22

FOOD, DRINK and IDENTITY in EUROPE

Edited by
Thomas M. Wilson
EUROPEAN STUDIES
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22

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AND
IDENTITY
IN
EUROPE

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Thomas M. Wilson

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INTRODUCTION

FOOD, DRINK AND IDENTITY IN EUROPE: CONSUMPTION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF LOCAL, NATIONAL AND COSMOPOLITAN CULTURE

Thomas M. Wilson

Abstract

Eating and drinking have increasingly been considered by scholars in the humanities and social sciences as constituent elements in the creation and reproduction of local, regional and national cultures and identities in Europe. Such approaches are also part of the newer scholarship on Europeanization and European integration which has turned to issues of social identification in its attempt to identify forces that will enhance or hinder the realization of an ever closer union. This essay reviews some of the current concerns in the scholarship on food and drink and their roles in identity and identification in localities, regions and nations in Europe. It also introduces the themes that link the historical and contemporary case studies that make up the volume which it precedes.1

Scholars have increasingly researched and theorized social eating and drinking over the last decade. This growing attention has sought to examine food and drink within their contemporary and historical social contexts, in order to explore the changing nature of these

1 Teodora Hasegan of the Department of Anthropology, Binghamton University, worked tirelessly on the preparation and copy-editing of this essay and the volume it introduces, and Tanya Miller of the same department provided valuable bibliographical support in the writing of this essay. I am grateful to them both.
ingestibles within both traditional and transforming societies. To achieve this, the social sciences and humanities have converged in their interests and approaches to the subjects of what and how we consume, when, where and why we consume, and to what ends and with what significances. This turn in many scholarly disciplines to eating and drinking, to consumption in the most literal of senses, has focused a number of overlapping themes and focuses:

1. Food and drink as commodities, material goods that are symbolic of so much more in society and culture, but also, how food and drink as commodities act as elements in essential economic and social processes of production, distribution and consumption;

2. Eating and drinking as practices that figure prominently in many and diverse private and public social behavioural processes, whether such behaviours be the everyday or normal practices of social life that in and of themselves are part of the ordinary minutiae of societal interaction, or the stuff of extraordinary social event, whether unpredicted or recurrent, as, for example, might be found in rites or passage and other rituals that involve feasting, fasting or particular uses of food and drink;

3. Food and drink as signifiers of group culture and identity, wherein the items ingested say something meaningful about people, to themselves and others, in often open-ended processes of social identification, that are at the heart of ethnic, national, class, gender, sexual, local and other identities.

The reasons for this growing interest among scholars in past and present foods, drinks and their associated practices are many. Globalization theory in general has called attention to the ways in which diverse and distant groups of people often eat and drink similar things in increasingly similar ways, as well as how peoples often consume similar items in increasingly dissimilar ways, sometimes as a reaction to the homogenizing effects of global foodways, often in patterns of conformity and resistance that are at the core of globalization debates. The manner in which the peoples of the world are growing closer in their consuming habits and values, or drifting farther apart in the face of so many forces for integration and conformity, is the veritable stuff of globalization studies in the social sciences. And the people who are the focus of such scrutiny are often representative of larger groups of people who have been remarkably
stable over time and place, and consistent in the reproduction of their consumption behaviours over generations and sometimes across great territorial expanses. This is why eating and drinking as aspects of tradition and heritage are central concerns in many narratives of local, regional and national cultures, that are perceived to be under threat of change due to a combination of external, often global forces, as well as due to forces that are internally produced.²

These globalization studies have much in common with a broad range of analyses that have been part and parcel of scholarly post-modernity. All of them seem to have as a principal interest the investigation of culture. In these studies culture is viewed in multiple ways, among them as an ideology, as sets of fixed or free-floating symbols, and/or as significant and reproducible social institutions and structures that are instrumental in regular and innovative social practices. This turn to culture, perceived in various guises as low, high, elite, everyday, and minority- and majority-cultures, is important in scholarly studies of past and present manifestations of modernity, as well as in the theoretical underpinning of post-modernity.

It is the intention of this book to situate food and alcohol, and some of their associated eating and drinking practices, within broadly conceived cultural and political frames of historical and contemporary Europe.³ As such, this book contributes to a rapidly growing scholarship on the social constructions that are related to food and drink, constructions that figure in analyses of everyday culture, of the changing foundation of nations in a globalizing world, and of food and drink as subjects and objects of consumption within the dynamic material worlds of late capitalism and late modernity.⁴ The

² There are many other explanations offered by scholars for this growing literature in food and other consumption studies. For example, in Mintz and Du Bois’s recent (2002: 111) examination of the staggering rise in studies of food and eating in anthropology and sociology they suggest three major trends over the last quarter-century as its source: globalization; the affluence and cosmopolitanism of Western societies, and the inclusivist themes in US society that drive the cross-cultural exploration of variation.

³ One of the first and most comprehensive collections of essays to focus on themes similar to this book was Peter Scholliers (2001b); our volume’s title was chosen to complement that of the earlier work.

contributors to this volume focus in particular on the consumptive patterns that have shaped some European national histories, that today help to constitute changing identity and culture in various localities and nations in Europe, and which have fostered a variety of forms of Europeanization within the context of European integration.

**Consuming Identities**

Food and drink have long been associated in the popular imagination with what contemporary scholars often label as ‘identity’, which, roughly drawn, refers to the personality, mentality, character, and social, political, economic and cultural identifications of individuals and groups.\(^5\) Food in particular is often seen to be elemental in social identity, perhaps because of its universality, but also because of the regularity with which individuals and groups eat. But patterns and the needs associated with food and drink tell us little of the meanings that people attach to their related practices of eating and drinking, which, in many ways, are constitutive of all sorts of personal and group identities. As Brillat-Savarin suggested in 1826 (1971, as quoted in Leitch 2000), ‘Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are’, indicating that the consumption of foodstuffs and alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks are often at the centre of what observers think of others as well as what people think of themselves as they make their choices or are constrained in their attempts to use food and drink as markers of identity. But who we are is also a reflection of our pasts.

As David Sutton (2001: 7) has also noted, not only can people be approached in cultural and identity terms through an appreciation of ‘we are what we eat’, but our social histories can be approached through the notion that ‘we are what we ate’. And food often serves as the main motif in narratives of self-discovery (as Gabaccia [1998: 9] asks, ‘if we are what we eat, then who are we?’) and in narratives of territorial identity (as suggested in such geographical studies as Bell

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\(^5\) For an oft-quoted treatment of identity in contemporary social science, see Hall 1990; see also Hall 1994. For influential perspectives on the notions of the social constructions of consumption, see Douglas 1987 and Douglas and Isherwood 1979.
and Valentine [1997] in which it is queried: ‘we are where we eat’). And as such perspectives on past and present culture and identity also apply to critical approaches to the consumption of drink, in particular that of alcohol, in what Mary Douglas (1987) has aptly termed ‘constructive drinking’. Douglas (1987: 8-12), in fact, reminds us that most cultures celebrate matters with alcohol, and that drinking, like eating, is essentially a social act that marks the boundaries of personal and group identities and their related notions of inclusion and exclusion.

The importance of food and drink to identity has been made clear in all of their related social science and humanities research. Food and drink are the lifeblood of social cohesion, integration and differentiation, and are active ingredients in humans’ perceived ties to the sacred and the supernatural. Both food and alcohol build and enhance peoples’ senses of belonging and becoming, the twin bases to social identity. Food and drink are integral to most if not all definitions of identity as either put forward by the subjects of analysis or by the analysts themselves. The importance of drinking and eating to identity matters is apparent in all places and walks of life, regardless of whether one chooses to see identity as a set of relatively fixed personal and social attributes, largely immutable over time and space, or sees it as behavioural and symbolic responses to multiple social stimuli, wherein aspects of status, role and social meanings combine to create and constrain complex and always changing notions of self and notions of identification with larger and wider social entities. Food and drink are building blocks in the construction of all social identities.

In this book our authors pursue this idea of constructive eating and drinking in order to examine various ways in which groups of people in Europe are defined in part, by themselves and others, by what, how, where, when and with whom they eat and drink. The

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6 These queries, found in Gabaccia (1998) and Bell and Valentine (1997), also figure prominently in the discussion put forward by Scholliers (2001a), which seeks ‘to invite historians, sociologists and anthropologists to explore the way in which identities were built, interpreted, negotiated, narrated and altered by means of food’ (Scholliers 2001a: 5). My essay and the volume it introduces is a response to Scholliers’ invitation.

7 For a recent review of social science perspectives on drinking, culture and identity, see Wilson 2005a.
outsider and insider social constructions involved in such consumption are windows on the changing dimensions of local, national and global cultures and identities, which in turn allow us new vantage points from which to monitor transformations in the spatial and temporal dimensions to society, polity and economy. As Bringéus has remarked, with reference to the comparative study of food ethnology in Sweden, but in a manner which I suggest holds for all European societies and cultures, eating and drinking are much more than the ingestion of foodstuffs, they are part of temporal and spatial cultural patterns: ‘We eat at certain times, in certain places and usually together with certain people. Also, different dishes are eaten in a certain order’ (Bringéus 2001: ix). This is but one manner in which eating and drinking are constituent parts of cultural patterns; they are made socially important, and at times socially mundane, through the significance assigned them by mainstream and minority cultures. Eating and the production, distribution and consumption of food and drink are forces for order; as (Bringéus 2001: x) suggests, a meal ‘exchanges chaos for cosmos’, whether it be part of the ordinary daily routine, or an aspect of wider social hospitality and group feasting. And in their varied and ever-important roles of helping to construct and reproduce daily and everyday social identity, food and drink continue to delineate the boundaries of group membership and values, in localities, regions, nations and beyond, in a new Europe with many new and many old European identities.

Europeanization, food and drink

Europeanization is a term which is increasingly being used by scholars, policy-makers, journalists and many more people in the European Union (EU), to describe processes of becoming more European, in a variety of ways and means. While political scientists and international relations experts concentrate on Europeanization as a process of convergence in political structure and form, sociologists and anthropologists have examined Europeanization and its related identifications with ‘Europe’ as processes which go beyond political and economic adaptations to EU institutions and policies. Many

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8 See Harmsen and Wilson 2000 for a discussion of the range of social science definitions and usages of the term Europeanization.
scholars from these and other academic disciplines have increasingly viewed Europeanization’s role within processes of regionalism, deterritorialization, transnationalism and globalization. Borneman and Fowler describe Europeanization as a process which is ‘redefining forms of identification with territory and people’ (1997: 489) and as a historical and contemporary force for the transformation of European society and culture. Taken from this perspective, Europeanization may be seen as a movement of ideas, peoples and things which is radically changing various notions of traditional and modern culture and identity, thereby changing the groundwork of local, regional and national social, economic and political frames of reference.

Europeanization, however, should not be seen as a subversion of local, regional and national identities and cultures, but a supplement or complement, one of many new mantles of identity which Europeans may slip on or off, depending on social situation and social mood. Europeanization is a process in the reconfiguration of various identities in Europe, in a manner which contextualizes without supplanting national, regional and local identities. Borneman and Fowler (1997: 487) see Europeanization as ‘fundamentally reorganizing territoriality and peoplehood, the two principles of group identification that have shaped the modern European order’, whether this occurs as part of a centralized European Union project (Shore 2000) or in peripheral parts of Europe where Europeanization is largely an effect of EU policies on local political and cultural institutions and identifications (Wilson 2000).

Irrespective of the level at which Europeanization is having effect, its growing significance in Europeans’ lives is not in doubt, particularly because it is inextricably linked to so many other global, diasporic, transnational and world-systemic forces. Europeanization, in fact, is a process of identity-building that cannot be easily contained within more traditional notions of society and polity. As Delanty and Rumford (2005: 23) have suggested, ‘The cultural significance of Europeanization can be associated with cosmopolitanism rather than with something specific as a European People, a European society, a European supra-state, or a European heritage. This view of cosmopolitanism draws attention to dynamics of becoming that arise when the national and global interconnect.’ In their view, the process of Europeanization has four dimensions, each of which needs to be
considered if Europeanization’s role in the localities of and across Europe is to be understood. To Delanty and Rumford (2005: 18-20), Europeanization is a form of cross-border and transnational societal interpenetration, a force in the transformation of the state, a discursive and socio-cognitive transformation in almost all levels of European societies, and an overall force in the transformation of modernity in Europe.

The scholarly study of food and drink in a changing Europe of the EU is one very useful way to examine these various forces of Europeanization, as may be seen in the essay in this volume by Stacia Zabusky and in that by Erick Castellanos and Sara Bergstresser, who each approach notions of national identity through new practices and policies of European integration. In Zabusky’s analysis of identity and identification in one location of and among various occupations at the European Space Agency, she indicates ways in which Europeans drawn from across the continent use food to resist and to accommodate more important and widespread change emanating from ‘Europe’ (where Europe is alternatively defined as the EU or as an imprecise marker of global cultural changes). Zabusky engages the ideas put forward by Leitch (2003), who examined resistance to EU food policies in Italy, where local and regional producers of a local delicacy fought what they saw as homogenizing laws that would in the end destroy regional traditions and identity. Zabusky goes farther, though, in her analysis of food and eating as categories of cultural and political critique of both changing notions of national and cultural identity and of European integration and Europeanization which are to be found in elite European circles. In so doing, she cautions us all about the continuing importance of cultural stereotypes (over lunch in the dining hall or in sporting events) to the ways we all approach European differentiation and integration.

Castellanos and Bergstresser also contribute to our understandings of food as resistance and eating as symbolic of national and regional identities in Italy. In their examination of particular foods and food practices as constitutive of Italianess, they have consciously brought our attention to the disintegrative effects of globalization and Europeanization, where fights over food tastes, presentation, quality and character are simultaneously contests over national culture and identity, which while always active at the levels of interpersonal
contact and media stereotyping, also have clear policy and governance implications. In short, Italian notions of gastronomic superiority are much more than symbolic markers of lovely but relatively unimportant cultural differences – they are manifestations of trends in Italian society that will influence the future of Europe in Italy and of Italy in Europe.

And in this analysis Castellanos and Bergstresser also show us something about the malleability of what is often seen by scholars to be new and innovative forms of analysis and social critique, but which in effect are often representative of quite old and quite comfortable traditional identities. In this case they explore how cosmopolitanism is an element of Italian national identity, and that one key marker of this cosmopolitanism is Italian food and its cooking and eating.⁹ To Italians, cosmopolitanism is not an indicator of transnational or global identities, but of clear and overarching national identification.

Common to both of these chapters in the book, however, is the clear realization that Europeanization is made meaningful in daily and everyday life through some remarkable manipulations of local, regional and national cultures and identities, and that all of these may be approached through the themes of eating and drinking. Throughout Europe, this need to examine food and drink as aspects of national culture is not only a concern of contemporary European societies, but historical ones as well.

*Nationalizing, Localizing and Ingesting*

For decades scholars of nations and nationalism have used culture as a tool to explicate the multiple dimensions to ethnic groups and nations. In this theorizing of the nation, culture has been seen as an element in historical and contemporary nations: there is less and less talk of cultural nationalism, for example, and more and more discussion of the politics of culture and the cultures of politics. The analyses of nationalism in scholarly discourse are as likely to use the concepts of ‘invented traditions’ and ‘imagined communities’ as they are to consider government, territory and national borders. Ingrained

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⁹ This attention to food practices as elements in cosmopolitanism is suggestive of the film titles of the 1960s, such as *Divorce Italian Style* or *Marriage Italian Style*; here we must consider *Eating Italian Style*. For a complementary view of region and consumption in Italy, see Counihan 1988.
within such studies of the cultures of nations has been the attention to
social life from below, and the historical and contemporary forces at
work to construct quotidian culture, among the poor, displaced and
powerless as well as among those with wealth and influence.

As part of this turn to various cultural forces in the past of the
nation, historians have also turned to explorations of past forms of
eating and drinking, not only to trace contemporary patterns of
consumption and to determine origins and continuing importance,
but also to investigate how food and drink were implicated in the
development of other forms of national and local culture. In these
works eating and drinking are differentiating and integrating social
practices, historical processes of identity formation, reproduction and
transformation, which in many senses have captured the national
imagination, at home and abroad.

For example, no matter how much one might want to distance the
Irish from their most famous foodstuff, it would prove difficult when
on occasion a sit-down farmers’ meal in Ireland still may include
mashed, roasted and fried potatoes, heaped upon the one plate, after
which the server might inquire of the diner: ‘would you like some
vegetables to go with your spuds’? And how strenuously should one
continue to associate particular European peoples today with such
foods as limes, frogs, cabbage, cheese, beef and pork, even though these
foods continue to serve as epithetical symbols of national difference
and contest? The same historical and contemporary constraints also
apply to alcohol and the many associations it has with national
identities, from Guinness to cognac to plum brandy to vodka. In
short, food and drink still figure prominently in shared and disputed
notions of national identity, where pasta suggests Italian, porter
indicates Irish, and cheese the Swiss, and where garlic can no longer
elicit an image of one Mediterranean country and when lamb, rice and
tomatoes seem to be generically Mediterranean. This is why a history
of our food is also a history of ourselves, in national and imperial
garb as well in our local and regional costume, and as we have already
seen in relation to the foods we venture to serve on nominally
integrated European tables, these foods continue to be the stuff of
pride and contest, as is demonstrated in the analyses, by Menno

10 Notable among these social and cultural histories of eating and drinking are
Spiering, Joep Leerssen and Michael Wintle in this volume, of particular foods as they have played important parts in the development of England, Ireland and The Netherlands respectively.

Long seen on a world stage as a land where there may be plentiful supplies of food but it is badly prepared and served, Spiering shows us that England is also a land where its people have remarkable love for their food, particularly beef. In fact, the ‘beefeater’ is a source of national pride, a symbol of past and present English greatness (as may be witnessed in the privileged imaging of the Beefeater guards at the Tower of London, and on the label of the famous gin). But Spiering also shows that this source of this pride, as in so many national identities, is in its opposition to others, in this case in food’s role in differentiating the English from their neighbours, particularly the French. However, Spiering asks, what is to become of a national symbol, such as beef, in an era of globalization and Europeanization, when the ‘others’ are no longer so clear cut, and where former distinctly different nations are being touted as your fellow Europeans, with whom you (must?) share identity? Whatever the answers to these questions, which in their broadest terms are related to all of the peoples and countries our contributors discuss in this book, food and eating are the sites of resistance and compliance, and as such are the laboratory of changing national identities in Europe, testing grounds where the experimental results may very well prove surprising. In Tory fantasies in England, fantasies they may very well realize, it will not be the Europeans who consume the English, but the other way around.

The projection of national food and eating symbols both at home and abroad may often serve nation-building processes, but just as often they are part of the exchanges between imperial partners, including colonizer and colonized, and peripheral nation and core nation. Leerssen approaches the historical relations between the Irish and the English through the twin lenses of food and drink, on the one hand, and intercultural encounters on the other. As early as the 16th century the English were categorising their neighbouring Irish peoples in many negative ways, including in them references to their food and drink, but as often happens in colonial and imperial relations, some of these same practices and products become appropriated by the more powerful partner, who takes them on as symbols of partnership and integration. Whiskey may have been among the first of these
appropriated products, a symbol of difference of course, but also one of healing and warmth shared, a dream perhaps of the invader but one shared over generations by many Irish and English. But foods also take on significances of much more sinister colonial relations and imperial effects, as may be seen in the role of the potato in the development of Irish national identity. Leerssen shows us that the images of poverty and want, of suffering and exile, that were associated with the potato due to the events during and after the Great Famines of the 19th century have been superseded by new images of food and drink, in a nation many perceive has transcended its long historical role as England’s first colony, to become a much-loved and well-respected nation of the New Europe. While the new ingestible symbol on that stage may be that of Guinness, which to many consumers new to the pint of black gold find to be an acquired taste, Ireland and the Irish seem happy with that image: take your time, try it again, and you’ll learn to love it, and them!

Food is much more than a symbol, and its role in national development is also that of feeding the nation, of being a part of the diet that sustains and reproduces the peoples of the nation. This is what Wintle shows in his history of consumption in The Netherlands, wherein he points out that while there has been a great deal of recent scholarship on the history of consumerism in European nations, there is still a need to chart the course of consumption in the past and present. In the history he offers us in this volume, Wintle demonstrates the complicated nature of such food analyses, which at the least must also entail studies of demography, food products, agriculture, prices and markets. In this approach the potato takes on a significance which a study of its symbolic role in national identity does not adequately cover. The potato was a staple for peasants and proletarians for generations in The Netherlands (as in Ireland and elsewhere in Northern Europe), and historians need to know how it was prepared and eaten, and who lived off of it, in order to begin to determine the importance of food, drink and their related practices to the history of the nation. Yet all of these foods and practices have changed as a result of modernization in The Netherlands, where now the industrialization of agriculture, the globalization of markets, the blurring of class and regional boundaries, and the changes in diet and tastes have led to new considerations of what is traditional and
national in Dutch food and drink. Similar questions have had particular salience elsewhere in Europe, nowhere more so than in France, where to so many people around the world the notions of good food and the good life seem synonymous.

Wendy Leynse and Karen Montagne have each in their chapters in this book explored the increasingly important question in French life today: can we maintain the quality and assortment of our foods in order to sustain our local, regional and national cultures, all of which are under threat from the related processes of Europeanization, Americanization and globalization? The answers to this question are many, as are the ways in which the people of rural France have changed in order to protect traditional products and practices. Leynse examines, for example, the manner in which the land and its foods are not only related in essentialist ways in the Loire Valley, but also how these associations are the subject of school trips, for students to experience the ‘ingestible topography’ of the region, and to learn from movement and comparison the many ways in which local differences constitute cultural sameness and local identity. She offers a perspective on this region of France that suggests consumption and consumerism are active forces in the association of people with land, history, culture, identity and politics, all of which come to bear in the guise of the ‘situated eater’. But these forms of consumption and consumerism, while adapting to national and international trends, are locally produced and sanctioned, in ways which foster a socialization of young people into a distinctly local identity.

So too in the Gers region of France, where the production and consumption of food depends to a great extent on local notions of trust, in your supplier, in the quality of home-grown foods, and in the connections of family and friends who provide support in so many ways that are seen to be indicative of local and regional culture and identity. As Montagne concludes in regard to the Gers, and in ways similar to the region examined by Leynse, locality in France is dependent on some very precise notions of terroir, which in its many manifestations is a consistently raised element in French national identity. In both the Gers and Loire Valley examples contained in this book, it is clear that traditional and contemporary notions of food, eating and their related consumption behaviours are excellent vantage points from which to appreciate major changes to the quality of life in
France, itself so long dependent on the realization of quality of food, wine, water and the other tangibles that make up the good life in France. It is also clear in Montagne’s case study that this quality of daily life in France seems to be consistently under threat, at least in terms often expressed by locals. This theme of threat runs through all of the papers in this volume. The sources of this threat in France are many, including but not limited to animal diseases such as ‘mad cow’ (to which we must now add the avian flu), migrant peoples, the Americanization of language and other forms of culture, and the standardization and homogenization that come with modernization and Europeanization. As Montagne, Leynse, Zabusky, Castellanos and Bergstresser and so many other authors have shown us, one of the first and most emotional lines of defence against these perceived threats is that of what we eat as an expression of who we are, whether it be the British pintia milk, Irish sausages, Italian lard sandwiches or stuffed goose liver. The localizing processes of trust and quality, in food and social relationships, are the cornerstones of national culture and identity, where food and drink are just as emotive.

However, some local eating and drinking practices are not so much about defence against threats as a strong offense, a clear projection of identity to those near and far who may not share some of the attributes that are so important to some people’s group membership. F. Xavier Medina presents us with a complex picture of how wine and its consumption are key symbols in the operation of Basque society in the middle of the Catalan capital. Basque people there continue the Basque styles of eating and drinking, in ways that complement but also slightly subvert local practices, which are so similar to the Basque in some ways and so different in others. Medina, like other authors in this collection, presents a topography of consumption and identity, where place, social space and consumer relations are emotionally charged remembrances of distant lands and memories, where a glass of wine or a bite of a dish from home are sometimes quiet considerations of identity, and sometimes part of communal displays for others’ public consumption.

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11 For a comparative case of changing notions of quality under external threat in France, see Demossier (1997, 2000).
12 For a consideration of the political and economic relations that accrue to Basque and Catalan drinking and eating, see Hansen 1976, Kasmir 2002.
The Basque diaspora in Catalonia is an excellent example of intra-state international movement of people, where two nations without states mingle in the midst of a national state dominated by another ethnonational group. On the surface this seems a far cry from the situation that pertains in Oslo and Bergen, cities of the one nation and state. But as Gary Armstrong and Hans Hognestad discuss, other identifications can make cities and their various citizens both rivals and allies. In their case, the other identity we may need to consider is that of football fans, mainly young and male consumers of both the masculinity and sportsmanship that are part of the football fan’s life, but also consumers of the drink and other commodities that go along with the highly-charged daily, weekly and seasonal activities of a true football fan. As Armstrong and Hognestad show, the routines and intensity of beer drinking among football fans is more than an interesting case study of comparative sports or Norwegian urban change; ‘hitting the bar’ in Bergen and Oslo represents a major transformation between generations in Norway, a radical break with older patterns of alcohol use, and as such an internal threat for some to Norwegian identity. This is especially so if the football side one supports is British, and if much of one’s support is so dependent on the globalized media packages that allow British sport to be broadcast throughout Europe. In this view, drinking beer while enjoying a good football match between British, Italian or Spanish sides might constitute a socially revolutionary act, one that may help define future Norwegian national identities. Such acts again demonstrate that the consumption of anything that has such emotional appeal is a practice in the construction of local, national and European identities, and worthy of continuing scholarly attention.

Conclusion
It is the shared assumption among the contributors to this book that the importance of food and drink to scholars of culture and identity cannot be overstated. This book is a collection of historical and ethnographic case studies in the sites, practices and meanings of eating and drinking, and the multiple roles which food and alcohol play in various social and cultural constructions of locality, the nation and Europe. It is the intention of our authors to examine the cultural dimensions of eating and drinking, as practices and social institutions
that substantiate individual and group identity, whether they are at the local level of the factory floor or at national levels of cuisine and food production. In their shared view eating and drinking are acts of identification, differentiation and integration, particularly in the social arenas of ethnicity and national identity.

It is also clear to our contributors that in all of the humanities and social sciences that are represented in this book the study of food and drink has seldom been the principal focus of research and writing, at least that is, until recently. This is surprising in many ways, particularly because of the importance of eating and drinking to the social structures and practices that are the principal focuses of so much historical and social science research. But the lack of attention to such matters is also predictable, in that until recently culture and identity took backstage roles in these same studies. Today, with the post-modern turn in much academic analysis, culture and identity have become principal subjects and objects of scholarly research, where change ‘from below’ is as important to many scholars as any top-down great person-induced change. Even now, though, scholars often still see the need to validate their choice of the consumption of food and drink as important sites and motifs in their research. Nevertheless, this book’s contributors, like so many of the authors cited in our bibliographies, have chosen to approach consumption studies with a new dedication to the understanding of how culture and identity shape and are shaped by our attitudes to and actions over food and drink. We collectively offer these case studies of eating and drinking as one way to advance the use of such emotional practices in the wider analysis of locality, nation and Europe.

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13 For an evolving perspective on the changes in alcohol-related research in the social sciences since the 1960s, see the continuing work of Dwight Heath (for example, 1975, 1976, 1987, 2000) See also Hunt and Barker 2001.
References


FOOD, PHAGOPHOBIA
AND ENGLISH NATIONAL IDENTITY

Menno Spiering

Abstract
As in other countries, food and national identity are closely linked in England. Since the sixteenth century the English have considered beef as the commodity that best expresses their perceived national characteristics of common sense, love of liberty, manliness and martial prowess. Even today beef remains a popular emblem of nationhood, as witness the deep national indignation when the product was declared unsafe in the 1990s. Discussing the relationship between diet, food and national identity, this article explores the history and meaning of beef in England, and also instances of food imagery employed in nationalist discourse in the past and in the present. Once a familiar figure in prints and literature, ‘the eating Englishman’ has been replaced by images of ‘the Englishman being eaten’, an indication of increasing national uncertainty, especially since the end of the Second World War. It is proposed that this phagophobic reaction is the result of continuing strains in Anglo-European relations.

This article is about food and English national identity. The terms ‘food’, ‘English’, ‘national’ and ‘identity’ are all open to debate, with ‘identity’ perhaps being the most troublesome one. Much can, and has, been said about identity, about its relation to national character, image, reality and perception. It is generally accepted that statements about identity cannot be separated from the predispositions of the observer. There is, for instance, a real difference between the self-perception of an identity and the perception of this identity by an outsider. In simple terms, a Frenchman’s idea about what is typically
English is invariably influenced by his own Frenchness. This paper is concerned with the national self-perceptions of the English (and sometimes of the British. As usual the two groups cannot always be differentiated.) English national identity is the identity Englishmen or English women ascribe (or have ascribed) to themselves.

National identity is expressed, inter alia, by means of personifications, attributes or symbols, illustrating the alleged typical national characteristics. Whereas the cockerel and the ‘bonnet phrygien’ (or ‘bonnet rouge’, or ‘bonnet de la liberté’) traditionally symbolise French national identity, the bulldog and the bowler are emblems of Englishness. Food, clearly, may also function as an attribute or signifier of national identity. The French are usually associated with snails and frogs; the Germans with beer and sausages. As it involves ingestion, ‘a crossing of the border between the outside and the inside’ (Scholliers 2001, 8), the relationship between food and identity is, arguably, particularly significant. According to one scholar, ‘after language food is the most important bearer of national identity’ (Rogers 2003, 3).

But what is food? This article focuses on food imagery and the food items used to symbolise English national identity. In this sense food is not diet. Many studies have been published about diet in England, showing how changes in eating habits reflect changes in English society, but such developments do not necessarily affect the food items or imagery used to express English national identity. National diet and national food symbolism are not necessarily related.

**A bleeding dish nation**

There is no doubt which food is first and foremost associated with English national identity: beef. It has been a signifier of Englishness at least since the sixteenth century. In Henry V (1599) Shakespeare portrays the English as ‘eating great meals of beef’ and since then the association has evolved into a commonplace through repetition in countless poems, plays, songs, novels and pictures.

