-boundary.

520 If the essence of gamey flavour consumption could be summed up as cross-boundary, it is more likely that the boundary is heterogeneous under the globalization circumstance. As news coverage on coronavirus and its supposed zoonotic origin from an infamous gamey flavour wet market in Wuhan, a connection between ordinary Chinese people and the barbaric behaviour as eating gamey meat has become the mainstream argument in the western media landscape. To be clear, until now the scientists have no certain conclusion for where, when, and how the virus first jumped from animal to human-being. Probably originated in wild bats and transmitted through another intermediate animal, while the exact pathway remains unknown (Mallapaty 2020). However, to ban the trade and consumption of game meat in China is nothing new. Right after SARS in 2003, the prohibition against eating several farmed gamey products such as masked palm civet came out for less than half a year. With people's life back to normal, the consumption of gamey meat is back to normal in 2004. The consumption has persisted until the burst of COVID-19, despite trenchant international opposition during the past decades. Whether it is the well-known slogan 'No Trading, No Killing' produced by World Wide Fund for Nature, or Chinese government tough clear-cut prohibition on trade and consumption, the battle against the gamey flavour partakes a strong political dimension insofar as it attempts to reverse the terrible stereotypical gamey-flavour-aholic into the current gamey-flavour-phobia.

While it is true that wild game products were never central to the Chinese diet, the cultural representation of the gamey flavour is overdrawn. It permeates contemporary Chinese narrations, including but not limited to literary works and films. Admittedly, one finds few works could be identified as featured with 'gamey flavour' in the traditional definition. Whereas Jiao Tong's 焦桐 (b. 1956) *Wanquan zhuangyang shipu* 完全壮阳食谱 (A Complete Recipe to Tonify Yang², 1999) uses food as metaphor proffering us 'the parody of various political and cultural discourse, with a special focus on phallism and gender dynamics'³ through the structure of recipe and poetry, Li Ang's 李昂 (b. 1952) *Yuanyang Chunshan*

鸳鸯春膳 (Aphrodisiacs, 2007) precisely weaves food with identity, sensory memory and gender issue into eight short stories, within which the first piece ‘*Guozili yu chuanshanjia* 果子狸与穿山甲 (Civet Cat and Pangolin)’ deals with the relation between childhood memory, nostalgia and gamey flavour, while the fifth one ‘*Chunshan* 春膳 (Aphrodisiacs)’ dives into the ambiguity between medicinal meal and sexual desire; whereas Liu Xinwu’s 刘心武 short stories, ‘*Bang* 傍 (Gold Digger)’, in which one lover of a rich businessman abuses another who is from the rural area, saying she is ‘someone with gamey flavour (*yewei*)... (the man) just wants to try something new (*changxian*)’, and in ‘*Bali Yanwo* 巴厘燕窝 (Bali Bird’s Nest)’ as well as ‘*Pola Jiding* 泼辣鸡丁 (Hot Diced Chicken)’ there are scenes where bird’s nest, shark fin, abalone and sea cucumber serve as the conspicuous representation of cadres’ corruption and as the opposition against ordinary people, Ning Hao’s 宁浩 (1977-) film 疯狂外星人 (*Crazy Alien*, 2009) envisions Chinese people to put the alien-the Other even wilder than all the existed gamey flavour-into the medicinal liquor, to joke about Chinese people’s belief that ‘the wilder the thing is, the more effective it is’ (Anderson 1988).

Whether one has eaten the gamey flavour or not, one definitely has consumed its cultural by-products in one way or another. This fact leads us to look into the spectrum of gamey flavour imaginary and to question whether this discourse is generated by the political culture of drinking and holding feast or simply a concern over insufficiency. This chapter analyzes the contested conditions of contemporary Chinese gamey flavour consumption as a fig leaf over the psychological fear of individual and national impotence, a literary representation of the unruly body, and a neoliberal cross-boundary imaginary. The first part takes a cultural historical perspective from which to demonstrate that in pre-modern Chinese medical and culinary texts, gamey flavour was moral neutral. Focusing on a comparative study between the two extremities-the medicine made by human body exemplified by Lu Xun’s short story ‘Medicine’ and the gamey flavour represented by Jiao Tong’s recipe and poetry collection, *A Complete Recipe to Tonify Yang*, the second parts prevail the cultural turn from diseases as national allegory to a more complicated individual desire expression and unconscious anxiety of the intertwined personal and national fate. To consider disease as metaphor, this part unveils the relation between individual physiological impotence and the impotence on a nation level. Hence, gamey flavour has become a treatment for impotence – ‘the lack of power’, and with an implication to strengthen the body, strengthen the nation. The third part introduces 3Bs theory-*boundary, body and ban*-as the key concepts to decipher the cultural turn from gamey-flavour-aholic to gamey-flavour-phobia after the zoonotic pandemics such as SARS and COVID-19, bursting out in 2003 and 2019 separately. Consuming game meats, in one night, seems to change into both illegal and morally bad behaviour. In a nut, this chapter calls attention to how gamey flavour’s moral implication has been constructed and transformed due to the influence from the west, the works done by Chinese intellectuals as well as the changing policies from Chinese government.

Gamey Flavour in Traditional Chinese Medicine and Dietetics

Let us first examine attitudes toward gamey flavour mentioned in Chinese texts before the twentieth century. Medical and dietetic source suggest that Chinese people, recorded by medicinal experts and intellectuals perceived game meat in general as a useful supplement for patients with weak digestion system, or consumed by certain ethnic minority groups because of their hunting routine, thus did not universally enjoy the gamey flavour, as some westerners have implied.⁴ However, most of wild game products were also not easily accessed to ordinary people. And for the most historical records, gamey flavour has been ascribed as of medical function rather than any moral implication.

Ancient Chinese intellectuals documented miscellaneous uses of gamey flavour in Chinese cuisine, often with a focus of its medical function and the special ‘mouth-feeling (*kougan*, taste and texture)’. Medical scholars did not present that wild game products as something that common people would consume in a daily basis but would be used as medicine for certain kinds of patients. *Shiliao bencao* 食疗本草 (*Materia Medica for Dietary Therapy*), written by Meng Shen 孟诜 (621-713) around seventh to eighth century, collects and summarizes hundreds of medical ingredients. In the second Chapter, there were eighty-five animal products, among which over a half were wild game ingredients including bear, tiger, civet cat, and etc. For instance, for the application of bear, he suggests that diverse parts have different characters: ‘1) bear fat: a bit cold in nature (*xing*), sweet and smooth... Better mixing with hair dyes to treat grey hair... 4) bear gall: cold in nature. Mainly used to treat excessive heat in body, malnutrition and convulsive epilepsy. 5) to cure child epilepsy, use two bear galls as large as soybean with milk and bamboo juice’. Likewise, tiger eye, tiger ball, rhino horn, fox intestine and stripe were also mentioned to be applied in the treatment for malnutrition and epilepsy. Later doctors elaborated on the idea that the gamey flavour was tonic since it was ‘easy to digest’.⁵ Anthropologist E.N. Anderson also sums up that game meats in Chinese context, like lamb, are ‘warming and supplementing’ in nature, making it useful for illnesses caused by coldness, and are ‘high in easily digestible protein and easily assimilated mineral nutrients, including iron in modern biomedical terms’ (2015: 234), which could be used for digestion issue and malnutrition.

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Gamey flavour had entered into ordinary people’s sight as early as in the Northern Song dynasty (960–1126). *Dongjing menghualu* 东京梦华录 (*The Eastern Capital: A Dream of Splendour*) accounted inventories of food and drinks served in markets and restaurants in its Eastern Capital.⁶ In both Zhouqiao and Moxing Street Night Markets, there were vendors selling barbeque wild fox meat, gadget, deer, river deer, wild duck, and etc. along with chicken, pork, rabbit, fishes and other more or less domesticated animal products. Without a more detailed description of the texture, flavour, or medical value of game products, it is reasonable to conjecture that consuming gamey flavour in the night market was just an alternative option rather than a healthier or conspicuous food choice.⁷

Beside the application in traditional Chinese medicine, consuming game products were related to geographic condition and diverse ethnic tradition. Manchurian, Mongolian and several other ethnic minority communities had a hunting tradition therefore their protein resource was from lamb or game meats, and their mineral nutrients and fibre were mainly from wild plants. Gamey flavour for them, due to the eco-environmental condition, was a way of life rather than a choice of food. From Mongols' conquer in the *Yuan* dynasty (A.D. 1277-1368), court official book of food, nutrition, and dietetics, 饮膳正要 *Yinshan zhengyao* (Essential knowledge for drinking and feasting) and 回回药方 *Huibui yaofang* (Western medical formulas) documented dozens of recipes to cook gamey flavours and various medical formulas based on game meats. Some scholars point to how Mongolian and Middle Eastern ingredients and cooking methods influenced food and medicine at that time (Anderson 2015), whereas it is noticeable that several new recipes are made of game meat. Although the major section of recipe 'Strange Delicacies of Combined Flavours' in *Yinshan zhengyao* includes a large number of lamb and mutton recipes, another twenty recipes contain bear, river deer, wolf, and other game with Central Asian seasonings. Since the book was assembled by Hu Sihui, who was in charge of making the imperial food healthy and exotic (Buel et al. 2010), 'strange delicacies' at least indicates the appearance of exotic gamey flavour on emperor's table. As for the medical function, *Yinshan zhengyao* and *Huibui yaofang* continue the argument from *Shiliao bencao*, for instance, fox meat 'cures infantile convulsion epilepsy, spiritual confusion, indistinct speech, and inappropriate singing and laughing' (ibid, 409).

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By the time Manchus led the country in the Ching dynasty (A.D. 1644-1912), gamey flavour was more widely prepared as dietetic delicacies. Emperor had made hunting an imperial court entertainment and a common way in leisure time for the elite, with a mention of wild deer, river deer, bear and etc. Different from nowadays preference of wild game meat by the southerners (Zhang and Yin 2014), in the most important culinary book *Suiyuan shidan* 随园食单 (Recipes from the Garden of Contentment), the intellectual gourmet Yuan Mei only mentioned deer, river deer, and civet cat in five recipes and wild duck, wild chicken, sparrow in few comments. Compared with a whole chapter on pork and eight lamb recipes (not mentioning that the whole lamb feast includes seventy-two ways to cook lamb), those products were not that often prepared or consumed. To describe deer meat, Yuan said it was 'hard to obtain. And when being cooked, it is tenderer than river deer'. As for the civet cat, 'the fresh meat is rare. As for the preserved meat, add sweet rice wine, steam until well-done, and slice to serve... compared with ham it is tender and fatty'. Noticeably, when listing out the 'Admonishments', Yuan put 'Ban Eating by Ear 戒耳餐' among the taboos, which suggests consumers should not to eat cuisine only depends on how expensive and famous the ingredients were. The examples Yuan used as conspicuous consumption were bird's nest and sea cucumber, without even a touch referring to the gamey flavour.

Gamey flavour consumption in pre-modern China does not imply any moral significance. In medical and culinary texts, different game products were different in nature and medical functions and therefore never inherently nor consistently good for health. While in later part of this chapter we could see the morally and metaphorically cultural turn of the gamey flavour appeared in modern China.

Disease as Metaphor

‘Maybe there is; this is how it always is...’

‘Always is, but is it right?’

– Lu Xun 鲁迅 《狂人日记》 (*Diary of a Madman*)⁸

Food is among the most frequently adapted allegories in contemporary Chinese literature. Conventionally we should trace back to Lu Xun’s radical critique against the stagnant feudalism as ‘cannibalistic rituals and conventions 吃人的礼教’.⁹ One of the earliest and influential concept to decipher Lu Xun’s works is posed by Fredric Jameson as ‘national allegory’ – ‘*the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society* (1986, 69)’. To ponder on the ‘third world’ literary tradition, he differs ‘the Asiatic mode of production, or the bureaucratic imperial system’ (ibid, 68) from the Latin American mode. And Chinese literature, as belonged to the Asiatic mode of production, should not be decoded through Freudian psychoanalysis or Marxist class-struggle theory separately, but as a combination of the seemingly individualized sensory experience and the national destiny ingrained in it. An ordinary people’s life story often performs as a metaphor of the whole nation.

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Lu Xun’s short story ‘Medicine’ is a typical national allegory: the son of the Hua gets tuberculosis, while the child of the Xia participates in the revolution-Hua and Xia (the compound word *huaxia* refers to the Chinese nation) both suffer from the darkness of the ramshackle society. As a result, the federalist eats a steamed bun soaked with the revolutionist’s blood, which is not a panacea to Hua’s fatal disease. Two young men are buried side by side as the final scene, indicating the death of the youngsters, meanwhile leaving a silver line as Xia’s tomb is piled with wreaths displayed by the upcoming revolutionists. Echoing the ‘cannibal virtue and morality’ in *Diary of a Madman*, this political metaphor derives from Lu Xun’s personal experience and expands into an implication of the national fate. In his connotation, Lu Xun contemplates the relationship between the cannibalistic Chinese society and his own experience with exotic Chinese medicine-both at the national scale and personal scope, cannibalism is a mental disease, or as what C. T. Hsia has famously called the nation’s ‘spiritual disease’ (Hsia 1999: 533). In the preface of *Diary of a Madman*, he mentions his childhood story about Chinese medicine:

...more than four years, I used to go to the pawnshop and pharmacy, almost every single day... because the doctor who prescribed was a noted one, he used exotic medicinal usher: reed's root in winter, sugarcane which has experienced frost for three years, crickets in couple, Japanese ardisia herb with seeds... everything was rare and hard to get, whereas my father's health became worse and worse. As a result, he died.

In his treatment, Lu Xun highlights how rare and costly the medicine is, building up a mirage that the exotic thing has a magic power to cure the disease. Clearly, third-world stories about individual experiences and fate are analogical to the whole nation undergoing severe social strikes from external forces. Consequently, Chinese writer is endowed with a dual-identity for apart from being literati, inevitably becoming a political fighter against feudalism and imperialism.

Admittedly, Lu Xun's 'Medicine' is not, of course, among the description of the impotence which I want to analyze, but tuberculosis; it is consuming the steamed bun soaked with human blood (人血馒头) rather than the gamey flavour I would like to focus on; it is written before the establishment of the PRC rather than the reform and opening-up. Nevertheless, the application of human organ along with the consumption of exotic game meat or wild herbs in traditional Chinese remedies or adapted in medicinal meal, share a similarity as an extremity of cross-boundary: the former digests human-body to cure oneself, often through carefully selecting certain abject parts such as blood, urine of little boys (*tongzi niao*), excrement, hair, placenta (*zibeche*) or embryo, while the latter one consumes the gamey flavour, which stands for the furthest thing from the human-being and the most natural object in order to establish and nourish the cultural, identical subjectivity. Broaching the subjectivity leads to a larger question regarding the uncertainty of a strong, physically and mentally healthy body. Because of the uncertain subjectivity, the body who consumes and the body being consumed delve deep into the complicated construction and ingestion of the symbolic otherness in order to reaffirm the subjectivity. And this irrational, sometimes non-scientific duality of rarity and remedy, healing both the individual body and the societal body is not a unique phenomenon limited to Lu Xun's time. In the post-Mao era, opening-up brings in modern advertisement industry and booming Internet platforms, accelerating the spread of information and misinformation. The bondage between the pricy rarities and the effectiveness of medicine gets more and more intense, the valence of which lies in its imaginary projection of power. Rather, the power circulates from the money or power exchange between human-human to the micro relation within the bodily experience of human-medicine, represented by the effectiveness of the remedy. In other words, consumers equate the price they pay for the medicine, the hardness to obtain it with a fetishized conviction of the medicinal strength.

