

An Analysis of the Common Rhetoric Surrounding Cuisine Identity

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This research will advance the most common representations and identities of cuisine through a narrative analysis and critique. Cuisine identity is constructed and affirmed in various narrative structures and personal stories which include the food production activities and consumption patterns of its peoples. Cuisine and food products have traveled globally with emigrant's stories from multiple cultures. In fact, most contemporary cuisine stories are born from the immigration of people from various cultures, ethnicities, and nations upon previous styles of cuisine. The diversity of cuisine reflects the diversity of the environment; the bounty of the land, ocean and air; as well as the diversity of the human population. This research will advance the most common rhetoric that is used to depict, define and advance the most commonly consumed cuisines.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural stories about food provide a pattern or design for living that allows individuals in social groups to live together in relative harmony through shared values, beliefs and food practices. The variety of food, cuisine and social groups in the world and the diversity of the environmental contexts in which they live lead to great intergroup variation in values, beliefs, and practices that arise in an attempt to meet the basic needs of existence, including food and dependent nutrition. Similarly, individual identity's have many different life experiences that contribute to intragroup variation in the degree of adherence to norms in their culture. Members of society often have different interpretations of the same situation because of factors such as taste, smell, sight, age, income, education level, and finally religion. All food and nutritional professionals, as well as persons from all walks of life, need quick access to information to interact effectively with individuals from different cultural groups (Brittin, 2011.) This is especially true when it comes to cuisine identity. In the United States population changes both past, present and future have resulted in an increasingly cultural diverse cuisine explosion. Basic cuisines have provided us a lens to understand and interact with basic cultural norms and behavioral preferences regarding all cuisines throughout the world.

The purpose of this essay is to establish the important aspects of cuisine identity by examining common narrative structures or stories that depict what a cuisine really is by examining the meaning behind the symbol of ingredients and the overall story behind what really creates a cuisines prominence and sustainability within a global culture.

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Alasdair MacIntyre has described the human being as “essentially a story-telling Animal.” Narratives help us impose order on the flow of experience so that we can make sense of events and actions in our lives. They allow us to interpret reality because they help us decide what a particular experience ‘Is about’ and how the various elements of our experience are connected (Foss, 1996.) This true when it comes to cuisine. Every plate of food and meal tells a story about events and actions in our lives. As it has been said in the past “you are what you eat” holds true to the way we carry out our daily lives. The patterns of daily food consumption and cuisine interaction depict the stories in our lives. Every culture has a food consumption pattern that dictates our health and taste regarding daily food necessity. We as humans need food and nutrition to survive. We as humans need stories and narratives that make sense out of our events and actions to what we eat and when we eat. Recognition of the capacity of stories we use to reveal how we organize experience has led to the study of narratives by scholars in a wide range of food disciplines. Contributions to the study of narrative can be traced back to classical Greece and Rome; Aristotle and Quintilian, for example, both wrote about narration. Because of the conceptual diversity that characterizes narrative theory, it is clear that understanding its basic construction and methodological applications one can clearly see why it is important to the overall human condition and food consumption patterns of man in the past present and future. A narrative generally is recognized to be a way of ordering and presenting a view of the world, very similar to a plate of food or a classical dish. The depiction of the situation involves characters, ingredients, actions and cooking, and a sequence of some kind that describes at least two events or states that are organized sequentially. In many cooking preparations two events occur such as a hot food preparation or cold food preparation requires the gathering of ingredients or foodstuffs and then preparing them for some type of consumption pattern. Narratives constitute some basic form of story that creates a cuisine interest and adapts it for consumption. Interpretations through symbols and language form and create a conversation with friends, introduce the need for reading magazines and newspaper articles related to food and identify key ingredients in food that depict and promote our consumption desires. Narratives can be examined, as well, for what they reveal about an individual’s or a cultural identity (Foss, 1996.) Because stories have to do with how protagonists interpret things, what things mean to them. It is clear that narratives provide clues to the subjectivity of individuals and to the values and meanings that characterize their perceptions of culture and food consumption identities.