The history of the English special relationship with beef has often been described, most recently in a study by Ben Rogers (2003). It was in the eighteenth century that the connection became firmly established in the context of prolonged and intense Anglo-French rivalry. In many a song, pamphlet or print the English happily portrayed themselves as hearty beefeaters, whereas the French were usually depicted as
pathetic creatures having to make do with *soupe maigre*. James Gillray’s *Consequences of a Successful French Invasion* (1798) shows skeletal Frenchman forcing downcast Englishmen to harvest onions and turnips. A soup cauldron can be seen steaming in the background (Figure 1).

![Image](image_url)

*Figure 1: James Gillray, Consequences of a Successful French Invasion, 1798.*

The question why beef reached this status in England is not so easy to answer. Rogers and others (e.g. Mennell 1985, 102) suggest that from an early date onwards the English really ate large amounts of meat, and in particular beef. The least reliable evidence to support this claim are reports from foreigners. The Italian Merchant Alessandro Magno, who visited London in 1562, was apparently staggered by the English meat consumption:

> It is extraordinary to see the great quantity and quality of meat – beef and mutton – that comes every day from the slaughter-houses in this city, let alone the meat that is sold at a special market held every Wednesday for meat brought in from outside the city. Truly, for those who cannot see it for themselves, it is almost impossible to believe that they could eat so
much meat in one city alone. The beef is not expensive, and they roast it whole, in large pieces (Rogers 2003, 11).\footnote{For more travellers’ reports on English meat consumption see Helen Morris (1938).}

Reports such as these make good reading, but they cannot be trusted. Did the English really have an extraordinary relish for beef, or did Signor Magno only think so, noting perhaps merely a relative difference between the English and his own national dietary habits? The fact that many others repeated the Italian’s claim does not make the observation more reliable. Travel literature is notorious for copying earlier sources and claims rather than offering first hand observations. Instead of studying reality the visitor to foreign parts sees what he thinks he ought to see and pleases his audience by confirming their expectations. The familiar tales of African cannibalism, for instance, are the result of this intertextual process.

The idea that the English consumed much beef finds more reliable support in the observation that large parts of the island are suitable for raising cattle and were thus used, especially after the falling of wool prices in mid-sixteenth century. As the practice of enclosure became more widespread, more and more meat became available at reasonable prices, to be traded at one of the many English markets (Rogers 2003, 12-15).

It is possible, then, that the English did indeed produce and consume relatively large amounts of beef. Yet, this fact in itself cannot explain why this commodity became a national emblem. It seems logical to assume that abundance of supply has something to do with this, but what is abundance? Man does not live by meat alone. Obviously there were many other products which were consumed in equal or greater abundance than beef. Statistical evidence shows that for many generations the average Englishman was a not a beef but primarily a cereal and pulses eater (Mennell 1985, 63). The point that emerges is that the emblematic value of a food product is in the quality, not the quantity. Histories of national diet and culinary habits are therefore of limited value to those interested in food and identity. The fact that beef became a symbol of English nationhood can only partly be attributed to what people actually consumed. Beef attained its special status not just because it was around, but because as meat it enjoys
particular symbolical qualities. Meat is more than a source of protein. Meat is special.

Firstly, being high up in the food chain meat is an expensive, even a luxury product. Today affluence and status are still connected with meat intake: ‘The higher the income bracket, the greater the proportion of animal products in the diet’ (Fiddes 1991, 13). At the top of the hierarchy, moreover, we find red meat, such as beef. ‘Lower in status are the “bloodless” meats – chicken and fish – and below this are the animal products – eggs and cheese’ (Twigg 1983, 21-22). No wonder, then, that in their conflicts with the French the English made the most of their beef eating image. In anti-Gallic prints of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Frenchman is invariably portrayed as a pauper having to make do with vegetables, whereas the Englishman, usually personified as the no-nonsense, commonsense, ‘John Bull’, is presented as a prosperous beef eater.

Secondly, beef, especially when served as plain and simple roast chunks (as was common in England) proved an excellent symbol of the virtues of Protestant honesty and simplicity the English liked to ascribe to themselves. The unnatural, dishonest tendencies of the Catholic French, on the other hand, were visible in their preference for over-refined, embellished dishes. Fearing for the Frenchification of England, Robert Campbell complained in 1747 that ‘mighty roast beef’ and ‘our Cookery [which] was plain and simple as our manners’ is threatened by ‘meats and drinks dressed after the French fashion’:

Fish, when it has passed the hands of a French Cook, is no more fish; it has neither the taste, smell, nor appearance of fish. It, and every thing else, is dressed in masquerade, seasoned with slow poisons, and every dish pregnant with nothing, but the seeds of diseases both chronic and acute (as quoted in Rogers 2003, 40).

It was only natural that, given these unfortunate tendencies, the French suffered the yoke of absolute monarchs or the tyranny of revolutions. Blessed by their love of honesty and hearty, unadorned dishes, the English, on the other hand, enjoyed a balanced government of King and Parliament, bestowing liberty on each and every Englishman. Honest beef and honest liberty were thus united in patriotic poems and songs of which the club song of the ‘Sublime Society of Beefsteaks’ (founded in 1736) is the most famous:
Throughout the realms where despots reign,
What tracks of glory now remain!
Their people, slaves of power and pride,
Fat Beef and Freedom are denied!
What realm, what state, can happy be,
Wanting our Beef and Liberty?

The third and most important reason why meat reached national emblem status is that it associates well with a core aspect of the English national identity, more important still than the supposed penchant for honesty, simplicity and liberty. Writing about nineteenth-century imperialism, Michael Paris calls the English a ‘warrior nation’ (2000). Surely, this is an apt appellation, even today. In no European country can so many war memorials and museums be found, are so many war memories propagated by the media, and so many past battles reenacted in numerous TV documentaries or by groups of enthusiasts all over the country. War and warrior worship is an abiding part of the English national fabric.

All this, however, did not just start in the nineteenth century. Every nation derives its identity from opposition to others. National anthems, histories and folklore invariably celebrate past battles and bloody victories. As the saying goes: ‘war is the midwife of nations’. This is particularly true of the birth of the English nation, which fought its way into the British isles in the fifth century BC and has since then fought, merged with, and fought again countless rivals and invaders, and, in due course, peoples in all parts of the world until the mighty Empire was built. England, Shakespeare reminds us, is ‘the seat of Mars’ (Richard II, II, 1). Meat goes well with this manly self-image, long held to be the traditional food of hunter-warriors. ‘Deeply embedded in dominant culture is the idea of animal food around the qualities of strength, aggression, passion, sexuality (...). Men in particular are thought in some sense to need meat’ (Twigg 1983, 22). Even Mahatma Gandhi concurred with these ideas. He once tried to convince himself that the only way to overthrow the warrior nation would be for the colonised to become carnivores themselves: ‘It began to grow on me that meat-eating was good, that it would make me strong and daring, and that, if the whole country took to meat-eating, the English could be overcome’ (Fiddes 1991, 67). (Gandhi, by the way, very quickly dropped eating meat as it made him physically sick and ‘full of remorse’.) The vital, virile qualities of meat are thought to be especially
present in beef, as this product can, and usually is, served in bloody chunks. The world, according to Châtillon-Plessis, can be divided into ‘bleeding dish nations’ and ‘sauce nations’ (Mennell 1985, 309). There is no doubt to which group the English belong. Our ‘warlike predeces-
sors’, Joseph Addison wrote in 1710, ‘have paid great respect to this excellent food’ (of beef). ‘We use the word “beef-eater” in a respectful and honourable sense. Beef and mutton was the diet which bred that hardy race of mortals who won the fields of Agincourt.’ A few decades later Henry Fielding linked the exploits of the warrior nation even more directly with their intake of beef in his famous patriotic song *The Roast Beef of Old England* (1731):

When mighty Roast Beef was the Englishman’s food,
It ennobled our Hearts, and enriched our Blood;
Our Soldiers were brave and our Courtiers 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.
Oh, the Roast Beef of old England,
And old England’s Roast Beef.

The eating Englishman

Moving from food as an emblem of English national identity to gen-
eral food imagery employed in English nationalist discourse, a first glance at English patriotic prints reveals a high proportion of images of eating Englishmen. That John Bull eats meat is important, but even more important, it seems, is to portray him in the act of eating and drinking itself. Well known is the splendid engraving ‘John Bull Taking Luncheon’ published by James Gillray in 1798, after Horatio Nel-
son’s victory over the French at Aboukir Bay. The massive ‘Grumble-
Gizzard’ can be seen devouring with great relish platefuls of French ‘frigasees’ supplied by Nelson and other triumphant British admirals (Figure 2).

In written discourse the eating Englishman is a similarly well-
known figure, ranging from Shakespeare’s rotund Sir John Falstaff and Sir Tony Belch, to the huge Dr Samuel Johnson (‘he who does not
mind his belly will hardly mind anything else\(^2\), and the modern Grumble-Gizzard Roger Micheldene, main character in Kingsley Amis’ *One Fat Englishman* (1963).

Also well known is the image of the Englishman who unperturbedly continues to eat and drink whatever else happens around him. Many will remember the scene in *Asterix in Britain* where the English insist on drinking their tea even though terrible battles rage around them. It is variant of a rich legacy of similar anecdotes and cartoons, deriving probably from a remark made by an Italian visitor in 1500 that ‘when the war is actually raging most furiously, they will seek for good eating, and all their other comforts, without thinking what harm might befall them’ (Sneyd 1847, 23).

\[\text{Figure 2: James Gillray, John Bull Taking Luncheon, or British Cooks Cramming Old Grumble-Gizzard with Bonne-Chere, 1798.}\]

\(^2\) One of the good doctor’s many remarks on food as noted down by James Boswell (Birkbeck Hill 1887, 468). About this ‘true-born Englishman’, Boswell continues to write that ‘his (Dr Johnson’s) looks seemed riveted to his plate; nor would he, unless when in very high company, say one word, or even pay the least attention to what was said by others, till he had satisfied his appetite, which was so fierce, and indulged with such intense, that while in the act of eating, the veins of his forehead swelled, and generally a strong perspiration was visible (...). They who beheld with wonder how much he ate upon all occasions when his dinner was to his taste, could not easily conceive what he must have meant by hunger’ (Birkbeck Hill 1887, 468).
This initial investigation into food imagery and English national identity warrants the formulation of a hypothesis, if not a firm conclusion. The act of eating signifies what meat signifies. It stands for affluence, strength, health, confidence. Just growing food is not enough. The warrior nation wants to be seen expanding its girth as it expands its empire. As the Gillray print shows, John Bull dines on his enemies with great gusto, swallowing ever greater parts of the world. No wonder anti-imperialists depicted the British as guzzling swines, ‘hogging’ the globe (Figure 3).

![Figure 3: Britain Hogging the Globe. The New York World, 1895.](image)

In contemporary England food remains an important signifier of national identity, with beef still topping the charts. In 2004 the nation was asked ‘what people, places, activities or characteristics set the country apart.’ A substantial 73% opted for roast beef, along with Yorkshire pudding and fish and chips (BBC 27 April 2004). The enduring national identification with beef should not however be taken to mean that there is no debate about English identity. Judging by the number of books, articles and documentaries on the present state and uncertain future of the country, the merits and meaning of Englishness are pondered as never before. As in the past, food and food imagery have
a prominent place in these contemplations of English national identity.

**Cool Britannia**

It is received opinion that since the Second World War the English have increasingly felt uncertain about their national identity. Many have argued, in as many books and articles, that ‘the English no longer know who they are’ and ‘feel anxious about themselves’ (Paxman 1999, viii). To what extent the nation is really experiencing these tribulations is difficult to measure, but there is some statistical evidence. A 1999 MORI poll showed, for instance, that the English identify with a bewildering collection of national flags. Whereas the vast majority of the Welsh simply prefer their Red Dragon flag, the English opted first for the Union Jack and then for the Cross of St. George. The American Stars and Stripes, however, came a good third, followed by the Welsh, European and Scottish national flags (MORI 1999).

Four reasons are usually mentioned as to why the English have lost confidence in who they are: the demise of Empire and the ensuing increase in ‘ethnic’ immigration; devolution or ‘the Break up of Britain’; European integration; Americanisation or globalisation. No doubt all these events have caused rapid changes in society, as witness equally rapid changes in the English diet. A 1976 Gallup Survey showed that in that year ‘chow mein and sweet and sour pork were known by seven out of ten, pizza by eight out of ten, and ravioli by nearly as many’ (Burnett 1979, 348-349). Now, in the twenty-first century, surely these figures are ten out of ten across the board, with many other ‘foreign’ dishes being consumed on a daily basis. However, as was pointed out earlier in this article, a changing diet does not necessarily mean a shift in the food items or imagery used to symbolise the nation. What is the role of food in the present debate about English national identity?

We have just seen that beef is still the preferred food item to symbolise the English nation. English butchers continue proudly to drape their shops in Union Jacks, and beef remains a Sunday dinner favourite. The events surrounding the BSE crisis of the 1990s further illustrates the continuing love affair between the English and their beef. No nation is happy when one of its products is declared unsafe by others. The English are no exception. They reacted, however, with
exceptional fury when the export of their beef was banned by the EU and other nations in 1989. Even after the authorities had accepted that a high proportion of British beef was infected with Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), and could thus pose a health risk to consumers, the mood in the country remained defiant. A large section of the media urged the nation to keep on eating beef, while boycotting the produce of persistent sceptics such as the French and Germans. Apparently, of all English produce, beef retained a very special status. At the height of the BSE crisis the agricultural minister John Gummer made a great public show of feeding his four-year-old daughter a hamburger, while in Parliament many spoke passionately about the enduring qualities of beef. It is a ‘prime product’, declared the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in 1996, and ‘the Europeans’, who were then still refusing to import it, are ‘mugs to miss out’ (Browning 1996). In that same year the Earl of Lindsay summed it all up by stating that beef remains part of ‘our national identity’ (Earl of Lindsay 1996).

That beef has prevailed as a symbol of Englishness does not gainsay that since the Second World War the English have felt uncertain about their national identity. After all, by their very nature symbols tend to be unchanging. The national uncertainty of the English is rather reflected in a multitude of government and media sponsored campaigns aimed at reinventing, re-imagining or rebranding British or English national identity. The last decade saw the launching of the New Labour ‘Cool Britannia’ campaign, aimed at ‘showcasing Britain as a young stylish post-imperial nation with leading-edge creative cultural industries’ (McLaughlin 2003); a BBC ‘Rebranding Britain’ competition so as ‘to relaunch Britain to the world’; a ‘Nominate England’s Greatest Icon’ contest sponsored by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport; suggestions for new national flags (such as a ‘Union Black’); several attempts by the British Council to ‘refresh’ the image of Britain and England around the world; and the publication of various reports on ‘renewing our identity’, for instance the 1997 DEMOS report titled Britain TM:

The renewal of identity does not imply casting off what has gone before. Our challenge is to find a better fit between our heritage and what we are becoming. Two hundred years ago our ancestors invented a new identity that proved enormously successful. They pioneered new institutions, new
images and new ways of thinking, free from any sentimental attachment to the traditions they had inherited. Today we need to do the same again (Leonard 1997, 5).

Food is given an important role in this pioneering of new images. Rather than beef, modern, ‘cool’ or multicultural food items are plugged as suitable symbols of the new national awareness. The ‘Cool Britannia’ campaign was apparently inspired by the introduction of a new Ben and Jerry ice-cream flavour in 1996 (vanilla with strawberry and chocolate-covered shortbread). The launch of the campaign ‘involved Britannia parading around the Royal Albert Hall dragging a large tub of the new ice cream’ (McLaughlin 2003, 1). Tea figured large in the England’s Greatest Icon contest, only now the product’s colonial origins were proudly promoted as ‘an early example of multiculturalism’ (BBC 8 June 2004). One of the new British Council posters, finally, shows a plate of ‘traditional’ fare (including beef) cut across by new products such as stir-fried vegetables and pizza (BBC 24 September 1998).

The threat of Europe

Some reasons were mentioned above as to why the English have felt increasingly uncertain about their national identity since the Second World War. Of all these reasons ‘Europe’ is the most important one. Ever since the creation of the first European cooperation schemes in the 1950s, the English debate about whether or not to join Europe has been fierce and infused with countless references to ‘identity’. In short, the English are unhappy in the European Union because they feel different from ‘the Europeans’. In the early 1960s, when the United Kingdom attempted to accede to the EEC for the first time, many feared that ‘joining Europe’ would inevitably lead to an utter loss of national identity. ‘There is a value’, wrote Sir Herbert Read in 1963, ‘that is threatened by the Common Market which I would call national or regional identity and it is a value of incalculable importance from a cultural point of view’ (Read 1963).

The issue of identity would remain at the centre of Anglo-European debate in years to come. The outbursts of Margaret Thatcher about how English honesty was threatened by European duplicity are famous, but Labour politicians, too, have expressed similar concerns. Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell, for instance, feared the effects on Brit-
ain of the ‘evil features of European history’ (Gaitskell 1997, 21). Of the many Eurosceptic groups and parties that are active in Britain today, none limit their arguments to political or economic issues. On their website the United Kingdom Independence Party asserts that it is the future of ‘Britishness that is at stake.’

If it is true that food is a particularly meaningful signifier of national identity, then one would expect to find a good many references to food in the English European question debate. It is indeed remarkable how often such references were (and are) made. As the United Kingdom negotiated EEC entry, there was widespread concern that membership would dramatically increase food prices. According to one survey, the cessation of Commonwealth imports, coupled with the implementation of the European Common Agricultural Policy, would add a crippling £600,000,000 a year to Britain’s food bill (Burnett 1997, 365). Many Eurosceptics reached similar conclusions and proposed to maintain Commonwealth food imports, while cutting off relations with the EEC, which is ‘a body of busy-fingered, interfering, self-righteous, obsessive harmonisers in Brussels’ (Stanley-Smith 1975, 12).

But it was not just the price of food that was an issue. Many expected that joining Europe would jeopardise the very existence of traditional English fare, and thus strike at the heart of English identity. The British press habitually reports on the intrusion of European directives in the national life. In the major newspapers, of the 129 scare stories about such directives published between 1995 and 2004, 30% were about food and drink. Invariably the reports suggested that the European obsession with regulation was not only daft, but a real threat to the British way of life. Believing that ‘Europe’ was about to ban the sale of milk in glass bottles, the Sunday Telegraph remonstrated that ‘another sliver of the British way of life bites the dust’ (26 August 2001, 13). Over the years similar scares have been spread about the imminent demise of British traditional cheeses, chocolate, clotted cream, crisps, cod, mince pies, mushy peas, mustard, rhubarb, shandy, strawberries and ‘fry-ups’ (European Commission Representation in the United Kingdom 2005).
The Englishman being eaten

A typical formula in Eurosceptic discourse is that Britain is being swallowed up by Europe, the Europeans or a European superstate. Writing about the draft European Constitution, the Sun, for instance, warned that ‘Britain is drifting ever closer towards being swallowed up by a European superstate’ (1 June 2003). Showing a fierce dragon ripping apart the United Kingdom, the same newspaper described the European Union as a ‘beast which aims to devour our national identity’ (23 April 1996). The Campaign for an Independent Britain is particularly fond of the ‘swallowing metaphor’, which occurs in many of its publications. ‘Our country is faced with the gravest crisis in all its history’, says one of its most active members, Sir Richard Body. ‘A crisis in which its very existence as a nation is being sedulously assailed by people in high places seeking to see our nationhood swallowed up in a federal Europe’ (Campaign for an Independent Britain 2005). This imagery of Britain being ingested by Europe is interesting as it recalls the imagery of the eating Englishman (or John Bull) which was discussed above. Only now the situation is reversed. Gone are the days of confidence and dominance. The Englishman is no longer eating but being eaten.

A persistent Eurosceptic fear is that the United Kingdom will not just be swallowed up by the European Union, but by one of its member states, Germany, which is often portrayed as the evil fairy godmother of European integration. Looking ahead to the year 2045, the historian Andrew Roberts describes how England has degenerated into a insignificant province of a European superstate dominated by the Germans. The European offices have moved from Brussels to Berlin, the English are coerced into speaking German and the streets of London are made unsafe by German louts chanting ‘Britons will be slaves’ and ‘Deutschland über alles’ (Roberts 1995, 142). In 1990 the then trade secretary Nicholas Ridley expressed similar anxieties when he stated that the Germans were bent on ‘taking over the whole of Europe.’ ‘I’m not against giving up sovereignty in principle, but not to this lot. You might as well give it to Adolf Hitler’ (Ridley 1990, 9). Reverting again to the imagery of ingestion, the Times Magazine summed up these fears by publishing a large portrait of a huge Chancellor Kohl gorging on Europe, a fork in one hand while rubbing his stomach – covered by the European flag – with the other (8 March
The similarities with the Gillray print which was discussed above are striking. Only John Bull is replaced by John von Bull. Apparently, in the English imagination the Germans have taken over the role of conqueror and warrior nation, reducing to fodder the once proud empire builders.

The anxiety syndrome phagophobia, of which the fear of being eaten is a variant, usually manifests itself in persons suffering from a severe lack of self confidence (Kohl 1998). Just as eating involves ‘the principle of incorporation’ (Scholliers 2001, 8), so being eaten signifies a total abandonment of self and absorption in ‘the other’. Applying psychological analyses to nation states is a dangerous game with obvious limits. Having said that, the images showing Europe eating Britain or England must be indicative of something. Jeremy Paxman’s proposition that since the end of the Second World War the English have increasingly felt anxious about themselves finds particular support in English Euro sceptic discourse. The European Union is more than an organisation compromising British sovereignty. It is widely perceived as an ogre feeding on an apparently defenceless and unassertive nation.

Figure 4: Dave Brown, Europe Devouring Britannia. ©The Independent.
When the then President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, visited Britain in 2001 the press again showed a great preponderance for words like ‘devouring’ and ‘swallowing’, and tales of Europeans predating on the island race. It prompted a fantastic cartoon by Dave Brown in the *Independent* of 16 February 2001 (Figure 4). Taking his cue from Goya’s dramatic painting of Saturn devouring one of his children, he portrayed a terrible Prodi (covered only by a napkin made out of a huge bloodstained European flag) sinking carnassial teeth in a small, pallid Britannia. Tony Blair, obviously personifying the Eurosceptic claim that Britain is unable to assert itself, can be seen assisting the European monster by offering him a good helping of sauce (Figure 4). The bleeding dish nation has become a bloodless nation and it is Europe, but also the own national uncertainty, which is to blame.

**Conclusion**

Many histories about the English (or British) diet have been written, giving useful insights into the changing social and economic circumstances of the nation. They do not, however, necessarily inform about the English perception of national identity and how this is associated with food or food imagery. Though it was never a true staple, beef became the prime emblem of Englishness in the sixteenth century and has remained so ever since. Being ‘red meat’ the product combines well with core aspects of the English national self-image, such as honesty, love of liberty and, above all, manliness and martial prowess. Similar qualities are manifest in the image of ‘the eating Englishman’ which figures large in English literature and the visual arts.

Beef remains a favourite national symbol even today, in spite of major shifts in the way the English perceive themselves, especially since the end of the Second World War. No longer ruling the world, or Britannia, the English, by various accounts, have lost all sense of who they are and where they stand. The plethora of government-sponsored campaigns aimed at reinvigorating or reinventing the nation are indicative not so much of a ‘Cool Britannia’ finding fresh ways of expressing herself, but of a nation which has lost past certainties and not yet found a new identity. The postwar encounter with ‘the Europeans’ and the European Union has been experienced as particularly unsettling, as witness the many Eurosceptic campaigns, pressure groups and parties
which predict that the English national identity will not survive incorporation in a European superstate. Eurosceptic discourse is larded with references to food which, if one accepts the adage that ‘after language food is the most important bearer of national identity’ (Rogers 2003, 3), is an indication of how seriously the European threat is felt. In England ever closer union has brought ever deepening phagophobia. Not content with regulating away traditional domestic dishes and culinary habits the Europeans are about to consume the English.

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FROM WHISKEY TO FAMINE:
FOOD AND INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS
IN IRISH HISTORY

Joep Leerssen

Abstract

Food provision and diet belong to the fundamental cultural patterns that mark a society, and are often foregrounded as salient experiences in intercultural encounters. This is also the case in one of the most long-standing intercultural confrontations in European history: that between Ireland and England. Some discursive thematizations of Irish diet (whisky, dairy, potatoes, famine) are traced in this article, both in their historical context and in their rhetorical function.

In intercultural encounters, the thing that stands out most saliently as a marker of cultural otherness is (apart from costume) diet. Eating is a universal biological given; Claude Lévi-Strauss has made us aware of the anthropological constant that what sets us apart from animals in our human self-perception is the fact that we process our food before ingesting it. On that basis, the differences in what we eat, and how we eat, stand out as a deep, fundamental part of the differentiation of human culture.¹

One of the oldest and best-documented cross-cultural encounters in European history is the one between England and Ireland. From the twelfth century onwards, there is a rich and continuous record of English observations on the neighbouring isle as it was brought into English purview and under English domination. The starting point, Giraldus Cambrensis’s *Topographia Hiberniae*, was written in 1188, when Norman-Welsh barons undertook to assert in arms the suzerainty of the English

¹ Lévi-Strauss 1964; also Tannahill 1973.
crown over Ireland. English descriptions of Ireland have a number of important features in common. They are all exoticist (in that they concentrate on uncouth rather than on familiar things), they are all ethnocentric (in that they measure Irish society by English standards), and they frequently rely on previous descriptions rather than on first-hand observation.

As a result, a number of commonplace themes or tropes took shape at an early stage which became fixed ‘tags’ in the intertextual tradition of Ireland-related discourse. The trope that Ireland harbours no snakes (or indeed any other venomous animal) is derived, ultimately, from the classical geographer Solinus. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, references to Irish laziness and to the use of wailing mourners at funerals became a similar standard fixture – and so did the references to Irish food and drink. Whereas the medieval tradition, from Giraldus Cambrensis onwards, recycles topographies and mirabilia taken from classical authors and from sheer fancy, the early modern period gives more detailed geographical and social observations. The ideological background is that of colonial domination: in the decades after 1543, Ireland was brought under the direct sovereignty of the English Crown (it had been a feudal lordship before), ruled through a civil administration and Privy Council rather than through feudal enfeoffment. At the same time, colonial ‘undertakers’ were encouraged to set up plantations in Ireland’s more remote regions, which accordingly were now gaining in economic and political interest. The change in outlook can be reflected no better than in the differences between Cambrensis’s Topographia of ca. 1188, and the 1596 View of the present state of Ireland, by none other than the poet Edmund Spenser (himself a colonial landowner in Co. Cork).

Modern-style descriptions of Ireland from Tudor times onwards are more attentive to the daily manners and customs of the native inhabitants. These are invariably depicted as uncouth, restive, lazy and untrustworthy – the standard stock-in-trade of colonial denigration. Comments about their diet are twofold, and in both cases Gaelic loanwords are used to describe it. The first of these is usquebaugh or usque for short, nowadays

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2 What follows is set forth in much greater detail in Leerssen 1996.

3 And a trope it is. To be sure, the absence of snakes from Ireland is an ecological fact; but so is the absence of reindeer or of boars, which is never commented upon. Moreover, the tropical nature of the no-snake-comments is demonstrated by its recurrent link to non-factual, speculative comments as to the Irish paucity or plenitude of bees (which is unremarkable either way).
spelled *whiskey*.\(^4\) Whiskey is unanimously praised by those who describe it; it is drunk for its comforting propensities, and praised because it “dries more, and inflames less” than other distilled cordials; the phrase is, again, a formula that we can trace from one description to another. Even William Camden’s Latin geography *Britannia* (1586) says that the Irish *aquam vitam optimam habent, quae multo minus quam nostra inflammant et magis excicat* – an indication, again, of the high intertextual consistency of the descriptions: commonplace rules.

The other loanword refers to one of the staple food elements in the traditional Gaelic diet: a form of curdled milk called by its Gaelic name, *bāinne clabair*. Anglicized to *bonnyclabber*, the word enters the English language in the early seventeenth century, and falls into desuetude in the course of the eighteenth. This may reflect a change in the native Gaelic lifestyle under English rule: the Gaelic clans were originally of a semi-sedentary, pastoral nature, with cattle at the heart of the economy. Dairy produce (and meat, when affordable) would accordingly be at the centre of an Irish diet.\(^5\) By the eighteenth century this pastoral pattern has been ousted by a new system, based on strict, territorially divided, sedentary and crop-raising land ownership under English or English-ruled landlords. Tellingly, Jonathan Swift in one of his Irish pamphlets mentions the old-fashioned *bāinne clabair* side by side with another staple food which thenceforth was to dominate Irish life and Irish stereotype: he satirically refers to the Irish people as “living with comfort on potatoes and bonny clabber”.\(^6\)

Potatoes were introduced into Europe as part of the selfsame colonial expansion which saw Ireland brought under English control. It provided

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\(^4\) There is now a somewhat artificial division between the spelling with or without an *e*. *Whisky* is supposed to be used only for the Scottish, *whiskey* for the Irish variety. Both are derived, by way of the earlier loanword *usquebaugh*, from the common Gaelic *nisce beatha*. These words, *nisce* (‘water’) or *nisce beatha* (‘life-water’; ‘spirit’, cf. Latin *aqua vitae*) are common to both Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaelic, two languages which in any case only grew into separate standards long after the word *usquebaugh* had been introduced into English.

\(^5\) A mid-seventeenth-century Gaelic satire against upstart yokels, written from an aristocratic perspective, denigrates them also in their diet, which is grotesquely exaggerated as consisting of loathsome and unclean refuse, but which nonetheless may throw some light on the dietary situation in the first half of the seventeenth century: ‘the head-gristle and trotters of cattle, and the blood, gore and entrails of dumb animals, (...) coarse, half-baked barley-bread, messy mish-mashes of gruel, skimmed milk, and the butter of goats and sheep, rancid (...)’ Williams 1981, 2.