Both ways predominantly feature the ‘dietary determinism’ proposed by historian Rachel Laudan (2013, 255-57). Unlike the traditional culinary system that ‘eat what you are’, dietary determinism suggests that ‘you are what you eat’. The theory of ‘dietary determinism’ appears quite useful when Hilary Smith analyzes the construction of moral meaning in milk in modern China (2020). She considers the emphasis on the relationship milk consumption and strong body with good morality to strengthen the nation was influenced by the western powerful bodies. Here I re-quote this theory with the same logic: the belief of the relationship of gamey flavour and *zhuangyang* discourse roots in the dietary determination that eating powerful ingredients could bolster individual bodies, and as a result strengthen the nation.

By the same token, for ordinary Chinese consumers, they have accepted dietary determination and thus drawn a connection between the gamey flavour and nourishing the body. In 2006, China Daily has conducted a survey on the reason why people choose to eat wild game meat, according to which 32.4% is out of ‘nourishing (*zibu* 滋補)’. The real comprehension of gamey-flavour-aholic should be based on the understanding of traditional Chinese medicine, in particular the entanglement of food and medicine in everydayness (Farquhar 2002: 47-77). Half a century ago, Baudrillard had already figured out people in modernity grow out a fetishized obsession towards medicine, and the evaluation or the care of body is far more than a biological concern but connected to social status. In pursuit of a ‘perfect’ body, in the contemporary Chinese context, people turn to the application of medicine meal and medical liquor to discipline their body. The interaction of traditional knowledge and contemporary practice makes the ‘bodily experience’ matters. As Judith Farquhar points out, it contributes to a ‘self-consciously crafted’ life (166), expert knowledge of *yangsheng*, rather than being imposed on life as a modern knowledge-power confluence, is ‘not only needed, but desirable’ (166–167). *Yangsheng* (養生), often translated as life nurturance, marks by the privatization of health care and the surge of health-advice books in the transient social and medical milieu.

The blurring boundary between medicine and daily food consumption distorts the notion of ‘improve *bu* (or ‘bolster and tonify’ 补)’. A pertinent example is the disease of *yangwei*, sexual impotence (阳痿), a common concern in contemporary China. Impotence as a categorized disease, has become into a common concern in contemporary China almost the same time as the opening-up reform in 1980s. It is relatively easy to see common worries about sexual performance and self-diagnoses of impotence as a metaphor for the middle-age, middle-class men, often cadres, receding powers in their career life – or the weakness of a nation. The comparison mixes two rather different senses of the word impotence, which links to the essence – ‘the failure of power’. Impotence might also be an epidemic in the classical sense beforehand, while as Judith Farquhar borrows Paula Treichler’s term from her article on AIDS as ‘an epidemic of signification’ (1987), it is noteworthy that impotence

has become an ‘epidemic of significance’ in the post-Mao China (2002: 269). Through her interpretation of the movie *Ermo* (Zhou 1994), Farquhar makes a connection between the failure of erection and the emasculation of the social body where an ordinary female labourer Ermo is trapped between her impotent old husband who is a communist party retired cadre, and a profligate young lover. Based on Farquhar’s interpretation, ‘impotence’ should be read as a ‘national allegory’ which represents the ‘denunciation of the failures of the past and the banality of the future for a China that has committed itself at every level, even the most domestic, to millennial capitalist relations of production’ (2002: 274). The comparison mixes two rather different senses of the word impotence, which links to the essence – ‘the failure of power’. Here we are in the highly political domain of common sense and embodied experience. Interventions at the level of the body are not distinct from efforts to exert power in the world while the most ordinary engagement with food and sex are the exertions to the macro power dynamics.

The cultural turn of impotence most being focused on the national level to the private field has transpired in recent decade. Everett Zhang conducts an anthropological research on the birth of *nanke* (men’s medicine), which treats impotence and other complaints, as the signal of new moral code producing desire-centred subjectivity (2007): *yijing* (emission), as a symptom under Mao regime, echoes a moral code of repression against individual desire, whereas impotence, as the symptom of post-Mao, represents the justification of individual sexual desire. In haste to set up the contradiction between the repression and expression of subjectivity, Zhang risks the pitfall of an oversimplified, making his statement falling into the trap of ‘repressive hypothesis’ upheld by Michel Foucault (1978).¹⁰ It is in another group of works that we come cross a more ambiguous, and thus more intriguing, endeavour to collaborate both social anxiety of impotence and personal desire expression.

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The abundant methods to improve yang are rooted in the uncertainty of the identity and subjectivity as men. In other words, individual ineradicable anxiety of the possible impotence, combined with the panic to recall the derogatory trope of the sick, feminine China¹¹, fabricates the whole cultural ideology underscored *zhuangyang*. The renowned Taiwanese poet and food writer Jiao Tong’s *Recipe* relates in an avant-garde, lyrical, while ironic style how Chinese turns to food to broach their desire for erection, both on an individual sexual intercourse level and on a political level. Named as *Recipe*, Jiao Tong does not intend to teach anyone to follow the recipe to cook any tonics so as to improve one’s sexual performance; rather, he plays with the words in an ideological level, with a subconscious anxiety towards impotence, deliberately triggering an aesthetics of a postmodern pastiche formed by the poetic language. Provoked by *zhuangyang* discourse’ rich history, Jiao arranges the book into three meal plans A, B and C, each of which contains eight dishes, and names all the dishes by four characters. With a concentration on Chinese characteristics, names from A meal such as ‘日出东方 Sunrise from the East’, ‘埋

头苦干 Bury Head into Hard Work’, ‘我将再起 I will Rise again’, or ‘还我河山 Restore Our Lost Land’ convey the mainstream ideology to ‘make the nation great again’ along with the sharpening determination to become stronger. B meal applies natural elements in titles, exemplified by ‘南山猛虎 Ferocious Tiger from the South Mountain’,¹² ‘北海蛟龙 Dragon from the North Sea’, and ‘红杏出墙 Red Plum Branches out over the Wall (A wide-spread Chinese idiom to indicate the betrayal of the wife)’ as allusions of the sexual intercourse, while nothing is more blatant than C meal via nominating dishes with sexual idioms – ‘花前月下 In Front of Flowers and Under the Moon (refers to place suitable for dating)’ ‘偷香窃玉 Steal the Fragrance and Jade (indulge in secret and illicit relations with women)’ ‘一柱擎天 One Pillar to Shoulder the Sky’. From political reference and a hint of sexual narrative to a straightforward, vivid portrayal of sex, Jiao Tong targets to bridge the political agenda to individual sexual desire through the tunnel of gamey flavour food.

One typical example is the piece ‘*Nanshan Menghu* 南山猛虎 (Ferocious Tiger from the South Mountain)’ in B Meal. From the selection of ingredients to the cooking process, gamey flavour emerges as the key character of this recipe and a key point for us to understand the relation between the gamey flavour and *zhuangyang* discourse:

[Ingredients]

One Bengal tiger penis, two pickled plums, four perilla leaves, one piece of dried seaweed, two cups of rice, and a bit of red wine.

[Cooking Method]

1. Quickly wash rice and drain it.
2. Put rice into rice-cooker. Add tiger penis, pickled plums, seaweed, water and red wine.
3. Cook until well-done. Turn off the cooker and stand for another ten minutes.
4. Take out the penis, wipe it clean, and put it away to reuse next time. Remove plums’ pit. Mix up seaweed, plums and rice.
5. Dice perilla leaves. Wash and strain the water through a piece of gauze. Sprinkle on rice. (2013:39)

When following the fourth step to ‘take out the penis, wipe it clean, and put it away’, whether there is any scientific evidence for the tonic function embodied in it is not essential in terms of tiger penis’ specialty. The ritualized process of consuming a tiger penis and the absence of its physical existence at the table mimic the fact that many people use and reuse the seahorse, seal penis, or other things believed with *zhuangyang* function – served as a symbol, consumers are fond of those ingredients because they meet their imagination of the tonics of yang would like.

Two simple principles consumers held in selecting tonics are ‘eat the organ which will benefit your organ’ (吃啥补啥) and ‘eat the shape similar to what you want to bolster’ (以形补形). Following the first principle, all mammal’s kidneys along with their penis are everywhere. Admittedly, most of the organs are quite normal. Pig kidney and bull penis could be found almost at every Chinese barbeque restaurant, somehow contributing to the ‘no-waste’ principle proposed by the government. However, those normal mammals’ penis is not large enough to fulfil their similar to the religious belief in ‘the rare, the larger and the wilder they consume, the more yang they gain’. Hence, tiger, deer, and seadog penis are frequently applied and soaked in white/yellow liquor (*baijiu/huangjiu*) to make medical liquor to improve yang energy (*qi*).

The second principle is what Anderson calls the ‘sympathetic magic’:

Walnut meats have a reputation for strengthening the brain because they look like a brain; red jujubes and port wine are thought to strengthen the blood mainly because of their red color...Fowl-especially wild-are probably most used. Much stronger are sea cucumbers, bird’s nests, raccoon-dogs, deer antlers, shark fins, pangolins, and many other wild animals and animal products. Many of these are famous worldwide as examples of bizarre things human beings will eat and pay high prices for (1988: 192).

What he does not reveal explicitly is that sea cucumber gains its popularity mainly because its similarity to penis; the hardness and largeness of the rhinoceros horn conveys a similar ideology in that sense; and pangolin and loach (and even bamboo shoot) are good at punching into the hole, as a simulation to the sexual process. The list is quite long, since we can easily draw some loose connection or weird imagination between human penises, sexual behaviour, and an animal feature. It is unfeasible to evaluate the effectiveness, given that from a psychological perspective the consumers believe that their performance and male identification are strengthened by the choice of food. Inevitably, cultural images of the gamey flavour appeal to male-identified appetitive desires like what the tiger penis represents. Perpetuating the fantasy of sexual empowerment minimizes awareness on the dark side of consuming the gamey flavour, appealing instead directly to the appetite: ‘somehow, nothing satisfies like the ‘gamey flavour’. And the appetite being appealed to is constructed as male. Masculinity appears to require both the privilege gained by the money and method to access limited wild animal and the belief in *zhuangyang*, which contributes to the reinforcement of masculinity. Jiao Tong’s following words directly point to the constructed masculinity and the symbolic role played by the tiger penis:

[Notes]

The health condition of Taiwanese men is not suitable to consume tiger penis. Recommend to buy a plastic one at Chinese pharmacy instead.

[Specification]

...

From ancient China, heroes are often suffered from the deficiency of kidney (*shenkui* 肾亏). Tiger penis, therefore, safeguards men's dignity, startling the universe and moving the gods. Taiwan produces most of the tiger penises around the world. Although the overall quantity of tiger on the planet is less than a thousand, there are more than thirty thousand tiger penises on Taiwanese market (2013: 40).

How preposterous these words are, how sublime the discourse to tonify yang is. Jiao Tong intentionally plays with his national and gender identity as a Taiwanese man, satirizing the condition that the world production of tiger's penis could not fulfil the needy requirement of Taiwan, and suggesting to buy the plastic penis since it is, indeed, a placebo. By the same token, other things advertised as tonifying yang, nourishing the kidney (*bu shen*), or improving essence/energy (*bu jing/qi*) such as pangolin scale, tiger bone medicinal liquor, the hairy crab from Yangcheng lake and etc. have more than they should on the market. When we consider the absent tiger penis on the dish as for a display, as excel to the imagined consumption of masculinity, the unconcealed 'plastic penis' pushes the connotation of gamey flavour even a step further into its virtual representation. On one hand, it is similar to what Slavoj Žižek's concern of the logic of commodification in the global market economy. In *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, Žižek notes that, in today's postmodern, market-oriented economy, many consumer commodities are presented in a manner that deprives them of their malignant properties: coffee without caffeine, cream without fat, and beer without alcohol, and it could also extend to the consumption of virtual sex (sex without sex), politics (defined as expert administration) without politics, liberal multiculturalism (the experience of the Other without Otherness), and so on (2002: 10–11). Building on this characterization, the consumption of tiger penis without penis is a Chinese way to collaborate the tradition into the age of globalization. On the other hand, plastic penis could remind us of the copycat (山寨) culture as an expression of popular resistance to power. Yu Hua suggests in *China in Ten Words* that 'it (the copycat culture) represents a challenge of the grassroots to the elite, of the popular to the official, of the weak to the strong' (2012: 188). Both Yu Hua and Jiao Tong attempt to articulate the 'grant talks'¹³ to construct the national myth from the level of common people (*minjian*). In the 'afterword', Jiao aluminate that 'for cooking, I anticipate to ritualize the process and minimize expensive ingredients, like the spiritual meaning-freedom, equality and philanthropy-contained in *zhuangyang*, which pursues the achievement of popularized and generalized tonics to avoid monopoly' (2013: 160). The essence of plastic repetition and the representational significance of tiger penis are further illuminated in the beginning of the poem:

如今只剩下恐惧，
Now there is only fear left:
他们用恐惧，不断
they use the fear, continuously
复制又复制的长鞭，
to replicate and reproduce the long penis,
赤裸着被恐惧
naked and worshipped by
膜拜。如今
fear. And now

...

When the first stanza describes how penis is replicated by anxiety and the fearful emotion, inevitably, the plastic penis in the age of industrialized yang tonics echoes what Benjamin demonstrates in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (2008). The mode of production transformed from craftsmanship to technological reproduction ousts the 'aura', or the authenticity and genuineness involved in art production. Benjamin brings us back to the origin of artworks as 'the objects of worship' (ibid: 12), being received and appreciated by their 'cultic value' and 'display value' (13), which also echoes the traditional practice of yang tonics consumption. From the realm of tradition, yang tonics (as exemplified here by the tiger penis) are underpinned by ritual therefore the value and the effectiveness generate from the worship. The 'aura' endowed from its traditional ritual practice generates its original use value, which has been distorted into conspicuous consumption as showing-off of money and power. Similar to the art in the mechanical reproduction, the plastic penis has lost its aura whereas functions as 'the naked and worshipped by fear'. When discussing western mega-mythology, we always visualize the desire to patricide, love for mother and the fetish rooted into the fear to be castrated, while Chinese people's consumption of yang tonics originates from the anxiety of impotence. Those are two different fears: the western one is the fear and uncertainty about the disappearance of the penis, while the Chinese one is the anxiety of impotence, the powerlessness to erect.