METHODOLOGY

By understanding the important application of a narrative perspective, the next step in studying cuisine identity is to describe what written stories and observations depict and define a cuisine within itself. By examining written stories regarding a cuisine’s content and context any reader can begin to understand, consume and interact with all cuisine through ingredient and cultural values. In the United States, food and cuisines have been typically classified by food group and or ingredient availability. Our consumption patterns have lead us to consume most cuisines through the lens of ingredient and cuisine identity. As Americans we label a cuisine by food group and likes and dislikes regarding sight, smell and taste. Our society has had a significant dependency towards, salt, sugar, and fat based products. Cuisine and cuisine identity can be classified according to their symbols (content) or their meaning (context). Content includes the observable practices of food use, such as ingredients, preparation methods, equipment and food-handling roles. All content has meaning within the context of the food story or narrative. Context can be connotative (physical and economical properties of food such as appearance, aroma, flavor, convenience of availability) and image-based self expression9communication, cultural or social identity). The complexity of cuisine identity can be ranked in both content and context narratives. Some additional approaches that can be helpful in understanding the cuisine identity of a culture may include, (1) which foods are considered edible (2) how often those foods are consumed. These interpretations often investigate and reveal the daily, weekly and yearly use of food in culture and are

most often characterized through meal patterns and meal cycles. Any cuisine can be read, written and consumed by identifying the food, interacting with the culture and finally by making personal observations regarding likes and dislikes regarding the ingredients presented. The methodology put forth in this research is done through the lens or mouth of various cuisines that are identifiable through written story and observation. It would be impossible to categorize and depict all cuisines presented in human consumption in relationship to past, present, and future demand. The goal is to highlight common cuisine and depict the inherent ingredient and history of story through cultural development and implementation.

DEFINING A CUISINE

Classical, or French cuisine is the foundation to most other cuisines in regard to ingredient availability and technological cooking techniques. French cuisine became known as Haute Cuisine when it was first transcribed and duplicated, which translates to “high cuisine” and identifies its context to foods that are prepared in an elegant or elaborate manner. Haute cuisine has maintained great influence because for many years France was one of the most important political forces in the world. Currently, European cooking methods and ingredients are still the foundation for all modern-day cuisines both past and present. As European influence spread through travels and trade, the Europeans left their thumbprint of food and beverage knowledge, as well as ingredients and techniques, throughout most modern-day cultures. Over time, changing eating and dining habits redefined cooking and Nouvelle cuisine rose up in reaction to rich and supposedly unhealthy nature of classical French cookery.

A cuisine’s foundation is a specific set of cooking traditions, cooking techniques, and a primary and secondary set of ingredients associated with a specific culture within a 50-mile geographical location or area. Some terms that have been historically used to define a cuisine’s foundation may include language that depicts “slow food” “Sustainable Agriculture” or “Sou Vide Cooking.” These new names all incorporate some new form of ingredient inclusion and some degree of innovative cooking and preparation techniques. Throughout the world, the diversity of cuisines is a direct reflection of the cultural dynamics derived from various factors that are particular to a specific area: geography, immigration, economics, trade, politics, and religion and ethnicity background. These set of standards define the act collectively gathering ingredients which eventually lead to the development of traditions and styles that in turn develop and affect our eating habits, flavor preferences, recipe development and dining etiquette. These definitions and thought processes are the primary indicators that sustain the distinction of a particular cuisine.

In today’s world, cookery has been modernized to create what is known as a world cuisine. World cuisine defines by the aspect that it does not have geographical boundaries. World cuisine is rooted in the creation of food that incorporates that include ingredient choice and techniques that are promoted from all around the world. The old style of cuisine identity that included only French and Classical design no longer dominate the art and science of cooking. Instead world views and preparation techniques have been implemented to design and promote new cuisines that adapt to old traditions. World cuisine can also be classified as cuisine that may incorporate a combination of modern and classical practices, ingredients, and techniques. Take for example “Fusion Cuisine.” This cuisine is defined as a cuisine that blends or uses ingredients and preparation methods that encompass various ethnic, regional or national cuisines in the same dish; also known as transnational cuisine. From a Western Cultural perspective, the United States has also developed a new cuisine entitled “New American Cuisine.” This cuisine can be defined as a cuisine that has Americanized the principles of French Nouvelle Cuisine. The goal of this cuisine is to serve fresh food that is simply prepared rejecting the popularity of processed and packaged foods. The cuisine preparations intend to use fresh, seasonal and locally grown foods that emphasis the local and natural flavors of the primary ingredients. As “New American Cuisine” grew in popularity, the culinary philosophy began to bring together a nation, farmers, and chefs that began to work together to make fresh, locally grown foods available. This new cuisine in turn created producers and suppliers that began to develop domestic sources for some of the high-quality ingredients that were once available only from overseas. At the same time that chefs are sourcing ingredients globally, they are also working