\(^6\) ‘Answer to the craftsman’ (1730), in McMinn 1990.
cheap and plentiful nourishment and soon became the staple of the poorer classes all over Europe. (This ‘food for the poor’ is thematized in Van Gogh’s painting ‘The potato eaters’ of 1885.) In Ireland, it provided an alternative to the dairy-oriented diet of earlier periods. In what is known as the ‘landlord system’, large estates were held by landowners of English background and sympathies, and worked by natives whose Catholicism deprived them, under the prevailing laws, of any legal standing or protection. The resulting exploitation was severe. When Swift wrote his Irish pamphlets, the Irish peasantry were a pauperized underclass driven to beggary in the lean seasons of the year; famines and starvation were not uncommon. Indeed one of the most ferocious satires in the English language, Swift’s ‘Modest Proposal’ (1729; repeatedly reprinted, also in McMinn 1990), was occasioned by precisely this condition. Adopting the voice and persona of a fatuous Anglocentric economic planner, Swift launches a scheme ‘for preventing the children of poor people from being a burden to their parents or country, and for making them beneficial to the publick’ (subtitle). The scheme boils down to cannibalism. Rearing young Irish children to the age of two and then slaughtering them for food would solve the problem both ways: more food supply, and fewer mouths to feed. With the gruesome systematic consistency so characteristic of true madness, Swift works through the implications of his scheme, the yield and recipes (extolling the suitability of toddler flesh for broiling, or fricassées), the costs, pricing and benefit. This hair-raising text still stands out as one of the most savage denunciations in literary history against the dehumanization of the oppressed. What is more, Swift’s attack has an uncanny prophetic quality: obviously, food and famine are, by the 1720s, already looming large over the colonial exploitation of Ireland. This was to reach catastrophic proportions a century later. It all hinged on the potato.

The worst iniquities of the landlord system were redressed in the climate of Enlightenment patriotism from 1780 onwards. Ireland was no longer exclusively an exploitation economy, improving societies made their influence felt, landlords were concerned with improving their estates, and the civic disabilities of Catholics were mitigated. The native peasantry established a modus vivendi of sorts. Although they lived in airless, windowless hovels⁷ and were dressed in rags, a minimum level of

⁷ Many travellers from the period 1740-1840 testify to this. Windows were a luxury, since real-estate taxation took the form of ‘window tax’ and chimney taxes; as
subsistence was guaranteed by, precisely, the potato. Such lands as were available for their own farming only needed a small minimum size to accommodate a few potato-beds, sufficient to keep a family in food.

From the 1820s onwards, observers began to comment on what was apparently a population explosion as a result of this.\(^8\) Holdings were subdivided to their very smallest possible extent, and the countryside was crowded with settlements fed on a mono-diet of potatoes. Protestant academics would comment, with a degree of worry, on the improvident tendency among poor Catholics to marry early, set up a hovel with a potato bed, and have numerous offspring. This worry was partly inspired by Malthusianism, but also partly inspired by sectarian anti-papery and contemporary politics. Daniel O’Connell, the hero of Catholic Ireland, had in the 1820s managed to mobilize the ragged peasantry for political agitation. Whereas in previous decades the Catholic peasantry had manifested its discontent in wayward acts of rebellion and revolt, O’Connell had managed to rally them into a movement, which first wrested full civil rights from an unwilling British government (‘Catholic Emancipation’, 1828-29), and subsequently flexed its muscle in mass rallies aimed at obtaining an autonomous Home Rule status for the country. O’Connell was, to borrow a phrase, turning peasants into Irishmen,\(^9\) and their sheer number and destitution presented a worrying aspect to Protestant Tories.

Parallels with the French Revolution were unspoken but obvious. The French Revolution had unleashed a savage, famished underclass; stereotypically, the Frenchman was seen as a lean, hungry rascal under-nourished on *soupe maigre* (and, as such, mockingly opposed to the English opulence of roast beef and plum pudding, a subject explored by Menno Spiering in his contribution to this volume); the parallel between France and Ireland, both characterized by hunger, by a demographic power imbalance and by potentially violent disaffection, was obvious to all, certainly in the years surrounding the Reform Bill. If Benjamin Disraeli was later to base his programme of ‘one-nation Toryism’ on the worried realization that British society was divided into two separate nations, *rich* and *poor*, without common interests, then that societal split was all the more severe in the case of Ireland, with its colonial-style

\(^8\) See Casey and Rhodes 1977.

\(^9\) I take the phrase from Eugene Weber’s classic *Peasants into Frenchmen*. I have argued the case at greater length in Leerssen 2002.
landlord system, where rich and poor were coterminous with a religious and cultural divide: Protestant and Catholic, English and Gaelic.\(^\text{10}\) In his 1837 *The French Revolution*, Carlyle spoke of the Irish peasantry as the *sans-potato*, in an obvious play on the French *sans-culotte*.

But what if History, somewhere on this Planet, were to hear of a Nation, the third soul of whom had not for thirty weeks each year as many third-rate potatoes as would sustain him? History, in that case, feels bound to consider that starvation is starvation; that starvation from age to age presupposes much: History ventures to assert that the French Sansculotte of Ninety-three, who, roused from long death-sleep, could rush at once to the frontiers, and die fighting for an immortal Hope and Faith of Deliverance for him and his, was but the second-miserablest of men! The Irish Sans-potato, had he not senses then, nay a soul? In his frozen darkness, it was bitter for him to die famishing; bitter to see his children famish. (...) Such things were, such things are; and they go on in silence peaceably: and Sansculottisms follow them. (Carlyle 1906, 2: 381)

In the event, the threatened revolution did not materialize. What did happen, however, was the greatest natural catastrophe to hit Europe since the Black Death: the potato famine of the years 1845-1849.\(^\text{11}\) The Irish peasantry was, quite literally, decimated by it. As a direct or indirect result of the famine, the Irish population was halved from an estimated eight million to ca. four million. The millions that disappeared (ca. one million as a direct result of starvation and attendant disease, the other three millions as a result of mass emigration, higher mortality and infant mortality, shorter life expectancy and reduced fertility) were all from the poorest peasant classes. The Irish peasantry melted away, and even today the faint ridge-style traces of abandoned potato-beds can be seen on desolate mountainsides.

Lean periods and minor famines had occurred before, but sporadically. What happened in 1845 was a total failure of the entire potato crop

\(^{10}\) In his pamphlets against the ‘Penal Laws’, the anti-Catholic law code in Ireland depriving the Catholic mass of the population of elementary civil rights, Edmund Burke had already warned that this legal discrimination divided Irish society into separate, hostile nations (‘Tracts on the Popery Laws’, c. 1765; in Burke 1988, 1-69). This influence, by one of the architects of anti-Revolutionary Conservatism, on Disraeli’s own political programme is as yet under-researched. Disraeli’s own comment on the ‘two nations’ divide was phrased, famously, in his political novel *Sybil, or the two nations* (1845).

\(^{11}\) There is a sizeable body of literature on the topic. I mention only Woodham-Smith 1962; Mokyr 1983; O Gráda 1983. A good digest is given by Foster 1988, 318-244: ‘The Famine: before and after’.
all over Ireland owing to fungus infestation. Total crop failures re-occurred in subsequent years. The poor peasantry in the outlying areas, which depended exclusively on the potato for almost their entire sustenance, was hit hardest. Rural Ireland was, by now, densely populated, but its lacked urban centres, administrative or civic infrastructure as well as proper communications or roads. As for food, there were no food alternatives except in some coastal areas where the population could take to kelp (edible seaweed) and shellfish.

The Irish Famine has been extensively described, analysed and commented upon. The details of its causes, development and impact need not be rehearsed here; the aspects that I want to present in the present context concern the reactions the famine provoked: among the British authorities, among the Irish population and among the survivors.

The role of the government in this horrendous catastrophe is still a subject of debate. On the one hand, it must be admitted that not even the most pro-active, concerted government action could have prevented or even significantly lessened the terrible effects of the potato crop failure. The exclusive subsistence of millions of people on a single staple diet, suddenly wiped away, must have presented almost insurmountable problems to any relief programme; all the more so, since the famine struck distant areas without adequate communications or infrastructure. On the other hand, it is equally obvious that the reaction of the authorities was passive, despondent and dismissive. It may be that, in general, the more harrowing the reports are of distant catastrophes, the more difficult it is to convince people of the need for urgent action (reports on Nazi extermination camps also met with British officials reluctant to take them at face value). Even so, government inaction was not wholly due to the, quite literally unbelievable, magnitude of the catastrophe. To begin with, there was an ingrained mistrust of Irish rhetoric. The Irish were stereotypically known as beggars, prone to exaggeration and rancorous self-pity; this allowed some unsympathetic government officials to dismiss the problem as partly one of exaggeration.

Moreover, the political and economic climate of the time was callous. The famine struck at the height of Dickensian Victorianism, with its city slums, its child labour, its economic ruthlessness. People starving to death was nothing special: any severe winter would see numerous cases of starvation and freezing on the streets. The traditional poor relief based

12 Bourke 2003.
on an England of rural parishes was inoperative in the large new cities, and alternatives (poor houses, work houses) were only grudgingly being tried out. Prevalent economic opinion believed that the market must be steered only by the ‘invisible hand’ of supply and demand, and that to intervene in the availability or cost of food and shelter meant sending the entire economy into a tailspin. *Laissez faire* was the doctrine of the day, and the government, already embroiled in the ongoing, debilitating Corn Law debates, was reluctant to give free food to whining, unemployed Irish beggars; this, it was felt, would be tantamount to rewarding passive inaction and take away any incentive for the Irish economy to right itself.\(^\text{13}\)

As a result of all these factors, government sustenance and relief was tardy, grudging, and inadequate. A poor-house system in South-West Ireland almost collapsed under the pressure of the desperate masses; relief rarely reached into the outlying rural districts where the famine hit hardest; and when government-sponsored labour projects were set up (building roads and piers so as to give employment to the destitute peasantry), remuneration was often in money that had no immediate buying power in what was essentially a barter economy. Only after a long delay was food relief made available.

Local help from landowners was likewise inadequate. Although many of the more humane landowners set up food relief on their estates, waived rents and fees, and practically ruined themselves in order to provide for their starving tenants (often by subsidizing emigration to more prosperous countries), there were many landlords who did not reside on their estates (this ‘absenteeism’ being one of the key elements that gave Ireland its colonial character) and who did not feel the same compunction to relieve suffering or forego their rental income.

Such factors turned the grief and the horror of the catastrophe into political bitterness.\(^\text{14}\) The aging Daniel O’Connell was almost literally heartbroken when he failed in urging a sceptical, uninterested House of Commons into relief action. The leading Irish newspaper of the day, *The Nation*, began to appear with black mourning borders around its front page as the death toll mounted, and in bitter editorials denounced government inaction. Would the British government, so it was asked, have been similarly passive if the famine had struck in Yorkshire? Was this not

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\(^{13}\) Black 1970.

\(^{14}\) Ó Ciosáin 2001.
a sign that Ireland, though nominally an integral part of the United Kingdom, was in fact only a colony to be exploited and forgotten about? Anti-English rancour increased at signs that the full impact of the Famine hit only the poorest rustic peasantry. Signs of agricultural productivity (cattle farming, corn) were a cause of outrage: why was not this food immediately used for the relief of the starving victims?

It is safe to say that Irish nationalism was vehemently radicalized as a result. The notion that corn and beef were exported while the peasantry starved was not economically reasonable (the amounts involved would only have had a minimal relief effect), but symbolically it was devastating. It summarized the callous, inhumane _laissez-faire_ attitude of an exploitative British government vis-à-vis its Irish subjects, worse than anything Jonathan Swift could have predicted. And so conspiracy theories began to crop up: food was supposedly made available provided the takers were willing to convert to Protestantism,\(^{15}\) the government was deliberately allowing the Irish peasantry to starve into extinction as a sort of ‘Final Solution to the Irish Question’; landlords who were subsidising the emigration of their peasant tenants to England, America or Australia were aiding and abetting the draining of Ireland of its native population; the Famine, in short, was being used for purposes of ethnic cleansing.

Such dark tales were particularly strongly represented among the Famine’s emigrant survivors. While many of them sought survival in England, hundreds of thousands made the Atlantic crossing and arrived on the shores of America, often after harrowing passage – the ‘coffin ships’ have gone down in folk memory. All of these escapees had their traumas. They had seen neighbours and relatives die; they were forced from the place where they had been born and raised, and were thrown like flotsam upon the shores of an alien country. In these conditions a strong mixture of affects took hold: nostalgia for a Lost Ireland that had been ruined and lost, and hatred for the British-dominated system under whose rule they had been forced to abandon their ravaged country. In the following decades, the Irish population of America found its bearings in a new society. Irish America became the base from which a radical-separatist nationalism took shape.

\(^{15}\) There had been, since the early 1800s, evangelical and Tractarian missions in the West of Ireland, trying to convert the Catholic natives to Protestantism. The distribution of emergency food went hand-in-hand with their proselytizing attitude and gave rise to the charge of missionary blackmail, known as ‘souperism’. On the religious dimension of the Famine, see Kerr 1994.
The Famine ground to an end after 1848: crops were once again free from, or resistant to, the fungus, and fewer people were left who needed food. The disappearance of the poorest peasants created consolidation opportunities among the remaining survivors. When the landlord system was abolished, after violent agitation, in the 1880s, the Irish peasantry finally became a farming class\textsuperscript{16} – fairly prosperous in some cases, quite poor in others, but no longer the famished underclass of Carlyle’s\textit{sans-potatoes}. What had disappeared in the process, was an entire pre-modern culture. The rural communities that had sustained it were decimated; its language, Gaelic, was now shunned as a mark of primitiveness; its verse and stories were remembered as something quaint from bygone days.

Ironically, then, the Famine triggered the rise of militant nationalism in the same process that almost extinguished the native population’s culture. The first militant separatist movement in Irish history, that of the Fenians (with a strong base in the diaspora of emigrants in America, Australia and Britain), was also the first to name itself after an ancient Gaelic example: whereas national or autonomist movements had carried contemporary names or slogans like ‘Emancipation’, ‘Home Rule’, ‘Repeal of the Union’ or ‘Young Ireland’, the Fenians named themselves after an ancient Gaelic warrior band, known from myth and ancient romance, called the\textit{Fianna}. The peasantry, such as it survived after the Famine, still knew tales of the Fianna; but when they met Fenian agitators, they did not make the connection between the ancient myth and the modern ideologists. As a result, the Gaelic term for these Fenian nationalists was not the old\textit{Fianna}, but a neologism, coined for the purpose: \textit{Fínní}. The nationalist invocation of a continuity between Old and Modern Ireland was lost on the Gaelic-speaking population.

The potato famine of 1845-1849 marks the point where Irish history diverges from that of other European subaltern nations. Irish literature was to return to the Famine with increasing intensity after the initial daze had worn off, that is to say from the mid-1850s onwards. Nationalist historians like John Mitchel thematized it as the apogee of mounting Irish suffering under English rule, while in plays, novels and verse the peasantry gained a tragic dignity as survivors of a holocaust.\textsuperscript{17} The presence of a large emigrant population in the United States gave Irish nationalism the quality of what Ernest Gellner (1983) has identified as ‘dias-

\textsuperscript{16} See Connell 1968.

\textsuperscript{17} For the literary treatment, see Fegan 2002.
pora nationalism’: the mixture of prosperity, nostalgia, bitterness and distance meant that Irish America continually exerted a radicalizing influence, from the Fenian days of the 1860s until the financial support for the Provisional IRA in the 1970s and 1980s.

In all these respects, Irish nationalism was, as it were, ‘de-Europeanized’. To be sure, its main patterns follow the trend of nineteenth-century European national movements generally: it is generated as cultural nationalism in the climate of Romanticism, driven by academic and literary historicism, and claims national independence not only in order to achieve an autonomous control over political and economic issues, but also to incorporate what is felt to be an ethnic-national identity. At the same time, the effect of ‘diaspora-nationalist’ features has tended to create resemblances between Irish nationalism and non-European national movements towards decolonization. Ireland has come to see its history as that of a third-world colony, a trend that was reinforced by Irish neutrality during the Second World War. In the European confrontation with Nazism and fascism as exaggerated, aggressive forms of nationalism, Ireland stood apart; and while in European terms nationalism was subsequently burdened with the mortgage of its fascist outgrowth, nationalism is Ireland remained a positively valorized ideology: the legitimate pursuit of national self-determination. Accordingly, the commemoration of the Famine in the period 1995-1998 stressed the global (that is to say, non-European) nature of famines and the global need for famine relief.

Meanwhile, as a member state of the European Union, Ireland has seen a remarkable rise in its living standards. Its cuisine, which well into the 1970s was frugal and unimaginative, has participated in a hedonistic espresso-and-tiramisu globalization driven by tourism and a demographic generational shift. The potato, or its dearth, are no longer icons of Irishness. Instead, the twentieth-century dietary symbol has become the pint of Guinness. Guinness encapsulates different layers of the Irish national image as it changed over history. From the early twentieth-century onwards it connotes pub culture: male conviviality in small, dark, cozy bars. Those bars in turn are an icon, used extensively for Irish local colour in films, stories and tourist advertisements. The ‘Irish pub’ (now itself a global trend, thriving in cities around the world) stands for a sense of

\[18\] For this typology of European nationalism, following on the work of Miroslav Hroch, see Leerssen 2006.
community, fiercely intense amongst its insiders (to the point of conspiratorial hermeticism) whilst yet open and welcoming to outside arrivals. Whiskey is still (or again) a characteristic presence in such pubs, and as such continues the oldest strata in a dietary image of Irishness; complemented now by ‘the pint’. James Joyce celebrated Dublin pub life in his _Ulysses_, and Dublin sports a good deal of pubs which either carry names derived from Irish literature, or else capitalize on their literary connections, in that well-known authors such as Brendan Behan or Flann O’Brien were amongst their patrons. The hard-drinking Irish writer is himself a stereotype (the combination of ‘dreamer and fighter’) largely of American vintage; while the allure of Ireland as a place of relaxed conviviality is part of the twentieth-century Continental-European romanticization of the Irish image.

Cultural encounters cross borders in the real world and in our head. They involve a complex combination of real (social or anthropological) differences and imaginary (stereotypical) commonplaces. On the basis of an anthropological constant (we must all eat and drink) we register cultural differences (what and how we eat and drink is different from place to place), and turn these into formulas of what we consider representative or ‘typical’ of a nation or society. Eating and drinking in Ireland has changed from century to century; those changes register as variations in our habits of encountering the place.

References


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DIET AND MODERNIZATION IN THE NETHERLANDS DURING THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

Michael Wintle

Abstract
This article focuses on modernization of diet in the Netherlands between 1800 and about 1950, which covers the time span when the Dutch (and most of Europe) moved to a modern consumption pattern. The Dutch case-study is examined on the basis of contemporary accounts, with consumption and price figures: the treatment is mainly statistical, with additional qualitative data. This entails that the health and nutrition aspects are as important as the socio-cultural ones, and the article is concerned with the mass of the Dutch population, rather than just the elite. Attention is paid to high Dutch death rates and the dietary reasons for them, food production and prices, diet (potatoes), alcohol consumption and civilization offensives and (mal)nutrition. The main theme is change in consumption patterns as a facet of the process of modernization. In that sense, the Dutch were not especially unusual, but a good example of a general trend, naturally with their own idiosyncrasies.

Food, culture and death
We now live, in the early twenty-first century in the West, in a food-obsessed culture. Food is important. Those of us who have travelled to less affluent areas in the world will have noticed that food matters there as well, but often more in terms of whether there is going to be enough of it for the evening meal today, tomorrow and next week. In the West, it is more generally a question of lifestyle. We live to eat, and what and how and where we eat announces and even determines our status and identity in our communities. That was not always the case, of course.
There are still a few individuals, usually of an older generation now, who are uninterested in food except as a necessary bodily function: eating to live, rather than living to eat. Such people are viewed as rather unsophisticated, unworldly, as those would be who take no interest whatsoever in the style in which their houses are decorated and furnished. It is very hard to live outside fashion in the twenty-first century. But a hundred and fifty years ago, only a tiny minority of people in the Netherlands (and elsewhere) would have viewed their eating habits in that way: they simply ate to live, and were delighted with anything they could get. It was a question of staying alive, not of style and culture. There was in fact very little choice involved. The great metamorphosis, from eating to live to living to eat, is the subject of this article, with a case-study focus on the Netherlands in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Netherlands has an atrocious reputation for its cuisine and food: it is almost as bad as that of the British, except that at least the Dutch diet is considered ‘wholesome’. The inspirational food writer Alan Davidson wrote in his encyclopaedic *Companion to Food* about the stolid Dutch fare in masterly, diplomatic terms, saying that it had shown ‘great continuity since medieval times … as befits people who can count conservatism amongst their numerous virtues’. Davidson put the – literally – indescribably tedious Dutch cuisine down to bourgeois civilization offensives in the early twentieth century, ‘in which nutritional values were dominant and questions of palatability and pleasure were considered to be of secondary importance’ (Davidson 2002, 636; Van Otterloo 2005, 32-7; Den Hartog 1992, 17). Ironically and magnanimously the Dutch honoured him anyway with the prestigious Erasmus Prize, bestowed by Queen Beatrix herself, for his work on food history, shortly before his death in 2003; in any case, things have changed a great deal now, as indeed they have in Britain and other former gastronomic black holes. Dutch towns and cities are now as culinarily cosmopolitan as most of their European counterparts, although the Dutch were apparently slow to relinquish their traditional peasant-style comfort food at home in the evening, making exceptions only for colonial exoticism (the Chinese-Indonesian restaurant), and for a surprisingly early and enthusiastic devotion to fast food from automatic vending machines (De la Bruhèze and Van Otterloo 2003)

There is now a substantial literature on food as culture, and indeed on the role played by food and its consumption in identity formation and representation. Peter Scholliers and his colleagues from the International
Commission for Research into European Food History have explored ideas of belonging and food, and while warning against the excesses of wild claims about the centrality of food habits to identity formation, they have agreed that a cultural approach to food habits can reveal many an insight about community self-images (Scholliers 2001, 7-15). The claims can indeed sometimes verge on the hyperbolic: "The history of any nation's diet is the history of the nation itself" (Bell and Valentine 1997, 168-9; MacNeill 2004, 45). There is a palpable trend to associate food with national identity, as can be seen from the many of the articles in the present collection. To take a brace of other examples from a burgeoning field, the study by Ben Rogers (2003) of Beef and Liberty follows British national identity formation in terms of its attitudes to certain foods, especially beef. And the way in which eating outside the home has helped to determine culture and identity in various countries and regions in the last two hundred years has been a subject of intense study; that kind of public (if not conspicuous) consumption has had considerable impact on sociability rituals, and on taste and fashion (e.g. Jacobs and Scholliers 2003). Food as a badge of religious identity has attracted attention, as has the cultural significance of the rituals surrounding eating generally (Sarti 2004, 200-45).

The consensus is that there are two basic ways of going about food history. There is the history of diet, cuisine and prandial practice in social-cultural terms; the mealtime as ritual, the use of diet to denote social class, trends in new products, and so on. This is to study food history as consumerism, as opposed to just consumption. Until the start of the twentieth century at least, consumer trends were confined largely to the upper classes, and so much of this approach leaves out most of the population (the poor). The coming of mass-consumerism did not strike the Netherlands until after the First, or even the Second, World War.

The other side of food history is to do with consumption, or with what the majority of the population actually consumed on a daily basis. It is framed in a more demographic and economic matrix, and this will be the primary focus of this chapter on Dutch diet in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The context is thus the country's population history, which has been, for example, conditioned heavily by death rates, which in turn have been affected by the causes of death, and they in their turn by diet. This chapter will establish the diet of the aggregate of the Dutch population, using government and other statistical sources to do
so, rather than relying on ego-documents and other anecdotal evidence. The impact of changing diet on the population levels of the Netherlands, and therefore also on its economic life, will be the subject of the investigation.

On the other hand, the improving and expanding diet, which allowed the population to grow and the economy to expand, also represented a social modernization of the Dutch people, bringing them closer to patterns of existence which we recognize as similar to our own. So the two approaches – quantitative and qualitative, demographic and socio-cultural – are intimately related and even interdependent. This is a conclusion shared by one of the doyens of food history, Peter Scholliers, who urges a combination of the statistical approach with an analysis of the discourse and narrative about food (Scholliers 2001, 18). A leading historian of food in the Netherlands, Adel den Hartog, also favours an approach which integrates the cultural and health-related aspects of diet (Den Hartog 1992, 5-6). The particular focus here will be the changes in the Dutch diet in the crucial period of industrialization, from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth century, which radically changed the health and longevity of the nation, and also turned it into a substantially modern, consumer-oriented society in dietary terms.¹

Demography

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the Dutch population has behaved in an extraordinary manner, in a demographic sense. For a start it grew very fast indeed: between the beginning of the nineteenth century and the outbreak of the Second World War, while the world population is estimated to have grown by a factor of 2.4, and the European by a factor of 2.9, the Dutch managed to expand their numbers by a factor of no less than 4.4 (Heere 1949, 4).

However, the Dutch population did not simply grow; there were idiosyncrasies. Indeed, the Netherlands was something of a demographic maverick: not only did it possess one of the highest growth rates, but it also has had some of the highest birth rates and the lowest death rates in the world, and in the twentieth century its life expectancy has also been among the highest. All this meant that by the 1980s the Netherlands was the most densely populated country in the OECD area.² In technical

¹ The following quantitative analysis draws on my earlier work, e.g. in Wintle 2000.
² At 432 persons per km² in 1987 (Wintle 1988, 356).
terms, two factors lie at the root of this prominence of the Netherlands within the European pattern. One was the relatively late and gentle decline in fertility rates in the twentieth century: the Dutch continued to breed very large families, especially amongst the Orthodox Calvinists and Roman Catholics, right into the 1960s, for a set of reasons which are fascinating, but do not concern diet, and so will not occupy us here. The other reason for the rapid rise in the Dutch population since about 1850 was the rapidity and extent of the decline in death rates in the middle of the nineteenth century, and that was indeed driven at least in part by dietary considerations.

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>12,709</td>
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*Figure 1:* Population in the Netherlands at census counts, 1815-1971, with average annual rate of increase. Source: CBS, as reported in Van der Woude 1985.
Figure 1 shows the absolute and index figures for the total Dutch population between 1830 and 1971 at census points, from which it is clear that in terms of the increase in population, the 1870s formed the crucial decade. One way of looking at it is to examine the annual rate of increase, or the percentage rise in the population each year (measured as an annual mean in each decade). It stayed well below one per cent per annum until the 1870s, when it leapt from 0.82 per cent in the 1860s to 1.21 per cent p.a. in the next decade (Figure 1). Thereafter the annual rate of increase continued to rise until the 1930s, since when it has subsided. What caused this rise in population increase between 1870 and 1930?

Contrary to many expectations, the rise in population was certainly not caused by a rise in the birth rates. Aggregate birth rates in the Netherlands (Figure 2) fluctuated around the mid-thirties per thousand population between 1815 and the 1870s, and then entered a long decline which has only been briefly interrupted by the ‘baby-boom’ after the Second World War. If the birth rate were determining the size of the total population, then we would expect the population to fall heavily from the 1870s onwards, whereas what in fact happened was precisely the opposite: an unprecedented rise. Birth and fertility rates conceal all manner of vital information about the dynamics of the Dutch population, but as far as the national rise in population is concerned, the explanation lies mainly elsewhere. There was no immigration surplus in this period. That leaves us with death rates.

Death rates in the Netherlands (Figure 2) fluctuated around a slightly declining trend from 1815 to 1870, and then went into free fall. With a blip for the First World War and rather more than a blip for the Second, they have continued to fall ever since. In aggregate terms, then, the main reason at national level why the Dutch population rose, and rose rapidly after the 1870s, was a fall in mortality. In brief, relatively few people were dying, rather than more babies being born: the Dutch were living longer. National death rates were above twenty per thousand for almost the whole of the century, and only began to come down after the 1870s (Table 2). By World War I things had altered. After 1914 death rates were not exceptional in comparison to other European countries. What brought them down so rapidly after 1870?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Marriages</th>
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<td>75</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>170</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-1909</td>
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<td>309</td>
<td>156</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1905-1914</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>291</td>
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<td>1910-1919</td>
<td>74</td>
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<td>1920-1929</td>
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<td>84</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>74</td>
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</table>

Figure 2: Birth rates, death rates, infant mortality rates, and marriage rates in the Netherlands, 10-year intervals, 1840-1955. Source: CBS, as reported in Van der Woude 1985.
The answer lies mainly in changes in the pattern of sickness and cause of death. Medical services improved, but not very much before 1900. Very importantly, the water supply improved, especially from the 1860s on, due to steam drainage and pumping. Prior to that, the water supply was lethal in the west of the Netherlands, and it killed thousands, especially children. But another main reason for the increase of the population as whole was an improvement in the food supply: in the amount, the type, and the quality of food available. The major example is of course the introduction and widespread take-up of the potato as the staple of Dutch diet. It was crucial to the reduction in disorders of the digestive and respiratory systems, and the decline in those particular diseases was one of the main reasons for the decline in mortality as a whole (De Meere 1982, 111; Jansen and De Meere 1982, 210).

*The food supply*

These demographic figures have given us an indication of the major changes in diet insofar as their effects on the health of the nation, so we now know how important diet was, in physical terms. But what exactly did the Dutch eat – and drink? How much food was there? What did it cost? How much did the Dutch consume? What were the levels of nutrition? And how did these things alter over time? Can food really be credited with the decline in mortality, especially among children, which was so marked towards the end of the last century?

The Netherlands’ most important source of food was its own domestic agriculture. That domestic production rose prodigiously in the course of the nineteenth century, as a result of intensification of the agricultural economy, the introduction of new food crops with a much greater capacity to provide nutrition, but also because of the weather, which was generally improving in terms of temperature from 1800 to 1875, and of rainfall from 1800 to 1830 and from 1850 to 1870 (Labrijn 1945, 109-11). After the 1870s other factors took over: any number of forms of agricultural technology and intensification began to take effect, so that yields per hectare of rye, for instance, rose steadily from about one tonne in 1870 to more than three tonnes in 1970 (de Bakker 1979, 52). These factors, plus increasing imports of cheap foreign grains from the 1880s onwards, played a role in providing the extra food required by a rise in population from two million in 1800 to five million by 1900. Agricultural production growth accelerated as the century wore on,
and most tellingly, the crop with by far the fastest growth in production was the potato (Van Zanden 1985, 200-3).