The way Jiao Tong broaches tiger penis and yang tonics leads to an inevitable question regarding the invisible and untouchable female body during the discussion of *zhuangyang*:

...
我的耽溺如利牙，
My addiction is like sharp teeth,
咆哮般抽长，
prolonged like roaring,

撕开你的装饰，
torn down your pretence,
咬你的颈项。我的爪
and bit your neck. My paws
是忍不住的火，
are the unbearable fire
模拟腾身纵跃，扑向
mimicking jumping and soaring, towards
你的乳房，
your breast
你的双臀。’
and your butt.

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The violent behaviour of imitating the tiger during sex should not be comprehended only by personal choice of hyper-masculinity, as female body is the prey needed to be conquered; rather, female body stands for the imaginative motherland and the anxiety of impotence represents the aphasiac political ambition in the postcolonial Taiwan if we also look at other more straightforward poems. For instance, the recipe of a fish soup named as ‘我将再起 (I will Raise again)’ uses small fish swam upstream from Fenghua county at Zhejiang province, the hometown of Chiang Kai-shek. ‘Small fish swims upstream (溯流而上的小鱼)’ is his motto, while even his favourite book *Streams in the Desert* is included. Echoing Li Denghui’s political doctrine, another piece ‘心灵改革 Revolution of Mind’ inebriates crabs as how the politician intoxicates the people. Followed this recipe is another highly political one, ‘戒急用忍 No Haste, Be Patient’, as the view held by Li Denghui to deal with mainland China, is what Chen Shuibian harshly criticizes for. With the parallel structure calling for ‘no haste, be patient’ with the preparation of black-bone chicken, whether it is effective to improve yang or not, or whether the statement is useful to deal with the mainland is dissolved in chicken. As such, the hardcore political agendas are softened and resolved by the preparation and mocking of food, bridging the kitchen to politics, bonding desire for food, sex, and power into one dish. By the postmodern celebration for the nonsense, the anxiety towards individual impotence and national powerlessness has been stirred in a dish. Fantastic political discussions asides, Jiao’s final piece ‘一柱擎天 One Pillar to Shoulder the Sky’ possesses an ambitious and imaginative association, although a bit clichéd connection between penis and the monumental buildings all around the world:

变长了变长了
Become longer and longer

变成了东京铁塔；

into Tokyo Tower;

变歪了变歪了

become askew and more askew

歪成了比萨斜塔。

into Leaning Tower of Pisa.

魔术师指挥眼神，

The magician directs eyes

扶正了扶正了

holding up and straighten it

扶成人民英雄纪念碑；

into the Monument of People's Heroes.

竖起了竖起了

Erect, erect

竖起男子汉的图腾。

a totem of masculinity.

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It is almost impossible to figure out the ingredient of this monumental masculine dish by reading this piece of poem. The superficially totemist worship of penis deep inside is a 'magic of shape and dignity', and by the hand of a magician, 'Tokyo Tower', 'Leaning Tower of Pisa', 'the Monument of People's Heroes', and the 'totem of masculinity' all become a playful joke, deconstructing and reversing the austerity of *zhuangyang* discourse.

From Gamey-flavour-aholic to Gamey-flavour-phobia: Zoonotic Diseases, Boundary, Body, and Ban

Entering into the twenty-first century, wave after wave of zoonotic diseases related to the consumption of game meats have changed their moral meaning from the metaphoric empowerment on a national level into a more complicated feeling from gamey-flavour-aholic to gamey-flavour-phobia under the consideration of boundary, body, and ban.

Although 'gamey-flavour-aholic' has always been a suspect lexicon in post-Mao China, the gamey flavour partakes of a cornucopia of food and wealth, the rapid urbanization and globalization insofar as it invokes of a visceral and bodily ambiguity. As a matter of fact, the anthropological analysis around Chinese gamey flavour consumption relies heavily on the occasions when certain zoonotic (animal-borne) diseases have made a loose connection to

the unfarmed animals. From the condemnation towards the infamous civet cat combined with discrimination against southern Chinese in 2003 during the height of SARS¹⁴, to the irrational blame against Chinese food, Chinese restaurant, or even Asian people in general¹⁵, within few years the fever for game products has transferred into a mark of sin attached to consumers.

This transformation is not simply driven by Chinese consumers. Rather, it is bounded with Chinese pursuit for international recognition thus highly influenced by the western world. Medical anthropologist Mei Zhan has published a widely discussed essay after SARS, 'Civet Cats, Fried Grasshoppers, and David Beckham's Pajamas: Unruly Bodies after SARS', which precisely juxtaposes the culprit of the SARS outbreak—the consumption of exotic animal, namely civet cats, and the popularity of Beckham's body in China to suggest: in post-SARS China, discourses and practices of both human and non-human consumption conjure up a society that refuses the Orientalist, once being Othered tropes of exotic desire for gamey flavour, and form an anticipatory neoliberal consumer choice in order to participate in the globalization (2005). The consumption of civet cat and Beckham's body, seemingly unrelated, represent the contradictory between gripping the local, regional food preference and vie for the acknowledgement by international standard mainly dominated by the west. Those international entities include Michelin guide (Farrer 2019), the World's 50 Best Restaurants List, or UNESCO (Chan & Farrer 2020). By means of the culinary nationalist desire for a broader global recognition, *zhuangyang* (enhance yang) and *yangsheng* (life-nurturing) discourse, intertwined with wild game products such as civet cat and pangolin, are the distorted products by widely acknowledged national power, a general medical concern for impotence, and the flourishing outspoken individual desire. Experiencing through the age of hunger and the socialist era with strictly nation-distributed quota system, Chinese consumers urgently require a way to unleash their individual desire. This desire, whether via the fulfilment of appetite, or the satisfaction of sex, can be seen as a self-orientalist imaginary of the neoliberalism (Harvey 1989) and a pursuit to anticipate into the trendy hyperglobalization (State News Service 2020). In this sense, the preference of gamey flavour should be reiterated through three key concepts as 3B: *boundary, body and ban*.

Cross-boundary is the essential concern while consuming gamey flavour; body should be ruminated as the field to operate the power; and ban operates like a knife hanging above both producer's and consumer's heads, demarcating the consumption as the moral bad.

By boundary, I refer to the post-human cross-border studies, both inter and intra-species boundaries, especially between the human and non-human, rejecting the predominantly anthropocentric emphasis on the mobility of human-being per se.¹⁶ Anthropologists and literary critics have been quite sensitive to the fundamental dichotomy drawing a line between the self and the Other, between the inside and outside. As Judith Butler suggested,

‘a movement of boundary itself appeared to be quite central to what bodies are’ (1993, ix). The fluidity of moral meaning contained in the gamey flavour indicates the newly constructed boundary between the human-being and the nature. The outsider is perceived as threatening. The intuitive need for a safe and stable integrity leads the social group to squeeze out whatever unfamiliar into the outside, creating an absolute difference (Parasecoli 2008, 37-60). And as analyzed in the former part, the anxious inclination contained in the contemporary gamey flavour discourse is a derivative from the belief of the natural yang energy in the game products.

By body, I follow the tradition of the ‘techniques of the body’ proposed by French anthropologist and sociologist Marcel Mauss as ‘the ways in which from society to society men know how to use their bodies’ (Mauss 1973: 73). What we eat and drink are codified and regulated within our social and cultural life, far from being natural. The inherently political essence to discipline the body or to nourish the body, as argued in gamey flavour’s function as ‘*yangsheng* 养生’, literally means nourishing one’s life or *zhuangyang*, as the technique to improve sexual performance and boost reproduction. Just as sex has been widely written about as a field for political struggle aimed at controlling the body (Foucault 1990), food choice can constitute a vehicle to effect or even discipline bodies in the most intimate dimension as the intersection of appetite and sexual desire. Arjun Appadurai has observed:

The body calls for disciplines that are repetitious, or at least periodic. This is not because the body is everywhere the biological fact thus demands the same disciplines. On the contrary, because the body is an intimate arena for the practices of reproduction, it is an ideal site for the inscription of social disciplines, disciplines that can be widely varied ... the techniques of the body, however peculiar, innovative, and antisocial, need to become social disciplines, part of some habitus free of artifice or external coercion, in order to take their full power (1996: 67).

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His observation cuts into the intimacy between reproduction (sex) and social disciplines, bridging the individual arena to the institutional force. In my definition, the ‘techniques of the body’ does not merely point to the interference of the institutional power outside of the body to the private field. Rather, it is a cultural, fictional, schematic power facilitated among the gamey flavour consumption. If we consider body as the field for power exchange, the newly moral perception of gamey flavour from the empowerment of body as the ultimately good to an uncontrollable natural damage which could destroy the human-being.

And the third conception ban is originated from Mary Douglas well-known discussion in *Purity and Danger*, in which the notion ‘taboo’ constantly intermingles with the concept ‘boundary’ (Douglas 1969). The lack of boundaries could cause displacement or disorder, becoming dirt or danger. In the moment of breaking the taboo, followed by the possible disease or legal punishment, consumers temporarily share the dark secret and lose their individuality; as a matter of fact, many of them enjoy holding feasts centred around the

gamey flavour and seem to experience sensual pleasure precisely because they choose to give up part of their individuality to form a community bounded by the sin. Not only blurring the boundary between human body which consumes and the nature body that being consumed, but also erasing the distinction between each other, the pursuit for gamey flavour, as a result, has become a sin shared by this consumer community.

Notes

1. In this essay, I intend to use my own invented compound word 'gamey flavour' both as a literal translation and a neutral indicator of yewei. Whereas wild game meat, in a more narrow sense, is a more commonly accepted way of expression, it loses the 'flavour' (wei) perspective of the wildness and conveys a morally negative meaning.
2. Zhuangyang, using tonics to improve yang energy, roots in the yin-yang cosmos as a supplement added to the narrowly defined masculinity, yang.
3. The original text is '戏仿各种政治、文化话语，尤其聚焦于生殖崇拜和两性关系' (2013: 85). First published in 1999 in Taiwan as Wanquan zhuangyang shipu 完全壮阳食谱, while the mainland version is published in 2013, renamed it as Yuwang Chufang 欲望厨房 (Kitchen of Desire) to go through the censorship. Although the version I cite in this essay is Yuwang Chufang, I do insist on using the original name of the book. Except where specified, all translations from the Chinese language are mine. The original texts are provided selectively where I think would be helpful for readers; otherwise, Chinese reference is given in pinyin or omitted.
4. A brief summary of this stereotype about which all Chinese people are used to consume wild game products and 'bizarre' ingredients could be seen in King, M. T. (2020). 'Say no to bat fried rice: changing the narrative of coronavirus and Chinese food'. *Food and Foodways*, 28(3), 1-13. With the advent of COVID-19, the United States has risen the fear of Chinese food, generating a racist characterization of Chinese food as 'bat fried rice' widely spread by cultural products and media coverage. King traces westerners' misunderstanding of Chinese food back to the late nineteenth century, when they first encountered Chinese population in large numbers to lay down the history of cultural misrepresentation regarding Chinese food in the west.
5. This idea could be found in Yuan Mei 袁枚 (A.D. 1716-1798)'s quotation of doctor Xue Shengbai 薛生白's words as 'Xue often makes a suggestion to people that do not eat domesticated animals because the game one is not only more delicious but also easily digestible'.
6. Bianliang 汴梁 was the Eastern Capital city in the Northern Song dynasty. At present, its name has been changed into Kaikeng 开封, a city in Henan province.
7. The original text simply listed all the meats and several typical or popular cooking methods in night markets with no special focus on wild game products. And the price for night market's food was much lower than consuming in a restaurant, indicating that the barbeque was presented as a daily consumption rather than served in a feast. Additionally, game products were only few, unlike in Bencao mentioned above, which contained more exotic, expensive products from bear, tiger, so on so forth.
8. Lu Xun 1981; translation adapted from Lu Xun 1977. With this text and other Lu Xun's lines quoted in this essay, the cited English translation has been modified.
9. The original expression in *Diary of the Madness* is when the madman consults a historical text in order to reaffirm the hazy anecdote he remembers that 'in ancient times, people often ate human beings', while all he sees in the document is the Confucian 'virtue and morality (renyi daode) scrawled unevenly over each page', though as he continues reading the volume deep until midnight he begins to discern an injunction to 'eat people' (chi ren) concealed 'between the lines (1981: 425; 1977: 10)'. For an in-depth analysis of this literary and cultural tradition, see Gang Yue, *The Mouth That Begs: Hunger, Cannibalism, and the Politics of Eating in Modern China* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999). Other influential discussions following this tradition include Rey Chow, *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Languaging As a Postcolonial Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), where she analyzes Ba Jin's Jia; Fredric Jameson, 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational

- Capitalism' in *Social Text*, Autumn, 1986, No. 15 (Autumn, 1986), pp. 65-88, where he also discusses Lu Xun's works in detail.
10. As Foucault points out in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (1978) the Victorian era was not silent on sex and sexuality due to the repression. The era that was known for the fear of the merest hint of sex while could to some extent correlated everything to sexual desire, which was deeply rooted in their obsessively concerned with sex. Hence, under the guise of repression, sex became an object, an incitement to knowledge, or even more, a fetish.
 11. From *Madam Butterfly* to *The Last Emperor*, the orientalist trope equals Asian men to femininity has been permeated through these cultural projects. Some renditions could see: Rey Chow. 'Seeing Modern China: Toward a Theory of Ethic Spectatorship' in *The Rey Chow Reader*. pp 92-123.
 12. The name Nanshan Menghu is borrowed from the idiom Nanshan Shehu 南山射虎 Shooting Tiger from the South Mountain, which refers to the heroic behavior to shoot the tiger done by the General Li Guang in Han Dynasty (BC 202-AD 220). The undertone of the idiom is indeed a juxtaposition between the killing of a strong tiger and the proof of his masculinity.
 13. Here I borrow the definition of 'grand talks' from David Wang's 'dashuo 大说, as opposed to narrative fiction or xiaoshuo. These dashuo are aimed at sublime subjects – from nationalism to sovereignty, from frontier disputes to economic issues – and public contention' (2020: 28)
 14. Southern Chinese has been perceived by northerners as a center of zoonotic diseases for centuries: see Martha Hanson, 'Robust Northerners and Delicate Southerners: The Nineteenth Century Invention of a Southern Medical Tradition', in *Innovation in Chinese Medicine*, ed. Elisabeth Hsu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 262-91. See also in Mei Zhan's piece as mentioned in the former paragraph. A well-organized discussion of SARS impact and its cultural reproduction, see SARS in China: Prelude to Pandemic?, ed. Arthur Kleinman and James L. Watson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).
 15. There are bunches of reports on anti-Chinese during the COVID-19, one comprehensive study on both news report at the early stage and the cultural reproduction triggered by anti-Chinese sentiment could see Michelle T. King (2020) 'Say no to bat fried rice: changing the narrative of coronavirus and Chinese food, *Food and Foodways*'.
 16. For the classic survey on 'border studies' as an emerging field in social science and humanities, see T. Wilson and H. Donnan (eds) *A Companion to Border Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012). For a more recent discussion about food and cross-boundary studies in relation to the concept of globalization and zoonotic disease, see A. Smart and J. Smart, 'Food, Borders and Disease' in *The Handbook of Food and Anthropology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016). For the consideration of the notion boundary, limitation and desire-control in the Chinese context, I would like to mention a line from an ancient Chinese philosopher, Laozi, stated as 'five flavours could destroy people's taste (wuwei lingren koushuang 五味令人口爽)', in which he uses 'five flavours' to indicate the unlimited pursuit for the flavourful and delicacy, and 'koushuang' is a disease with which patients lose their sense of taste. By the same token, Confucius says 'even if I (am so poor, as to have to) use my bended arm (to serve) as my pillow, I can still be happy' (Confucius: Lun Yu, Pt. VII, Ch. 15. Quoted in F.T. Cheng's *Musings of a Chinese Gourmet*: p7) to indicate that pleasure does not depend on the abundant material things nor does the enjoyment of food only relate to the scarcity or specialty of the ingredients. Hence, the gamey flavour consumption is against the traditional Chinese way of life, rooting in the overindulged desire, causing imbalance within human body and between human and nature.