together with farmers to supply their diners with fresh flavors preserving local agriculture and heirloom varieties. The concern for locally raised ingredients, referred to as the 'Farm-To Table Movement' has influenced chefs to serve fresh seasonal foods, such as wild greens, or free-range hogs and chicken, that is produced within a few miles of their restaurants and dining establishments. A final noted cuisine is ethnic cuisine. This cuisine is the cuisine of a group of people having common cultural heritage, as opposed to the cuisine of a group of people bound together by a geography or additional political and religious factors. Ethnic cuisine is the cuisine of determinant factor. This determinant factor takes an ethnicity and attaches it to the common foods and ingredients that are gathered and cooked.

THE STORY OF CUISINE

This essay has provided significant documentation and research to understanding the story and definitions behind what ultimately defines and depicts what a cuisine is and its impact on culture. Food consumption patterns and historical impact through story form provide any reader basic insight as to the importance and existence of any cuisine. With this in mind a basic layout or model would enhance a reader's curiosity to determine how all cuisines in general can be viewed and how all cuisines can be analyzed and studied in the future. All cuisine patterns mix, match and compare ingredient selection and comparison patterns. Since the basic technique of cooking has its roots in technological procedural acts almost it could be stated that all food preparation is either served or presented in a raw or cooked form. The techniques of broiling, steaming cutting, and grilling all remain the same. The only comparison that is necessary is to identify the ingredient and determine how the item should be cooked. Food is prepped or prepared either as a raw food or a cooked food. It is cut, chopped, and cooked in any number of variations or patterns. Every recipe has a list of ingredients, a theme to match the ingredients to the preparation and finally a procedural story that allows all cooks to replicate the dish over and over again.

The French Haute Cuisine Model is an excellent starting point to begin the process of outlining the story of cuisine. The French module emerged as one of the first formalized and documented cuisines. France begin to tell the story of cuisine in the mi-17th century. Beyond the sheer number of cookbooks that were produced, the French took the lead in ways that innovated the story of cooking by producing and creating new recipes and techniques. Cuisine became fashions or styles that were imitated everywhere. Everyone in Europe imitated French fashion and style through cooking. Through the story of cookbooks and fashionable styles of cuisine great chefs emerged and dominated the creation of cooking styles and modules.

The French module of cuisine in the mid-17th century depicted a class struggle between its people and the ruling elite. This period is so important in the history of cuisine because it was here that what we call modern French classical, or Haute, cuisine was born, although it would not be called haute cuisine until much later in history. It was during this time that the stories emerged from cookbook authors that defined what elegant cooking should be like and how it should be done. By creating a story and a technical code French cuisine became a normative rule or style. This early and remarkable style of cooking became the model of replication for cooking and designing meals. The first narrative or cookbook to make culinary history was *Le Cuisnier Francois* written by Francois-Pierre de La Varenne. The essence in the new cuisine embraced foods that encompassed and intensified the flavor of the main ingredient rather than contrasting with it the sugar, spices, and vinegars of older cooking recipes. In terms of technique, several features of classical haute cuisine began to emerge in the culinary model. The extensive use of stocks bound with thickening agents and garnished with expensive ingredients like truffles, and Foie gras. The focus was on concentrating flavors and reducing them to an essence. This was one of the most important organizing principles of the French cuisine module. The enactment or order of ingredients and overall effect of ingredients was the beginning of the story of cuisine and the development of modern cuisine and recipe duplication. The French or classical style created a framework which enabled other chefs and emerging cuisines to follow. As we know cooking today every recipe and dish has a main ingredient and specific method of preparation that enhances all other combining ingredients that make up every dish with distinction.