The Dutch have a special bond with the potato. Amongst European nations only the Irish are more closely associated with it than the Dutch. The Spanish found the tuber in Peru in the 1530s and brought it back to Europe as a botanical curiosity, where it reached the Netherlands around 1550. It is indeed a most remarkable plant. It requires no special equipment or conditions and is easy to grow; it takes only four months to mature from seed. But most prodigious are its huge yields both in bulk and nutritional value: a farming family plus some livestock could live off a couple of hectares, and by 1700 it was a common crop in the more densely populated parts of Europe. (Maize, also from South America, played a similarly miraculous role in southern Europe [Sarti 2004, 235f.; Langer 1975, 52-5]). By the 1720s the potato had become a significant element in the Dutch diet, and from 1770 it increased its share of the market. By 1800 it was the staple food, having elbowed the traditional bread (and herring) into a poor second place (Van der Maas and Noordegraaf 1983, 213-15; Pot 1994, 95). It was to be crucial for the Dutch diet from that point on: up to 1930 it was crucial in the sense of life and death, and it is still important in terms of preference amongst many Dutch people today.

The price of food

But what of the price of food? There was more food available to the Dutch, but it needed to be affordable to ordinary people in order for it to have a widespread beneficial effect. Figure 3 shows a graph of a set of indices of agricultural product prices for four moments in time, for around 1810, 1850, 1880 and 1910. It shows grains (wheat and rye, for bread) remaining quite steady in price until the 1870s, and then coming down appreciably by the time of the First World War. Meat was eaten on a regular basis by very few, but for the record, pork increased slowly in price in the first half of the century, then rapidly in the third quarter, and then declined between the 1870s and World War One. Most important was the movement in the price of potatoes: the prices rose sharply up to the mid-century, then remained stable, and after 1880 declined significantly in line with cereals (Van Zanden 1985, 110).
In general, then, food became more expensive in the first half of the nineteenth century, then stabilized and then decreased, with the decrease accelerating by the end of the century, significantly reducing the problems of the expense of basic food. A cost-of-living index, from the Central Bureau of Statistics and others, confirms that prices declined from a high around the 1870s until the end of the century, which ties in well with the fall in death rates from that moment (Van Stuijvenberg and De Vrijer 1982, 707-9). There is a whole range of price series available which confirm these general trends, from institutions like orphanages, hospitals and prisons, which kept food-purchasing records over long periods. There were differences in price levels between the various regions of the country, though not in price trends, which were similar all over the nation.

There were times, of course, like the time of the potato famine in the late 1840s, when the price of food suddenly increased beyond all expectation, as a result of harvest failure; the same had happened during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and would occur again during the World Wars of the twentieth century. In the 1840s, as the price of the staple potatoes went through the roof, the value of real wages dropped sharply and food crises resulted. The real price of food is of course directly related to wage-levels, and a good indication of the relative position is provided by the per-
Diet and Modernization in the Netherlands

The percentage of income spent by working families on food. A sample of the available figures shows clearly that Dutch families were spending less and less of their budgets on food as the nineteenth century progressed. That indicates either that they were earning a great deal more, or that food was becoming significantly cheaper and more available, or both. In 1850 about 65-70 per cent of income was spent on food in ordinary families; by 1900 this had declined to 50 per cent, by 1950 it was 39 per cent, by 1974 26 per cent, and by 1999 just 18 per cent. Combined with the likelihood that most people almost certainly ate more in 1950 than a century earlier, this certainly indicates a radical drop in the real, income-related price of food (Den Hartog 1980, 336; 1992, 16; 2003, 263; Horlings and Smits 1996, 24-5). The changes in the price of food related to earnings in the Netherlands consisted of a rise in the first half of the nineteenth century, followed by relative stability between 1850 and the 1870s, and then a decline thereafter until the First World War. The most obvious reason for this progression is the general increasing prosperity and economic development, slowly filtering down to the lives of ordinary people, but certain events accounted for catalytic improvements along the way.

One such catalyst was the change in the way taxes were levied. Liberal reforms of the mid-century, including the new constitution of 1848, and the Gemeentewet (Municipality Act) of 1851, made radical changes: now tax rates were to be the same everywhere, with only restricted opportunities for the levying of local excises. The liberals then took on the various national excises: those on meat (except for beef) were abolished in 1852, fuel excises were abandoned in 1863; all local excises had gone by 1865. By far the most significant for diet was the removal of the excises on milling grain, which occurred on 13 July 1855, and which resulted in immediately cascading bread prices. A kilogram loaf of fine white bread cost 47 cents in Haarlem in 1855, and just 34 cents a year later, after the abolition of the milling excise; in Amsterdam there was a decline of 50 per cent in bread prices in the 1850s (Van Otterloo 1990, 43; De Meere 1982, 108).

The Dutch diet

What, then, did the Dutch actually eat? There are two sorts of evidence to this issue: the qualitative or descriptive, and the quantitative or statistical, the former giving us information about taste and subjective opinions on food, and the latter – if the figures are reliable – telling us objectively about actual
consumption, from which it should be possible to extract information about nutrition levels as well. We shall examine the descriptive sources first.

For most of the nineteenth century the Dutch diet was in fact characterized by a considerable diversity: it is simply not possible to be categorical about what the average Dutchman and his family ate, for they did not all eat the same (Lintsen 1992, 40-1). In the 1830s workers ate mostly bread and potatoes, but also would occasionally have some fruit and vegetables, some milk or buttermilk, and some fish. They would hardly ever have meat, except perhaps at slaughtering time in November. A comprehensive piece of descriptive research into the diet of the people of Zeeland in the 1870s concluded the same: potatoes were the staple, but fish and shellfish in the ports, vegetables in season, pulses, and even a little meat and some dairy products sometimes adorned the diet of even the meanest families (while the rich, of course, did very well indeed) (Fokker 1877). Pancakes made of the cheapest flour and skimmed milk were popular in some areas. Bread was widely consumed, in a great variety of quantities and types according to region. Traditional wheat-growing areas would have nothing to do with the much cheaper and equally nutritious rye bread, or ‘turf’, as it was sometimes called. Areas like Groningen, on the other hand, which grew plenty of wheat, but which had originally concentrated more on rye in the eighteenth century, were quite happy to eat the rye bread (Voskuil 1983; Lintsen 1992, 95).

Nevertheless, this picture of variety and diversity, which prevents us from being categorical about what people ate in the nineteenth century, should certainly not be presented in any way as a rosy picture, either in terms of nutrition, or in terms of dietary or culinary delights. Most of the population probably suffered from a light but chronic form of malnutrition for most of the nineteenth century (Lintsen 1992, 42-3), and although nearly everyone would have known what fruit tasted like, and would occasionally have a small piece of cured pork or the odd herring if he or she were lucky, these were rare treats for most people below the level of the middle classes, which of course meant most of the populace. For with very few and very occasional embellishments, the diet of the Dutch in the nineteenth century consisted of some bread, and a very great deal of potatoes.

Potatoes formed the staple diet in the absolute sense that very little else was eaten (Burema 1953, 317-19). They were often served up three times a day, seven days a week. And it was pretty unappetizing by the standards of the twenty-first century, for the preparation was uncomplicated: plain, unadorned, boiled potatoes. The Dutch still eat a quantity of potatoes nowadays, especially those of an older generation, but they are served with meat
and other vegetables, with the potatoes themselves swimming in a rich meat gravy and often mashed with winter vegetables. But in the common household of the nineteenth century, it was just the spuds on their own. Salt might be added, or perhaps vinegar; a little cheap, thin gruel made from flour and mustard with water might be used to moisten them. The main meal was at midday, when the tubers were peeled and freshly boiled; at supper the leftovers were served as a mash, and the next day’s breakfast was warmed up from what was left over from the night before – but again without fat or any other adornment (Van Otterloo 1990, 16-31; Jobse-Van Putten 1995; Den Hartog 1992, 15).

Potatoes can be delicious, but the incredible monotony of this diet is quite appalling to our pampered palates today. The bread which was eaten was usually unadorned, and if anything were spread on it, then it was more than likely to be – inevitably – a little leftover mash. Eating can have had few of the social and cultural connotations that it does now, and must have been more of a necessary bodily action performed unthinkingly in order to remain functioning physically, rather akin to drinking water or even to passing water or moving the bowels. Van Gogh’s haunting image of The potato eaters, picturing a peasant family sitting round their lamp-lit kitchen table in the village of Nuen near Eindhoven in 1886, is most eloquent in evoking the lives of poor people at the time. Not that people were necessarily disgusted by their potatoes: if you have to live off one food-type, in terms of nutrition and even taste, the potato is a pretty good bet. The father of social medicine in the Netherlands, Samuel Coronel, watched with fascination as he repeatedly saw young children and infants of the urban working classes tucking into their potatoes with gusto and even sucking on them for comfort as if they were modern babies’ soothers or dummies (Coronel 1859, 241-2).

Liquid refreshment

And what did the Dutch drink? The middle and upper classes drank all sorts of interesting imported wines, spirits, and beverages, but the poor’s habits were less complicated. To wash down their meals and to quench their thirst they drank water, the quality of which was generally appalling, and even lethal, until the end of the nineteenth century. They also used the water to make a weak brew of the coffee brought into the harbours by the colonial traders, or chicory as a cheaper substitute: coffee became virtually a national drink in the nineteenth century. Tea was also popular; with coffee and tea at least the water was boiled, which had considerable health advantages. In certain areas, like the Zaanstreek near Amsterdam, and in Zeeland, hot choc-
olate was also drunk (Schuurman 1989, 102; Voskuil 1988). Milk was too valuable a commodity to be consumed in significant quantities by ordinary people, except in the form of dairying’s by-product, buttermilk (Van Otterloo 1990, 30). And then, of course, there was alcohol.

In the Netherlands of the nineteenth century, there were only two alcoholic drinks consumed in any quantity, that is by any number of the populace: beer, and jenever, the renowned Dutch gin. Beer was often seen, by those who thought in such terms, as the lesser of the two evils. It was expensive, and was even praised by moralizing campaigners as a good alternative to the dire perils of gin-drinking. Beer had some nutritional value. The indigenous Dutch beer of the nineteenth century was pretty poor stuff by all accounts, being cloudy, tasteless and of short shelf-life (Büch 1977, 81; Lintsen 1992, 172-92). It was very much a Roman Catholic drink, being consumed heavily in the southern provinces of Brabant and Limburg, and indeed in the Catholic parts of mixed provinces (Wintle 1989, 121-30). After the 1880s the commercial market was taken over by German-style bottom-yeast pilsner beers, which produced a beverage which was clear and hoppy, and which kept reasonably. Top-yeast beer continued to be brewed on a small scale for local or even auto-consumption, especially in the south of the country. The per-capita consumption figures are interesting: from about 33 litres per capita per annum in the 1870s, they rose to around 40 litres by 1900; by the time of the later 1930s, they had fallen dramatically to a mere 14 litres per head of population (Brugmans 1961, 472; Lintsen 1992, 192).

![Figure 4. Spirits consumption in the Netherlands in litres @ 50% alcohol, per head of population, 1831-1919. Source: Verbruik 1920, 3.](image-url)
Jenever or gin consumption at the start of the nineteenth century was prodigious: it was double the equivalent levels in France, Germany and Britain in the 1830s (De Meere 1982, 97-8). As the graph in Figure 4 shows, in the early 1830s some ten litres of strong liquor at 50 per cent pure alcohol was consumed in the Netherlands for every man, woman and child each year. It fell to about seven litres in the late 1840s, but rose again to its old levels by the 1870s. Then a decline in consumption set in, which after the 1890s became a cascade. It was down to five litres per head by World War I, and was a mere 1.46 litres in 1936/7. This was a really radical change in the behaviour of the Dutch (Brugmans 1961, 472; Büch 1977, 71). Adding all major alcoholic drinks together (spirits, beers and wines), and translating the units into litres of pure alcohol per head per annum, the pattern is a similar one. Consumption was high at six to eight litres between 1800 and 1840; in the 1840s and 1850s it fell to four or five. It then rose again to reach a peak of seven litres just before 1880, when the rate began to drop, and then to plummet after 1900 to well under two litres in the late 1930s. (From 1960, consumption soared again to the highest levels ever recorded – nine litres of pure alcohol for each and every member of the population every year – around 1980) (Van der Stel 1995). There seems to be clear evidence here in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of a classic bourgeois civilization offensive which actually worked: the Liquor Act of 1881 severely limited the number of licensed premises where strong drink could be sold, and although cheap American grain eased the supply side of this industry, government excise policy applied a 600 per cent increase to jenever between 1840 and 1900 (Van Zanden and Griffiths 1989, 11-12; Den Hartog 1980, 349-53). For the record, and for purposes of comparison, this steep fall in the consumption of alcohol was also recorded in Belgium (Van den Eeckhout and Scholliers 1983, 297-301).

Estimated food consumption

We have looked at statistical material on demography and on alcohol consumption, but most of the comment on food so far has been descriptive rather than quantitative. Before proceeding to conclusions about modernization in diet, it is necessary to review the available statistical evidence on consumption, and where possible on nutrition levels.

The sources for the period up to 1852 are patchy; thereafter the official statistics take over (Onderzoek 1895; 1920). In the period before 1850, consumption of food items seems to have stagnated or even declined (Van
Zanden 1985, 139-40; Horlings 1995, 229-30): the consumption per capita of meat and wheat steadily reduced, while that of rye (the poor man’s grain) increased (De Meere 1982, 93-7; De Beer 1996). Local indications are that the potato was the saviour of the Dutch in a very difficult time from the last decades of the eighteenth century onwards, with consumption continuing to rise in the 1830s and 1840s (De Meere 1982, 95-6 and 111; Bergman 1967, 391). So the population was reducing its intake of food in the form of relatively luxury articles like wheat-bread and meat, while expanding its intake of potatoes and rye, the cheapest forms of nutrient available.

The per-capita consumption of all food items grew in the second half of the century, with the sole exception of buckwheat; potatoes increased, but the cereals increased more, reducing the Dutch dependence on the tuber and introducing more variety into the diet. There was a relative increase in wheat usage over rye, indicating a swing in bread preferences, and protein foods like meat and pulses saw especially large increases, as did the consumption of stimulants and luxuries like tobacco and especially sugar: the per-capita annual consumption in 1852 of sugar was 2.7 kg, but virtually quadrupled to 9.9 kg, by the end of the century. The consumption of many of these articles actually doubled over the half-century after 1850 (Lintsen 1992, 232; Baudet and Van der Meulen 1982, 80). Average annual meat consumption took longer to double, between the 1840s and the 1930s (Koolmees 1997, 42 and 46). The increasing use of potatoes levelled off after 1860, but remained high until 1920, when at last diversification meant that the potato no longer formed the monolithic diet of the Dutch.

The process of diet diversification was therefore a slow one in the Netherlands, starting around 1860 and continuing until after the First World War; by 1900 the nation still ate little meat, existing mainly on potatoes and bread (Van Otterloo 1990, 45-7). As we have seen, though, the consumption of alcohol fell like a stone from the 1880s onwards.

**Nutrition levels**

Translating these figures for per-capita consumption of various food articles into nutritional values expressed in calories is fraught with difficulties, and the results must be viewed with considerable suspicion, especially for the nineteenth century. Rough indications are all that is feasible. If we accept that about 2,500 calories per head are required each day to keep the population even minimally fed, then before 1850 that average was probably just about reached, consisting mainly of potatoes and (rye) bread. Given that this is an
average, and in the knowledge that the middle and upper classes would have consumed considerably more than 2,500 calories per day, then it is clear that many in the lower orders often did not manage to consume enough to keep them from being lightly malnourished (De Meere 1982, 92-8). Nutrition levels probably declined from the late Republic up to about 1810, what with the deprivations of French period (De Vries and Van der Woude 1997, 230), and a recent study concluded that in nutritional terms existence before the mid-century was ‘frankly precarious’ (De Beer 1998, 224-5). After 1850 up to the time of the First World War there was an improvement in consumption, and another set of estimates reckons that per-capita daily consumption had risen by then to just under 2,800 calories, with an average daily intake of some 75 grams of high-protein food like meat, fish, cheese or pulses. This was still bordering on malnutrition, on the eve of the First World War (Baudet and Van der Meulen 1982, 55). Even during the Second World War (before the onset of the Hunger Winter of 1944-5), average consumption levels were generally between 3,000 and 4,000 calories (Trienekens 1985, 472-3).

**Conclusion: modernization**

Taken as a whole, what do these changes in the Dutch diet signify? Much of this article has been concerned with nutrition levels and population totals, and the changes in the Dutch diet were evidently extremely important in that respect. The huge increase in population (in comparison to almost anywhere else before 1960), together with the increase in longevity and the more robust physical condition of the working population (until the 1950s, anyway), were developments with a profound effect on the economy of the Netherlands. It amounted to one of the reasons that the Dutch economy was highly successful in the nineteenth and early twentieth century in terms of per-capita product and growth rates, despite the fact that it never experienced a classic Industrial Revolution, in the way that Britain and Belgium did, for example. Improved diet also caused considerable amelioration in individuals’ health, which must also have fundamentally altered people’s attitudes to fate, religion, acceptable risk, issues of procreation, and life in general. The difference between chronic malnutrition, and not having to worry about where the next meal is coming from, made for a revolution in outlook on life, in a very personal way.

But the alterations in diet also amount to a fundamental change in another way, beyond the macro-economic and the individual health-related
senses. They meant a replacement of a pre-modern pattern of consumption of food and drink with a modern one, and the change was part and parcel of the modernization of the economy and society of the Netherlands (and other European countries) as a whole. The shift was not revolutionary, in the sense of a rapid discontinuity, but took place over time, at a fairly gentle pace. Adel den Hartog (1980, 335-50) defined a pattern of modern consumption in the following terms: it is characterized by a variety which eventually allows a degree of individuality in taste; it contains substantial amounts of industrially processed food; it shows little seasonal variation, is not auto-produced to any important degree, and involves considerable distance between producer and consumer. Finally, he also included less alcohol as a feature of a modern diet; in that respect at least, since the 1960s we have clearly now moved on to post-modernity. The kinds of factors which stimulated the achievement of that modern pattern of consumption are legion. They include increasing prosperity, urbanization, and technological advances in fields such as refrigeration, preservation and manufacture, which permit cheaper and more hygienic food. There were also farming changes which increased the supply of food, and improved distribution networks (with the associated advertising, branding, and modern retailing). There was increasing intervention by government to maintain standards of hygiene and provide services like clean water, electricity and gas for cooking, and transport for perishables.

After 1850 some of these factors were in evidence in the Netherlands, gradually making themselves felt and resulting in an improving and more ‘modern’ food consumption pattern. There was an industrialization of the food supply which produced a steady stream of cheap food for the urban working classes, symbolized by factory-produced bread. The middle classes expanded, and so therefore did the numbers who had the opportunity to make choices with their food and drink consumption patterns, indulging in luxuries and faddish tastes. The food-processing industry was one of the most advanced in the Netherlands (Wintle 2000, 182-3), and it forged a path of mass production, better preserving techniques, synthetic foods, the use of dyes, and many semi-prepared foods (Den Hartog 1992, 16). People began to eat out more, even in the Netherlands, as technology and individual prosperity permitted it: the Dutch were particularly fond of the automatic snack-vending machine (De la Bruhèze and Van Otterloo 2003, 317f.; Den Hartog 2003, 263). With the exception of food shortages in the First World War, and the dreadful winter of 1944/45, there has been little widespread hunger in the twentieth century, and we have seen how the variety of food increased while mortality decreased. Regional differences in consumption were also on
the decline, as a function of the improving transport infrastructure. The
process was by no means complete by 1900, nor even by the First World
War, but it was well advanced (Van Otterloo 1990, 18 and 48-50; Montijn

The health of the nation was altered unrecognizably from that existing
before 1850, and the quantity and quality of consumption were well on the
way to turning the country into the modern society in demographic and
public-health terms that it is today. Dutch food is no longer deserving of its
stolid reputation: the modernization process, involving more calories, better
nutrition, luxuries, snacks, a Sunday meal and all manner of other innova-
tions (Den Hartog 1992, 16), has gradually resulted in a modern cosmopoliti-
tan diet, perhaps on the verge of losing some of its healthier aspects, and
indeed much of its individuality. In a strange way, the modern Dutch diet
may well be about identity, but more about a cosmopolitan identity than a
specifically Dutch one.

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HITTING THE BAR:
ALCOHOL, FOOTBALL IDENTITIES
AND GLOBAL FLOWS IN NORWAY

Gary Armstrong and Hans Hognestad

Abstract
Drawing upon ethnographic research conducted over five years (1999-2004) in the Norwegian cities of Oslo and Bergen this paper examines alcohol consumption and its association with domestic and transnational football supporter cultures. It examines the historical contexts of football that have produced the everyday (routinised) drinking in contemporary Norwegian society, and explores how football support in recent decades has provided extraordinary drinking occasions which go beyond previous forms of heavy drinking that were associated with the life-cycle and the religious calendar. Football fandom has facilitated a new attitude to alcohol consumption and has taught the benefits of routinised mature (non-inebriated) consumption to a population emerging out of state sanctioned sobriety. Intertwined within such routinised occasions are narratives around concepts of masculinity, localism and national identities.

As Mary Douglas (1987, 8-12) has argued, all cultures celebrate and most do so with alcohol. Where and what a people drink is surely worthy of anthropological analysis. Yet alcohol production and consumption were until very recently a relatively neglected area of anthropological inquiry (Heath 1976, Heath 1987, Heath 2000; deGarine and deGarine 2001; Wilson 2005). This is surprising because prolonged ethnography in any culture often demands alcoholic intake on the part of the ethnographer. Yet anthropologists have been relatively reluctant to narrate such experiences to the pages of knowledge. Ethnographic studies on this
issue do exist (Cavan 1966; Heath 1975; Hunt and Satterlee 1986a, 1986b; Szwed 1996) but too many researchers seem content to recall drinking times and consumption as if the subject was peripheral to their real intellectual task and insignificant to the research process. Until the late 1970s a reader would have to look very hard in most academic disciplines to find narratives around alcohol beyond those which addressed consumption as a medical problem (Heath 1987, 105-110; Hamer and Steinberg 1980; Segal 1990; Gusfield 1996). The studies that went beyond drinking as a social or medical problem used cultural analyses of the global processes and alcohol consumption (Bales 1962; Mandelbaum 1965, Mandelbaum 1979; Everett, Wadell and Heath 1976; Cavan 1966).

People engage in what Douglas has termed ‘constructive drinking’ to produce and celebrate identities of ethnicity (Leland 1976; Graves et al. 1982; Singer 1986; Ambler 1990; Li 1995; Sagers and Gray 1998), gender (McClelland 1972; Marshall 1984; Bennett 1996; Tomsen 1997; Gough and Edwards 1998; West 2001) and occupational cultures (Moeran 1986). Central to the production of social relations alcohol consumption is an ‘economic activity of consequence’ (Douglas 1987, 8) which can be inclusive and exclusive and can be pedagogic in teaching the young and the outsider the boundaries of the permissible. Alcohol consumption usually takes place in leisure time and is therefore synonymous with fun, which demarcates spaces of valorisation and boundaries. It is also integral to concepts of hedonism (Hansen 1988; Pearce 1992) and sensorial experiences with body images and situational protocols. Integral to such an analysis is the construction of boundaries, identities, rituals and memory, all of which are crucial to processes of identification and the politics of friendship and acceptance as well as difference and exclusion (Gusfield 1987; Warde 1994; Salingar 2002; Wilson 2005).

The common traditional perception is that the average Norwegian does not drink much over a week, in expectation of getting drunk on the Saturday in social settings with friends and relatives. In regard to the big hangover day on the Norwegian calendar, 18 May – the day after the National Day – Morten Bing (1995), a conservation officer at the Norwegian Folk Museum, writes about this traditional way of drinking in a newspaper article entitled ‘Party without drunkenness is artificial fun!’ In this, he argues that the ritualised social drinking patterns have
been considered the ‘good’ kind of intoxication while the ‘dangerous’ kind is depicted in the lonesome drunkard who sits at home with his bottle every day (cf. Hauge 1986; Hauge et al. 1985). This is related to the virtue which states that alcohol belongs in parties and nowhere else. Influenced by continental drinking habits, these traditional virtues have been challenged in recent times with a greater focus on the ill-effects of excessive drinking, advocating a more moderate way of drinking. The anti-alcohol movements in Norway combined in their origins a nationalist project (to build a sober nation) with a definite anti-urban profile (Sande 1996, Sande 2000). Alcohol consumption was more difficult to control in cities than in the transparent context of life in the villages, and was associated with the hedonistic temptations of city life in terms of the number of bars, restaurants and dance halls urbanity offers.

Sport was always an important target for the temperance movements. Research on the symbiosis between alcohol and sport in Norway is often influenced by moralising views of leading ideological bodies which have throughout the construction of the Norwegian welfare state tried to define alcohol as beyond sporting contexts. One example of this is the value laden research conducted by the government appointed foundation Alkokutt (Alco cut1) (Langeland 2003). This foundation has published reports with titles such as ‘Holdninger til salgs – slik utnytter alkoholindustrien idretten’(1999) (‘Attitudes for sale – how the alcohol industry exploit sports’). As social events sport have always been accompanied by alcohol consumption in Norway, but with less of the officiated legitimacy that exists around alcohol and sport in the UK, for instance, where drinking before and after football matches is a century long tradition. Alcohol around sports in Norway has traditionally been consumed in private settings prior to sports events, and as Goksøyr (1999) shows, has been brought illicitly into sports arenas on hip flasks or in rucksacks and consumed during the event. The ritual of drinking before and after football games did not evolve until recent times and is still reserved for a relatively small minority of dedicated, young supporters. A lot of this has to do with the fact that Sunday is the primary football day in Norway and hence football takes place outside the legitimate drinking day, which is Saturday. Drinking on a Sunday has

never been part of the modern, hegemonic rural Norwegian drinking pattern.

**Athletic drinking**

Norwegian research on alcohol has been totally dominated by a normative and problem-orientated focus related to health issues and the social ill effects of alcohol consumption. Yet there is one sober exception. In her fascinating accounts of Norwegian drinking cultures the last 200 years Historian Ellen Schrumpf shows how drinking spirits in the 18th and most of the 19th century was regarded as a necessary and healthy concomitant to work related, social and religious rituals (Schrumpf 2003). In the predominantly agricultural society that was Norway until late 19th century the bigger farms would have both a brewery for making beer and a distillery for producing stronger drinks for the labour force at the farm. Legislations and regulations on the production and serving of alcohol have existed in Scandinavia for centuries, but it was not until the end of the 19th century that drinking and drunkenness became a socio-political issue in a Norwegian context. By the mid 19th century beer and coffee had to some extent replaced spirits as the most popular social drinks. Beer along with wine, rather than spirits, were also encouraged as favoured drinks by leading politicians and commentators at the time. Inspired by anti-alcohol movements in England, Ireland and the USA there were, however, more radical temperance movements evolving at the time, with the first organization to advocate a total ban on all types of alcohol being founded in Stavanger in 1859 (Schrumpf 2003, 48-51). **Det norske totalavholdsselskap** (‘The Norwegian Society for Total Temperance’) was founded in 1875, ideologically charged with Lutheran moralities about the ill effects of alcohol consumption, and leading individuals of this organization made alco-politics their prime objective. By 1913 this society had become the biggest voluntary organization in Norway with its 139,500 members.²

The temperance movements and the labour movement shared the same cultural and social platform (Schrumpf 2003, 136). This meant that the religious and left-wing political pressures against drinking – and particularly drinking in public – grew to become very strong in Norway

² See www.dnt.no/historie.html
during the first half of the 20th century. Along with the political impositions of heavy taxation this meant that drinking beer on a weekday lunch-time would most likely be regarded as a sign of alcoholism as the only ‘legal’ drinking time would be at Saturday night dances and parties in private or semi-private settings. For the religious temperance movements, however, such parties remained hot-beds for a semiotic chain of presumed sinful activities, notably drinking, dancing and having sex outside marriage. The temperance movements had their strongholds in the rural parts of the country, and urban centres with their licensed premises and easier access to various hedonistic activities were frequently associated with all kinds of social problems. Hence the nationalism that grew to dominate the new Norwegian nation during the 20th century was charged with ideologies that are anti-urban (Gullestad 1991a and Gullestad 1991b; Hognestad 2001) whilst also stressing the desirability of sober and ascetic life styles (Schrumpf 2003). It is possible to argue that the ritual drinking pattern with a heavy consumption on rare occasions in semi-public contexts became an unintended effect of the political restrictions and religious moralities on alcohol consumption. This way of consuming alcohol has prevailed into the present as a dominant drinking pattern in Norway. Pubs did not exist in Norway until the late 1960s and in villages heavily influenced by the temperance movements it was not even possible to purchase beer in shops. Beer had to be ordered days in advance. In villages and small towns there were not even restaurants where alcohol could be purchased.

Alcohol was during most of the 19th century a natural part of most sports events in Norway, consumed along the skiing tracks in the woods or at the skating rinks in town centres, which the historian Matti Goksøyr has also described as meeting points for boys and girls and the major winter arena for flirtation during the latter half of the 19th century (Goksøyr 1999). Even tobacco was a natural part of sport around the turn of the 20th century and advertisements for cigarettes and pipe tobacco, with names such as ‘Sportsman’s Delight’, and alcohol ads targeting athletes were commonplace in sports periodicals (Goksøyr 1999). Alcoholic drinks, usually punch, was regarded as an important part of the ceremony preceding and succeeding a sports competition for athletes and spectators alike. From the 1890s onwards the temperance movements along with the health policies of the evolving modern social democratic state structured and disciplined national winter sports such as
skiing. For most parts of the 20th century alcohol was therefore not an official part of most sporting rituals in Norway, even though individual spectators continued to brings flasks containing alcohol to great sporting events such as the annual Holmenkollen ski jumping competition. In 1975 a new law banning all advertising for alcohol and tobacco was implemented by the Norwegian government and this law still exist. This also meant a complete ban on advertisements for alcohol and tobacco in sports arenas. Sports have continued to be a major target for various temperance movements up to the present day. A quarter final game of the European Cup Winners Cup in Bergen between Brann and Liverpool in March 1997, saw the visiting team forced to remove the name of the sponsoring brewery on their shirts. Liverpool’s and Carlsberg’s response to this problem was to make shirts with prints of only the first word of their renown advertising slogan: ‘Probably ...’.