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Food in Sabbath Table Hymns: A Taste of the World to Come

Susan Weingarten

ABSTRACT: Many traditional Jews today sing together at table during their family Sabbath meals. The songs they sing, *zemirot*, are found in prayer books from the Middle Ages. Many of these songs mention Sabbath foods as part of the accepted way of celebrating the Sabbath: for example, the wine and bread blessed at the beginning of the meal. But other foods mentioned in the *zemirot* may not necessarily reflect the foods which would have been on the tables of those singing: it is unlikely that many – or any – Jews ate all of the ‘swans, quails and fish’ of the refrain to one of these songs, although fish by itself was very popular. In this paper, I look at food in these *zemirot*. I suggest that it is used to construct an imaginative world, a sort of transitional space outside weekday time and place, where the real food eaten and the imagined food of the table hymns join together to create a ‘taste of the World to Come’.

Many traditional Jews today sing together at table during their family Sabbath meals, a practice which goes back to mediaeval times. While the songs that are sung have varied over the ages, a canon of accepted Sabbath songs, *zemirot Shabbat*,¹ has grown up, mostly in Hebrew and Aramaic but also in Yiddish, Ladino and Spanish.

There are a large number of different tunes for each song, some having been passed down through the generations of a particular family, others influenced by local popular music. The songs belong to a genre of Hebrew poetry called *piyyut* (pl *piyyutim*), from the same Greek root as English ‘poetry’. *Piyyutim*, first found in late antique Palestine, are sacred poetry which became part of prayers in the synagogue. *Zemirot* form a different sub-genre, as they belong in the home. As well as being sung during the three mandatory Sabbath meals, *zemirot* often include allusions to food, such as the wine and bread traditionally blessed before the Sabbath meal. But the *zemirot* also refer to other foods as well.

In this paper I shall be looking at food as it appears in these *zemirot*: how far it is real and how far imaginary.

It is unclear how many *zemirot* are extant today: there is a generally agreed core, but variations on the periphery. I shall be taking as my base the twenty-five *zemirot* discussed by Naphtali Ben-Menahem in his book *Zemirot shel Shabbat (Zemirot for the Sabbath)* mostly in Hebrew but including five in Aramaic.² I have excluded prose passages and psalms.

Origins

When and where did *zemirot* originate? There have been attempts to relate them to psalms sung in the Temple, in particular to the ‘song for the Sabbath day’ (Psalm 92). This ‘song for the Sabbath day’ is explained in the Mishnah as being a song for ‘the future to come’, ‘a day which is all rest and eternal life.’³ The earthly Sabbath is imagined by the rabbis as a foretaste of the eternal Sabbath of the World to Come. We shall return to this later. Meanwhile, I have found no hint that Ps92 was ever a table hymn, and it does not mention food. Similarly, Midrash Esther Rabbah, sometimes claimed as foreshadowing *zemirot*, writes: ‘When Israel eat and drink and are merry, they bless and praise and glorify God’, but the vocabulary used there is just of praise of God, not necessarily in song.⁴

The earliest identifiable *zemirot* date back to the Middle Ages, although we have no way of knowing how long they had been in use before their first appearance in northern France, in the compendious prayer-book known as *Mabzor Vitri*, which dates from the eleventh century. It is inevitably difficult to date individual songs, and would have been even more difficult had it not been for the habit of Jewish poets to sign their works by including their own name in acrostic form at the beginning of each line.⁵ Thus we can identify *Tzama Nafshi* (*My Soul Thirsts*) as written by the Sephardi Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra (born in Tudela, 1089-1164) or *Barukh El Elyon* (*Blessed be God on High*) as written by the Ashkenazi Rabbi Barukh bar Samuel of Mainz (approx. 1150-1221). But there are a number of writers whose signature we cannot identify: eg there are two poets who sign themselves simply as Moses and one as Menahem. And there is one very popular rabbi whose acrostic signature in one case seems to be forged. Rabbi Isaac Luria, (known as the ‘Divine Rabbi Isaac’, or the Ar”i, after his Hebrew initials) was a leading kabbalist in the Holy City of Safed in Galilee in the sixteenth century. He apparently wrote and signed three *zemirot*, one for each Sabbath meal, each preceded by *Atkinu Se’udata* (*Prepare the Meal*) in Aramaic.⁶ But this was not enough for his followers: they took the popular *Yom zeh leYisrael* (*This is a Day for Israel*) signed simply ‘Isaac’, and added more verses with the acrostic ‘Luria’. However, the shorter version of this song, with ‘Isaac’ but without ‘Luria’, was included by Moses b Jacob of Kaffa (d. ca. 1520) in the Kaffa prayer-book before Isaac Luria was born in 1534.⁷ This original *zemer* appears to have been written by Isaac Handali, and became popular with rabbinic and Karaite Jews alike.⁸ There are also a number of *zemirot* identified by their inclusion in collections of poetry of well-known authors, eg R Judah haLevi or R Solomon ibn Gabirol. *Zemirot* are found in many prayer books, and in the last few decades, little booklets containing the most popular songs, together with the long Grace after Meals, have become a common memento given to guests at wedding meals (although they are not sung at such meals!).

Sabbath in the Bible

These *zemirot*, then, are sung at all three Sabbath meals, and many of them contain references to food. Before examining these references, let us first set these table hymns in the cultural

context of the Jewish Sabbath and the ways Jews observed it through history, beginning with the Hebrew Bible. The first Sabbath in the Bible belongs to God: it was the seventh day of creation when God rested from his work of creating the world. (Genesis chapters 1-2) The description of the second Sabbath celebrated by the Israelites, even before they receive the laws of the Sabbath as part of the Ten Commandments, centres on food: manna, the miraculous bread from heaven with which God fed his people for forty years in the wilderness.⁹ Every day they received a portion of manna calibrated for their needs, but on Friday they received a double portion to include the Sabbath meals. No manna fell on the Sabbath, so they did not have to work gathering and cooking it. The Ten Commandments given afterwards on Mount Sinai then tell the Israelites that they must always keep the Sabbath holy by refraining from work: 'Remember (observe) the Sabbath day to keep it holy... Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work' (Exodus 20.8-10/Deuteronomy 5.12). The prophet Isaiah tells us that all people who keep the Sabbath will be rewarded by God: 'Thus says the Lord: keep judgement and do justice, for my salvation is near to come...Happy is the man that does this.... that keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it' (Is 56, 1-7). He then adds: 'If thou restrain thy foot because of the Sabbath, from pursuing thy business on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight (*oneg*)... then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord ... and I will ... feed thee' (Is 58, 13-14). Isaiah's Sabbath observance has progressed here from passive refraining from work, to active enjoyment, *oneg*. Both the double portion of manna for the Sabbath, and the concept of *oneg*, enjoyment – usually by eating – on the Sabbath, form part of the observance of the Sabbath through the ages, and hence the content of the *zemirot*.

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Sabbath in the Talmuds

Both Talmuds each have a whole tractate, Shabbat, devoted to the Sabbath, with instructions for observing it. We concentrate here on Babylonian Talmud (BT) Shabbat, pages 113a-119b, looking at the food in particular. This begins citing Isaiah 58.13 above, and expands on it: 'honouring' the Sabbath means washing, and changing to special clothes and walking differently, as well as not pursuing business. The discussion then moves to the biblical character of Ruth, who was the ancestor of the royal House of David, and therefore will be the ancestor of the Messiah. Not only is Ruth reported to have washed herself and changed her clothes,¹⁰ but she is said to have eaten, to have been satisfied and to have left food over [simply 'left' in the AV].¹¹ The rabbis expound: 'She ate: in this world; she was satisfied: in the Messianic age; and she will leave over: in the World to Come.' Sabbath food here is thus linked to Ruth, with a foretaste of the Messianic age and the World to Come – when there will be enough food for everyone to leave some over.

Later in this passage the rabbis rule that eating three meals on the Sabbath is obligatory. They promise rewards: those who join these meals will be saved from the travails of the

Messiah, and the wars that will precede his coming. The table was to be set, they specify, before the Sabbath begins. At these meals, breaking and blessing the bread should be done over two loaves, in memory of the miraculously doubled portion of manna God sent his people in the wilderness.¹² And if we ‘delight’ in the Sabbath, God will reward us by feeding us (Isaiah 58.14 above), and will give us our hearts’ desire (Ps 37.4). This leads to a discussion on the meaning of the word ‘delight’ (*oneg*):

It refers to the delight (*oneg*) of the Sabbath. With what do you show your delight in it? — Rab Judah son of R. Samuel b. Shilat said in Rab’s name: With a dish of beets, large fish, and heads of garlic. R. Hiyya b. Ashi said in Rab’s name: Even a trifle, if it is prepared in honour of the Sabbath, is ‘delight.’ What is [the trifle]?—Said R. Papa: *Casa de-harsana*.

The rabbis make it clear here that the delight, *oneg*, of the Sabbath is through enjoying good food (even if their definition of good food may not be ours). This is not confined to luxury foods such as large fish: if you intend to honour the Sabbath by eating, you can even do it by making *casa de-harsana*. This was a dish made of tiny, very smelly fish, which seems to have signified the smallest amount of and/or the cheapest food: eg once, when someone arrived at an inn unexpectedly, there was no food – not even a *casa de-harsana*.¹³ So even the poorest foods, if made with the intention of honouring the Sabbath, can be part of ‘delighting’ in it. The text then continues to detail the servile work various rabbis did ‘to honour the Sabbath’. Many of them are connected to preparing food: ‘R. Safra would singe the head [of an animal]. Raba salted *shibuta* fish. R. Huna lit the lamp. R. Papa plaited the wicks. R. Hisda cut up the beetroots. Rabbah and R. Joseph chopped wood. R. Zera kindled the fire...’

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The rabbis then tell the story of Joseph-who-honoured-the-Sabbath and his reward (see below).

The Sabbath, which begins at sunset on Friday, was also greeted as a Queen or Bride: ‘R. Hanina robed himself and stood at sunset of Sabbath eve [and] exclaimed, ‘Come and let us go forth to welcome Queen Sabbath.’ R. Jannai robed himself on Sabbath eve and exclaimed, “Come, O Bride, Come, O Bride!”¹⁴

This personification of the Sabbath became extremely popular among the sixteenth-century kabbalists of Safed and was incorporated into the Sabbath eve synagogue services everywhere, as well as into many *zemivot* in the home. The Sabbath meals are thus metaphorised as the banquet of the Queen/Bride.

All these Talmudic discussions I have cited are taken up and alluded to in the Sabbath *zemivot*, written some hundreds of years after the Babylonian Talmud, but relating to the same aspects of celebrating the Sabbath. Below is a description of a fictional Sabbath eve meal in a nineteenth-century Jewish novel, which sums up for us the context of the Sabbath atmosphere, the food, and the songs:

Israel Zangwill's Sabbath

Israel Zangwill's *Children of the Ghetto* (1892) depicts the transformative power of the Sabbath in the lives of the Jewish poor of Victorian London, in his chapter: 'The Hebrew's Friday Night':

The rabbi was returning from synagogue... He had dropped into a delicious reverie – tasting in advance the Sabbath peace. The work of the week was over. The faithful Jew could enter on his rest – the narrow, miry streets faded before the brighter image of his brain. '*Come my beloved, to meet the Bride, the face of the Sabbath let us welcome.*'

The rabbi here creates his Sabbath in his brain, oblivious of the harsher reality outside, aided by the imagery of the Sabbath hymn quoted. This quotation, ringing in the rabbi's head, is descended from the Talmudic text we saw above, and belongs to a hymn written by R Solomon Alkabetz, another sixteenth-century kabbalist from Safed, which is still sung today in the synagogue service which precedes the Sabbath meal. Weekday cares are left behind: 'Tonight his sweetheart would wear her Sabbath face, putting off the mask of the shrew, which hid not from him the angel countenance....A cheerful warmth glowed in his heart, love for all the wonderful Creation dissolved him in tenderness.' Zangwill notes the Sabbath loaves on the table: '...with a curious plait of crust from point to point and thickly sprinkled with a drift of poppy-seed; and covered with a velvet cloth embroidered with Hebrew words'. On the table also stand a 'flask of wine and the silver goblet'. There is soup at this meal and 'fried fish made picturesque with sprigs of parsley', but no meat is mentioned. The transformative power of the real food combined with transcendent song is made clear: 'after a few mouthfuls the Pole [a poor guest] knew himself a prince in Israel'.

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Zangwill relates to the *zemiroth* specifically, on a slightly apologetic note: 'When supper was over, grace was chanted and then the *Zemiroth* was sung – songs summing up in light and jingling metre the very essence of holy joyousness – neither riotous nor ascetic ... For to feel the 'delight of the Sabbath' is a duty and to take three meals thereon is a religious obligation....' Zangwill even provides the text of three *Zemiroth*, with their stress on meat, wine and fish; comfort for sorrow, and the rebuilding of the Temple to come. Zangwill's Sabbath, then, replaces and transcends weekday cares.

Foods Mentioned in the *Zemiroth*

Bread and Wine

With this in mind, we turn now to look specifically at the food in the *zemiroth*. We saw that the rabbis of the Talmud noted the formal blessings over wine and bread that begin the three Sabbath meals, and the required double portion of bread in memory of the double portion

of manna. Real wine¹⁵ and two breads would thus be on the table of Jews celebrating the Sabbath with food and song, since they had become religious requirements. So it is hardly surprising that they are mentioned frequently in many *zemirot*, where they form both the halakhic (religious regulatory) and the spiritual context. For example, *Menuhah veSimbah* (*Rest and Joy*) cites the two loaves and the *qiddush* (*blessing*) over the wine, as does *Yom zeh Mekhubad* (*This Day is Honoured*), and many other *zemirot*.

