

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

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**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*.<sup>1</sup> 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'<sup>2</sup>.

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'.<sup>3</sup> 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'.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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?'<sup>7</sup> 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*.<sup>8</sup>

### 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.’<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> 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'.<sup>11</sup> He finally asserts that 'French cuisine is, above all, a land of plenty'.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup>

### 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'.<sup>14</sup> 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'.<sup>15</sup>

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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'.<sup>16</sup> 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'.<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup>

*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'.<sup>19</sup> 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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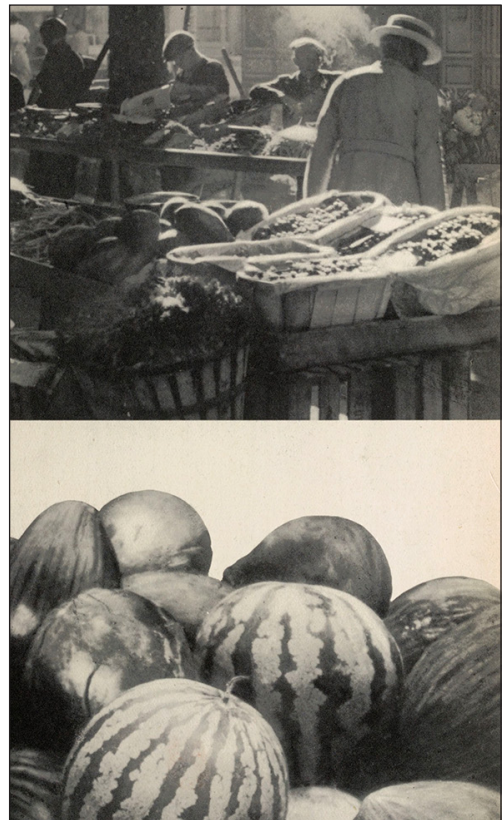
In comparison with its twenty-four-volume predecessor, appealing more towards the passionate gastronome, we see the emergence of concise texts, and maps, geared towards the weekend traveler. In opening this volume, Curnonsky upholds the mythology of France's status as a '*pays de cocagne*' asserting 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'.<sup>20</sup> 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...'<sup>21</sup> 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*'<sup>22</sup> 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, exquisite*, and *délicate*, evidently appealing to a wealthier

potential visitor.<sup>23</sup> 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’.<sup>24</sup> 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’.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> 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



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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’.<sup>28</sup>

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.<sup>29</sup> 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’.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup> 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.