Sport has for a long time been a major target arena for preventing the consumption of alcohol. The organization Alkokutt (‘Alco Cut’) was founded in 1981 in close cooperation with the Norwegian government in an attempt to reach a goal set by the World Health Organization to reduce the consumption of alcohol by 25% by the year 2000. However between 1980 and 2000 there was a steady increase in the consumption of alcohol per capita in Norway and hence the organization continues to exist. Sport is listed by this organization as one of eight arenas which ought to be alcohol-free zones. This is particularly visible through their ‘Beer in the wrong arena’ campaigns. The current executive manager of Alkokutt is Grethe Fossli who is also Vice President of the Norwegian Sports Association and an MP for the Labour Party. Despite having been the most popular sport in Norway since the 1930’s in terms of the number of players, football was never charged with the same degrees of national virtues as skiing. This may in part explain why football has in some respects remained an arena for more liberal attitudes to alcohol, even though the temperance movements and the political authorities have prevented the strong symbiosis between the alcohol industry and football as depicted by Collins and Vamplew (2002) in their accounts of alcohol and sport in a predominantly British context. The Hansa Brewery in Bergen signed a contract with the major football team of the city, SK Brann, in 1928 which gave them the sole rights for advertising at Brann

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3 See www.alkokutt.no/nyheter2/190199-frittfrem.shtml
4 See also www.alkokutt.no/omalkokutt2/formal.shtml
stadium. Despite not being allowed to advertise the beers they produce after the law introduced in 1975, this brewery is still involved as a sponsor for Brann, advertising their selection of mineral waters and low alcohol beers instead. In 1998 a new seated stand was erected at Brann stadium and named the Hansa stand. Tales about drinking footballers have prevailed up until the present day, even though drinking before games is no longer part of the increasingly scientific preparations. Among spectators drinking was generally not a legitimate part of a match day experience. However with the fan cultures which have evolved around football since the 1980s, more collective trends have developed which sees supporters gather in pubs for a drink or five before and after games, resembling the social patterns elsewhere in Europe, notably in Britain. Pubs in small places and big cities now literally make a living out of mixing beer and football.

Bohemian rhapsodies: Oslo, April 2004

Right at the heart of the Oslo city centre there is a pub called Bohemen (Norwegian for ‘Bohemian’) which is one of many theme football pubs that have appeared in Oslo and in towns and villages in Norway from the early 1990s. One climbs five steps up from the Grensen street to enter this place of pagan worship. Bohemen was opened in July 1998 in the premises which was formerly known as Rykteborsen, a meeting point for journalists working in Oslo’s Akersgata district, just a block away. The bar was the unofficial rendezvous for fans of the Vålerenga Football club from the eastern suburbs of Oslo. This proletarian district provided the second biggest following of a club in the Norwegian domestic leagues. In return the club has delivered limited success in terms of trophies, despite coming very close to the league title in the 2004 season. Since the mid 1980s when they won the league twice they have a couple of F.A. Cup winners medals, yet they have also been relegated several times and disappointment has really been the perennial feeling among their followers in the last two decades. The pub was founded by supporters of Vålerenga and the pub has taken its name from Vålerenga’s nick name dating back to the 1960’s when they were first called Bohemene (“The Bohemians’). Vålerengas’ supporters club Clanen
(‘The Clan’) currently holds a 15% ownership in the bar (January 2005). The owners boast that if a game is televised they will show it. Games involving the most popular English Premiership teams generate the biggest crowds in the pub, yet lower division English games, along with games from the Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, Scottish, Italian and Spanish leagues are frequently found on the screens inside the pub, along with the occasional ice hockey match. Beer is cheap for a city centre pub (NOK 43,– for half a litre) and the clientele varies according to the teams and events taking place. The manager of Bohemen Kjell Grønningangen explains the success of the pub in the following way:

We follow the principle that by selling cheap beer we sell more beer. Yet our pub is not a rough place. We hardly ever experience brawls. Our great effort is focused on football and we have many regulars who only appear when their team are on the screens. Therefore we have a very diverse clientele. People see us as a pub with credibility. They know what they get here and they know that we’re not mucking about. We are very careful about serving suitably chilled beer with the right taste at any time. We know beer, we like beer and we know how it is supposed to taste, unlike a number of other places around here.

The draft beer on offer is the local pilsner of Ringnes, Frydenlund’s dark ale (called ‘Bayer’ in Norwegian), along with Irish-brewed Guinness and stout ale. There is a wide selection of imported bottled beers also available. However it is the local brews that flow on big match days. The manager informs us that they sell around 200,000 pints of beer during the course of a year, averaging 547 pints a day, a very impressive amount for any pub in the Oslo City centre. The record sale for a single day is 3,500 pints, set on the day of the last league game of the 2004 season when Vålerenga lost the league title to Rosenborg by the narrowest of margins and under particularly dramatic circumstances. Bohemen is a place where British, Italian and Spanish expatriates mingle with the predominantly Norwegian clientele to watch games. The pub is famous for its interior covered with football memorabilia, cheap beer and

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5 The supporters of Vålerenga had adopted the nomenclature of the Scottish clan in order to stress the family-like structure of the collectivity of supporting the club.

6 Both teams were level on points and goal difference before the last game, but Rosenborg had the advantage through having scored more goals. At 3-0 to Vålerenga against Stabæk and 3-1 to Rosenborg against Lyn with just a minute left it looked like the league title would leave Trondheim for the first time since 1991. But then Rosenborg scored and clinched the title.
televised football. It is not the kind of place where you find accidental tourists. The pub is also a popular venue for the Friday night pub quiz which attracts a variety of people, including government employees working in the neighbourhood.

*Bohemen* is always packed on a quiz night, before and after Vålerenga home games and during games involving the big English clubs. It has become the central meeting point for various groups of supporters for English clubs living in and around Oslo. Hence on match days you are likely to bump into crowds of Arsenal, Manchester City, Manchester United, Ipswich, Wolverhampton, Leeds or Tottenham fans, depending on the games being shown live. The sandwich board which stands immediately outside the premises informs passersby of the broadcasting of no fewer than five professional football matches on Saturday. Three will be from the English Premier, with one each from Spain’s La Liga and Italy’s Serie A. Opening hours depend on the TV football schedule, but are generally from midday until 1 a.m. Interestingly football transmission is advertised more than the actual commercial purpose of selling alcohol both on their web site (www.bohemen.no) and on posters outside the pub.

On a typical Friday evening some 300 revelers are packed into the bar following the quiz. All have a drink in front of them. The vast majority drink Ringnes pilsner served in long glasses. A few remain sober with soft drinks. Nobody is drinking wine or spirits despite their availability behind the bar area in the centre of the room. Two of the three bar staff are female and it is the women who collect empty glasses from the table areas and ledges. Interestingly for a place that is male dominated there are no images of women amidst the paraphernalia that adorn all the pubs walls.

Fading photographs of decades of Vålerenga teams and the high points of the clubs history are displayed. Some of the photographs are of the mass assemblies of Vålerenga fans. Individual portraits pay homage to footballing heroes and committee members who have contributed to the formation of the club. Two other manifestations of local identity are evident. One is sporting apparel of the Vålerenga ice-hockey team which see a degree of ‘cross-support’. The other local image of note is a very large framed aerial photograph of the Frydenlund Brewery. The overwhelmingly male clientele are mostly under 40 in age and thick set in physique. A cacophony of football related noise emanates from the
multi-lingual TV commentaries on offer, supplemented by the collective
expressions of outrage and ecstasy that committed supporters the world
over would recognize.

For those seeking solitary enlightenment the walls and ceiling provide
a variety of football-related English language contemplations. Football
annuals are available to read in a small library area. Football trophies,
commemorative plates and cups are displayed and some 40 football club
pennants hang from the cornice. Framed photographs of British players
from the 1970s hang at head height alongside pictures lovingly cut out of
the British published football magazine *Shoot!,* so central to football fans’
identity during the 1970s. Such artefacts had been at one time the pride
and joy of a personal collector because the profiles they portrayed were
often of men who were not famous then and were lost in the annals of
time ever since their playing days had ended.

If Scandinavian design is normally associated with a minimalist touch,
this bar is working more on the principle of maximalism. There is no
inch of wall or ceiling spared a football memoir or club scarves from 12
countries and ranged in status from Barcelona of Spain to English non-
league amateurs, Woking. The ceiling alone is bedecked with the flags of
20 clubs.

*Where’s the party?: The locations of liminality*

Consumption of alcohol in public houses does not tell the full story of
Norwegian’s alcohol consumption. In a society that does not use alcohol
in the middle of the day, and which until recently reserved the use of it
for Friday and Saturday nights, the outsider could see the sobriety of city
centre streets the rest of the time. However, behind closed doors were
enacted throughout the country domestic drinking parties known as
*vorspiel* – a word adopted from German meaning a warm up to a party
(for a description, see Garvey 2005). Before going out into public places
Norwegians have a fashion to drink at home which is the aperitif to later
public consumption.

In the past the domestic arena was considered the primary place for
the consumption of bottled beers without a food accompaniment. Whilst
such ‘bottle parties’ remain popular in rural areas, the rise in the urban
population of Norway since the early 1980s has seen an exponential rise
in the opening of pubs. These sell alcohol and little else to a youthful
populace who in their urban surroundings are free of the rural
constraints and are wealthier by virtue of the new economy. New wealth arising out of the oil economy from the early 1970s onwards provided for new entrepreneurs, greater numbers involved in international travel and a new sophistication in Norwegian taste. The domestic breweries have had to compete with imported products and their consequent fashion and fads. The decline of socialist thinking as a political ideology in the 1980s saw the rise of a free market economy. As a consequence, commerce overcame ethics to a degree and made changes in many aspects of society, long considered traditional. Such a process inevitably affected the contexts of alcohol consumption.

In a memorable phrase Cohen-Kiel (1993, 65) attempted to encapsulate the Norwegian socio-morality and described the ideal Norwegian as someone who was ‘faceless in a crowd’. The metaphor is loaded with an idea of the collective good which subsumes the egocentric pursuit of individualism (Stenius 1997). The metaphor can be read more deeply; the crowd is normally a public event and the faceless idea suggests the good citizen is not attention-seeking, nor eccentric, nor over-gregarious in such locations. Predictability in behavior is the ideal within known and expected parameters. The phrase also suggests shared norms and accepted boundaries of sociability. But where, we might ask, does such an ideal standard of citizenship fit with alcohol consumption?

For over a century, the Norwegian state has feared the effects of alcohol on its populace. As a consequence successive Norwegian governments throughout the twentieth century have enacted a variety of legislation upon alcohol consumption which has no parallel in Europe. Established in 1922 the state attempted to monopolize the consumption of wine, spirits and high alcohol beer through specific licenced outlets known as Vinmonopolet (“The Wine Monopoly”). Regional legislatures can dictate what is permissible both specifically and more subtly via tax and sales restrictions. As such it can be argued that the state has for decades been the chief regulator of alcohol (Saglie 1996). As a consequence Norway is currently one of the most expensive countries in Europe in which to consume alcohol. One result is that Norwegians are near the bottom of the European alcohol consumption league. Statistics reveal that only Iceland consumes less alcohol per inhabitant than Norway (Lohinva 2002).

Imposing hefty taxes on liquor has meant that obtaining a bottle of spirits was not always easy. It also meant that consumption was rare and
reserved for both special occasions and for shows of conspicuous consumption by those so inclined. The fact that advertisements for high-proof alcohol have been banned since 1975 might be seen as an effective social policy for sobriety. But this has not really proved to be the case. The law prohibited beer and wine consumption until the age of 18. Spirits are legally not allowed to be drunk until the age of 20. The state then, has sought to refuse to the young the forbidden fruits of inebriation. Clearly the state and the temperance moralists fear alcohol, their actions suggesting that social irresponsibility will follow mass consumption.

However in recent years the consumption of alcohol has grown on a massive scale by any measure. But even official rates underestimate consumption levels because they cannot include that consumed arising out of illegal stills or that brought into the country via airport and ports as part of tax free allowances.\(^7\)

*Narratives and the nation*

Sport in general has played a central role in Norway’s social democratic policies the concept of egalitarianism particularly since the end of the Second World War. Arising out of this politeness is considered both desirable and a virtue in Norwegian society. Such politeness has been manifest in sporting ethics and at football matches for decades. The promotion of sport by Norwegian governments had as its explicit purpose the parallel promotion of tolerance and understanding which was meant to build bridges between the different social classes. Supporter practices in Norway were for decades dominated by a positive ethos of mutual appreciation and collectivist and consensual ideas rather than the parochial chauvinism and even loathing that are characteristics of the game elsewhere in the world. Indeed the Norwegian language has

\(^7\) Those charged with regulating alcohol consumption operate under the Department of Health and Social Affairs. Two organisations, the Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Problems and the National Institute of Alcohol and Drug Affairs, are responsible for policy and implementation. In 1998 a policy document addressing intoxication sought to educate the populace via school-led campaigns and public posters that warned parents of the perils of permitting their offspring access to alcohol at a young age. A campaign was also launched to inculcate a sense of responsibility into those who retailed alcohol. Such campaigns however, do not address the desirability of alcohol. Whilst it can be said that Norwegians do not drink most of the time, when they do they drink rather heavily. In this milieu, the consumption of alcohol permits a sense of liminality and is the excuse for social and moral transgressions.
no equivalent to the word ‘fan’ or ‘supporter’, the term ‘patriot’ is sometimes applied but the more frequent term is ‘tilhenger’ which translates as ‘trailer’ and suggests a passive spectatorism.

The ideal is that one should love one’s neighbour via sport. However, the reality at football matches especially in recent years has been rather at odds with that which the authorities would prefer. Fans in the past decade have increasingly begun to gloat at the demise of their rivals. The vociferous suggestion during the Jøren derby game a few seasons ago arising from Bryne fans that an injured Viking Stavanger player be taken to the place where dead animals are re-cycled did nothing to foster harmonious relations with their near neighbours. Elsewhere football matches in Norway have started to see an increase in violent clashes between rival fans. Yet the ‘hooligan situation’ remains innocent in Norway, illustrated by the attention paid to a six year old boy shouting ‘Homo’ at a rival teams goalkeeper during a game in 1997 which produced a fair amount of soul-searching via letters to the press.\(^8\)

Football partisanship appears as living confirmation of the relevance of early structuralist thinking a là Levi Strauss (1966) who stressed that categories are empty by themselves but are charged with contexts of social and cultural meaning through their reciprocal difference to other categories. In real life the relevant ‘Other’ tend to appear in many shapes and more changeable guises than the static models offered by classical structuralism. Yet the relevant footballing ‘Other’ are central to an understanding of the game’s global popularity. Football identities evolve around antagonistic ‘local tribalism’ that may extend across terrestrial and national borders. This is certainly the case in Norway. As a social and cultural practise football has a relatively brief history in Norway. It is only in the last three decades of the twentieth century that the game has grown to become widely instrumental in the expression of identities spun around themes such as rural/urban backgrounds, civic and national pride. Similar to the game elsewhere in the world it is a privileged male participation (Archetti 1999). Despite its reputation as a feminist nation Norway’s football story is mostly about men.

\(^8\) Article in Aftenposten, Kirkeboen, S. E., 27 April 1997.
Drinking in the glocal

In the Norwegian league supporters generally did not travel to away games until the 1990s. Football games in general were not part of the extended social and drinking rituals which are currently evident across the nation, whether connected to Norwegian domestic games or in pubs that make a living broadcasting live televised football from the English leagues. New wealth has permitted larger numbers to follow their teams across the great distances that constitute Norway. These new trends challenge traditional Norwegian narratives of sport that more often are located both actually and allegorically in snow-covered mountains than around rectangular grass pitches located in urban areas. Most of the famous Norwegian players, including all of the big names with European teams, originate from rural areas which reflects the dominant political ideology which stresses the value of the rural above the urban and at the same time stresses the virtue of participation over that of spectatorship.

Considering the fact that modern sports are being practiced in virtually every corner of the world it is noteworthy that few among the ‘globalisation theorists’ mention the phenomenon. As a concept globalisation resonates well with a widespread paradoxical feeling of an expanding world becoming smaller and more accessible, a condition that in various ways relates to large-scale changes concerning the speed and flow of information, finance and trade across borders. As Robertson (1992, 133-35) argues, globalisation as a *phenomenon* is about the world being experienced as a single place with global practices, values, and technologies which works as a discourse about diversity, rather than homogeneity. Examined in relation to football support one could argue that places and localities induced with a high degree of passion for the supporter can be encapsulated in various notions of ‘home’. These identities are operationalised and made relevant in a series of other contexts, such as school yards, work-places and pubs, but it is the stadium that is at the heart of sport identities and the ‘vernacular spaces’ (Zukin 1992) of football.

Whilst Norwegian enthusiasm for English football teams is decades-old its manifestation was primarily radio-transmitted and both private and personal. The proliferation of the extra-terrestrial visual media from the 1980s enabled the formation of collective fandoms both domestic and public (Armstrong and Hognestad, 2003). In the rural areas the appearance of ‘bling parties’ after the introduction of *Tippekampen* – the
vernacular term for the live Saturday football match from England from 1969 onwards, saw groups of youngsters agree to feats of beer consumption which accompanied the ‘bling’ sound that the Norwegian state TV used to alert the viewers to a goal scored in the English league – scores appearing at the top of the screen. The same enthusiasm also provoked the search for and indeed the establishment of venues in which shared fandom of foreign clubs could be enacted in front of a TV screen accompanied by alcohol.

Far from being interlopers on the wider 1990s fashionability of English football post-Premiership, English football has been covered in the Norwegian press ever since 1902, the same year the Norwegian Football Association was founded. Influences from British football have been significant throughout the history of the game in Norway. This backdrop was undoubtedly decisive when the state broadcasting corporation NRK in cooperation with the betting company Norsk Tipping started live coverage of English football in the late 1960s. In the first years these games were televised under numerous restrictions, which were first and foremost aimed at protecting domestic sports. No English games were screened during the Norwegian football season (April-October) and in the event of winter sports tournaments taking place on Saturday afternoons, the live game from England was usually dropped. The number of games each season varied between 10 and 15. Nevertheless this was enough to initiate a cult for all things English (particularly football) among children and young people growing up in the 1970s.

This fascination with the culturally exotic was further enhanced as a consequence of the English games satellite TV deal with Sky in the early 1990s. In 1995 Norwegian TV2, a public commercial channel, bought the rights to show English Premier League football. The number of games shown each season on public TV channels rose considerably with TV2 covering Premier League while NRK in 1999 reintroduced ‘Tippekampen’ providing live coverage of games from the English First Division (renamed the Championship in 2005). The big change in terms of accessibility to top-level games from England happened in 1998 when Norwegian Canal+ beat TV2 in the competition for the rights to show Premier League matches. Canal+ is subscription-based and since the 1998-99 season. Premier League games have been accessible via subscription fees only. NRK have continued to show Championship
matches while TV2 in recent years have had the rights to show English F.A. Cup matches. As a result the number of live English games on TV screens in Norway has rocketed. For the 2002-03 season all restrictions regarding collisions with Norwegian league football or, indeed, sports in general were lifted, which contributed to Canal+ showing an amazing 161 live Premier League games. On top of this NRK showed 11 English First Division games, Norwegian TV3 showed 17 live UEFA Champions League games involving English clubs Arsenal and Manchester Utd. And TV2 showed a handful of live English F.A. Cup matches in the same season.

Since the start of the 2002-03 football season subscribers to Canal+ were offered the choice between two live Saturday afternoon Premiership games. When combined with the Premierships scheduling of early Saturday kick off games for television, this contributed to the considerable rise in the total number of games shown live between the 2001-02 season and the 2002-03 season. As a public broadcasting company NRK generally pulls more viewers for the coverage of their Championship matches than the subscription-based Canal+ does for their Premier League matches, but no exact figures are available. Interestingly, Canal+ along with Event Travel and the football pools paper Tips are currently partners for the Norwegian Supporters Union for British Football (see www.supporterunionen.no).

The increased accessibility of English football on commercial TV channels in pubs combined with excursions to England have created new arenas for nourishing immediate experiences for long distance supporters in more collective ways. For those not wishing to pay a subscription fee of NOK 3,600 (ca. £300) a year to Norwegian Canal+ at home, it is possible to watch Premier League games in football pubs. Apart from Canal+ a lot of these pubs subscribe to Sky Sports and other pay channels showing live football, including games from the lower English division, and this increases the number of accessible TV games even more for a lot of fans. The first football bars in Norway did not open until around 1990, before this pubs rarely had TV sets, and it was not an established practice to gather in pubs to watch football. In Oslo Andy’s Sports Bar opened as the first specialised bar showing football in 1990, while Highbury Pub opened the year after. This pub is named after

9 By comparison NRK showed a total of 425 live Saturday matches from England over 34 seasons between the 1969-70 season and the 2002-03 season.
Arsenal’s North London ground and was officially opened by Hallvar Thoresen, a famous Norwegian Arsenal fan and a renowned Norwegian footballer during the 1980s (scorer of a famous winner for Norway against England in a World Cup qualifier in 1981 and later captain of the Dutch side PSV Eindhoven). In Bergen, the second largest city in Norway, *Fotballpuben* opened in 1992. Since then football pubs have popped up in towns and villages all over the country. The clientele normally consists of a mix of local Norwegian football and British expatriates. British ex-pats also own a number of football pubs in the bigger towns. The Scandinavian Supporters Club for Liverpool lists 21 football pubs in Oslo alone and 225 all over the country.\(^{10}\) Judging from estimates in various cities tens of thousands of supporters on a weekly basis follow big matches in pubs. A substantial number of these pubs literally make a livelihood out of showing English football on TV and continuously update their football schedules on the internet.\(^{11}\) This trend provides opportunities for a far more public and community-based kind of long-distance support as fans turn up supporting their teams with or without club colours, creating a collective, social basis for support. The originally individual, idiosyncratic orientation around support for English teams has given way to more collective ways, akin to that of supporting a local club, central to which is a licenced premises and a shared consumption of beer.

Constitutions and alkobol: The football pub, Bergen city centre May 2002 and 2003

SK Brann (the word means ‘Fire’) has been the major football club in Bergen for as long as football has had any popular significance in the city. Founded in 1908 as a skiing and football club the latter dominated the board by 1913 and went on to achieve considerable domestic success. They are at present Norway’s second best supported football club behind Rosenborg, averaging crowds of around 12,000-15,000 a season. Their fans are renown in the Norwegian footballing world for their fanaticism, arrogance and loyalty. The wider citizen body are little different, demonstrating in the eyes of other Norwegians a civic patriotism bordering on chauvinism. This is a product of Bergen’s historic role as Norway’s west coast trading centre producing what

\(^{10}\) See www.liverpool.no, figures from December 2004.

\(^{11}\) See for example the web sites of www.bohemen.no and www.belfrys.no (Oslo), www.fotballpuben.no (Bergen) and www.driv.no (Tromso).
Goksoyr (1991) has described as an international orientation with a patriotic conservatism.

The football club has an almost iconographic relationship with the city, which was at one time a city-state in its own right and sustains a strained relationship to the nation-state and the political and economic capital city of Oslo. Membership of the Brann Board of Directors brings social prestige and the city’s richest familial dynasties have lent their names over the generations to the boardroom scrolls of honour. Despite their wealth (arising out of the patronage of its many wealthy citizens) Brann provoke much mirth from their Norwegian football opponents for their relative absence of footballing success. Indeed their last league championship occurred in 1963 and the cup final win over Lyn Oslo in November 2004 was their first trophy since 1982. Their greatest achievement in European competition is to reach the last eight of the Cup-Winners Cup in 1997, when they were knocked out by Liverpool. The one day of fan support without parallel is that of the eve of the National Day. Since 1982, 16 May has been a regular date for top football. Hence it is a new tradition, resembling the well-established tradition of Boxing Day fixtures in English football. Widely regarded as a warm-up to the celebrations of Constitution Day it is the biggest crowd-pulling day of the Norwegian football calendar. While Brann average a crowd of between 10-15,000, the 16 May game is normally a sell-out, irrespective of the opposition. This means close to 20,000 people. It was now some 17 years since Brann did not have a home game on May 16.

Busy every night during the week with Brann fans and non-football drinkers, the city centre fotballpuben was on match days packed almost exclusively by the red nylon shirt bedecked fans of Brann. Visiting supporters also used it and were made welcome. Two sets of fans, those following Valerenga from Oslo and Viking from Stavanger, were not allowed in, their presence having caused fights some years previous. The pub was a commercial premise run by an entrepreneur who had themed the pub to attract the Brann clientele. The fans in effect colonised it and had done since 1992, and whilst they spoke of the pub as ‘theirs’ the reality was they were there as guests. That said the owner appreciated the regulars and because of the volume of beer sold to them had established a reputation for selling the cheapest beer in the city centre at 34 kroner for half a litre.
Self-selection was more crucial in deciding who entered than the ever present security staff manning the door. The three bars catered very efficiently with busy times. Aware that the pub was the haunt of many single males aged between 18-40, the young women who served the beer had been chosen for reasons beyond their ability to draw beer from a barrel. When packed the bar was stuffy and smokey and whilst some relief was offered by the outside bar built on wooden decking with a glass partition and upright heaters to protect from the often harsh elements this latitude offered, the truth remained that the bar was more for the young at heart and beer drinkers than for those more sensitive in psyche and moderate in alcoholic intake.

The décor told the innocent that this establishment was a football pub without apology. Dozens of pictures adorned the walls which celebrated the great teams and players past of Brann. In an adjacent room the theme was global football with photos of great players from World Cups of the past 40 years. One window display was dedicated to footballing memorabilia that celebrated Manchester United and Arsenal. In the basement bar was a table football game adjacent to a pool table. Thus whilst the vision was undeniably football, the sound was a mixture of local and global influences. The basement played the best of British punk anthems circa 1977 while the upstairs rear bar would offer rock. To add to the cacophony the front bar located nearest to the small dance floor and dais pumped out anthemic football selections – in Norwegian. If the music on offer was wide in choice that of beverage was limited. The bar staff’s main duty at busy times was to count the fingers raised by the prospective buyer. The fingers signified the number of large beers needed. Spirits and wine seemed non-existent. What consumptive led deviancy there was seemed limited to coca cola and mugs of strong percolated black coffee. Drunkenness was evident most nights, heads asleep on tables was common, there was no evident aggression and fights were so rare as to be noteworthy. When serving stopped at 01.00 the place was emptied without drama within 20 minutes.

**Conclusion**

Since the Norwegian state banned advertising for strong beer in 1975, only light beer (2.5% volume) can be promoted via TV and cinema advertising. This is the only way for breweries to advertise and they do so claiming that such a drink can cure a variety of conditions ranging
from stiffness to melancholia (Doving 2003). One TV commercial broadcast in 1999 sought to profit a Norwegian brewery by using the iconography of the British male football fan as validation for a beer which contained no alcohol. Depicting an English pub packed with muscular tough guys, watching a televised match, the mythical landlord of the premise realizes his beer supply has run out. His dilemma is solved when he substitutes the non-alcoholic brew named *Munkholm* for the real beer. Upon being served this, the football supporters respond with an immense roar of approval and happiness. It is incredulous, but watching Norwegian viewers are aware it is a hidden commercial for strong beer. In 2000 Ringnes similarly promoted a light beer which focused on the opening of the beer bottle with a backdrop of a broadcast football match. For every goal scored the bottle would open to the sound of a ‘bling’. Seemingly innocent to an outside, both this and the above were loaded with semiotic and cultural significance, which saw the brewery and advertising agency working with local meanings but aware of trans-national football passion, socio-spatial movement and the law of the land.

At the national level, an observer could see processes that typified global capitalism everywhere, namely that private concerns are expansionist (Ritzer 1998). Breweries are commercial concerns that are no different. The last five years has seen the beer competition enacted across Norway despite the ban on alcohol advertisement, which is also symbolic of the East-West rivalry of the Norwegian nation. The Hansa brewery of Bergen sponsors three other football clubs in Norway, including Vålerenga of Oslo. The Ringnes brewery of Oslo is in turn desperately trying to penetrate the Western markets of Norway. The question remains whether the football fans dislike of rival clubs is sufficient for them to refuse to drink beer associated with that club. At the transnational level the emergence of cross-border beer markets has combined with greater spending power and the pursuit of more determined hedonism which sees beer flowing across Baltic borders: Danes travel to Germany for cheaper beer, Swedes travel to Denmark, and Norwegians travel to all three in pursuit of cheaper inebriation. Aware of such desires, foreign breweries have targeted Norway, some offering massive price reductions on off-sales. For a couple of months in 2003 some units of beer retailed at prices as low as 6 kroner (one US dollar) which forced the Norwegian government to intervene to insist
that prices were raised. However, the issue is now political – the right wing politicians who favour low taxation support domestic brewers who slash their prices to compete. Caught in the middle of this however are the brewery workers. In 2004 brewers at the Hansa factory in Bergen took voluntary pay cuts in an attempt to avoid compulsory redundancy.

Identity is in late modernity fragmented, fractured, subject to revision and open to challenge and transformation (Appadurai 1986 and Appadurai 1990; Hall 2000; Maguire 1993; Ohmae 1990 and Ohmae 1995). Football is synonymous with collective identities and specific localities and consumption of alcohol. Football is also the world’s most globalised sport and as a consequence breweries focus their efforts on both the game and its fans. One can imagine communities (Anderson 1983) and invent traditions (Hobsbawm 1983) yet most would agree that sport is inseparable from discourses of national identity which bring a concomitant discourse about consumption and the nation. As Hoberman (1993, 18) has argued ‘sportive nationalism’ is not a single generic phenomenon but is dependent on local contexts. Hypothetically, when one considers the transnational nature of Norwegian support for football clubs, it is possible to imagine such Norwegian ‘supporters’ of English football clubs as incarnations of an unwanted ‘globalized’ hybrid, polluting local indigenous fans attached to having ‘grown up’ with the club with autobiographies closely woven into the physical community of the club. But such notions of purity and pollution are not so relevant because hybridity makes differences into sameness and sameness into difference. Furthermore, Archetti (1999, 24) argues that notions of hybridization should not be restricted to studies of recent migration and global encounters, but rather regarded as an intrinsic part of every human encounter and should be seen as old as narratives of origin.