Other foods

Would the other foods mentioned in the *zemirot* have been reflections of what was on the real table in front of the singers? In some cases we can safely assume that the food vocabulary in these songs alludes back to Bible and Midrash: 'eating sumptuously and drinking sweet beverages'¹⁶ clearly alludes to the feasts of the book of Nehemiah (Neh 8.10), while the 'savoury dishes' *matamim* of many of the *zemirot*¹⁷ would have reminded the singers of the 'savoury dishes' made of 'two good kids of the goats' prepared for the patriarch Isaac by his wife Rebecca in the book of Genesis (Gen 27.1-41), and the many elaborations of this dish in rabbinic exegesis. The *zemer*, *Tzur MiShelo Akhalnu* (*Rock from whose Stores we have Eaten*) begins with a verse which is repeated as a refrain:

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Rock from whose stores we have eaten,
Bless Him, O constant companions,
We have had sufficient and have left over,
Just as the Lord has commanded.¹⁸

This echoes the story of Ruth quoted in the Talmudic discussion above: she too ate of God's food, was satisfied and left some over.

We saw how the two loaves on the table echo the double portion of manna in the wilderness. There too, and later in the Temple, the priests would set out twelve shewbreads as part of the ritual of the Sanctuary.¹⁹ So shewbreads appear in *Ki Eshmera Shabbat*,²⁰ and some hassidic families actually have twelve Shabbat loaves, rather than just the required two.²¹

Other foods mentioned in the *zemirot* which relate back to the Bible include the swans, quails and fish of the refrain to the *zemer*, *Ma Yedidut Menuhatekh*, (*We Cherish the Rest that Comes with You*). Swans are mentioned in a feast of King Solomon,²² and were certainly seen as royal food in mediaeval Europe (they still belong to the Queen in England). Quails, like manna, were miraculously provided for the Israelites in the wilderness.²³ Let us look at the context of this *zemer*, known from the sixteenth century, to hopefully understand better what is happening here:

We cherish the rest that comes with you, O Sabbath Queen
Run to greet you: Come, O royal Bride
Wearing our best clothing we light the Sabbath lamp with a blessing

Food in Sabbath Table Hymns

When all our labours are completed and mundane work forbidden
To delight in delights (*oneg*) – swans, quail and fish
On the Sabbath eve we prepare all kinds of savoury dishes (*matamim*)
While it is still daytime fattened fowl are made ready
To be served with a variety of dishes, drinking spiced wines
Thus to indulge in delicacies during all three meals
To delight in delights (*oneg*) – swans, quail and fish

The following verses talk of both rich and poor honouring the Sabbath, and how, while business and money-making are forbidden, it is permitted to arrange marriages, teach children from books and to sing, as well as to rest ‘as if on a bed of roses’. The final verse says:

Sabbath rest is a taste of the World to Come
Everyone who delights in it will have much happiness
And be spared the travails of the Messiah
When our redemption will flourish and all sadness and sorrow be banished
To delight in delights (*oneg*) - swans, quail and fish

It would seem clear that few of the foods in this *zemer* are in fact the foods which would have been on the tables of those singing: it is unlikely that many – or any – Jews ate the ‘swans and quails’ of the refrain, or even the ‘fattened fowl’ of the second verse, although they may have had fish on their table in some form. Nor would everyone have had access to the ‘spiced wines’. Recognising this problem, one modern prayer book translates the refrain as: ‘It is indeed a day of joy filled with the likes of succulent poultry, quails and fish.’²⁴ Moreover, some foods which would usually have been on the table are conspicuous by their absence - like the very heavy Sabbath stew kept hot overnight (called *cholent* in Yiddish, or *adafina* in Ladino)²⁵ which does not, to my knowledge, appear in any *zemirot*.²⁶

Other foods mentioned in the *zemirot* are simply metaphorical. Rabbinical literature, and especially mediaeval Hebrew poetry was full of complex word-plays, so it is scarcely surprising that the *zemirot* include a number of plays on words connected to food and eating. Inevitably some of these go back to the Bible. Thus the love of God in *Yedid Nefesh* (*Beloved of the Soul*) tastes better than *nofet tzuf*, a honeycomb, referring back to Ps 19.8-11,²⁷ while Isaac Luria in *Azamer beShevachin* (*I will Sing with Praise*) prays for honey, alluding to the words of God in Ezekiel 3.3, ‘like honey in the mouth’. In *Yom Shabbaton* (*Sabbath Day of Rest*) the Sabbath is remembered like a ‘sweet savour’, an allusion to the ‘sweet savour for God’ of the offerings in the Sanctuary, mentioned in the Torah many times.²⁸ This allusion would join the singers’ awareness of the good smell of the real food on their table. Indeed, the rabbis wrote that, since the destruction of the Temple, the Jewish table has taken on some of the functions of the altar.²⁹

Some *zemirot* cite an earlier metaphorical word-play: when R Joseph Caro wrote his code of Jewish law in the sixteenth century, he called it *Shulhan Arukh*, (the *Prepared Table*), and a later commentary on it was called the *Mappah*, (*Tablecloth*). Thus the mention of the ‘prepared table’ in a number of *zemirot* is bi-valent: referring both to the real table, which the Talmud specifies was to be prepared before the Sabbath, and to the metaphorical ‘table’ of laws, including Sabbath laws.

Meat

Meat is mentioned frequently in the *zemirot*. It is cited repeatedly together with the other delightful foods (*oneg*): the double portion of bread (or manna), good wine, fish and ‘all savoury dishes’, in a number of *zemirot*. It was clearly very desirable, which does not mean it was always there. But the Hebrew word *basar*, (*meat*), refers not only to the dead animal food we eat, but also to living human flesh. Thus the anonymous undated *zemer*, *Hai Adonai uBaruch Tzuri* (*May God live, and my Rock be blessed*) quotes Psalm 136.25: God ‘gives bread to all flesh’. But in a *zemer* written by the mediaeval Spanish poet, Abraham ibn Ezra, the play on ‘flesh’ is turned into an almost metaphysical conceit. Thus *Tzamah Nafshi* (*My Soul Thirsts*), begins: My soul thirsts for the Lord, for the living God, alluding to Psalm 63.3: ‘O God...my soul thirsts for thee/ My flesh longs for thee in a dry and thirsty land.’ Ibn Ezra does not actually quote the second half of the verse in the psalm, but takes up its content, the ‘flesh’ of the psalm and uses it in his refrain, sung after every verse: ‘My heart and flesh will sing to the living God.’ Thus the flesh-and-blood living human both sings of, and (sometimes) eats flesh of dead animals. Of course, the human will also die: Ibn Ezra contrasts the cemetery, final ‘home of all living’, with the ever-living God. And he stresses that both eating and singing are done with the mouth, while the hand of God both holds the ‘soul of all living’ and contains food to feed the living.

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Fish

Fish also appear frequently in the *zemirot*. We saw that the rabbis of the Talmud distinguished between eating very desirable large fish, and ‘*casa de-barsana*’, a much less desirable dish which may have come in very small quantities. But if it was intended to honour the Sabbath, it was the intention which counted. Herring would have been as good as carp, although neither merit a mention as such in Talmud or *zemirot*. The rabbis of the Talmud do mention more legendary creatures: the large fish on which Joseph-who-honoured-the-Sabbath spent his last penny, and when cut open proved to have swallowed a large pearl, which rewarded Joseph with the means to honour many more Sabbaths. Joseph reappears in the *zemirot* too: in *Yom Shabbat Qodesh hu* (*the Sabbath Day is Holy*):

Meat, wine and fish
Should not be missing from our delights.

Food in Sabbath Table Hymns

And if these three are displayed before him,
This will be his reward
Whom [the King] delights to honour:
Joseph cut a fish in half
And found a pearl in its flesh.

We note here that the presence of the meat, wine and fish is not to be taken for granted: if they are there, this is a reward from God.

Apart from the food, the *zemirot* relate to other aspects of the Jewish Sabbath: rest from work and weekday cares, as well as hopes for the future: both mundane hopes of marrying off the children, and eschatological hopes of the rebuilding of the Temple and the coming of the Messiah. Most of the *zemirot* traditionally sung on the Sabbath eve end with some sort of reference to these future hopes, including hopes of the World to Come. Thus *Menuhah veSimhah* (*Rest and Joy*) ends:

With two loaves and blessing over wine,
With many savoury dishes (*matamin*) and a generous spirit,
Those who delight (*oneg*) in [the Sabbath] will see much goodness,
In the coming of the Redeemer and the life of the World to Come.

There are indeed several midrashim which refer to the banquets to be enjoyed by the righteous in the World to Come.³⁰ God is said to have killed and salted the female Leviathan, a gigantic fish, to preserve her flesh for the righteous.³¹ Thus mentions of the World to Come often imply food to come as well.

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The Audience

It is clear from the *zemirot* we have looked at that their learned authors were thoroughly familiar with biblical and Talmudic texts. What of their audience? How many of the ordinary Jews who sang understood what they were singing about in Hebrew (and sometimes Aramaic)? Kohn proposes that singing *zemirot* was originally an elite rabbinical custom, which gradually penetrated ordinary Jewish homes: small booklets with collections of *zemirot* begin to appear from the fourteenth century.³² Some *zemirot* were translated into German, at least from the mid-seventeenth century, while translations into the vernacular Yiddish aimed at women exist from at least 1854.³³ That women were singing we know from seventeenth-century rabbinic complaints which disapproved of this custom, even at family meals.³⁴ But how many women – or men – were literate in any language? We can perhaps infer that certain key-words in the Hebrew texts should have been comprehensible to many from the prayers: the Sabbath, God's name, rest, the Messiah, the Temple, Eden and the World to Come, as well as food words: wine and bread, and possibly also fish and meat.

Transitional Genre, Transitional Space

Modern scholarship on Sephardi Hebrew poetry from mediaeval Spain points out that there existed a tension between traditional *piyyutim*, sacred synagogue poetry, and newer Arab-influenced poetry whose content included songs of wine and love, even including homo-erotic love.³⁵ I should like to propose here that in some ways *zemirot* (both from Sephardi as well as Ashkenazi contexts) can be seen as middle ground, a transitional genre: they are indeed sacred Sabbath songs, but they also deal with the material world, with foods, clothes, match-making, as well as more spiritual aspects. The foods they mention often refer to real foods on the table in front of the singers which they bless and eat, but the foods are also often idealised. As noted, there is no *cholent* or herring, but savoury dishes, sometimes mythical ones, with the likes of swans, quails, fattened fowl, and spiced wines. Thus the *zemirot* sung on the Sabbath are transformative: they convert the material world to a transitional space.³⁶ The real food on the table and in the mouth combine with the imagined foods of the songs to create a fantasized sacred bubble outside weekday time and space, giving the singers a taste of the future ‘World to Come’, a hint of the banquet of the righteous in the celestial Garden of Eden.

Notes

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1. *Zemirot*, songs, *zemer* in the singular.
2. Naphtali Ben-Menahem *Zemirot shel Shabbat* (Jerusalem, 1949, in Hebrew).
3. MTamid vii 4. For a brief explanation of the Talmudic literature, see my paper ‘Nuts for the children: the evidence of the Talmudic literature’, *Nurture: Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery Proceedings* (Bristol, 2004)
4. Midrash Esther Rabbah iii, 13.
5. Acrostics exist in Hebrew poetry from the time of the Bible, where some psalms eg Ps. 145 were written with each line beginning with a different letter in alphabetical order. In the Middle Ages it became popular for poets to sign their works in acrostic form by beginning each line with the letters of their own name.
6. These *zemirot*, based on kabbalistic concepts from the Zohar, are sung today by Hassidic Jews.
7. *Yom Zeh leYisrael* also appears in *Mabzor Aram Tzova* published in Venice in 1527: Y. Weingarten (no relation) *HaSiddur haMefurash haShalem (The Complete Annotated Prayerbook)* (Jerusalem, 1991), who also notes that the attribution to Luria is impossible.
8. Kaffa is present-day Feodosiya in the Crimea, once a port at the end of the Silk Road: LJ Weinberger *Jewish Hymnography: a literary history* (London/Portland Oregon, 1998) Kaffa p343; *zemirot* p 348
9. Exodus 16.11-35; Numbers 11.1-9
10. Ruth 3.3-6
11. Ruth 2.14
12. Exodus 18.1-36;
13. BT Bava Batra 60b. See on this my paper: ‘Fish and fish products in late antique Palestine and Babylonia in their social and geographical contexts: archaeology and the talmudic literature’ *Journal of Maritime Archaeology* 13 (2018/3) 235–245.
14. BT Shabbat 119a:
15. Sometimes no more than raisin ‘wine’. See on this in the thirteenth century: Rabbi Elazar Vormensis: Oratio ad Pascam, ed. Simcha Emmanuel (Jerusalem, 2006, in Hebrew) p110, allowing it for Passover if ordinary wine is unavailable.

Food in Sabbath Table Hymns

16. From the *zemer, Yom zeh Mekhubad*, (This Day is Honoured)
17. *Eg Barukh El Elyon; Menubah veSimbah* etc
18. Tr Zangwill, adapted
19. Leviticus 24.5-9.
20. Above, n.2
21. Some families braid their two loaves with six strands of dough each for the same reason.
22. IKings 5.3. (AV geese). Others translate: 'succulent poultry'.
23. Numbers 11:31-34
24. *Siddur Avodat HaLev*, published by the Rabbinical Council of America, (Jerusalem/New Milford CT, 2018)
25. See CRoden *Book of Jewish Food* (Harmondsworth, 1997)125-8;365-8
26. *Schalet (=cholent)* does appear in Heine's poem *Prinzessin Sabbat*, but as a satire on Schiller.
27. The Law of the Lord is perfect...sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.
28. Leviticus 1.9 and many parallels
29. BTBerakhot 55a. See on this JBrumberg-Kraus, SMarks, JRosenblum: 'Ten Theses on Meals in Early Judaism' in SMarks, HTaussig eds, *Meals in Early Judaism: Social Formation at the Table* (New York, 2014) 13-39. This has a suggestive analysis of the table setting, albeit relating to an earlier period.
30. See on this: JRosenblum 'Dining in (to) the world to come' in *olam ha-zeh v'olam ha-ba: This World and the World to Come in Jewish Belief and Practice* ed. LJGreenspoon (West Lafayette, 2017), 105-114
31. BTBava Batra 74b
32. AEKohn *A History of the Jewish Custom to Sing around the Shabbat Table* (1200-1600), MA thesis, Jewish Theological Seminary, (2018) 27.
33. JBuxtorf *Judenschül* (Basel, 1643), chapter 10; *Siddur Qorban Minbah* (Vilna, 1854).
34. Joseph Yuspa Seligman (1570-1637) *Yosif Ometz* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1927/8), #602-603 (134).
35. RBrann *The Compunctious Poet: Cultural Ambiguity and Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Spain* (Baltimore, 1991)
36. My concept of 'transitional space' owes much to the 'relational space' discussed by YRotman: 'The relational mind: in between History, Psychology and Anthropology' *History of Psychology* (2020) doi:10.1037/hop000175

Teaching Cookery Gets Personal: Harnessing Imagination to Feed the Will to Learn

Nikki Werner

ABSTRACT: This paper examines how imagination might be employed to make culinary education personal, so the learner becomes the protagonist in their own food story, compelling them to cook that which has meaning and, as a result, seek out and hone the required skills.