SOME SIMPLE STEPS TO IDENTIFYING CUISINE

Chefs and food professionals, as well as people from all walks of life need simple but decisive methods to access cuisines from other cultures and nations in kind. As human beings we are required to eat and drink in order to maintain health and vitality. As people from multiple cultural groups and nations, each individual must identify, choose and finally consume some sort of food and beverage. While most of us do not regard the consumption of food a specific cuisine acquisition we do pick and choose specific ingredients that fall into categories that define or tell a story about a specific food and its culture. By reading and interpreting a cuisine through cooking and eating most cultures are able to define and recreate a food style or type over and over again. In many cultures the stories describe the predominate foods. In many cases a title or a term can ultimately depict a specific detail or heritage to the commonality of food choice. The following examples are stories and specific research that identifies and describes a particular dish and cuisine through story form. The selections are of multicultural thought and dispersion, meaning no specific cuisine is dominated. What is important to note as a reading is how and why the story or narratives allow us to want and produce the cuisine within itself. We cook macaroni and cheese because we know it love it and recreate it. As with all recipes and ingredients our choices become a common familiarity of ingredients and design of cooking function.

When someone is asked to think of a classic American comfort cuisine, one of the top answers is macaroni and cheese. This American cuisine is a dish that most remember fondly when thinking of their childhood. Most people would consider macaroni and cheese a staple of their meals growing up, and still love eating the dish today. Many people bake their mac and cheese with elbow macaroni pasta and cheddar cheese. However, mac & cheese may be made with various short cut pastas and different cheeses.

THE STORY OF MARCONI AND CHEESE

The Kraft Company was the first to really commercialize the product and made it a staple in the American diet. It was 1937 during the Great Depression that Kraft came out with a quick, easy, and affordable way for families to cook dinner. They put macaroni and cheese in a box, and the meal took off from there. The boxed meal became even more significant during World War II when rationing was in effect. Not only was Kraft mac & cheese affordable, but it was simple to make for families on a stove top. Today, Kraft still dominates the boxes mac & cheese. Typically, the box comes with dry pasta and a powder cheese that becomes creamy when cooking it with water.

The dish has become even more convenient with the creation of “easy mac,” which are single serving of macaroni and cheese that can be made in a microwave. Because it is inexpensive and requires very little cooking tools to make, easy mac has become very popular among college students. When living in a dorm, as long as you have a microwave and water, easy mac is a go to meal or snack. While other brands have also established their own boxed macaroni and cheese and single serving containers, Kraft still remains the dominant brand of this product.

The exact origin of macaroni and cheese remains a mystery, but it is thought to have originated from Italian cuisine, possibly derived from a lasagna dish. The American mac and cheese that everyone knows and loves today most likely came from northern Europe. It is believed that the cuisine first made its way to America thanks to Thomas Jefferson. According to this story, Jefferson became enamored with the various pasta dishes in Europe and brought back a pasta machine to the states. While president, he served macaroni and cheese at the White House.

Many current day macaroni and cheese recipes have become much more creative. Instead of the simple pasta and cheese recipe, chefs would add in various meats, vegetables, or even bread crumbs. One recipe calls for elbow macaroni pasta, cheddar cheese, milk, butter, flour, and breadcrumbs. The recipe instructs one to cook the pasta and in a saucepan, melt the butter and mix in the flour and cheese. It then states to mix the pasta and cheese in a casserole dish and to top with bread crumbs. Finally, the recipe states to bake the dish for 30 minutes at 350 degrees.

THE STORY OF PIZZA

Pizza is a baked pie of Italian origin consisting of a shallow bread-like crust covered with seasoned tomato sauce, cheese, and often other toppings such as meats or vegetables ("Pizza History, What's Cooking America"). Pizza is one of the most popular food items here in the United States. Pizza is known as an Italian dish, but was actually created by the Greeks. In the 18th century, "flat breads" which we know as pizza were sold on streets and in the markets. This dish was mainly sold to the poor because it was extremely cheap to make and filling (Paolo). As time continues, the simple piece of flatbread started to turn more and more gourmet. With chefs from the Italian origin making a simple but delicious masterpiece.