Football support has been very influential in shattering the conservative ethos that surrounded alcohol consumption in Norway for the best part of 75 years. Because football support is not considered ‘real’ time, consumption and inebriation arising out of such support was and remains ‘permitted’ and drinking patterns have changed from the home-based one of local brews to the more public, pub-oriented consumption of the larger and fewer Norwegian brews alongside European imports. Until the first pub – The Sir Winston – opened in Oslo in 1969, alcohol was the preserve of the café and restaurant. But the proliferation of public houses in the past fifteen years has meant that it is now legitimate
to drink in the public sphere without eating. Saturday excess and temperance have largely gone in the ever-expanding urban arenas. A weekday afternoon pint in Oslo no longer raises eyebrows amongst more sober citizens\(^\text{12}\). In their devotion to Hansa the Brann fans are manifesting an identity that encapsulates elements of time, space, myth, football fandom and regional politics. In this context drinking beer is both affirmative and symbolic. The weekly football match permits an affirmation of Bergen identity with its celebration of place rather than of people or formal institutions. This public occasion is permissive and facilitates contestation, permitting those present to celebrate a variety of meanings. The citizenry seem to agree on permitted transgression and the carnivalesque is enacted within confines.

Both in this civic context and nationally throughout the past fifteen years it is TV-transmitted football that sees the nation gathered in leisure time. The pubs that broadcast football games are in some ways a continuation of the social mores of the Norwegian citizens, but in other ways they extend the realms of the possible. Football loyalty and its accompanying beer extend the realms of idealised identities whilst at the same time permitting excess and rowdy behaviour. These facts enhance sociability by encouraging the sharing of narratives and nostalgia.

References


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\(^{12}\) Being unsatisfied with a law imposing smoking free zones in restaurants in 1988, the Norwegian government imposed a law which banned all indoor smoking in bars and restaurants from 1 June 2004. Hence Norway became only the second nation in the world to ban smoking in public houses, Ireland being the first. From 10 January 2005 Italy did the same and a law banning all indoor smoking in public is currently being discussed in other EU countries.


‘SOCIAL WINE’: ETHNIC IDENTITY AND WINE CONSUMPTION IN THE BASQUE DIASPORA IN BARCELONA (SPAIN)

F. Xavier Medina

Abstract
The specificity of the anthropological perspective – as Mary Douglas points out – is to examine the consumption of alcohol as a way of life, one element of a given culture. In this sense, alcohol and wine consumption are clearly social manifestations. It is the aim of this paper to analyze the role of wine as a drink and as a social element in the Basque diaspora, and particularly among Basque people living in the region of Catalonia (in the Northeast of the Iberian Peninsula, bordering France) and more specifically in the urban context of Barcelona city and its surrounding area. In this urban/migratory context, wine provides to Basque people living in Barcelona a particular form of relationship, but also a very important way of performing identity. Basque eating and drinking are actually contributing to showing ‘Other’ people in Catalonia – Catalan or not, migrants or tourists – how and why Basque identity is different, and how and why Basque culture is different.

Introduction
As an integrating part of the general frame of food behaviour patterns, wine consumption has, no doubt, an outstanding social significance. A wide number of varying factors and beliefs are closely linked to a social and moral construction about alcohol, and to the specific transmission of the values which are created and developed around it. This article intends to analyse the role of wine as an instrument of social relations and ethnicity in the Basque diaspora, and special attention will be paid to the Basque people who live in Catalonia and more specifically, in the city of
Barcelona\(^1\). Through the processes of emigration, the emigrants’ behavioural patterns adjust to a new environment; sometimes they must develop or emphasize certain new social rituals, due to the lack of such infrastructure in their new residential sites. However, certain values attached to specific aspects of their past and present cultural practices, as is the case with wine, also remain important. Wine is considered by the subjects included in this study to be a daily foodstuff. To them it is nutritious, it is caloric and even therapeutic. On the other hand, it is also an important tool for the socialisation and identification of group members. It can be said, in this sense, that people ‘drink socially’. In this respect, wine is an important instrument for the promotion of social relationships among the members of the Basque diaspora in Catalonia, and it is an especially important element of ethnic identity (as portrayed, represented and experienced through Basque wine, Basque bars and restaurants, Basque associations, and Basque social gatherings). This essay examines the social aspects of wine and Basqueness as it is experienced and perceived among Basque people in Barcelona.

**Basque migration and Barcelona**

In spite of the fact that the Basque group living in Barcelona is not a typical model of emigration grounded in the necessities of economy and work, they provide an interesting example of a group of emigrants who have settled down within an urban environment. These people have reshaped their ethnic individuality according to the sociocultural characteristics rebuilt after the emigration, as well as to the new territory in which they set up home, and eventually converted into their own. It is worth noticing that the population of this group is relatively small (slightly more than 8,000 people), when compared to other groups of Spanish immigrants who reside in Barcelona, such as the Andalusians (more than 60,000 people), the Aragonese (more than 70,000) and the Galicians (45,000).

Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia – one of the most outstanding industrial regions in Southern Europe – has been the goal of migratory flows since the second half of the nineteenth century and during the

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\(^1\) The subject of this article was part of my PhD research about Basque migration and ethnicity in Catalonia. The research and fieldwork was conducted in the city of Barcelona and other small cities in Catalonia, and in the Basque Country, between 1988 and 1999.
whole of the twentieth century, especially between the 1950s and the 1980s. However, the arrival of the Basque people in Barcelona did not coincide with the big migratory movement that took place in Spain due to working/economic reasons. The largest amount of emigrants from the Basque Country arrived in the city between 1935 and 1940, which coincides with the dates of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). An important number of Basque people left their birthplace for reasons which were closely connected to the war.

A second important period of Basque emigration to Barcelona was the decade 1971-1980. Although traditional emigration due to economic/working factors had decreased notably, and had itself never been a principal factor, it was in this period that a new contingent of people decided to leave the Basque Country and go to Barcelona in search of better jobs and profits. This was the case for a number of Basque managers, companies and banks which had branches in the Catalan capital, and was also the case for technicians and people who had relocated in order to occupy middle managerial positions within the firms in the Catalan territory.

As previously explained, through a detailed study of this Basque group we can pinpoint the behavioural patterns of these emigrants within an urban frame in which they reconstructed their daily routine and, in so doing, redefined their identities. Aspects like those linked to wine consumption may be, in this respect, illuminating.

Wine as a social drink: Basque models of food and drinking

Food culture has never been underestimated by the Basque group: not only are the Basque people aware of the importance of food in their lives, but they are also aware that Basque cuisine is generally assumed to be superior to any other in Spain (even in the world), which implies a certain degree of ethnocentrism. As Arregui remarks, ‘we usually say, as a joke, that our national sport is “feasting”’ (Arregui 1988, 307). That is to say: eating and drinking. Moreover, wine is integrated with food consumption to the extent that a meal is often judged incomplete without it.

2 And did not coincide also with other examples of the Basque diaspora around the world (like those in the Americas or Australia; cf. Douglass and Bilbao 1975; Douglass 1996)
As far as this last aspect is concerned, it can be asserted that wine is the alcoholic drink *par excellence*. Within the frontiers of the Basque Country, two main varieties of wine are produced. These are the most valued in the Basque context and also the most exported. Among red wines, those of Rioja Alavesa belong to the *appellation d'origine* Rioja and are cultivated in about twenty municipalities in the province of Álava, in the South of the Autonomous Community. Among white wines, the fruity and home-made new wine known as *txakoli* mainly comes from the coastal area of the country (cf. Medina 2005, 112). In the Basque Country wine is the foremost alcoholic product and a source of local pride. By extension, although to a lesser degree, the wines of Navarra, Low Rioja, Irolegui and even Jurançon are also considered similar.

According to Mary Douglas (1989), an important anthropological perspective on drinking is to examine the consumption of alcohol as a way of life, as one element of a given culture and social life. In this sense it is evident that, far beyond any conception of wine as being nutritional and even therapeutic, wine is clearly, especially within the societies of Southern Europe, a social foodstuff. ‘Drinking together’ fosters and strengthens social ties.

In regard to drinking, Ramírez Goicoechea (1990, 1991) sees alcohol use as a trait of militant Basque identity (see also Gamella 1995), and he also has collected from informants humorous statements regarding drinking, along the lines that the Basque *national sport* is ‘elbow-lifting’ (in reference to the movement necessary to raise the glass and drink), or ‘glass lifting’. Both expressions are, of course, metaphors of wine and beer consumption. About this subject, an informant (Basque immigrant who lived in Barcelona City for more than forty years) told me that:

> no doubt about it. If you want to keep Basque people quiet and happy, they must have good food and good wine, otherwise forget about it. For good food they could do anything, and the same is true of wine. People drink a lot in Euskal Herria, you know, in my village people say that there are two

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3 The Basque Country produces also some other alcoholic beverages, as beer and, particularly, cider, but the main production and consumption has been historically wine.


5 Basque name for the Basque Country.
things that the Basque know better than anybody else: the weather and wine.6

According to Georges Guille-Escuret: ‘whatever the society in which wine is produced, distributed or consumed, it embodies, both in its definition and use, the predominance of specifically sociocultural values’ (Guille-Escuret 1988, 63). Drinking in company, in this respect, confirms and corroborates social ties. There is no doubt that wine for the Basque people, perhaps even for the whole of the Iberian peninsula, is one of the elements which helps to structure both the rituals of community, such as commensality, and sociability in general. In this sense, wine is also considered an element of identity in the Basque country. Wine is, particularly, a Basque drink, ‘ours’, and is consumed within the traditional circuits and the ritual of groups of friends. The importance of the stimulating, invigorating and euphoric properties of wine, as well as of its social-relational and religious functions, relegates to the background the fact that wine only marginally meets one’s nutritional needs.

In the Basque Country, the main relational group is the gang. It is an informal group of friends, mainly male, though nowadays also female, which is structured according to age. The age of the members of the groups stretches from childhood and adolescence to the period just before marriage, although its activity may continue – as it usually does – all the individual’s life. For young people, as Fernández (1999, 498) points out, this process works very often as a ritual which shows the identification, through imitation, with the adult group, but it is far from adult surveillance.

As Ramírez Goicoechea points out also, what defines the gang as a differential group are its practices, condensed in the activity of the txikiteo, that is, the routine bar crawl. It is the daily and reiterative consumption of wine in small quantities or units called txikitos, which the gang, regardless of the number of members participating, drink in a number of bars, following a specific route along the streets of the city (Ramírez Goicoechea 1991, 289-290).

The circuit follows the pattern set by the members’ routine, and it is not as aimless or spontaneous as it might appear to an outsider. This structured route facilitates the meeting of the gang members at any point

6 Male, aged 65.
of their trajectory. *Txikiteo* usually takes place in the evening, after work and before dinner, during the week; and in the morning and/or afternoon at weekends, always before lunch or dinner. Although the most common drink of *txikiteo* is wine – *txikitos* are, popularly, small glasses of wine —, it is becoming increasingly usual to consume other kinds of alcoholic drinks such as *zuritos* (beer) and cider, a very popular and traditional drink in the Basque Country indeed, also served in little glasses.

This consumption of wine and of other kinds of alcohol is usually accompanied by *pintxos*. *Pintxos* are special *tapas*\(^7\) or small portions of a food, appetiser-like. One of the main characteristics related to the topic under analysis is that *tapas* are an accompaniment to alcohol, mainly but not uniquely of wine, and that they prepare the stomach\(^8\) for alcohol consumption. They are made of a base of sliced bread with some speciality on top, which may vary from a simple piece of sausage (usually typically Basque: morcilla, *txistorra*, chorizo, longaniza) or cheese, to a much more complex food preparation such as tuna or seafood salad, prawn specialities, combinations of creams, cheese, etc. This food portion may be joined to the bread slice by means of a toothpick, hence the popular name of *pintxo* (Basque spelling for the Spanish verb derivation *pinchar*, meaning to spit).

*Pintxos* are also an important motivation for meeting and socialising. Since they are small portions of food, their price is relatively cheap and customers may try various specialities for little money. This usually takes place standing by the bar, which favours group meetings and conversation. It is worth briefly considering the way *pintxos* are consumed and paid for. Consumption is carried out in the Basque fashion: customers eat as much as they wish and they show the number of corresponding toothpicks when it is time to pay. One pays as many

\(^7\) The popular name of ‘tapa’ is due to its ancient use in Spain. It was placed on top of the glass of wine or other alcoholic drinks and it was thus used to top / cover (‘tapa’) the glass. It was usually a small plate with some food — mainly a slice of cold cuts or sausage (Caballero Bonald 1988, 121) — and it protected the liquid from whatever might fall into the glass. On ‘tapas’ in general and alcohol consumption in Spain see Millan’s article (2001).

\(^8\) It is believed that drinking alcohol without eating anything at the same time, besides the fact that it makes one get drunk faster, has negative effects on one’s stomach. Thus, ‘to top’ the wine of glass with a tapa, was traditionally meant as a way to oblige the customers to eat the food before even trying the wine so that there would already be some in their stomach when alcohol was ingested.
pintxos as toothpicks shown or, more simply, verbally tells the waiter the number of pintxos. In any case, there is no control on the waiters’ part as to the quantity of food consumed, which implies a certain degree of reliance between customer and waiter.

Txikiteo, understood as ‘ritualised interaction’, enhances sociability – mostly through wine consumption – in as far as it fosters communication, talk and jokes. As one of my young informants asserted, ‘If you don’t drink you’re left out. You are not at the same levels as others ...’. The consumption of small quantities of wine facilitates the extension of the route and the total or partial repetition of the patterned circuit when this has been completed and all the habitual bars have been visited.

In the Basque Country, as in almost every part in the North of the Iberian peninsula, txikiteo, that is ‘going for a wine’, has traditionally served as a means of introduction of the young into a socioculturally patterned dynamics of sociability. When a teenager starts going out with friends and forms a gang with those who are closer to his/her age, drinking becomes part of a ‘rite de passage’ from childhood to adulthood. Wine is thus converted into a culturally symbolic element actively participating in this transition (Medina 2001, 2002a).

The members of the gang were traditionally male, although recently female gangs have started making their appearance. As Arachu Castro (1999; cf. also Millán 2001) points out in his study on La Rioja (bordering on the Basque country and also one of the main producers of the wine consumed there), alcoholic drinks in general, and wine in particular, are preferably consumed by the male population, whereas women consume them in much smaller quantities.

It is worth noting, however, that the introduction of beer in this process, through the consumption of zuritos as highlighted above, is becoming increasingly popular among the groups with younger members, particularly among women, while older people prefer wine, especially red wine. As an informant cheerfully said: ‘What we drink is wine. Red wine, and good too. Anything else is a ‘sissy thing’, it’s for women and children.’

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9 A similar statement was collected by Ramírez Goicoechea (1990, 292) from an informant in Errenteria (Guipúzcoa): ‘I don’t drink and every time I go out with them I find I am not with it, I am left out. If you don’t drink, you don’t relate to other people’. 
Through emigration, however, the need arises for the emigrants to readjust themselves to the new environment they have come to inhabit. In this sense, the new social milieu imposes its own restrictions on certain patterns of behaviour, such as the very existence of gangs and the possibility of going out for wines or for *txikiteo* and *pintxos* in the same way as in the Basque Country. The group is thus forced to reformulate and recreate specific patterns within the sociocultural frame. In spite of all, certain values are transmitted through the socialisation of the young people and they are kept, thus, surviving in the minds of the subjects.

Within the Basque community of Barcelona, there exists an appropriation of the environment which has produced a particular shaping of urban space. Especially in the last decade there has been a proliferation of Basque taverns and premises which, beyond the influence of the very Basque people who live in Barcelona, have become very popular with customers at large. The combination of the quality and the novelty of food which they offer, together with a touch of exoticism joined to the ‘Basque’, have propitiated an unprecedented popularisation of such premises.

*Basque taverns and restaurants in Barcelona: A topography of identity*

Basque restaurants and taverns are now very fashionable in Barcelona. In the last decade and especially in its second half (see table 1), there was a sharp increase in the number of Basque restaurants and taverns all over the Catalan capital. Customers seem to appreciate more than ever the peculiarities not only of Basque cuisine in itself but also of the ways and habits of these ‘exotic’ premises and their Basque practices of *txikiteo*, *pintxos*, etc.

Such a phenomenon is not new or recent. The city of Barcelona has many restaurants – some of them with a certain prestige and some open for forty years – specialising in Basque cuisine. Table 1 shows the data on Basque restaurants and taverns opened in Barcelona (those which have closed down are not considered) in the last half of the century. The boom that these premises had from the 1990s on is remarkable, as is the fact that there were as many places opened in the period between 1996 and 1999\(^{10}\) as there were in the forty years from 1950 to 1990.

\(^{10}\) Fieldwork for this research was completed in the year 1999. For this reason, that is the last date considered. Yet, it could be observed that later on other premises of this kind have been opened, up to today. Some of them are quite large, as is the case
Table 1. Opening of Basque restaurants and taverns in the municipality of Barcelona.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Number of Premises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-60</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-70</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-75</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-80</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-85</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986-90</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-95</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-99</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Medina (2002b, 228)

The trajectory of these premises in the city reflects, on one hand, the prestige enjoyed by Basque cuisine today in Barcelona and, on the other, the new initiatives and projects of Basque catering which have carved out their own niche of professional contribution, business and customers, in a city which already provides a wide range of eating and drinking establishments.

If the location of Basque premises on the urban map is considered, the first striking characteristic is that despite their distribution all over the city, there is a tendency of such restaurants to gather in specific areas (Eixample, Gràcia, Ciutat Vella, etc.) which have gradually turned into areas of concentration of Basque premises. In the following section, one of them, which may be regarded as a paradigmatic case within the urban context of Barcelona, will be analysed.

_Ciutat Vella (old city): the new core of Basque catering in Barcelona_

It is from the year 1994 on, with the re-opening of the Euskal Etxea, the Basque House, in the area of Ciutat Vella, that the foundations for the creation of a new area of restaurants and taverns were laid in this district. In the five years following 1994 the number of premises of this kind increased from 3 to 11, that is, eight new restaurants opened in this

of the restaurant opened in the middle of the Ramblas of Barcelona – considered as the heart of city –, in the second half of the year 2000. Another such restaurant was born at the beginning of 2002, just a few months before the completion of this article. Many others have opened since then.
relatively short period. Furthermore, most of them are located along the streets adjacent to the restaurant of the Euskal Etxea, the one which set the example in this area. Around this place there is now a concentration of Basque taverns of very similar characteristics, some of them very popular for their pintxos specialities.

Another peculiarity of their location is that they are very close, only some metres away from one another, only at a few minutes’ walk. They are located either in pedestrian areas or streets with little traffic, an aspect which facilitates the customers’ movement from one tavern to another, in an area which is old and touristic, at the very core of the Ciutat Vella.

This has favoured the creation of specific routes to these premises which, in turn, has allowed the reconstruction within the diaspora, of the Basque tradition of txikiteo, although not only on the part of Basque emigrants\textsuperscript{11}, but also of customers at large, with a generalised consumption of pintxos, txikitos and zuritos, in each of them. As one of my informants points out:

It is like in Bilbao. You go out with friends, going from bar to bar ... time and again. Now it is more like there ... the system ... I like it because if you want to go on there is a place to go to. It wasn’t like this earlier on ... There was only one then.\textsuperscript{12}

Yet another informant observed:

It’s good to have many premises together, but I don’t care. Some people go and drink, but I prefer the way it’s done here: you take a seat in the bar, you have your beer or ... and that’s it, then you go home, not from one place to another ... drinking, and ending up completely pissed. But, mind you, it’s alright, aha? I mean ... (now) there are more options for everybody.\textsuperscript{13}

The premises located in the district of Ciutat Vella have recovered an important space of commensality and sociability in an area which had been poor in this respect, even though it was where most of the institutional life of the Basque community in Barcelona took place, around the Euskal Etxea, the Basque house and cultural centre. The

\textsuperscript{11} As to Basque emigrants, Totoricagüena (2000, 582) describes a similar phenomenon in the American diaspora (specifically in Boise, Idaho). Here, the bar Gernika is used by young Basque-Americans as the favourite gathering place on Friday and Saturday night, since at this bar they can try Basque specialities, listen to Basque music and meet their friends.

\textsuperscript{12} Male, aged 54.

\textsuperscript{13} Male, aged 35
construction of this space according to determinants of food consumption is, thus, closely linked in this case to the social and institutional life of the group.

However, it must be added, the above mentioned premises are located in a historical area which is also very touristic and very near to the Gothic Basilica of Santa Maria del Mar, the old market of Born, and an artistic route which is very well known, both locally and internationally, including various important museums such as the Picasso or Barbier Müeller or prestigious art galleries as Maeght or Metrónom. This increases the flow of tourists and public in general and, thus, the profits of this kind of tavern, which offers affordable products at reasonable prices and in a pleasant environment with an ethnic and exotic atmosphere.

In relation to food and wine social consumption (txikiteo), so far we have examined not only public spaces such as bars and taverns, but also the specific localisation of such premises within the urban geography as one form of the creation of Basque space in the diaspora. As can be seen, the construction of what we have termed ‘areas of concentration’, meaning the Basque restaurants and taverns in the city of Barcelona (including that of Cintat Vella) took place for various commercial, strategic, and spatial reasons. These are all closely linked with an internal logic of Basque life in the city, which uses the means available, including food and drink, in order to recognise and show itself to others in their most attractive and social facets.

Thus, on one hand the concentration of various premises in Cintat Vella, far from creating real competition, favours consumption in one or another place, giving people in general – Basque or not - a specific idea of localisation. It also allows alcoholic consumption – ‘wine is social’ it can be said – in small portions amid visiting various premises which offer the customer a similar, though different, environment each time. On the other hand, and in relation with the internal life of the Basque people living in Catalonia and Barcelona, this concentration helps to articulate a certain idea of associative and communal life within the urban space. As an example, one might consider how certain religious rituals like that of Santa Agueda, which in the past occurred in places which were particularly significant to Basque life in Barcelona, now revolve around the Basque taverns of the Cintat Vella, thus giving this area a symbolic meaning which demonstrates remarkable changes in
Basque life in Barcelona, and which also indicate fundamental shifts in urban space in that city.

Wine in the Basque diaspora: Basque and Catalan patterns of consumption

Wine is as highly valued in the diaspora as it is in the Basque country. A Basque shepherd who emigrated to the U.S.A. at the turn of the last century wrote in a letter to his family that he resented the moral relaxation and excessive love for food – especially for wine – of his compatriots: ‘Here the Basque people are indeed behaving in a despicable way. If they have plenty of peppers, soup and wine\textsuperscript{14}, they don’t even remember what religion is’ (Lhande 1976).

Things do not appear to have changed significantly at the end of this century. A Basque-Argentinian from Río Carabelas (South of Buenos Aires) similarly commented: ‘I summoned them to a meeting. We were going to have a meeting at seven ... but nobody turned up. Now, when it comes to eating and drinking and having a good time, there wouldn’t be one person missing’ (Pérez-Agote et al. 1997, 124; my translation).

With reference to the Basque who reside in the city of Barcelona, wine is highly estimated by them, both in terms of its intervention in sociability and of its function as food proper, as an identity-defining drink. In this respect, an informant said:

it is produced in Euskal Herria together with cider. What else should we drink? Wine, of course! It’s what we’ve been drinking all our lives. When I was a little boy my mum gave me bread with wine and sugar as a snack. And very little I was too! We’ve always had wine ... it’s ours.\textsuperscript{15}

In Catalonia the system of relationships is not structured in the same way as what happens in the Basque country. The dynamics of gangs according to group age – particularly for young people – and the txikiteo as a patterned consumption, is characterised by alternative strategies. The most usual pattern, as far as the residence of Basque people in Barcelona is concerned, is that of integration into the local system of relationships.

In this sense, the local system of consumption is quite more static: individuals or groups choose a place or two and consume there, usually sitting at a table, and they spend more time on the premises chosen – which need not necessarily be always the same. On the contrary, they

\textsuperscript{14} My emphasis added.

\textsuperscript{15} Male, aged 67.
usually vary on each occasion. The system of *txikiteo* demands mobility: customers usually consume drinks and *pintxos* standing by the bar, they spend less time in each place and follow a route which has been set beforehand. Yet, the adoption of local patterns is not exempt from friction:

‘I am looking forward to having holidays or days off, to leave, go and *potear* with friends. I’m sick of the bloody *granjas*’. ‘Here, where you don’t even move. You stay there the whole damned evening!’

Another option, however, could be visiting the Basque bars which have been spreading through the city, especially in the area of *Ciutat Vella*. In this sense, people – those who feel like it – can follow the route including Basque bars where they can carry out the *txikiteo*.

You go out and a have a good time. You can meet your friends, drink wine and have a chat (...) you know! It’s like what we do in Euskadi, isn’t it? I mean, when you’re there with your mates and all that.

In this respect it is worth pointing out that a significant aspect of wine consumption within the Basque diaspora in Barcelona is its relationship with identity. The Basque premises of the city usually serve Basque wines: as above mentioned, they are Rioja Alavesa (or, in its absence, Low Rioja) and, among the white wines, *txacolin*. They are always Basque wines or may be assimilated as such, an aspect which links the product to a specific territory, giving it clear identity connotations.

It must be noted, however, that older people, who were born and have socialised in the Basque country, find it easy to live according to a social model similar to that of their place of origin, whereas younger individuals, who have socialised in Catalonia, find it more difficult. In fact, in Barcelona fewer children and young people gather for the *txikiteo*; they follow, usually, the local Catalan patterns of relationship, since in their age group, usually formed at school, the young people of Basque origin are clearly a minority. Only when they travel or spend their holidays in the Basque country do they practice *txikiteo*, with the alcohol consumption it implies.

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16 Granjas are places specialising in coffee, chocolate, dairy products, cakes and soft drinks. They are usually visited by customers in the afternoon. Alcoholic drinks are not commonly consumed here.
17 Male, aged 17.
18 Male, aged 25.
When I go there, yes, with my friends in the village ... But I can’t (laughter) what the hell! One thing is to drink some wine, another is one and more and more ... I am already pissed after the third or fourth glass. I’m not used to it. And they tell me things like, you know, ‘you’re like a Catalan’, ‘you can’t hold your drink’!\(^1^9\)

**Conclusion**

This article has approached wine as a ‘social drink’ within the Basque diaspora in the city of Barcelona. As the case exposed has shown, wine, a daily foodstuff, is turned into an important instrument of social relationships among members of a group and at the same time it becomes a significant element of identity – both in relation with the product itself, Basque wine, and with the lifestyle, relationships and consumption modes. A social drink, wine strengthens the social ties of those who consume it. An element of sociability par excellence in Southern Europe, wine is turned into an important instrument of identity which links individuals to a specific territory (the Basque country, in this case); this is an aspect which, seen from the perspective of the migratory diaspora, is particularly important for the identification with and developing relationships with the place of origin.

Likewise, especially from the last decade of the 20th century on, Basque catering – due to the international fame enjoyed by Basque cuisine in the last decades – as well as the Basque ways of consuming wine and *tapas* (*txikiteo, pintxos*, etc.) have become fashionable, exploiting those aspects of ‘typicality’ and ‘ethnicity’ inherent to the (Basque) products and (Basque) environment offered: they are always Basque wines or may be assimilated as such, an aspect which links the product to a specific territory, giving it clear identity connotations.

Thus, a proliferation of Basque premises has taken place in Barcelona in a relatively short period of time, with the consequent creation of areas of concentration in the urban context, as a ‘Basque circuit’ of taverns and restaurants, where wine is usually consumed within the traditional circuits and in the rituals of groups of friends (‘If you don’t drink you’re left out. You are not at the same levels as others…’). In any case, and from within the Basque community living in Barcelona, there existed – and still exists – an appropriation of the environment which has produced, in relation with the topic here considered, a particular shaping

\(^{1^9}\) Male, aged 14
of the urban space. Such areas were not born by chance, though, but were created out of logical strategies (economic, marketing, feasibility, etc.) and at the service of a Basque space in the diaspora. The construction of the space according to determinants of food consumption is closely linked in this case to the social and institutional life of the group; it is, in this sense, a space which allows a better articulation of Basque social life and identity in Barcelona.

Different from the ‘static’ local-Catalan patterns of drinking, the Basque system of txikiteo, as has been observed, demands mobility: customers usually consume drinks and pintxos standing by the bar, they spend less time in each place and follow a route which has been set beforehand. It provides, evidently, a particular and ‘different’ cultural way of consumption. But Basque bars and taverns in the diaspora are an important ‘Basque window’ to show to ‘Others’ who ‘we’ are, and what is our way of life. Basque eating and drinking are actually contributing to showing ‘Other’ people in Catalonia – Catalan or not – how and why ‘our’ Basque identity is different; how and why our Basque culture is different. Thus, wine (and sometimes also cider) consumption in a Basque context is considered a trait of militant Basque identity, whereas many other alcohol beverages are thought of as foreign. In Barcelona today, among Basques, wine is viewed as inherently, socially and culturally, ‘Basque’.

References


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JOURNEYS THROUGH ‘INGESTIBLE TOPOGRAPHY’: SOCIALIZING THE ‘SITUATED EATER’ IN FRANCE

Wendy L.H. Leynse

Abstract

While place-based food habits play an important role in many parts of Europe, this article argues that knowledge of food origins and production methods is especially important to many French consumers, and that children are often socialized to value ‘place’ in their eating habits from a young age. Although the socialization process takes many forms, this analysis provides an ethnographic case study of one particular mode of learning about food habits and place which I refer to as ‘journeys through ingestible topography.’ During ethnographic fieldwork in the Loire Valley, I observed French children – along with their parents and teachers – as they made several of these ‘journeys,’ in which they gained a sense of place by moving through geographic spaces, meeting food producers, obtaining first-hand knowledge of food production, and anchoring their memories with on-site tastings. In this process, they were socialized to become informed and ‘situating’ eaters – situating, or constructing, their identities in terms of place.