I begin by giving the background for drawing on the work of education theorists Kieran Egan and Rudolf Steiner and then outline how their theories form the basis for setting up lifelong learning and establishing a suitable age for the research.

The qualitative research of five cooking lessons with one learner is documented to reveal benefits and challenges through my reflections as the educator. The lesson progression is structured with memory as the entry point and the task of reimagining as the core challenge (prompting idea generation, critical thought and mastery of relevant cooking techniques).

The case study shows the age at which reimagining could add value to learning, offers a glimpse of how this task can impact acquiring the necessary skills and shows the effect it can have on shifting how a learner thinks about cooking.

In the spirit of ‘what if’, this paper is not a proof of concept but a proof of possibility. I was curious to see what would happen if teaching cookery started in a different place. It was a journey of emotion, inspiration, and learning and I’m hopeful about the potential of the idea.

It’s quite a cringey story but we were driving to my auntie’s house in England and we were in a traffic jam and I saw this big truck. It had a picture of a pig on it and said ‘Veganism: thinking of me as a some-one, not a some-thing’, and that made me feel really sad.

My sister was veggie and I’d always talked about it but I loved meat too much to ever actually do it. So I decided after that Christmas lunch, which we were on the way to, I would try my best to go vegetarian. To be honest, I did not think I would last, but now I’ve been veggie for three years.¹

This was the first story Molly told me. Molly, who is 14 years old, joined me on a journey of cooking and learning (on both our parts) for this paper. Before starting out we didn’t know each other well at all but I did know she was vegetarian, because I remembered this story.²

Teaching Cookery Gets Personal

‘The reason you remember and enjoy stories,’ says Dr Gillian Judson, ‘is because they make you feel feelings’.³ Judson is a scholar of and an advocate for imagination in education, as is Dr Kieran Egan, whose book *Teaching as Storytelling* started me on this journey.

Egan defines imagination as ‘the capacity to think of things as possibly being so; it is an intentional act of mind; it is the source of invention, novelty, and generativity; it is [...] a capacity that greatly enriches rational thinking’.⁴

As a teacher of cooking I became interested in the capacity to imagine as a way of showing not just how to chop an onion but why anyone might want to do so in the first place, because my reasons for cooking came from a place of meaning far removed from stainless-steel surfaces or chef’s whites.

That said, the Netflix series *Chef’s Table* features chefs around the world who tell their own story through cooking, with episodes following the departure-initiation-return trajectory of Joseph Campbell’s hero’s journey.⁵ A simple mechanism often applies: the memory of a much-loved dish serves as the springboard for reimagining a new dish and the story behind it connects the two.

But why should this mechanism be limited to fine-dining chefs who use it to turn the lights on in their diners’ eyes? What these chefs can never give their diners is the essential finishing seasoning: the memory itself. If each person possesses their own finishing seasoning, a memory that stirs emotion and provides meaning, then why not work with that to turn the lights on in the eyes of those who might not otherwise feel moved to learn how to cook?

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Research

On considering meaning making in the landscape of the South African food industry, someone who moves storytelling-through-food beyond his own story is Tapiwa Guzha. He describes Tapi Tapi, his Cape Town shop where he sells the ice cream he makes, as an educational initiative.

Flavours such as *bonongwe* (amaranth), okra and plum or boiled peanut open the door for conversations about ingredient origins, personal origins and food culture. As does the art he creates on and for the walls, which is rooted in African mythology and cosmology. On asking Tapiwa about how Tapi Tapi became a means of shifting consciousness, he explained:

I made baobab, Mazoe Orange, and maputi, so popped maize [ice cream]. And that was the first time I tasted ice cream that I connected with [...] sure you can have a nice ice-cream memory but that was the first time I was [...] connecting to my childhood [...] and I realized, ‘Oh there’s actually a nice emotional connection to this experience.

And then I did a few events and [...] people were reacting very emotionally to the representation. And that’s when it started morphing into this

rehabilitative tool and also educational tool [...] trying to inspire the people to do whatever work they do with the continent in mind.⁶

Emotion is the common thread. Through my research and reading it appeared that in order for learning to be meaningful, intellect and emotion need to fuse and that can happen through imagination. As Peter van Alphen concludes in his paper, Kieran Egan and Rudolf Steiner concur.⁷

Rudolf Steiner founded the first Waldorf School and his art of education became a source of insight for this paper since cooking is both an art and a craft. In Steiner education craft work and art are not only integrated with academic study, they are seen as necessary for learning through imagination and developing a living thinking.⁸

Learning for Life

When fully experiencing a subject a learner creates a flexible concept, which can develop as they mature. Whereas a concept reduced to facts or skills, presented as pre-digested material (textbooks) and adopted by the learner (memorized), can remain fixed even in adulthood. This is Steiner's view, which Peter van Alphen expounds.⁹

552 Peter van Alphen is founder of the Centre for Creative Education in Cape Town and a Waldorf teacher-training programme in Kenya. In conversation he described a teacher's focus as: 'How do they bring out the meaning, how do they bring out the values, how do they get children completely immersed [...]'.¹⁰

Cooking is naturally immersive and regularly cooking a beloved dish deepens understanding with each return, until movements and decisions become second nature. If a finished recipe is a fixed concept, reimagining creates a flexible concept in a dish that evolves with the learner.

Learning as a lifelong pursuit is central to *Peripheral Visions: Learning Along the Way* by Mary Catherine Bateson, who writes of complex mythology learned through relationship in San culture.¹¹ The San imagination once thrived in South Africa through rich oral narratives.¹² For the !Xo San hunters in the documentary *The Great Dance* the story of the hunt is essential to the activity.¹³

Egan describes stories as a culturally universal way of making sense of our experience.¹⁴ In the context of food, we all have stories because we all have to eat. Yet in an industrialized world the story is often divorced from both the eating and the cooking.

To use storytelling as a tool for engaging the imagination, educators find the story in existing curriculum content and food education programmes such as The Edible Schoolyard Project do include food memories.¹⁵ The fundamental differences in my approach are:

1. The food memory is the starting point. The original dish is the portal to meaningful learning and the reimagined dish the hook on which learning hangs, allowing for further reimagining in years to come.

2. The learner's story informs the content created for learning.

This gives the learner a reason to learn how to cook from the first lesson because they need to acquire the skills to realize their vision, which tells their story.

This demands that the educator be responsive and support the learner's journey through an understanding of food, cookery, and culture. It leans into the Steiner sensibility that 'the nature of the child should tell us what to teach, and when and how to teach it [...]'.¹⁶

The Thinking Age

Egan and Steiner's theories point to 14 to 15 years as the earliest age for which the task of reimagining might be the right fit and facilitate learning as a life's work. In Egan's five stages of understanding there is the opportunity for Philosophic understanding to develop during teenagehood, where discovering laws and theories that make sense of the world brings together what previously seemed disconnected.¹⁷ In Steiner education the emphasis falls on developing the will from birth to seven, feeling from seven to 14 and thinking from 14 to 21, with 14 as a pivotal age for conceptual thought, seeking out experts to learn from and establishing independence.¹⁸ As teacher Torin Finser writes:

Around age fourteen, the more formed cognitive and intellectual thinking life of the teenager begins to develop strongly. Now the student works with teachers who are specialists in their fields. [...] there awakens a quest for the truth, and this pursuit of truth takes them on journeys as profound as those of King Arthur's knights seeking the Holy Grail.¹⁹

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Practical Application

Molly and I worked through five two-hour lessons meeting roughly once a week, mostly in my home kitchen. Before we began Molly referred to our time together as 'an adventure', which was prescient given the story arc that took shape.

Lesson One. An Invitation to Cook: Finding the Story

'I'm quite nervous,' said Molly, as she stood in the middle of my kitchen, 'because I don't know how to cook'. Her honesty was disarming. 'So am I,' I admitted, 'this is new for me too' and that set the tone for us finding our way together.

We were both in uncharted territory and no matter how compelled I felt to plan and have all possible answers prepared, this process demanded improvisation. As Bateson writes, 'my own greatest resource as a teacher is the learned willingness to wing it in public [...] This is the challenge – improvising, learning on the job – that my students will confront all their lives'.²⁰

To create a space where imagination could thrive and all contributions were valid, we started by affirming 14 years of accumulated knowledge and skill that lay ready to be awakened in a new context: cooking.

Teaching Cookery Gets Personal

The handing over of a journal, for Molly to document what she felt was important in a way that worked for her, was a gesture of my invitation and her acceptance to explore the world of cooking together.

We brainstormed her favourite dishes and food memories to see where they intersect and selected one to work on. This is how Molly described her dish and the story behind it:

Bacon-lentil-potato is the kind of meal you eat from a bowl sitting on the couch on a Sunday night. My mom would make it without me even asking for it. Like if I'd had a hard day at school, I would come home and it would just be there. It's not the kind of dish you make for a dinner party but it's so comforting.

She started making it before I was vegetarian but now, without the bacon, it doesn't taste the same, because then it's basically just lentils and potatoes. So she doesn't really make it any more because we haven't found the right bacon substitute.²¹

Lesson Two. Gathering the Tools to Reimagine: Ingredients and Techniques

Molly's overarching narrative had a clear challenge: bringing a much-loved dish underpinned by bacon into her new context as a vegetarian. So we had the constraints necessary for the function of imagination to be realized.

554 As Rist et al elaborate, 'mere wealth of imagination has no value. It must connect with given conditions, with the external situation and with inner experiences, if change is to constitute progress'.²²

In equipping Molly to reimagine, I presented ingredients and relevant techniques and we tasted and discussed with Molly quickly finding her way to a dish of her own.

It developed around an aromatic base of caramelized onions and garlic (in keeping with her love of the bulb) and an equal ratio of lentil to potato. 'It's quite nice using garlic so it isn't one of the actual main ingredients,' commented Molly. 'It's more a side thing, like salt, just to add flavour.'²³

Her caramelized onion idea, she later explained, was because she imagined them to be sweet but also crunchy and inspired by thoughts of maple-cured bacon and bacon with maple syrup. One area I consciously steered the process, with Molly's blessing, was that rather than adding a meat substitute we recreate what bacon contributed: salty, smoky, umami, crisp.

When analyzing what she loved about the dish, Molly led with texture:

I think it's just everything working together. The lentils are squishy but they're not as squishy as canned lentils, so you still have to chew them. And the potato is soft so it's easy to bite into but then the bacon is always really, really crispy. So [...] you have every single texture in your mouth at once.

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After tasting different varieties Molly chose green lentils because of their resistance to the bite and we tested bringing in a crisp element with the potatoes, which she suggested roasting to different degrees of doneness:

Having a few soft potatoes, then a few that just crunch is quite nice. So you can make them together but take some off earlier and continue half of them so it's like two different ingredients [...] then it also doesn't take up any extra time and space.

When evaluating the flavour of floury versus waxy potatoes the term umami needed explanation, so we returned to a story Molly had shared in the first lesson of her friends daring one another to taste a piece of seaweed when out surfing. This framed our exploration of the fifth taste. This is just one example of how Molly's personal narrative and purpose in achieving her outcome determined where the content needed to go, creating stories within the story.

The dish continued to evolve in the third lesson when, while peeling potatoes, Molly suggested we fry the peels for extra crisp. She opted to finish with flaky sea salt, again to boost crunch, and I sourced smoked salt to bring us closer to bacon.

It was not the thinking that needed my support but rather the mechanical skills, the necessary link between imagination and the physical world that could bring her reimagined dish to life.

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Lesson Three. Entering the Kitchen: Learning Techniques

Our first cooking session was a baptism of fire. Molly persevered in wrangling two large onions while becoming accustomed to the feel of a knife in her hand, her eyes stinging with tears. I realized how much I'd taken for granted as a seasoned cook inured to allium fumes.

My ability to apply pressure and keep an onion together while chopping was different to hers, which highlighted the extent to which physical learning needs to be informed by the learner too. It required rethinking how I chop and making it work for her.

We tried dividing the cutting into two stages and then switched to the same weight in baby brown onions so the relative size gave Molly more control. By showing what aspects were flexible in figuring out a solution, it reinforced the core principles that weren't: the fan cuts, even-sized pieces and the claw grip.

The need to rationalize lesson hours by ticking off the techniques covered exposed the unlearning I have to do to instil the kind of mastery Rist et al call practical consciousness.²⁴ In this case that might be observing at what point gently caramelizing onions develop butterscotch aromas or how to hold a knife to yield it effective while conserving energy.

Molly was up for the challenge. My challenge was allowing her to lead fully, hone her instincts and make mistakes if necessary when I know so well what to do.

Lesson Four. Owning the Kitchen: Practising and Fine-tuning

Molly had expressed how much she loved our garden, so we resumed our onion chopping under the lemon tree. And, just as we started almost every lesson, I brewed her a pot of loose-leaf rooibos tea and poured it from a teapot with a knitted cosy. This had captured her imagination and she pronounced it the best tea she had ever tasted. I like to think it may have illustrated the beauty of ritual.

The raw honey that sweetened her tea became a talking point, again because of how delicious she found it, and led to a tasting at our local honey purveyor and beekeeper showing how different flowers influence flavour, highlighting the role of provenance.

On being asked, 'Do you wear an apron every time you cook?' I realized approaching cooking as a practice might be modelled rather than spelled out explicitly. These touch points, none of which were planned with content in mind, underlined the power of showing, or tasting, over telling.

It also underscored teaching as a natural part of everyday life, as the transmission of a way of being. These are concepts long understood by the Khoi and San, who are recognized as the traditional knowledge holders of Rooibos (the plant).²⁵

Lesson Five. Coming Home to the Table and Telling the Tale

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Molly's home had the air of an imminent feast. She had set the table with flowers, linen napkins and the bowls reserved for bacon-lentil-potato. For the final lesson she would cook her reimagined dish in her kitchen and present it to her family with the story behind it.

Molly put on music and we settled into the preparations. When her parents wandered in while she was mincing garlic, she asked if they knew how to remove the germ from a clove and proceeded to show them. It reminded me of organisational psychologist Adam Grant's words, 'the best way to learn is to teach someone else'.²⁶ When frying, Molly urged her sister to try the puffed, golden potato peels. And after lunch she brewed us all a pot of rooibos tea.