Today, pizza is one of the most popular food items that you can make or eat out at any time of the day. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner pizza recipes have been created to satisfy all. This simple recipe has expanded all over the world and is by far one of the best-known meals for gatherings/parties. Pizza is a \$30 billion industry in the United States. That being said 93% of Americans eat pizza at least once a month ("12 Facts about Pizza). The percentages show the popularity of pizza and its growing continued success. Growing up my family always had pizza on Friday's for our family nights. This simple recipe brings people together by providing a fast and easy meal. Today's society is fast paced and does not really focus on the sole recipe of pizza. Making homemade pizza is very rare to Americans because it is simple to pick up the phone and have it delivered right to the door.

When this recipe was first created it brought the ones who were making it closer together because of all the details it takes to make a pizza. However, it seems that today that pizza is for bringing people together by its deliciousness and quickness. Pizza is one of the many meals that most Americans look forward to because it reminds them of family.

THE STORY OF SUSHI

The cuisine known as sushi is a new and innovative style of food in western culture. Now the colorful little rolls are favorite foods for many diners around the world, especially Americans. Pictures of sushi are colorful and pretty and the story regarding the art makes for an inviting narrative to know more about the process. Also eating raw fish is something like a taboo in many cultures so one would want to learn why in Southeast Asia they thought it would be a good idea.

The true origin and the story of sushi is mysterious but the process of using fermented rice as a fish preservative originated in Southeast Asia. The process that sushi undergoes is sometimes called pickling. It basically refers to the lactic acid bacilli that is produced when rice begins to ferment. That acid, along with salt, causes the bacterial growth in fish to slow down. But this was just a way to preserve the fish and other meat. The actual concept of sushi was introduced in Japan in the ninth century. What popularized the meal was the Buddhist movement that expanded over the country which involved abstaining from meat. So, more people came to enjoy eating the basic rolls that were created. By the 1970s sushi bars began to open throughout the country and even worldwide. The first American city to successfully embrace sushi was Los Angeles.

Since celebrities were the first group of Americans to try the unique dish, it probably is the main contribution to why sushi was able to grow so quickly throughout the rest of the country. Now Americans in cities all over can order a variety of rolls and these restaurants even added a twist to some of them. These additions like cream cheese, spicy mayonnaise and deep-fried rolls reflect a distinct Western influence. Currently there are 3,946 sushi restaurants in the U.S. Part of the reason why is because the increase in sushi consumption from 2014 to now is 28%. Americans have acquired the unique cuisine and added pieces to make it their own. Even vegetarians can enjoy sushi because not all rolls include raw fish.

The recipe chosen is the smoked salmon Philadelphia roll. It is favorite sushi rolls because of the recognized cream cheese flavor mixed with the smoked salmon. Before starting to make the sushi roll it is helpful if you have a sushi rolling mat and a rice paddle. Rice paddles are similar to wooden spoons, but with a much shorter handle and a wide, flat scoop. Next you have to make the rice, it is the next step

because it takes about an hour to prepare. The ingredients include: 1 cup short grain rice, 1 cup water, 1 tablespoon rice vinegar, 1 tablespoon sugar, and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Once the rice is made the ingredients for the inside of the roll are: 2 cups cooked short grain rice, 3 nori sheets, 4 oz. smoked salmon, 3 oz. cream cheese, 1 avocado, and soy sauce (for serving). You lay out the rice then nori sheets and put the smoked salmon cream cheese and avocado (all in strips) inside of it. Then you roll it up but while you roll it up the rice will be on the outside and it is important to add some pressure while you roll so the rice stays attached to the nori sheet. Once that's done you cut up the roll to a normal smaller size and you have sushi!

THE STORY OF MEXICAN CUISINE

Growing up in the United States today, when one hears the term “Mexican” food or cuisine, the majority of us will immediately envision a taco. Although the taco is the most popular among Mexican cuisine in the U.S, it certainly is not the only dish that has found its way north of the Mexican border and gained immense popularity. Along with taco's, dishes such as tortillas, items like enchiladas, guacamole, tamale and fajitas come from Mexican heritage.