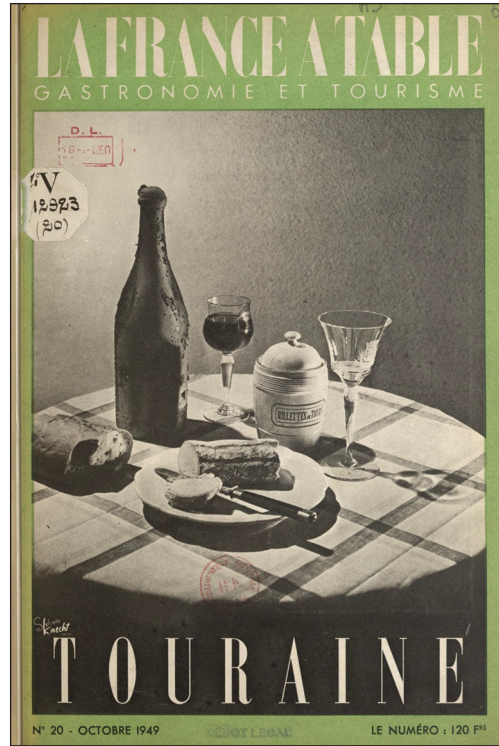
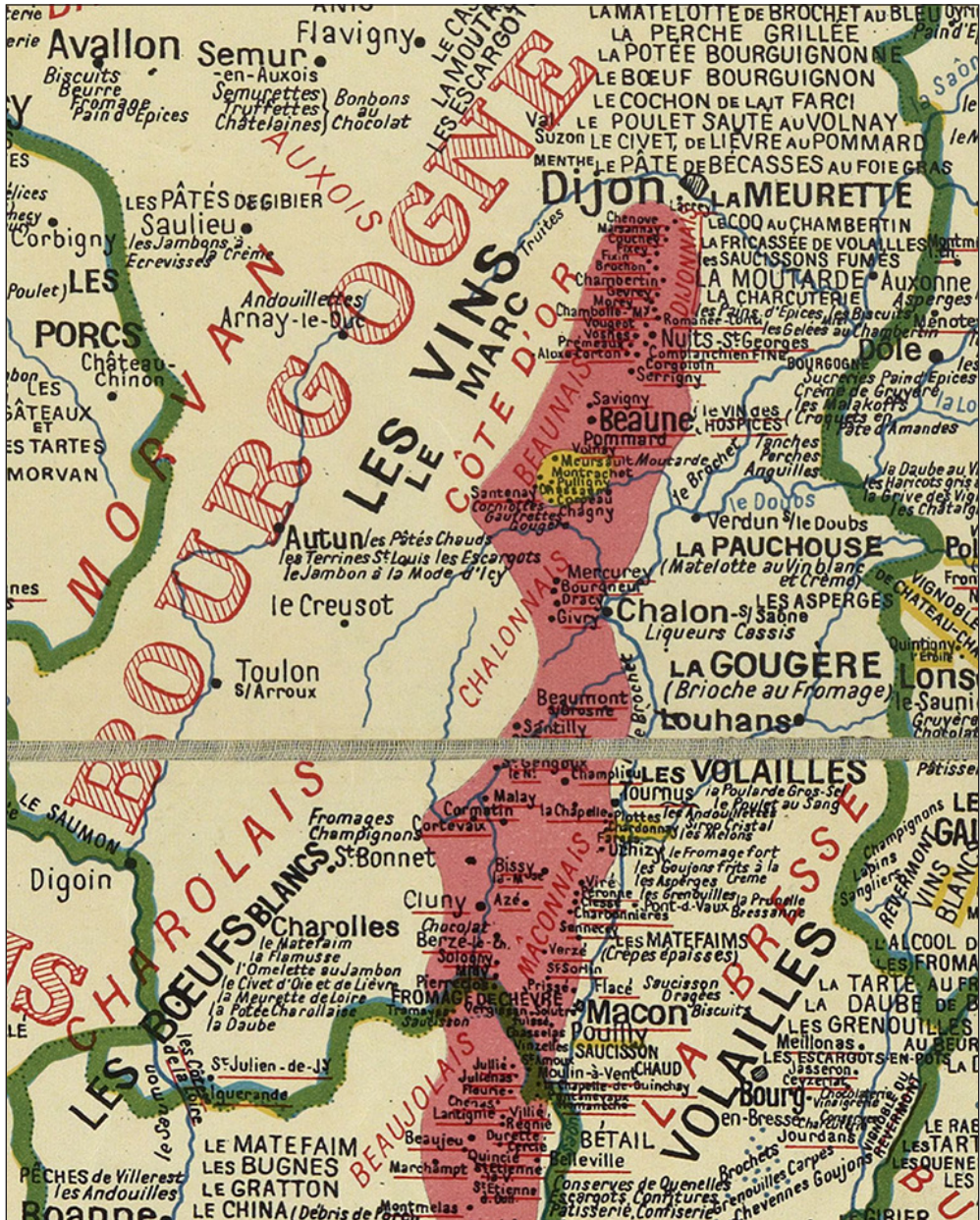


FIGURE 2. *La France A Table 'Touraine'* 1949. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k30519078>



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FIGURE 3. Detail of *Carte Gastronomique de la France*. A. Bourguignon 1929.  
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52504043q>

When considering culinary literature, we must also consider the motivations of the author, be it promoting tourism, safeguarding traditions, or marketing products, which becomes increasingly the case moving towards contemporary gastronomic literature. Even

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),<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup>

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*'.<sup>35</sup> 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'.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup> 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'.<sup>38</sup> 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'.<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup> In other words, AOP/AOC labels resist the feared 'acceleration of history'.<sup>41</sup> 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.

196 If we consider then, as Tomasik proposes, that *terroir* 'carries a strong affective charge'<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> 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’.<sup>46</sup> 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’agrèger 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 chèvre*. (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.