Lunch had turned into a lentil tasting menu of sorts as I'd been inspired to develop a dish of my own and Molly's mum joined in cooking her original. It also happened to be Mother's Day. Molly, given the option of any medium, had chosen to write a poem. She finished reading it to joyous applause and dewy eyes. Her story, the all-important bridge between the past and who she is now, had brought us back to emotion. This is as Molly presented it:

Mum's Milestone Meal Reincarnated

So the dish I made is a reincarnation of my mom's dish, which she used to make for me. I can't eat it any more because it had meat in it, so I decided to remake it vegetarian. This fits perfectly with Mother's Day because as I was making it, it reminded me of all the good memories I had with me and my mom, some of which I didn't even know I had.

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One Special Meal

One special meal
Turns a house to a home
One special dinner
Makes you feel less alone

The bacon sizzling
Fills the kitchen with its smell
A nostalgic feeling
That's very personal

The lentils boil
And so does anticipation
But mom slaps away your hand
Cause she needs to work on
Preparation

The potatoes frying
As they're stirred around
Everything added together
To make a compound

You take your bowl
And go and take a seat
The feeling of love
Fills your heart as you eat

Sadly through the years
The meal disappeared
So here I am to tell you
I've made it reappear

The steps might be different
And some ingredients too
But I promise you mum
This meal is for me and you

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Feedback

The journey had a fairytale ending. If actions speak louder than words, a high point was seeing Molly standing at her kitchen island casually demonstrating the rocking cutting technique for parsley that she had mastered to make her dish. This was Molly's feedback:²⁷

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Nikki: How did you find the whole experience?

Molly: I found it really, really fun [...] I was nervous [...] because I didn't personally [...] think I was very good at cooking, I didn't really find an enjoyment [in cooking] before I did this, but when we were doing it I kind of realised that anyone can [...] cook if you're in the right mindset of doing it, then it was very practical, which made it a lot more fun.

Nikki: Did you have a highlight moment?

Molly: Well, I really, really enjoyed on the first day when we went through meals and a lot of meals and memories that I'd forgotten about kind of came back, so that was definitely a highlight moment. And then in the actual practical when we were cooking there were kind of lots of little ones, especially when we first did the deep frying, I found that really interesting, I don't why but that really stuck with me.

558 There is validation of intent in that it was Molly who initiated frying the potato peels whereas other techniques, like roasting the potatoes, were simply presented as tools for her to work with. When asked about her greatest learning Molly returned to the brainstorm, which is where we found the meaning:

Nikki: And did you feel like you had a [...] light-bulb moment?

Molly: I kind of had a light-bulb moment when we were talking about it, it was kind of like, whoa, this really clicked something and cooking is really more than just [...] warming up food, putting stuff together and eating it, it's a lot more about the mindset.

Molly leading with how this affected her thinking is undoubtedly a positive outcome when igniting a lasting relationship with cooking is one of the aims.

That first lesson effectively generated a table of contents for Molly's own book of cooking knowledge and her journey can continue with or without me. She picked up on this:

Nikki: [...] How did you find the book [...] was it helpful?

Molly: [...] My book? [holding up the journal] It was very helpful [...] especially the first page with the brainstorm of food, now I'm remembering a lot of these meals and I'm [...] seeing that some of them are really simple and that if I could have made like bacon-lentil I can definitely go back and figure out my own way for the others.

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The ease with which Molly made connections, came up with ideas and asked pertinent questions goes some way to confirming 14 as an appropriate age. As the educator I didn't anticipate the extent to which my own imagination would come to life. The content flowed naturally and aligned with ease. The difficulty lay in prioritizing.

Conclusion

The promising result is motivation for further exploration. There is much work to be done on how this could have greater reach, play out with a group of learners, be culturally relevant and benefit learners for whom food and the associated memories are not positive.

If the happy by-products of forging a connection with cooking include a sense of agency and a path to selfhood, perhaps there is also a higher aim of rewriting personal narratives or reconnecting with our true stories? As it is only in strengthening individual stories that we may contribute to a robust collective food history.

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A Short History of Science Fiction and Fantasy Tie-in Cookbooks

Shana Worthen

ABSTRACT: The history of tie-in cookbooks can be explored through a bibliographic survey, one which in this case focuses primarily, but not exclusively, on ones inspired by science fiction or fantasy. The first, targeted at children, were published in 1969. Their slow but steady growth for ever-more-varied demographics continued into the beginning of the twenty-first century, from which point interest grew rapidly, supported by Adams Media, Insight Editions, and the increasing ease of widespread distribution for independently published works. In the early 2010, games began to inspire cookbooks, while fictional food bloggers and YouTubers increasingly leveraged their online success to publish cookbooks. Today their success is such that popular older TV series in particular are now belatedly receiving official tie-in cookbooks.

In order to have a tie-in cookbook, there must first be something which inspires it. A tie-in cookbook is an extension, a means to attempt to experience first-hand a flavour or sensation which was previously a part of an un-tastable medium, such as a book or film. The words within the book or the interactions with the dish in a film are what is intended to evoke the taste. The words are what summon up mental pictures and situations, which invite teach reader to envision or assume how something fictional tastes. For example, for *Alice in Wonderland*, how can a contemporary cook or tea-maker recreate what Alice consumed at the Mad Hatter's tea party? The text provides limited evidence, but the authors of recipes and cookbooks based on the book offer a variety of differing answers. The many cookbooks which respond to that text are tie-in cookbooks, tied in to the inspiring source. They were unwritable without it.

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This paper will specifically focus on tie-ins with fictional sources of inspiration, such as *Alice in Wonderland*. While primarily focused on science fiction and fantasy sources of inspiration, it will also consider contemporary and historical fiction, such as the TV shows *Friends* or *Downton Abbey*. Fictional tie-in cookbooks can be based on sources from any other medium, but most common currently are those based on books, TV series, films, or games, both online and off.

The work for this survey was primarily done as a bibliographic survey, compiling a bibliography of over 230 tie-in cookbooks and recipe collections in order to examine the overall patterns which emerged. The survey is an initial foray into this data; there are still

many cookbooks not yet located or included. As more cookbooks are added, it will be exciting to see how this affects the overall patterns.

To begin this loosely chronological survey of tie-in cookbooks, consider a book which was both cookbook and story from the early twentieth century. Jane Earye Fryer's book, *The Mary Frances Cook Book: Adventures Among the Kitchen People* (1912), was the first of a pedagogical series of books in which household appliances come to life and teach a young girl – Mary Frances – how to do useful household tasks like sew, garden, or, in this case, cook. It was not a tie-in cookbook, although it itself engendered a whole series of sequels. The Kitchen People aid the young protagonist in learning her first cooking skills, beginning with toast and working her way up to a full dinner over the course of three weeks. In the introduction, the author writes, 'Some very wise people would call this a story book, some a manual training book, and others a cookery book, but Mary Frances knows better; she knows that it is a Book within a Book that introduced her to Aunty Rolling Pin and a lot of other dear, dear friends...'¹

A story book, a training manual, and a cookery book are some of the main overlapping forms which tie-in cookbooks take. Fewest are training manuals, a pedagogically-structured plan for teaching long-term skills. Many, however, are partially works of fiction as well as works of cookery. Some are presented as in-universe fiction for a particular fictional world, even when they contain wholly-accessible recipes. The playful, story-based nature of *The Mary Frances Cookbook* comes from the same urge to help children relate to useful life lessons through stories that the earliest formally tied-in cookbooks come from.

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The late 1960s are when children's cookbooks begin to be more widely published. In part because of that shift, the late 1960s are also when tie-in cookbooks first begin to be published in earnest, with both *The Pooh Cookbook* and *The Peanuts Cookbook* first printed in 1969.² The trend extends beyond the English-speaking world at least as far as Denmark, as shown in Caroline Nyvang's study of Danish cookbooks for children.³ Between 1847 and 1965, a total of 15 cookbooks for children were published. The numbers increase notably beginning in the late '60s, with 9 in 1965-1975, 17 in the decade after that, in increasing numbers until the present day.

Tie-in cookbooks would continue to be published in slowly increasing numbers for the next several decades, with collections of recipes based on a wide variety of sources a regularly sampling across genres. TV programs for children in particular inspired related cookbooks.

1970s

By the end of the 1970s, children were increasingly targeted with a growing number of tie-in cookbooks, such as those featuring Peter Rabbit, Nancy Drew (US children's mysteries), the Mighty Marvel Superheroes, Sesame Street and The Little House on the Prairie.⁴ But children were not the only ones for whom tie-in cookbooks would be published.

In 1973, *Cooking out of this World* was published by Ballantine Books. Edited by Anne McCaffrey, science fiction author, it was initially suggested to the editor by the co-founder of the press, Betsy Ballantine. The book was a collection of recipes by science fiction authors, some of whom took it as a challenge to write poetry or context of their other works as well. (Alfred Bester: 'People have been kind enough to admire the originality of that novel [The Demolished Man]. I'm proud of that but even prouder of a recipe for striped bass which I invented at the same time...').⁵ It is not that it is a tie-in cookbook so much as that the volume was primarily of interest to fans of those authors and their works.

Not a selfless fundraiser in the traditional sense, *Cooking out of this World* was, nevertheless, proposed specifically as a way to help McCaffrey publish more, and thus earn more, in the wake of her divorce.⁶ It came out of the tradition of community cookbooks which had its roots in in the US in post-Civil War fundraising cookbooks. These group compilations were primarily put together as fundraisers for war victims.⁷ By the twentieth century, they were numerous, and published to support all sorts of organisations, most commonly churches, but also fan groups and science fiction conventions by the second half of the century.

The mid-1970s saw three different Sherlock Holmes cookbooks published, The publishers were primarily based in the US, and perhaps taking temporary advantage of the changing copyright law in the US before the US Copyright Act of 1976 took effect two years later. *The Sherlock Holmes Cookbook* (1976), *Dining with Sherlock Holmes* (1976), and *The Sherlock Holmes Victorian Cookbook* (1977) all came out in remarkably short succession, especially given how nascent the idea of even publishing a tie-in cookbook was at that time.⁸

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The advent of home computing and home printing must have made a difference to the way in which independent fan productions were produced, increasingly replacing their mimeographed antecedents.

1980s

In the 1980s, cookbook authors increasingly considered older books which were still popular for cookbook-writing inspiration. *The Wind in the Willows*, *Anne of Green Gables*, Louisa May Alcott, and *Little House on the Prairie* all had their cookbooks, the latter, presumably, at least as much for the then-recent TV series as for the still-popular books from the '30s and '40s.⁹ *The Wind in the Willows* and Louisa May Alcott's work were both out of copyright at the time, so both cookbooks must therefore count as fan works. It is also notable that *The Doctor Who Cookbook* was published in 1985, while the TV series was still actively being produced, an official tie-in, even if it predates the use of the word 'Official' in tie-in cookbook titles.¹⁰

There is another significant source of tie-in recipes in the '80s in the form of companion volumes to fiction, and sourcebooks for role playing games. One which I have often heard

fondly discussed for its recipes is *Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home* (1987), edited by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman.¹¹ The book is an Advanced Dungeons & Dragons supplement, designed to be used as an in-game book, written from within the fictional role-played fantasy world. *The Dragonlover's Guide to Pern*, an official companion to McCaffrey's sf world, also contains recipes which lay the groundwork for later Pernese cookbooks.¹²

1990s

In the early 1990s, Abbeville Press put out a series of movie tie-in cookbooks, under the series title of Hollywood Hotplates. These six volumes started with *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and included *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and a lone TV series, *I Love Lucy* (1950s).¹³ At the time, the most recent of the sources were over 30 years old.

There's an increasingly creativity in the kinds of sources by which 1990s authors were inspired to write cookbooks. *The Box Car Children*, Narnia, *The Secret Garden*, Jane Austen, and Patrick O'Brien's Aubrey and Maturin adventures all had cookbooks exploring their culinary worlds.¹⁴ In tie-ins to other media forms, Mollie Ann Meserve wrote one themed around musicals.¹⁵

The *Star Wars Cookbook* came out in 1998, with the *Star Trek Cookbook* the following year.¹⁶ One of the best-known authorised cookbooks from the late '90s was *Nanny Ogg's Cookbook*, a compendium of recipes and advice, often tongue-in-cheek, from the eponymous fictional witch Nanny Ogg, a recurring character in Terry Pratchett's Discworld series.¹⁷ Written from Nanny's garrulous and excessively honest perspective, the recipes include a straightforward (at least if you have access to Stilton and tinned, smoked oysters) Carrot and Oyster Pie, as well as frog-free Dried Frog Pills. All three authorised cookbooks were official publications, claiming the sales opportunity and pre-empting whatever fannish recipe work was already flourishing in harder-to-find places. Fannish recipe collections grew in parallel with this, published on photocopy machines or as computer printouts, and often moving to Print On Demand in recent years.

Although the fundraising community cookbooks are always not obviously tie-ins, they are worth mentioning in this context because many included one-off recipes which expanded on an author's world. The most well-known of the fundraising cookbooks were *The Bakery Men Don't See*, and *Her Smoke Rose Up From Supper*, organised by Jeanne Gomoll to help fund the Tiptree Award (now the Otherwise Award) at Wiscon, a feminist science fiction convention.¹⁸ Authors would sometimes submit single recipes which expanded on their own worldbuilding, or recipes which constituted playful works of fiction in their own right. For example, John Sladek's recipe for Fountain Pen Stew finishes with 'Note: Some might prefer to replace the chicken with four large fountain pens. This alters the flavor.'¹⁹

Two unofficial FarScape fan cookbooks were also fundraising community cookbooks. The goal of *Foodscape: What the Frell is That?* And *Foodscape 2: We're So Skewered* was to

raise awareness of the television show in the hopes of it being brought back for at least one more season.²⁰ Not long after the second cookbook came out, the show was indeed revived, the producers creating one more four-hour miniseries. Contrary to some analyses of fan cookbooks, they too are able to give back to the original creators. Fan works are in dialogue with their source material.