Historically, Mexican cuisine entered the U.S. when Mexican refugees started to migrate north in the U.S during the Mexican Revolution. Prior to the revolution, the majority of Mexican's migrating into the U.S were from the northern areas of Mexico where tacos weren't as popular. However, during the 1920's the 'taco' was introduced and first gained popularity in Southern California as a 'taquito' (a rolled taco). The reason why the introduction of the taco to American culture is so important is because the taco itself was the breakthrough for Mexican cuisine in gaining popularity here in America. (Arellano, 2014). Today, Mexican cuisine dominates the ethnic food markets in the U.S controlling 62% of the FDMx (food, drug, mass index) (Lee, 2013).

Driving down the street in the U.S. today you would be hard pressed not to see an Americanized-Latino fast food chain; places like Chipotle and Taco Bell are prevalent all over the U.S. Mexican Food has had a positive cultural impact in the U.S today because it has played a large role in the diversification of our cuisine across the States. Originally when Mexican food started to gain popularity in the southern states (beginning in California), but today you can find a Mexican restaurant just about anywhere you go.

Fast food in the United States has been and will continue to play a large roll in food culture in the U.S. Another important factor that has gained popularity over the past decade is the want and need for healthy alternatives. That being said, in the fast-paced society that we live in here in the U.S. today, fast food will forever be in demand. Some Mexican style restaurants like Chipotle offer the speed aspect of fast food but aren't as bad for your health. (Arellano, 2014) One of the most popular new dieting systems in the U.S. has been centered around attempting to cut out deep-fried, high fatty foods. Preparing these sorts of meals can be timely, or costly. However, an example of a Mexican-style restaurant that has grown in popularity and offers a relatively-healthy alternative to a fast food market that lacks many options in healthiness is Chipotle. Consumers can choose from burritos, tacos, bowls and quesadillas filled with different types of meat and other toppings. Having access to a fast and easy, relatively cheap restaurant such as Chipotle has gained immense popularity in the U.S. today.

CONCLUSION

In Exploring the stories told through the lens of cuisine identity the narratives explain the types of ingredients and methods of preparation that are in accordance with the history and importance of food choice. It is critical for the narrative to provide a persuasive appeal regarding the basic story line of every recipe. By identifying the recipe, itself through story form, the ingredients begin to persuade the reader what the recipe may look like and even imagine its taste. The means by which the content is communicated or the form of the narrative may appear to be most significant. Because the interconnection of the form of the content makes separating the recipe of the narrative from how difficult it is to perform

or prepare for final preparation the narratives truly guide the story of a cuisine and its inherit identity to culture and history.

This essay has explored the cultural stories about food and provided a pattern or design for living and identifying recipes that allowed individuals and social groups to live together in relative harmony through shared values, beliefs and food practices. The variety of food, cuisine and social groups in the world and the diversity of the environmental contexts in which they live lead to great intergroup variation in values, beliefs, and practices that arise in an attempt to meet the basic needs of existence, including food and dependent nutrition. Similarly, each specific recipe in this essay more specifically the story of Macaroni and cheese, the story of pizza, and the story of Mexican food all provide individual identity's that have many different life experiences that contribute to intragroup variation in the degree of adherence to norms and preparation within many cultures. Members of society often have different interpretations of the same situation because of factors such as taste, smell, sight, age, income, education level, and finally religion. All food and nutritional professionals, as well as persons from all walks of life, need quick access to information to interact effectively with individuals from different cultural groups (Brittin, 2011.) This is especially true when it comes to cuisine identity. In the United States population changes both past, present and future have resulted in an increasingly cultural diverse cuisine explosion. Basic cuisines have provided us a lens to understand and interact with basic cultural norms and behavioral preferences regarding all cuisines throughout the world.

The purpose of this essay was to establish the important aspects of cuisine identity by examining common narrative structures or stories that depict what a cuisine really is by examining the meaning behind the symbol of ingredients and the overall story behind what really creates a cuisines prominence and sustainability within a global culture. By reading and sharing narratives a cuisine identity can sustain and continue to live on as a legacy of food in thousands of multicultural contexts. Each recipe has a story and a memory each time it is cooked and consumed.

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