Whereas French food habits have long highlighted local production, regional dishes (Csergo 1996), and geographic specificities (Braudel 1986; Trubeck 2005), the reasons for this have varied over time – as

1 Material for this article is based on my ethnographic fieldwork on child socialization and food habits in France (dissertation in progress). Research was made possible by a Bourse Chateaubriand from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a Gregory Uscher Research Grant from the French chapter of the American Institute of Wine and Food.
have the processes by which people learn and come to identify with place-based food habits. This article aims to better illuminate these reasons and processes in relation to current French consumption patterns by providing an ethnographic case study of child socialization with respect to local food habits. Today’s French consumers, facing numerous food choices and provisioning possibilities, are nonetheless frequently dissatisfied with the perceived uniformity and anonymity of the mass-produced and mass-marketed foods in their modern supermarket-supergrocery stores (hypermarchés). Concomitant with this dissatisfaction is also a certain disillusionment with modern industrial food production methods, linked in many people’s minds to flavourless foods and food-safety breaches. Thus, in an era of rapid globalization and industrialization, the quest for distinctiveness of taste and food safety has led many contemporary French consumers to assert a positive value for place-based foods. They search for and celebrate locally produced food and drink (Demossier 2005) and, in the process, they insist on the value of place in their ideal eating habits – a value they actively seek to instill in their children.

My study offers analysis of one means by which residents in one French town became what I call ‘situated eaters.’ By this, I mean well-informed consumers whose eating experience is anchored in a culturally specific locale, and its associated identities, via rich multi sensory experiences. Local and regional identities are partly constructed at an early age through a variety of food-centred experiences. This essay focuses on one type of socializing experience: the journey through ‘ingestible topography,’ a term I have created to refer to both the visceral and metaphorical consumption of a given landscape. During ethnographic fieldwork, undertaken in 1999 and 2000 in a mid-sized town I will call ‘Loireville,’ I observed French children – along with their parents and teachers – as they made several of these ‘journeys,’ in which they gained a sense of place by moving through geographic spaces, meeting food producers, obtaining first-hand knowledge of food production, and anchoring their memories with on-site tastings. In this process, they were socialized to

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2 The anthropological practice of using pseudonyms ensures the confidentiality of informants. ‘Loireville’ is the pseudonym for the town (population approximately 30,000) in which I conducted a year’s worth of ethnographic fieldwork. ‘Central School’ is the elementary school, whose 10- and 11-year-olds (equivalent to fifth-graders) I studied as they learned about food in the classroom, in the lunchroom, on field trips, at home with their families, and in the community.
become informed and ‘situated’ eaters – constructing their identities in terms of place.

This article refers to two sets of data in which participants traced paths through their local landscape, ‘ingesting’ place as they went. First, by analysing a school field trip that included visits to a farm and a winery, I aim to demonstrate how multi sensory experiences at production sites can connect specific products to particular locales and can multiply and enrich the layers of meaning that children attach to the foods they eat. Secondly, by discussing local food festivals in the context of food heritage and place, or terroir (Trubek 2005), I point to a kind of festive socialization that also reinforces an attachment of people and their foods to place via embodied, sensory experience. Specifically, these types of experiences provide a strong geographic contextualization for food habits – a way of rooting eaters in their surroundings. In these particular cases, people were creating memories of consuming specific foods in specific places that could be brought together later in sensory-triggered representations of space – one could say, mental maps of ‘ingestible topography.’

Food and place: a search for meanings

The anthropological literature on ‘place’ defines the concept as the intersection of topography and culture. Studying ‘place’ elucidates a dynamic relationship between persons and their environment. Meanings ascribed to, and understood through, place are fluid, shaped by the confluence of time, events, and persons: by historical events and traditions of practice, by topography and ecology, by social networks and political economy. In these ways, people shape and are shaped by the places they experience. They ascribe meanings to a space and, simultaneously, experience life through the lens of the place as they understand it to be. Furthermore, through the multiple layers of meaning associated with any given locale, places – and discourse on place – can be used strategically for a host of political, economic, social, and cultural purposes (Feld and Basso 1996; Soja 1989; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003). Anthropological and sociological writing about places has generally focused on the structures, social contexts, and other attributes that can define any given locale. Here I am concerned with how people come to understand, internalize, and identify with a place (or places).
Food habits provide central organizing tropes for many aspects of group identities. While much has been made of the ways that food habits (through food choices or meal structure for example) can function to demarcate self from other and to structure communities (Levi-Strauss 1965; Douglas [1966] 1995, 1975, 1984), or are used to talk about practices which delineate class-based identities (Bourdieu [1979] 1984), anthropologists are now turning their attention to ways that food habits can anchor a collective identity in relation to the specificities of place. As eating is often a social experience, food habits and memories of specific dining/tasting experiences in particular places, using particular ingredients and production/preparation techniques, can be used to build or maintain community through the development of collective memory (Sutton 2001). Furthermore, it is important to consider the social construction of the senses, as well as to include the role of the senses, specifically, in understanding and organizing social experience (Howes 2003; Stoller 1989). Notably, scholars have been considering the role of sensory experience in both place (Feld and Basso 1996) and food-related identity constructions (Korsmeyer 2005; Seremetakis 1994). This article aims to contribute to the literature on food and identity in Europe by combining analysis on food, place, and sensory memory in France. Place-based food practices in the area of Loireville were, at once, multi-sensory, individual, physical experiences and shared representations that allowed people to create common cultural scaffolding on which to hang multiple and sometimes conflicting meanings.

In a world of increasing mobility and complexity of foods and food production, learning where one fits into the world through one’s food habits has become more difficult in some respects. People in Loireville were at once mystified and concerned about the origins and production of the foods they eat, and this tended to frustrate their desires and ability to identify themselves in relation to place-based food habits. Residents explained the importance of consuming foods from a variety of distinct French regions, including their own. As evidenced in media reports throughout France, as well as scholarly writing on French consumption patterns (Demossier 2005), feelings of connection to specific locales is important to many French citizens – especially as expressed in public discourse and private practices concerning place-based food habits. Loireville residents, for example, expressed their attachment to place-based food habits when they indicated their personal ties to the country-
side or to farming, and when they spoke of their appreciation of France’s
great diversity of regional cultural and culinary traditions – many of
which they remember fondly from time spent with family or on vacation
in specific areas. Moreover, the meaning of place in relation to food
production has taken on new meaning in light of several recent phenom-
ena including: food safety scares such as BSE (‘mad cow’) and listeria
outbreaks, increased mass production and mass distribution of food-
stuffs, concern about genetically modified foods, and the uniformity
engendered by both American fast-foods and European hygiene laws.
While these concerns are shared by many Europeans and while the links
of food to place are being re-thought throughout Europe (with the intro-
duction, for example, of European origin labelling systems3 or the rise of
the Slow-Food movement in Italy [Leitch 2000]), the goal of this article
is to outline some of the specificities in the case of France, and particu-
larly, those observed in the Loire Valley. France has a long history of
linking food to place and of constantly re-valorizing these connections;
and residents of Loireville expressed their own particular attachments to
locality, landscape, and local foods.

With this in mind, I now turn to my field data to demonstrate that the
idea of ‘place’ is an on-going construction. In reaction to processes of
globalization and uniformity in French food production and consump-
tion, people in Loireville seek out, and are socialized to, place-based food
habits through multi sensory discoveries of their local environment and
local foods.

Biking through the ‘Garden of France’: A fifth-grade spring field trip
A classroom-full of French fifth-graders set off one brisk spring morning
to explore their local countryside by bicycle. In the course of their four-
day trek, they would learn – through first-hand experience – about the
production of several local specialties, notably strawberries, white aspar-
gus, and red wine. This section focuses on the school field trip as a con-
text for socializing children to local food habits. First, I analyse the dif-
ferent kinds of knowledge gained by the children in the process of ex-
ploring their region, and I argue that this socialization process constructs
‘situated eaters.’ Descriptions of the first two days of the journey high-

3 European Union laws to protect the unique geographic origins of products,
promote rural and regional development, and create product-labeling systems were
developed, for example, in 1992 and 1999.
light the specifically food-oriented visits. Next, I discuss the broad cultural context of this school field trip, including the place of geography lessons in the school curriculum, the French concept of ‘terroir,’ and local meanings given to food and geography. I also draw some conclusions about the relationship of food, memory, the body, and place in a nexus of meaning that I refer to as ‘ingestible topography.’ Lessons in geography, ecology, food production, eating, and taste came together as the children pedalled through the landscape, metaphorically and literally ‘ingesting’ it as they went, learning not only where their food comes from, but also, as one could say, that ‘they are where they eat.’

The story begins in Madame L’s fifth-grade classroom, where the children were preparing a four-day-long spring field trip. It was to be a bicycle trip in which the class would criss-cross the local fields and country lanes, visiting places of interest along the way – places that would enable them to gain a greater understanding of the community and region in which they live. The field trip would serve as a springboard for lessons in many subject areas. During grammar, spelling, and composition lessons, for example, Madame L guided the students in writing letters of introduction and inquiry to set up visits. The tour of an old, historic manor-house provided the pretext for several medieval history lessons; visits to a produce farm, a vineyard, and an arborial nursery focused on botany; travelling distance computations provided math problems; bike safety lessons and, of course, the bicycling contributed to the physical education requirement; and, most of all, the trip led to geography lessons on map-reading, place-names and administrative units, as well as local ecology, topography, economy, and even demography.

While not a specifically food-centred excursion trip, food was an important element, deeply embedded in local geography, history, economics, and socio-cultural life. It would become clear over the course of the journey that learning about and consuming local foods was one way of ‘situating’ these children in this same matrix of meanings. Beginning with the students’ preparation for their trip, agricultural products and their relationship to the environment and their consumers were frequently evoked in the classroom and in the field.

In the classroom

One day, after studying plant growth in biology class, the children prepared interview questions for the farmer and the horticulturalist they
would soon meet. They began talking about strawberries, an important
crop for many local producers, and they began to discuss their favourite
ways to consume this fruit. They spoke from personal experience, thus
blurring boundaries by making knowledge from home central to discus-
sions at school. Their responses reflected the richness of local declina-
tions of the recipe for a bowl of strawberries, including: ‘fraises nature’
(plain); with whipped cream, thick cream, sugar, or jam; ‘marinated’
[‘macérées’] in vinegar and sugar or local red wine; and, for special occa-
sions, with the town’s special red sparkling wine poured over the top. A
‘traditional,’ local recipe for strawberry soup, called ‘la bijane,’ was also
cited. Thus, the science lesson elicited students’ culinary knowledge,
based on their personal experiences in a specific locale.

Local knowledge was deployed again, one Friday, during the chil-
dren’s geography lesson, focused on a small town, which I shall refer to
as Boisé-sur-Rivièrè. Boisé had a hostel where the class would stay over-
night and which would provide most of the breakfasts, dinners, picnic
lunches, and snacks. The geography teacher, Madame G, who would also
accompany them on the trip, had asked them to research the town of
Boisé.

The students, who had turned to tourist guidebooks, maps, local
history books, and family members, shared their findings with the class.
They had learned that Boisé, located east of Loireville, has 1,800 resi-
dents, has an economy centred around small-produce farming (called
‘maraîchage’ or ‘truck farming’), honey-making, and tourism, and is known
for its most popular sport ‘la boule de fort,’ a kind of bowling specific to
the area. Students also learned about Boisé’s administrative positions
within France, its topographical features, its ruins of a medieval fort and
its medieval-style garden. The class initially set up four categories: loca-
tion; economy; history and tourism; and sports and leisure.

However, the list did not stop there. One girl asked about culinary
specialties. Another girl in the class, whose grandmother lives in Boisé,
described a special, tall, cream-filled pastry named for the town. Madame
G noted that a neighbouring town also claims the pastry, calling it by its
own name. This other town has even trademarked it and claims to use a
‘secret’ recipe! The girl replied that she thinks it is probably the same as
the one she knows, just that people name it for the place they live. In this
example, we see that local, first-hand knowledge is put to use in the
classroom and that this knowledge can be exceedingly specific to a given
locale. It can also be used strategically by people in that geographic site as a marker of identity.

This phenomenon appeared again when another child brought up another local food specialty: the ‘fonée.’ The fonée is a kind of small, round flat-bread, popular in a kind of folkloric way in the Loireville region. All but four of the students in the classroom had eaten fonées. Of those who had not, two were new to Loireville and one had just moved there from the next town west of Loireville, where he knew them under a different name: ‘fonaces.’ In other words, this bit of culinary information is so geographically specific, that, like in the case of Boisé’s pastry, the name changes from one town to the next. Interestingly, it is the same product, but the fact of naming is a way of claiming it, which, in turn is a way of marking difference – in fact, the specificity of one’s identity as it relates to place.

Just as the production of certain food items is intimately linked to the environment (i.e. fonée-baking linked to the use of natural caves for ovens), so, too, Loireville residents’ consumption practices are sometimes tightly connected to their local landscape and its history. Some residents understand more acutely than others the inter-dependence of the two. For example, one girl raised her hand to express her concern over hearing about pollution killing fish in Boisé’s river. She had heard about it from her mother, who had read about it in the local paper. Madame G explained the situation to the class. Since Mme G was also a teacher one day a week in Boisé, she had learned about it from the daughter of the fish farmer most affected by the pollution. Apparently, a local farmer had rinsed out his tank used for fertilizer then dumped the water (with the traces of fertilizer) near the little river. It had leached directly into the river, which was the water source for the fish farm, where all (literally tons) of the fish were killed. This represented, she said, up to four years of the fish-breeder’s work. Madame G then compared this local incident to a European accident that they had previously discussed in class – namely, that winter’s industrial pollution of the Danube in which, she said, a cyanide spill had killed many fish. Through this discussion, the

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4 Note that this link between food items and specific topographical features extends to the milling of grain into flour, historically accomplished by windmills strategically atop the bluffs along the Loire river. One of these mills has been restored, mills grain, and serves as a living history museum where students often make their own fonées on class field trips – as did one of the younger classes that year at Central School in Loireville.
children learned about their environment and about the costs, or effects, of pollution on their world and on their food sources. In this way, the teacher also evoked current political events and concerns, highlighting the link between what people do to their environment and the quality (or safety) of their food. Once again class discussion about food and food production had served to situate students in (and identify them with) particular locales: the town, the region, and Europe.

On the bicycle trip
In the field, the students were once again ‘situated.’ Day one of the journey began with the helmeted hoard of students and their chaperones biking over the Loire River to a privately owned, late-medieval manor house on the opposite bank. The class was given a lengthy tour of the house by its very enthusiastic owner, who had researched it extensively. Among the rooms were the original kitchen and the huntsman’s lodge, equipped with an enormous cooking spit, whose elaborate system of gears intrigued many of the students. It could turn by itself for up to two hours – long enough to roast a wild boar. The owner also explained the manor’s historical importance as a site for jousting tournaments and a residence (albeit briefly) for an important local historical figure, known as ‘the Good King René’, who wrote an early treatise on jousting.

After the tour, the class picnicked in the adjacent woods. Aside from the usual ham, sausisson, or cheese sandwiches brought from home in brown bags and tupperware, the processed cheese spreads, sweet yogurt drinks, Orangina, and mass-produced cookie snack-packs provided a vivid contrast to the ancient walls we had just left. After this repast, our whole convoy set off again, winding past the fields and greenhouses dotting the alluvial plain there on the right bank of the Loire.

As the children had learned in geography class, the right bank of their section of the Loire River is flat with very fertile soil and a mild climate – perfect for growing fruits and vegetables. The natural micro-climate and topography allow the region to excel in production of apples, pears, grapes, berries, green-beans, radishes, asparagus, carrots, lettuces, and mushrooms. This produce is consumed locally, nationally and internationally. Woods and streams allow for hunting and fishing. Also, historically, the Loire Valley provided nourishment for the powerful nobles who hopped from beautifully landscaped châteaux to wonderfully
wooded manor-houses throughout much of the year. For many reasons, then, the region is nicknamed ‘the Garden of France.’

On this journey through the ‘Garden of France,’ the first afternoon found the class pedalling past a series of low, semi-tunnel-shaped greenhouses, and turning into the driveway of Monsieur and Madame ‘Lechien.’ The Lechiens are ‘maraîchers,’ or produce farmers. As the students had been taught earlier, small produce growing, called ‘maraîchage,’ is considered a different undertaking than large-scale farming, called ‘culture’ (which often refers to grain production). As students learned during the visit, the Lechiens take great care in rotating their varied crops and in leaving some parcels fallow, or ‘en jachère.’ When they toured the greenhouses, or ‘serres,’ Madame Lechien explained the growing cycle of strawberries, the botanical names of the varieties she grows, the time spent picking each morning, the expected yield, and even the time the berries spend in transit. Via the tour, students were gaining some of the specialized, technical vocabulary and the botanical and agricultural knowledge necessary to understand food production – at least in terms of berry growing. Culinary and taste-based knowledge rounded out the learning experience.

Imagine the pleasure of twenty-odd ten-year olds (and their willing chaperones) at being set loose in greenhouses full of delicious strawberries, raspberries, and currants! Needless to say, the students rambled up and down the rows, kneeling to discover the sweet gems hidden beneath the sandy green leaves.

All five senses overloaded by berry-picking and eating, the group made its way over to another section of the farm. Madame’s yellow labrador named ‘Praline’ paddled happily along behind, as a group of students stopped to identify and smell some wild mint growing on the edge of the field. (As will be discussed later, this incidental find stuck in the memory of some of the children.)

Next, Mme Lechien led the group to her asparagus field: row upon row of long, continuous, sandy mounds. As Praline lay sprawled atop an asparagus mound, Mme Lechien demonstrated the use of a specialized

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5 She also confirmed the recipe for ‘la bijane’ that the students had discussed in class. As the maraîchère explained, it is a dish made by marinating the strawberries in a few drops of lemon or vinegar (red wine or raspberry vinegar) and sugar, then adding wine (preferably red sparkling wine in this area): La Bijane – ‘laissez macérer les fraises avec du sucre et quelques gouttes de citron ou de vinaigre de vin ou de framboises pour qu’elles rendent bien leur jus, puis mettez du vin rouge au-dessous avant de les servir. Dans le coin ici, on utilise du mousseux rouge.’ (In other words, it is a very local specialty.)
digging tool. She explained that white asparagus, a local specialty, grows entirely underground. If you look closely at a mound, she said, beckoning the children to crouch alongside her, you can spot the purply-white tips of the heads of mature asparagus stalks, just as they start to poke through the earth. These are the ones that will be dug up and sent to market. Then, the students each tried their hand at unearthing one, thereby gaining hands-on, embodied knowledge. Just as with the strawberries, the students had the opportunity to observe and enact the gestures involved in harvesting their food.

As the tour ended, everyone took shelter from a sudden thunderstorm in the Lechien’s tractor garage – even joined by the soaking wet dog, Praline. When the skies finally calmed, the group pedalled through drizzle about six miles to the hostel in Boisé (followed the entire way by Praline!).

After dinner that evening, Madame L asked her students to think back on their day’s adventures and share their sensory memories. Children reported seeing the giant cooking spit at the manor, tasting raspberries, strawberries and mint, feeling strawberries, and hearing thunder. All of these embodied experiences were located in particular sites. In this way, foods were given meaning as they were worked into overlapping webs of significance. Shared activities generated meanings based on sensory, affective, and social experiences. Participation in the visits also built or reinforced different units of knowledge (like specialized vocabulary, sensory identifications, or new classificatory paradigms), and it familiarized students with a variety of bodies of knowledge with which to apprehend their world. Types of knowledge included, for example: technical knowledge of farming/food production, ecological/botanical knowledge relating food to environment and natural cycles, topographic knowledge relating food production to its growing sites and conditions, geographic knowledge relating people and their food habits to particular locations, and historical and touristic knowledge tying people and events to particular markers in the landscape. Not to be forgotten, of course, was culinary knowledge linking food consumption (like strawberry recipes and tastings) to food production (like greenhouses and mounds of sandy soil) and through this to place.

The second day of the journey, similarly, had the effect of teaching the children about their environment and connecting them to it in a kind of participatory, in-situ socialization process. It entailed a walk through
the forest, guided by a forester, a visit to a winery, a detour to a small hillside to look out and see the ‘lay of the land,’ and finally a visit to Boisé’s *boule de fort* (bowling) club.

In the forest, the guide pointed out sights, sounds, and smells: the interesting shapes of leaves, the honey bees buzzing loudly overhead, the sweet smell of flowering bushes and trees, the discovery of fresh boar and deer tracks in the mud, and the sight of large beds of mushrooms stacked at the entrance to a mushroom grower’s cave in a rocky outcropping. He also pointed out the ruins of a thirteenth century fortress that had once been surrounded by grapevines and grain fields. Then, while walking through some Gallo-Roman settlement ruins, several children were struck by the smell of wild mint wafting through the air – just like the mint they had discovered the previous day at the *maraîchère*’s. Their excitement was tangible as they began to make connections between places they had visited, sensory memories, and a variety of things they had seen and done.

These multiple layers of meaning connected to geographic locales would develop further at their next stop: a winery. Once again the children saw where local products come from and how they are made, and they were able to connect a human face to the landscape and its foods. They met the people who actually do the work of producing the food (or, in this case, drink), and asked them questions and watched them work. Their interactions drew them all together as members of a local community, situating them in a commonly meaningful ‘place,’ while simultaneously bridging the gap, to some extent, between consumers and producers.

At the winery, we were met by the vintners, Madame and Monsieur ‘Nicolas.’ The class observed various stages of vineyard planting and development. In one field, Monsieur and an assistant were in the process of trimming and carefully planting new vine ‘feet,’ onto which would eventually be grafted sprigs of cabernet franc, the local grape varietal. Monsieur explained this is the principal varietal allowed in this area by the national accrediting institution for the French designated-origin labelling system known as the ‘AOC.’ (*Appellation d’origine contrôlée*). Furthermore, he pointed out, he could plant only a limited number according to European Union regulations.

Next, Madame took questions from the children. In the student-vintner (or consumer-producer) interactions, the children took knowledge
from different sources (i.e. the school geography lessons and information gleaned from home) and applied it in situ – for example, asking the vintner to specify the links between the Loire valley landscape, soil, and climate for wine-making.

The children then learned about wine production, as Madame explained the harvesting, fermentation, aging, and packaging processes. The youngsters were allowed to roam through the slightly dark, damp winery building, taking in its inebriating smell, scaling ladders, peeping into vats, and examining barrels. A ‘tasting’ followed. Each giggling child was given a chance to dip his or her finger into glasses of two vintages of red wine … and taste!

Madame explained how to look at the ‘robe’ (colour) and to smell while tasting. She hinted that they might find aromas or flavours of raspberry, green peppers, and prunes that characterize her wines. She then spoke of taste education in general, insisting that to learn to differentiate smells and tastes, one must have experience and references (of sensory memory) to different smells/tastes. It is an argument for them to taste things starting young – even if it is a food they do not like, she added emphatically. Their teacher, Madame L, immediately seconded her. She was expressing her own belief in the importance of broadening children’s palates and her own attitude toward wine consumption, which I found to be shared by many of her compatriots. It is safe to say that throughout France, wine is understood to play a role in mealtime sociability, and the French tend to see wine as one of their prized products. Madame Nicolas proudly encouraged wine appreciation; however, she also made sure to remind the children of the importance of consuming alcohol in moderation.

Locally, wine is valued positively and is understood to be linked intrinsically to the landscape, through the concept of ‘terroir’ – a term used to describe the unique characteristics of a given locale that are thought to influence the taste of what is grown there. These characteristics often include soil type, climate, topography, and the history of cultural practices tied to the area – in sum, what makes something from the area ‘typical.’ As the parent chaperones stated at the end of the day, (‘Oh, avec le vin, le forêt, puis la boule de fort – ça fait une journée très [Loire]! ... ‘Ouais, ... la journée terroir.’) ‘Oh, with the wine, the forest, then the bowl-

6 The parents stated the name of the specific area, but with pseudonyms, I use the more general ‘Loire region.’
ing, that makes a very regional Loire day. … Yup…a real *terroir* day.’

Though *terroir* is a noun often used in conjunction with discussions of soil-types and plots of land for grape-growing, this parent’s adjectival usage reflects its more recent, popular connotation of things specific to the land or seen as somehow quintessential to the way of life on the land. Note that the elements of this very ‘terroir’ day included: an ingestible (*le vin*), the environment/landscape (*le forêt*), and a folkloric (leisure) activity (*la boule de fort*) (which was once related to the local economy, as it was purportedly played by river-boat men). In other words, the children were being socialized not just to discrete bits of knowledge, but to a whole package. They were not just learning about wine-making or the environment, but about a whole ensemble of inter-related people, places, practices, values, and objects – in sum, to life in their corner of the Loire Valley, as they were experiencing it.

This field trip socialized the children to become ‘situated’ eaters by constructing multi layered grids of meaning and communal values based on their experiences of particular locales. During this journey through ‘ingestible topography’, they were not only learning to relate specific foods to specific locales, but they were also investing the landscape and the foods associated with it with social, cultural, and individualized meanings – thus turning the topography through which they pedalled into meaningful ‘places.’ While pedalling along behind the children, I came to realize that the students were not only gleaning information on their area in a scholastic way, they were appropriating it as their own. By virtue of first-hand, multi sensory, communal, and sociable participation, their experiences were etched in their memories – thus becoming parts of their ever-forming identities.

*Why be ‘situated’?*

Why is it important that these children should be concerned with where and how their food originates? My research found that people in Loireville expressed distrust in the quality and safety of foods packaged for mass consumption. One palliative was the consumption of locally produced foods. Why these? It appeared that part of learning to consume in Loireville was learning to be an informed consumer. This entailed knowledge of the geographic origins, production, and preparation of one’s food – and acquiring this knowledge was most easily accomplished with local foods.
Geographic knowledge plays an important role in the construction of what French people think of as ‘France.’ Geography is taught in schools, as part of the centralized, national curriculum established by the French Ministry of National Education. Knowing something about where one lives is considered an essential part of citizenship. The objective of schooling in France, as stated in the mission statement of the official ministry bulletin, is ‘to assure each student the schooling that will allow him to acquire, beyond the fundamentals, the reference points that are indispensable to acting as a responsible citizen.’ While the geography lessons in Central School’s fifth-grade class occasionally dealt with international and European geography, the main focus was on the different regions of France. There was a particularly strong component of local history and geography in the spring, organized around the time of the bicycle trip.

Teaching about the different regions that comprise *La France* is not new, and exploring them through travel is not specific to Loireville. Socializing children to a common vision of the French nation has been a concern ever since the beginning of the Third Republic, when free, mandatory, primary education was established in the 1880s by the Ferry Laws. Early manuals and books used for teaching elementary school included the idea of exploring France’s varied terrain and cultural mosaic. For example, the famous story, *Le tour de la France par deux enfants* (1877), by Bruno, followed two children as they biked their way around the country, learning about local mores, regional products, and the beauty of different parts of France. Their journey of national discovery and personal development mirrored, in a way, the tours of France undertaken by journeymen under the old regime – tours in which they would learn a trade as they moved around France under the patronage of various master tradesmen. The element of bicycling used as mode of transport in Bruno’s book – as well as in the modern-day case of Madame L’s fifth-grade class trip – resonates for numerous reasons. Mostly, it works as a child socialization experience because bicycling is a very physical, immediate means of traveling and exploring the landscape. It is an active,

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participatory, and sensory mode of moving through and experiencing space – and the children enjoy it. Also, in contemporary France, the sport of bicycling is generally quite popular, with the famous ‘Tour de France’ bike race garnering great public support, as people watch cyclists from all over compete in legs of a journey, literally, around France. Whether via television or in person along the course, following the Tour de France race provides information on regions of France – and a ready-made model for associating cycling with acquiring geographic knowledge.

This said, awareness of place can be used to varying ends depending on the historical circumstances. Whereas, the bike trip described in Les deux enfants was meant as a parable for the incorporation and levelling of difference in the context of early Third Republic nation-building projects, the bike trip undertaken by Madame L and her students actually works to celebrate difference by socializing children to regional specialties and symbols at a time when the region is once again a valid unit of meaning. (Note that a certain amount of administrative and financial decentralization has occurred in France over the past few decades. At the same time, regions can more easily bypass the national level to deal directly with the European Union, as there is European funding earmarked for regions within European countries. This relationship is particularly evident where it concerns food and new European food labelling systems for artisinally produced local foods.) In other words, Madame L’s class bicycle trip was timely, as was the knowledge the children were acquiring.

In France, in general, it is not uncommon for schoolchildren to embark on voyages of discovery of some part of France. This practice, variously referred to as classes vertes, classes de mer, and classes découvertes (‘green/nature,’ ‘seaside,’ and ‘discovery’ field trips), is well organized, with a series of overnight accommodations, natural and cultural attractions, and guided activities at their disposal. However, Madame L’s choice of the bicycle as means of locomotion and the immediate region as destination seemed particularly interesting as the journey provided uniquely embodied experiences of an already meaningful place. The trip enabled students to experience places that they could easily re-visit, see faces that they might re-encounter, taste foods that they would repeatedly ingest, and build onto layers of meaning that exist in other realms of
their everyday lives in the area. In this way, she was helping them to build a much richer experience of their immediate world.

In terms of food habits, geographic knowledge was also reinforced in everyday life. For example, recipes, food marketing, and even food-related news reports constantly made reference to different French regions, and, especially, to ‘terroir.’ People are bombarded with the message that one of France’s great assets is its varied topography and climate. This is especially pertinent when it comes to describing the richness of different foods produced throughout France. Most of the people I observed expected and cherished this variety. They felt that their eating habits were off kilter if they ate too much of the same kind of food, and they seemed to enjoy knowing about the difference between, say, food from the Southwest and food from the Loire Valley. Many residents actively sought out local specialties from various regions – even if it was only during vacations. In fact, one of their greatest complaints was that they feel they are no longer in control of what they eat or where it comes from. They feel cornered by the power of the omnipresent, large ‘hyper-marchés’ (supermarket superstores) that are seen as offering endless aisles of placeless, monotonous, and tasteless mass-produced or packaged foods.\(^8\) Supermarket culture – which appeared only a generation ago in France – causes many to look back nostalgically on the tomatoes and cherries of their childhood. Needless to say, the mention of fast-food caused many a Loirevillois to complain bitterly to me about the perceived ‘steam-roller’ effect of American fast-food culture on French eating habits and tastes. All this forms the background context in which the students set off on their bike trip to discover their local environment and, in the process, some local foods. In this way, students would be bridging what some parents perceived as a severe disconnect between their children’s eating habits and their food knowledge – or, more simply put, between food consumption and production.