Even more modest cookbook projects abounded too, fan-driven labours of love. They are harder to track down because they lack ISBNs and straightforward cataloguing, plus their numbers were only ever limited. Fanlore.org has done good work in beginning to document them, but it is only a beginning.²¹

Early 2000s

During the first decade of the 2000s, authors increasingly began to publish their multi-book or multi-media culinary explorations in collections which provided a single recipe from each of many different inspirational sources. *The Book Club Cookbook* (which paid tribute to book clubs as much as it did food inspired by books), *Literary Feasts: Inspired Eating from Classic Fiction*, and *The Manga Cookbook* have collectively had numerous subsequent successors.²² Two more Jane Austen cookbooks were also published in this decade, their inspiration very safely out-of-copyright.²³ Other new cookbooks topics included, variously, *The Sopranos*, *Chas Addams Half-Baked Cookbook*, *Green Eggs and Ham*, and *Shrek*.²⁴

Many of the non-commercial, fan-created cookbooks of the early 2000s were collaborative efforts done through mailing lists, Usenet groups, or transient websites. These included an informal and unauthorised cookbook inspired by Robert A. Heinlein's work, such as *Stranger in a Strange Land*.²⁵ In 2002, members of a Lois McMaster Bujold mailing list compiled *Ma Kosti's Cookbook*, a collection designed to recreate the kind of food that her science fictional character Miles Vorkosigan might have eaten.²⁶ It ended up as a website, one now only preserved by the Internet Archive. In the same year, a nascent, unofficial *Pern Cookbook* website was also established, aiming to recreate Anne McCaffrey's science fiction-with-dragons.²⁷

Prolific bloggers and YouTubers have in particular helped to shape the modern tie-in cookbook market, building up demonstrable markets for science fiction and fantasy-themed foods in particular. Although not specific to any genre or recipes, the Cake Wrecks blog, begun in 2008, helped to raise awareness of tie-in-themed cake fiascos, and contributed to the growth of interest in well-made ones as well.²⁸ The popular blog profiled daily cakes which had gone wrong, accepting submissions from its fans and followers. By highlighting (often terrible) tie-in themed cakes, it helped to demonstrate the widespread interest in them.

2010s

Starting around 2010 is when tie-in cookbooks really begin to come into their own as a genre, with Adams Media's foray into the genre cementing its importance. Adams Media

(acquired by Simon and Schuster 2016) began publishing tie-in cookbooks in 2010, starting with Dinah Bucholz's *The Unofficial Harry Potter Cookbook: From Cauldron Cakes to Knickerbocker Glory—More Than 150 Magical Recipes for Wizards and Non-Wizards Alike*.²⁹ The book is further notable for being the first tie-in cookbook, as far as I can tell thus far, with the word 'Unofficial' in its title. It is very specifically a work of creative interpretation.

The Unofficial Harry Potter Cookbook was by no means the only tie-in cookbook of 2010. That single year also saw the publication of *The Moomin Cookbook: An Introduction to Finnish Cuisine*, *Brunetti's Cookbook* (based on Donna Leon's Venetian detective books), *Chef Mickey* from Disney's ongoing cookbook publications, and *Love at First Bite: The Complete Vampire Lover's Cookbook*.³⁰

In the early 2010s, cookbooks tied in to non-roleplaying games start to appear with *Angry Birds: Bad Piggies' Egg Recipes* (2011, based on the mobile game) and *Wood for Sheep: The Unauthorized Settlers Cookbook* (2013, based on the board game *Settlers of Catan*).³¹ By the end of the decade, there would be official cookbooks for games including *Overwatch* (a team-based shooting game) and *Destiny*, an first-person shooter game, in addition to plenty more for role-playing games, which more obviously lend themselves to playing with food.³² The official cookbooks for *Street Fighter* and *Tomb Raider* come out later in 2021.³³

566 *Super Mario Brothers* was the video game which inspired Rosanna Pansino's first foray into developing a cake recipe for popular consumption.³⁴ The professional actress began recording episodes for her enormously popular YouTube show, *Nerdy Nummies*, in 2011. Her first episode demonstrated how to make a Mario-themed cake. Pansino, whose series is still going strong, specialised in video game, science fiction, and fantasy-inspired baking. Her cookbooks are similarly themed around tie-in recipes, rather than the collection as a whole being themed around a single franchise or other form of worldbuilding. The first of them, *The Nerdy Nummies Cookbook*, was published in 2015.³⁵

George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Fire and Ice* series is rich with lavish food descriptions. In 2011, bloggers Chelsea Monroe-Cassel and Sariann Lehrer started *The Inn at the Crossroads* blog in order to more systematically explore adapting historical recipes to honour Martin's on-page evocations of meals.³⁶ The blog was begun a few months before the TV series based on it first aired. So successful were the bloggers, the books, and the TV series that the authors secured a contract to write the official tie-in cookbook. *A Feast of Ice and Fire: The Official Game of Thrones Companion Cookbook* came out in 2012.³⁷ It was successful enough to launch a whole career in developing tie-in cookbooks for Monroe-Cassel.

2011 and 2012 saw the birth of several still-influential blog- or video-based recipe developers who were inspired by a range of fictional sources. In addition to Pansino's YouTube channel and Monroe-Cassel's co-written blog, *Feast of Fiction's* YouTube channel was launched in December of the same year.³⁸ Jimmy Wong and Ashley Adams began with *Skyrim* (a role-playing video game) and continued rapidly on through *Harry*

Potter, *Minecraft*, and *Lord of the Rings*, for starters. From the beginning, they developed and provided recipes to go along with their videos, but their first – and thus far only – cookbook was not released until 2020.³⁹

2012 was when Chris-Rachael Oseland began self-publishing unauthorised cookbooks, beginning with *Dining with the Doctor: An Unauthorised Whovian Cookbook*.⁴⁰ Like many of this past decade's tie-in cookbook developers, official or unofficial, she built up a community of her own fans through blogging. Her website, Kitchen Overlord, develops multi genre recipes.⁴¹ Oseland's second cookbook was a collection of steampunk-themed drinks, entitled *Steamdrunks* (2012).⁴²

Tie-in drink collections surely predate Oselund's, but neither have I been looking so closely for them. But then again, perhaps not. *Shaken: The Official James Bond Cocktail Book* only came out in 2018, a product of the current growth in tie-in recipe collections.⁴³ Tim Federle authored four puntastic collections of tie-in drinks shortly after *Steamdrunks*. The first was *Tequila Mockingbird: Cocktails with a Literary Twist* and the second, creatively pushing at the concept, was produced as a board book named *Hickory Daiquiri Dock: Cocktails with a Nursery Rhyme Twist*.⁴⁴

Cassandra Reeder joined the ranks of multi genre tie-in cookbook authors in 2015, with her first cookbook, *The Geeky Chef*.⁴⁵ Several more followed, including one focusing primarily on drinks. *The Geeky Chef Drinks* (2018).⁴⁶

If the official James Bond cocktail book is of surprisingly recent vintage, so too is a collection of cocktail recipes inspired by the *Golden Girls*, based on the TV show which first aired from 1985-1992. *Drinks on the Lanai: Cocktails, mocktails & cheesecake inspired by The Golden Girls* was published by Smith Street Books in 2020, the same year that Hyperion Avenue, Disney's recently launched imprint for adults, published *The Golden Girls Cookbook*.⁴⁷

To return to the first half of the 2010s, as of the time of writing in 2021, I have put together a bibliography of approximately 230 dated tie-in cookbooks and recipe collections. The halfway point on this list, the point after which fully half of the cookbooks were released in whatever form, is the year 2014. That is how quickly the genre has grown in recent years in terms of commercial viability, and helps to explain why official cookbooks and drink recipes for older commercial properties are only appearing now. That halfway point on the list, however, may well not fully represent the depth of earlier fan-created tie-ins, given their necessarily more limited distribution methods.

Children's cookbooks, of course, were there from the beginning of tie-in cookbooks. Of note in 2016 was the publication of the first Julia Donaldson co-authored cookbook. The prolific author of young children's books, together with her best-known illustrator, Axel Scheffler, helped to create *Gruffalo Crumble and Other Recipes: The Gruffalo Cookbook*, the first of the four cookbooks that have thus far been tied in to their books.⁴⁸ (Note however that *Cat's Cookbook*, by the same collaborators, is not a cookbook, but a story about a trip to a library.)⁴⁹

Insight Editions joined in the publication of tie-in cookbooks in 2016 with *World of Warcraft: The Official Cookbook*, written by Chelsea Monroe-Cassel, her first of several for Insight.⁵⁰ The book, based on a role-playing game, proved a bestseller, leading the imprint to add tie-in cookbooks to its range of books which work as ‘literary portals for fans’.⁵¹ The *World of Warcraft* cookbook was shortly followed at Insight by official tie-in cookbooks for other commercial properties, including *Adventure Time*, *The Walking Dead*, and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*.⁵²

Adams Media, beginning in 2010, and Insight Editions, in 2016, have between them done a striking amount to raise the awareness and commercial viability of tie-cookbooks, but at least as striking is the sheer variety of different presses which have published tie-in cookbooks over the years. I have inventoried books published by 95 different publishers, most of which are major brands. Many of those published before the rise of imprints which at least in part specialise in tie-in cookbooks, but others have directly benefited from them.

The historical TV drama *Downton Abbey* originally aired 2010-2015 and *The Unofficial Downton Abbey Cookbook* came out promptly in 2012 from Adams Media.⁵³ It was written by Emily Anasara Baines, who had already developed *The Unofficial Hunger Games Cookbook* for Adams.⁵⁴ With Adams Media demonstrating the viability of the concept, food historian Annie Grey’s *Official Downton Abbey Cookbook* eventually followed in 2019.⁵⁵ The viability of tie-in cookbooks now is such that it debuted as part of a multi-book *Downton Abbey Cookery* series, with *Cocktails*, *Afternoon Tea*, and *Christmas* all covered by other volumes and authors.⁵⁶

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2020-2021

The last several years have been the heyday of tie-in cookbooks thus far, with astonishingly large numbers published. What is recent in terms of topic is that they are now tied in to games, both online and off, as well. What’s new in terms of finding a market is that many of them are now the offshoots of blogs and YouTube channels, with podcasts increasingly leaving their mark as well.

In the late twenty-teens, Diana Ault writing and co-writing a variety of media-themed recipe fanzines, including ones inspired by *Pokémon* and the video games *Legend of Zelda*.⁵⁷ On the basis of those, she was eventually contracted to write *Cook Anime: Eat Like Your Favorite Character*, a tie-in to a wide variety of popular Japanese animation series.⁵⁸ It came out in 2020. Her fanzines were largely published by subscription or fundraising, and were in no way the only ones to be funded that way. The original *Kitchen Overlord Cookbook* and *The Unofficial Zelda Cookbook* were both funded through crowdfunding.⁵⁹

The genre is going strong. There have been at least twenty tie-in cookbooks published by publishers in 2020, and plenty more which have or will come out in 2021, including *Marvel Comics: Cooking with Deadpool*.⁶⁰

A Short History of Science Fiction and Fantasy Tie-in Cookbooks

Consider, if you will, the gaps between source material and when a cookbook for it was published. *The Back to the Future* films came out between 1985 and 1990, but *Back to the Future: The Official Hill Valley Cookbook* was published in 2020.⁶¹ The Official *Friends* Cookbook, companion to the TV sitcom series which ran 1994-2004, only just came out in September of 2020, interest presumably spurred by the success of the unofficial *Friends* Cookbook – which itself was only published in 2018.⁶² In 2020, the official *Wonder Woman* cookbook came out, from a franchise which dates back to 1941 in comics and the 1970s in television.⁶³

This gap between inspiration and cookbook occurred even with the earliest of tie-ins. The first Winnie-the-Pooh cookbook (1969) corresponds to the era when Disney was first putting out movies about the character (1966, 1968 etc.), rather than when the book first came out (1926). Sherlock Holmes may have been thriving through films in the 1970s, when three tie-in cookbooks came out, but the original stories came out between 1891 and 1927. The recent proliferation of cookbooks has, however, given new culinary life to older, still-popular properties and fandoms.

Many of these cookbooks were written by fans of the series, but by no means all of them. Amongst these, the Mary Poppins cookbook, the Chalet School Cookbook, *Grandpa's Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs Cookbook*, and *The Redwall Cookbook* are relatively unusual for having been written by the authors of the source material.⁶⁴ P. L. Travers has the supernatural nanny helping the children learn to cook basic foods while the household cook is away, with the intervention of visiting neighbours. The Chalet School girls are on holiday, which is how they have time to do proper cooking. *Grandpa's Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs* cookbook provides recipes for some of the books' numerous foods, and is entertaining illustrated by Rob Barrett.

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Conclusion

To conclude, I would like to address four of the methodological challenges of doing a bibliography survey of this nature.

First of all, to what degree is the absence of pre-1969 tie-in cookbooks a product of the lack of ISBN numbers and the more systematic cataloguing of books, rather than an actual absence of them? On this front, the most reassuring evidence is all of the more recent publication of tie-in cookbooks for fictional worlds which were popular from the beginning. These later publications include the “Hollywood Hotplates” series from the 1990s, as well as the increasing proliferation of them in the 2010s and beyond, including the celebration of drinks inspired by James Bond (2018) and the Golden Girls (2020).

Secondly, it is particularly unsurprising that small-circulation fannish productions are incompletely catalogued here. I have relied on the generous work done on fanlore.org in compiling evidence for a variety of cookbooks, but it is clearly incomplete, not least because I am aware of at least a handful of additional ones. Furthermore, additional ones are being

produced all the time. One of the opportunities and frustrations of this project was catching a glimpse of just how many small-circulation fandom-themed foodzines are being produced through small-scale subscription funding. Anyone who doesn't happen to support a one-off foodzine in the, say, six weeks that it is available for purchase, will miss out entirely.

Thirdly, this bibliography only comprises English-language cookbooks thus far, a few of which were translated from French. It seemed simplest, to begin with, to limit the project, for now, to the largest available corpus of works, that of English-language cookbooks.

Finally, because this work is based primarily on bibliographical references, there are a number of works whose presence is ambiguous. A cookbook written for a science fiction convention is likely to contain a number of tie-in recipes, but that is not a certainty without a copy of the book for confirmation. *The Conflux Cookbook: Five Historical Feasts* was written for a science fiction convention, and the feasts were intended, by their organiser, Gillian Polack, to be straightforward historical recreation.⁶⁵ Yet the context was such, that many of the attendees at those feasts processed them as a lens for experiencing aspects of historical fiction set in those eras. As fantasy author Garth Nix wrote in the introduction to the collection, 'while we may not become Elizabeth Bennet or Mr Darcy, we can, if we are very lucky, eat their food'.⁶⁶

As of 2017, media culture scholar Madison Magladry could still write that 'fan food and cookbooks are relatively new types of texts in the fan community'.⁶⁷ In the sense that they were relatively new as frequent and high-profile publications, that is true. The years from 2010 onwards have seen an extraordinary growth in this genre. But neither are they entirely new. The Sherlock Holmes cookbooks of the mid-1970s were written by fans of the series, and the '80s and '90s saw increasing numbers of small-circulation community cookbooks which are incompletely inventoried and harder to track down.

The recent proliferation of tie-in cookbooks also inspired the recent academic essay collection edited by Carrielynn D Reinhard, Julia E Largent, and Bertha Chin. *Eating Fandom* is a cultural and sociological study of the topic, in contrast to the historical overview presented here.⁶⁸

This is an initial survey of a fascinating and wide-ranging variety of cookbooks and drink recipes which have one thing in common: they all grew out of fictional media, whether games, TV shows, films, or books. The earliest tie-in cookbooks may have been authorised publications targeted at children, but the genre encompassed far more than that within a few years. The work of countless fans, aided in recent years by numerous publishers, including specialists Adams Media and Insight Editions, have increasingly helped bring the flavours of fiction to life.

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