However, it was more complicated than simply finding out about the production of their food and gaining personal experience of the places they visited. Their understandings of the Loire region were layered on top of, or in conjunction with, other strategic uses of the landscape.

\(^8\) Beyond nurturing a sense of place, residents employed an array of strategies for dealing with the perceived lack of place in modern food habits.
Terroir

The concept of ‘terroir’ refers to the specificity of a certain geographic area. Talking about a ‘produit du terroir’ implies that the product – usually a comestible – comes from a specific place or is made according to a tradition in a specific locale. It connotes ‘authenticity’ or ‘typicalness’ and may even suggest that a product is ‘artisanal’ or somehow ‘natural.’ In this way, the idea of terroir can convey a certain timelessness – that of a settled traditional past that is comforting to people facing change in the present. In terms of food and wine, terroir also implies that there is (and always has been) something inherent to the place – some specific sensorial qualities gained from the soil, as in the expression ‘le goût du terroir’ (taste of the place). While all of these descriptors are vague and slippery, they have in common a positive affective charge. Thus, when chefs want to make their guests’ mouths water, all they have to do is say ‘menu du terroir’ (local specialty prix fixe). The dishes proposed may not always be elaborate, but they are made from local products, so given added value.

Whereas the students were learning to take pride in being from a specific place and to be interested, informed and proud of local history and products, the use of the idea of ‘terroir’ in France often fits other ends as well. Commodification of land and of place is one phenomenon, for example. The Loire Valley is eminently touristic, due to its rich history and cultural patrimony of châteaux that are visited by millions each year. In addition, rural tourism has taken off in the region, as struggling farmers turn their barns into restaurants, cottages, and B&B’s as a means to stay afloat. Village restauranteurs, local artisans, and vintners have also capitalized on the specificities of their locales by vaunting local products (like the galette ‘boiséenne’ and at the fouée restaurants described above). In all cases, entrepreneurial residents and outsiders alike have transformed the beautiful landscape, natural resources, and cultural heritage marking

9 For more on the history, elaboration, and politics of terroir and le goût du terroir (the taste of place) in France, see recent works by Amy Trubek (2004, 2005). For example, to describe the idea of le goût du terroir, Trubek writes: ‘Unusual to France is the attention put on the role of the natural world in the taste of food and drink. When the French take a bite of cheese or a sip of wine, they taste the earth: rock, grass, hillside, valley, plateau. They combine gustatory sensation and the evocative possibilities of taste in their fidelity to the taste of place, or goût du terroir’ (Trubek 2005, 260). Furthermore, because of this connection between perceptions of food and knowledge of place in France, Trubek asserts that ‘taste thus is a form of local knowledge’ (Trubek 2005, 269).
that landscape into commodities – goods, sites, packaged experiences, all to be marketed, sold, and consumed.

The way French food and wine specialists speak of terroir is, in some ways, akin to branding, especially as there is often considerable overlap between the broad category of produits du terroir and the specifically, place and technique-defined, ‘controlled origin label’ products issuing from France’s AOC accrediting process. The long history of using place-names to mark food and drink has, in fact, provided a convenient means for groups of people to develop place-based foods and food habits and, in the face of rapid social change and globalization, to preserve and promote them. Many people are using the commodification of place to reinforce the value of ‘situatedness,’ while, in the process, working to forestall and to challenge what many of them consider the placeless-ness of modern consumer capitalism.

In this sense, an analysis of terroir must include the politics of place, which is another phenomenon that serves to make the varied French geography strategically meaningful. Political actors in Loireville and elsewhere often cited the rich diversity of local French specialties (that arise from the varied topography and micro-climates) and offered them as a foil to what is perceived of as America’s monotonous, homogenous, mass-produced, or bio-engineered ‘bad food.’ Of course, political, cultural, and economic gain are also sought within France, as different regions and blocks of producers litigate over naming rights and appeal to French or European authorities for status that would allow them to use specific labels. Once obtained these labels help locations sell, protect, and maintain themselves. (Two examples from the bike trip include the forest of ‘Boisé,’ which is labelled a ‘parc naturel,’ and the vintner’s wines, which are ‘appellation d’origine contrôlée.’)

Finally, I see a kind of ‘fetishizing’ of terroir. In the wake of food scares in France (including listeria and BSE, or ‘mad cow,’) and the spectre of genetically modified foods arriving in France, people in France became concerned and many started to talk of ‘la tracabilité’ (traceability). In other words, people wanted to know where exactly their food was coming from and wanted this information listed on product labels. The

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people I interviewed in Loireville felt it was very important to know where their food came from but felt that as supermarket shoppers they could always be duped. Instead, many preferred to develop relationships with local butchers and food producers. They felt they could trust them and felt reassured by this. In addition, many shopped at the local farmers’ market and used personal connections (family, friends, friends of family, etc) to obtain foods directly from area producers. By imbuing locales and local products with extra ideological and affective value, people marked them as revered or sacred – perceived, at least, as safer and morally preferable. Eating locally, in effect, was a way for people to ‘situate’ themselves based on ethics.

Food and festival: Socialization at community events

Through talk of *terroir* and similar discourse, local communities actively sought to mark (in the sense of ‘brand’) products according to place. Various social actors (from politicians to local events organizers) could effectively link specific foods to specific places. Food-festivals are particularly suited to this task, as they often combine nostalgia for ‘simpler’ days with entertaining, convivial community gatherings. The overall ambiance lends itself to an enjoyable performance and experience of a given locale, and is, thus, an excellent site for socialization of place-based food habits and an overall sense of place.

In addition to their school experiences, children in Loireville also learned about local products at the many community-sponsored festivals that routinely punctuated the town and regional public events calendars. Among such events were grape harvesting fairs, apiary open-houses, holiday street festivals, Loireville’s annual Wine Show, organic goat cheese-makers’ open-houses, a tour of wine and mushroom caves, a local medieval history fair, a village *fonée* bread festival, a historical re-creation of river transport of sea salt, a municipal workers’ eel-cooking and skeet-shooting festival-fundraiser, a strawberry growers’ fair (that featured local berry dishes, egg tosses, and caged tigers), and a day-long closure of the roads along the Loire to all but cyclists seeking gustatory and historical treasures along their path.

Festivals provided interactive and multisensory opportunities for learning about local production, local consumption, and the value of place. Local food history, culinary specialties, and agricultural products were encountered by the children and their families in the context of
community events. At the berry festival, strawberries were freshly prepared in the local manner with sugar and red wine (for adults) as festival-goers stood hungrily in line. Volunteers laughed and joked with friends and strangers and were quick to inform the uninitiated that these berries had been picked that morning from the growers’ own farms and that this manner of serving them was a local specialty. Consumption of strawberries at local festivals like this one reinforced the kind of knowledge acquired by residents in other circumstances, such as on the children’s school field trip.

Like strawberries, fonées are another example of a food with a specifically local, symbolic value. They are produced and consumed at many local festivals and street fairs. As with many locally (ac)claimed foods, cultural meanings are developed – and socialized – across contexts, as is evident from the following classroom conversation.

While preparing for their class bicycling trip one day in geography class, the fifth-graders mentioned fonées as a local specialty of their region. Several children vaunted their culinary knowledge, offering information on the fonée. It is baked in a specially shaped brick oven, explained one girl, as she tried to sculpt an imaginary dome in the air. It is usually served hot, sliced open, and stuffed with something, added another child. Eyes wideness hungrily, as fellow students interjected their personal favourite stuffing, like goat cheese, jam, or chocolate-hazelnut spread (Nutella). Madame G, their geography teacher, explained that these ingredients are not ‘traditional,’ and that it used to be that fonées were stuffed with ‘rillettes’ (a regional potted pork specialty) or ‘beans called mojettes’ (a kind of white bean that, according to another informant, was often consumed in the area by farm workers). Mme G also explained that fonées are often made in ovens built into (actually carved out of) the natural limestone caves of the area and that several fonée restaurants have sprung up in the area. This elicited more comments from students, a few of whom reminisced about restaurant visits and even private parties they had attended with their families in rented local caves – parties at which fonées were featured on the menu. Others mentioned the omnipresence of fonées at local street fairs and festivals they had attended.

Note here, how the discussion about specialty foods in fact served to wend together different bodies of knowledge and different sites of socialization. Specifically, culinary knowledge, based in home/family experiences, was related to geographic knowledge that is made explicit at
school. Such knowledge of the place is obviously reinforced for many students in their active participation in family and community life, and for those for whom it is not reinforced, the school discussion served to disseminate it more widely to create shared knowledge of their community and environs.

As a kind of edible rallying point for the community, *fouées* provide an interesting example of a (re)invented local specialty, or ‘traditional,’ food. For example, one village in the region has an annual *fouée* festival. Its organizers explained that they wanted to rediscover this food that they say had been produced locally, once with flour milled in local hillside windmills, then baked in special troglodyte ovens in the natural limestone hillsides. After the First World War, they said, bread-making became less family and community-based and more the domain of specialized bakers. For the purposes of the festival, they contacted some local elderly residents and asked for their input on recipe and baking techniques. Organizers then involved all generations in working the festival, which has been held annually for over 25 years now. Inherently a social event, solidifying community ties, they point out that everyone has a job – including the young people, who now shuttle the hot *fouées* from oven to table on roller-blades! They have tinkered with tradition, as the ‘old folks’ only knew bean (*mogettes* (*fayots*)) and butter fillings. The committee members, ‘have evolved the tradition a bit’ by adding *chèvre* (goat cheese) and *rillettes* (pulled, potted pork) as options for fillings. They also have experimented with different types of sausage. For fancy parties, they make mini-*fouées* with *foie gras*.

The festival is meaningful to the festival committee members for a number of reasons. They cited village pride and satisfaction with having created such a success. They were quite eager to point out that they take great care in what they produce and that they use *produits de qualité* (‘quality products’), like *rillettes de tradition*, and *un chocolat pâtissier* made by a local pastry-chef and not just mass-produced spreads (‘like Nutella’). When asked to elaborate, organizers said that they consider themselves as producing ‘a quality product’, which they described as not having ‘any additives.’ ‘*C’est naturel, quoi! Meilleur de goût.*’ (It’s natural! Better tasting.)

In this interview, the festival-organizers developed a discourse of history and nature, indicating that it is ‘natural’ to make them ‘naturally,’ with only the basic ingredients, indicated to them through local oral history and local artisanal methods. In other words, they were espousing
a kind of anti-discourse toward products seen as outside of time – products deemed a-historical, because they flaunt ‘tradition’ and confound the workings of ‘nature,’ with additives used to ensure extra-long shelf lives. For them, food – especially, the fonée – should be a living part of the moment as well as being tied to history and the nature of the place. They were also voicing a discourse of taste, implying that ‘natural,’ rooted, artisanal products taste better than mass-produced ones – like in the case of the local artisan’s chocolate spread versus the commodified, Nutella-brand product.

Fonées were also a central attraction at another nearby village festival. It was a medieval fair where children watched with interest and anticipation as volunteers in period costume made this local bread specialty. Women mixed ingredients, kneaded, rolled, and shaped the dough to form nice, round, pale, palm-sized circles of dough. The men laid them out on the hot brick interior of a specially constructed, beehive shaped oven, which they tended carefully to maintain the optimal, very high temperature necessary for the fonées to puff up properly. The finished breads were then rushed in baskets to serving tables, where other volunteers opened the hot pockets and stuffed them according to the customers’ desires. While many adults chose goat cheese or potted pork (rillettes) fillings, the children delighted in chocolate or jam-filled fonées. One of the youngsters with whom I attended gleefully buried his face in a fonée, only to reappear moments later and shoot me a wonderfully sticky, chocolate-faced grin. Other products available at the fair were local honey (honey-tastings were popular), strawberries, and a special kind of small, madeleine-like hazelnut cake, named after the town (which takes its name from a local word for the hazelnut trees that grow there). A village association was selling little bags of the cakes as a fundraiser to finance

11 Time provides another possible analytical framework for understanding my data. For example, the festivals, like the bike trips, highlight the element of time in relation to place – via history, memory, and practice. For example, I consider the physical experience of time and people’s connection to history – i.e., time to physically visit, explore, and experience a place while learning about its relation to history. Note, also, that informants used the element of time strategically toward multiple ends. In this way, I encountered two kinds of relationships to timelessness. One represents, for example, foods that are outside of tradition, defy the passage of chronological time, or are in some way a-historical (as in the case of mass-produced, preserved foods with a very long shelf life); and the other denotes foods that are inside of historical time and connected to cultural traditions, but considered ‘timeless’ in that they are perceived as unchanging and are not thought of in terms of any very specific moment.
their renovation of an historic building, tucked under the ramparts. They explained that they invented the recipe and have them made specially by the very best pastry shop in Loireville – and, they assured me, these are only made for this fête!

Like the experiential, embodied learning that occurred during the student bike trip, encounters with locally meaningful foods at community events serve to reinforce the same kinds of value of place by creating and jogging memories of eating specific foods in a particular place. In this sense, local festivals also represent a kind of ingestible topography, this time via the intermediary of the food object in the festival. (It is out of the field, but, by metonymy, stands in for the field/river/land/etc at these events.) As the festival interactions mark out a social space of community, the festival foods serve as markers in the landscape, tying the communal eaters to a specific place. By attending several of these festivals – and eating locally produced foods at each event – participants develop their cognitive mapping skills as they learn to associate food experiences with places and, in turn, relate one place to another.

Another example occurs every year during the Fête du Vélo in the month of June, when residents (and visitors) bicycle up and down the roads along the riverbanks, getting a taste of local scenery, culture, history, and food specialties. The roads along both banks are closed to traffic for the entire day and brim with people of all ages. The fête is a family oriented event, welcoming large groups with young children towed in bike-trailers and youngsters and adults of all ages riding beside them. My initiation to this rite of summer occurred as I pedaled along with a multi generational, dual-family group that made several stops at food stands along the way in order to consume strawberries, fonées and wine.

However, this festival also went beyond the basic tastings. It included a specifically didactic exhibit about livestock production and beef butchery. Colorful tents, stands, and poster displays were scattered in a field, just past the bridge over the Loire that marked the halfway point. Needless to say, we stopped to explore – and to taste.

*The Beef Exhibit*

An exhibit and dégustation (tasting) celebrated the themes of beef, bread, and wine. The beef displays were particularly interesting and timely, as their purpose was to inform consumers in an uncertain time. There was
much information on how beef is labeled and on how butchers and customers can know if beef is *French* beef. Some butcher stands and posters displayed examples of veterinary papers certifying place of origin. Informative posters highlighted different sections of certificates so that consumers could know what they were looking at on a certificate and be able to reassure themselves of the meat’s French origins. Underlying this exercise was the safety risk many consumers associated with British beef – tainted in many people’s minds with the danger of ‘mad cow disease.’¹² People could also watch butchers at work on outdoor butcher blocks and see how meat is cut and prepared. Local butchers and cattle-farmers were present and were eager to talk with festival-goers. Also, what food festival would be complete without tasters and recipes? Beef dishes were cooked on site and available for tasters, for example: *pot au feu, grillades, boeuf en gelée,* and *carpaccio de boeuf* (beef stew, grilled steaks, beef in jelly, and seasoned, raw beef).

Furthermore, some displays specifically targeted children with simple colorful posters, photos, and educational games. The children could gain agricultural production knowledge, as they learned about raising livestock. The themes of nature, ecology, and place were evoked as sacks full of grain, bales of hay, and photos of contented cows in their pastures adorned the exhibit space. The children could also acquire culinary knowledge. One stand, for example, featured an oversized meat-cuts puzzle, in which children would try to place the correct cut of beef on the corresponding part of the cow.

The meat exhibit was a way of educating consumers, young and old, and a way of performing ‘*la traçabilité*’, not only through the label/certificate reading exercises, butchering displays, and tasters, but also by physically seeing and gaining rapport with individual butchers (not nameless, faceless, or industrial ones). With its emphasis on ‘traceability’ and teaching how to discern a meat’s origins, the exhibit specifically took on the question of knowledge of a contested product. This was especially important in the ambiance of food insecurity brought on by the mounting numbers of BSE-infected cows found in France and lagging questions about imported beef from England and elsewhere. Traceability was a concept that referred to EU recommendations and to French policies about labeling the origins of products on packaging, but

¹² In the wake of the 1996 ‘mad cow’ scare, many French consumers shunned British beef. This is not to say, however, that cases of BSE were not also detected in France.
it had taken on a larger semantic role in the national media. Specifically, it addressed people’s fears revolving around the issue of scale of production. Many of my informants voiced the belief that the large-scale livestock industry’s follies had led to BSE occurrences, and, as a result, only meat that came from a known (small) producer could be trusted. In lieu of having direct contact with such producers, many people put their trust in their local butchers, who reassured them of the quality and safety of the meat they would consume – hence, the creation and popularity of the butchers’ exhibit.

Overall, the Loire bike festival and meat exhibit helped to situate and inform residents in two ways. First, it was an embodied learning experience that ‘situated’ its participants in a particular place: it provided an occasion for area residents to cycle through, sensorily experience, and learn about their locality (tasting and visiting along the way, like in the school field trip). Second, it explicitly aimed, literally and figuratively, to bridge a gap in consumers’ food-related knowledge, by informing consumers young and old by way of a ‘fun,’ yet unmistakably didactic, exhibit at the central river-crossing. As in the cases of the school bicycling field trip and local festivals, Loire Bike Day informed children and adults about stages of production of place-based foods. Learning experiences were characterized by face-to-face meetings with small farmers and artisans, whose products were meaningful because of their local origins. With these foods, produced on a modest scale, residents could gain knowledge about production practices and geographic origins through personal experience. This knowledge, in turn, added value to the consumption of local foods. Learning about local foods served to ‘situate’ people by attaching them to these foods and, more generally, to the value of ‘place.’

Journeys through ingestible topography

What, then, are the processes by which this ‘situating’ actually occurs? As the bicycle field trip and festival examples show, child socialization via a form of experiential learning is one means of transmitting food-related values to the next generation of consumers. In all of the above examples, people moved through space, developed a sense of the relationship of different points (and people) in space, and attached multiple meanings to these locales, based on their embodied, sensory experiences there. Their
memories of these experiences would then combine to form a sense of place.

The events and visits described above served to ‘root’ the participants in their local landscape and community, while informing them about food and food production. They provided them with opportunities to sample local specialities, meet food producers, and gain new stocks of knowledge – whether geographic, ecological, botanical, agricultural, historical, or culinary. The journeys to, from, and between locales allowed them to connect these strands of information in new and meaningful ways by seeing their interaction in situ. Events connecting food to place appear especially meaningful and strategic when analyzed in light of the emotionally and often politically charged context of changing systems of food production, distribution, and consumption in France.

The bicycle trips (both field trip and festival) were more than fun and informative outings: they were embodied experiences of ‘place.’ A key element in understanding how this functions is the role of experience and memory in building ‘persons,’ and, since these trips involved groups, the role of collective memory in building community. The participants literally traced paths through the landscape, thereby gaining an understanding of the relation of point A to point Z and of the uniqueness of each point in between. Because they lived in the area and would visit its various points again (visiting family, friends, sites, etc), their experiences were that much more pertinent to their everyday lives. The places and their foods act as interrelated memory triggers.

The class field trip had created interrelated memories for the children, based on a series of lived experiences, connected in the pattern following their journey. In the posters created later to explain their trip to their parents, the children shared lists of information and impressions that one might not normally think to juxtapose when discussing the Loire Valley. For example, posters on sensory memories included the taste of berries, the sight of Roman ruins in the Boisé forest, the smell of mint, the smell

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14 Thomas A. Abercrombie has provided an interesting analysis of the processual nature of memory and collective memory-building in Pathways of Memory and Power: Ethnography and History Among an Andean People, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1988. See especially: Ch 7. ‘Telling and Drinking the Paths of Memory: Narrative and Libation Poetics as Historical Consciousness,’ pp. 317-367.
and the feel of Praline’s wet fur, and the texture of asparagus, to name but a few. These particular, seemingly disparate, impressions were integrally linked in many of the students’ perceptions of the locations they visited. In terms of embodied experience, the children doubly appropriated the landscape – by pedaling through it and by interacting with it. Furthermore, by tasting things en route, the children were literally consuming the landscape. They were both encountering and constructing an ‘ingestible topography.’ They were learning about ties between land, soil, topography, microclimate and food production, thereby adding insights to their understandings and experiences of the foods they ate. Their journey socialized them to become ‘situated’ eaters, appreciating the local bounty there in the Garden of France … until, of course, they would next be tempted by a cookie snack-pack or a ‘Happy Meal.’

As evidenced in Loireville, people were concerned to trace the origins and production of their food, and many felt it important to continue, enhance, and create festive traditions of place-based food practices. Learning to become a ‘situated eater’ in Loireville meant gaining an understanding of where one’s food comes from, how it is produced, and how it is prepared with a specifically local flair. It also meant creating the association between edible object and place of consumption. This learning process also reveals something about identity formation, in that processes of identification occur as people learn to consume through the intersection of memory, the senses, and the embodied experience of place.

**France and Europe**

On one hand, this case study of the construction and reproduction of local food habits – and their associated identities – leads to inferences about ideas of being French and to residents’ fears of Europeanization. My interlocutors labeled themselves ‘French’ and often spoke, with great pride, of being from a particular region of France and of especially appreciating their natal foods. However, most were well versed in the specialties of many French regional cuisines in addition to their own. In general, it seemed that people perceived France as a whole made up of very distinct parts, and people were expected to acquire a certain connoisseurship of the distinctiveness of foods that stand in for the distinctiveness of place, starting, of course, with a thorough knowledge and appreciation of one’s own local topography and food habits. In
looking at the broader context, an identity with a strong local or regional component was important for residents of Loireville because it provided a comforting alternative to perceptions of unappealing modernity and uniformity, as well as to the fears of loss of identity associated with Europeanization and Americanization.

On the other hand, learning to ingest place in France has implications for a French identity framed within a European one, as there are increasing commonalities. For example, as origin-labeling systems in Europe become more widespread and legally difficult to circumvent or contradict, foods are becoming more formally attached to specific locales and consumers are recognizing them as such elsewhere in Europe, too. Rural tourism is burgeoning, as small European farmers increasingly play the dual role of food producer and host. Overall, it seems that the value of place is becoming more of an issue for consumers across Europe, but whether this is a lasting trend remains to be seen.\textsuperscript{15} Further research is needed to ascertain what kinds of socialization processes are at work with other European children and how place-based food practices fare elsewhere in Europe.

References


\textsuperscript{15} In addition to differences across European places, it would also be important to consider the changing role of class difference in place-based food habits. For example, some French foods that are considered local specialties are part of what was once considered peasant food or country fare. Some of these foods have been adopted and adapted by the regional and/or national gastronomic elite. Others that had remained less well integrated into the national cuisine are now gaining recognition as consumers (who may be in search of social distinction) seek out ‘authenticity’ and ‘tradition’ with locally produced specialties.


THE QUEST FOR QUALITY:
FOOD AND THE NOTION OF ‘TRUST’
IN THE GERS AREA IN FRANCE

Karen Montagne

Abstract
Although globalisation and improvements in the agro-industry offer the majority of French consumers increasingly diversified food choices, it seems that this abundance, linked to the notion of a ‘food crisis’, gives rise to distrust and fear among eaters. In order to master those fears, many people work out an evaluation system for different products which results in a definition of quality different from that of European norms. This chapter is based on ethnographic study in the South West of France, in the rural departement of the Gers, well-known for its gastronomy and the quality of its products. Unlike many urban people, part of the population in this departement select where to buy food based on various representations which local people have of ‘quality products’; the discrimination system they adopt is founded upon the family network, social relationships beyond the family, and the notion of ‘terroir’. This chapter illustrates the different modes and places of food supplying among a rural population, and situates these actions within wider contexts of the consumption practices and aspirations of what may be the growing majority of French consumers.

Since the ‘mad cow crisis’, we have witnessed the multiplication of new ways for consumers to identify a certain quality in products. The first cases of contamination were observed in 1985 in Great Britain, and as early as 1988, use of animal origin flours to feed cows was already identified as a cause of the disease. However, the critical phase for the econ-
omy started in 1996 as ten cases of a new type of Creutzfeld-Jacob disease were announced by the British Health Ministry. This agro-crisis, which was amplified by the French media, led to an economic crisis, where the levels of meat bought by consumers dropped by almost 10% over the period 2000-2001. This crisis was all the more dramatic for both producers and retailers because it occurred in a general context of decrease in beef, meat, and meat products consumption (Bourdieu 2003). Quality labels have proliferated and grown in importance, because they are supposed to help consumers in their choices, to entice them to trust again the agro-food industry marketing system.

From the agro-food perspective, European and national terminology in regard to quality is paramount: quality is defined as ‘the aptitude to satisfy expressed or implicit needs’ (ISO norms 8402-2-1) or ‘the aptitude of a product or a service to satisfy the user’s needs’ (AFNOR norm X 50109). Thus, according to Marie-Françoise Guilhemsans and Françoise Lalande, ‘quality’ is increasingly analyzed by examining the degree of conformity to these norms or ‘right practices’ as agreed upon on international, European or national levels (Guilhemsans and Lalande 1998, 248). Such procedures are designed to reassure consumers who have no links whatsoever with food production. Today, as François Sigaut observes, cooking and agriculture are two separate spheres which occupy places in the social sphere which are no longer equivalent (Sigaut 1993, 67-77). However, in his analysis he does not take into account the rural populations who still produce the major part of their own food, and their relatives who are the food’s recipients. This might explain the result of a survey on French people’s food behaviours carried out by Jean Pierre Poulain (2002, 48), which reveals that people who do not eat ‘quality’ labeled foods are over-represented among the populations of small towns and rural areas.

In the field of human sciences, ‘quality’ is today a recurring theme in food studies. Most of these focus more particularly on processes set up by both producers and the agro-industry in order to restore trust among consumers (Dubuisson-Quellier 2003; Sylvander 1995). Labels and certifications are at the core of the analysis and they are usually approached through concepts used in the marketing sphere (Stanziani 2003; Valceschini 1995; Sylvander 2002). These studies reveal that, just like the

1 Maitre de requête to the State Council.
2 From the General Inspection of Social Affairs.
specialists who set up those systems and aim at restoring consumers’ trust and developing consumer loyalty, label designers care more about the representations of labels than they do about the target of these representations, the consumers.

Some kind of consensus seems to exist today in France regarding the complexity of ‘quality’, which is a multifaceted term. Until very recently ‘sanitary quality’ has been the official definition of food quality in France, which essentially meant the avoidance of toxicity in food, the preservation of public health, and commercial quality as an assurance of loyalty in transactions (Thouvenot 1983, 51). But quality has other meanings in France today: there is nutritional quality (referring to the quantitative as well as qualitative aspects of nourishment), hedonistic quality (or organoleptic quality), and the psycho-social components of quality (Fischler 1979). Most studies also agree on the fact that consumers make their choice by taking into account the product characteristics as a whole, including its price, which cannot be dissociated from other characteristics (Lancaster 1966).

‘Qualitative characteristics’ (Sylvander and Lassaut 1983) are used by agro-food companies as information to be presented to customers (labeling, quality symbols, etc.) so as to enable them to make their choice among a range of products. Yet, because of the food crisis, the intrinsic characteristics of a product must be explained to consumers in order to restore trust. In consumer behaviour studies, the concept of trust is either approached in terms of trust in the brand name, or in terms of the consumer’s self-confidence in his or her own judgement (Filser 1998).

In a survey which used lexical and structural analysis, L. Siriex (2000) distinguishes four types of consumers in their definition of trust. In the first category, trust bears upon product or brand name recognition or upon emotional bonds to the product or to another actor. The second category rests on extrinsic quality indicators such as brand name, without being necessarily linked to trust. The third category gathers consumers who distrust a product. Purchasing depends on the evaluation they make of several intrinsic quality indicators linked to such things as taste or freshness of products. Consumers in the fourth category do not speak in terms of trust but in terms of risk. It seems that to each category is attached a socio-demographic group. Trust for each consumer is oriented towards various partners, either food chain stakeholders or, in a more abstract fashion, quality indicators. The second contribution of this study
has to do with the dichotomy between trust judgement/interpersonal trust which usually opposes transactional and relational conceptions of goods exchanges.

Consumers’ responses show that both forms of trust are not in opposition but really are complementary. They even strengthen one another because they bear upon the same basis: the degree of familiarity perceived with the product or brand name, past experience and loyalty (Sirix 2000). Although this typology, which is only partially applicable to the population studied in this paper, gives an idea of the representation of consumers’ trust, it actually constrains eaters within a model which does not permit variability and alterations in the definition and characterization of products. It is largely the case that most analyses of ‘quality’, of consumption behaviour and attitudes, offer a linear perception of the distribution network or the food chain, with consumer and product each consigned to one extremity (Corbeau 1995, 94). We shall see that according to the mode and place of purchase, the persons interviewed in this study define the quality of foods they select according to various criteria; trust is induced by multiple factors among which the social link is the most important.

This essay is based on research which I conducted with Isabelle Téchoueyres during winter 2001/2002 in the Gers (South-West France). The research took place in a department in South West France renowned for its gastronomic and cultural traditions. The Gers is a deeply rural departement in terms of its agrarian activity, type of housing and population density. In 2004, on 6,301 km2 there were 172,511 inhabitants, with 27.35 inhabitants/km2, while mean density in France was about 107.4 inhabitants/km2. Eighty per cent of the population lived in spacious rural land with dispersed housing; sixty per cent of the population lived outside small towns (with populations larger than 2,000), whereas in France estimates show that 75.5% of population lived in urban centres. Finally, seventeen per cent of the working population was employed in agriculture, which is one of the highest proportions in France where agriculture only employs five per cent of the working population.

This ethnographic research was among a rural population directly connected to small-scale food production, and it confirms that the official definition of quality and reference to quality labels is not what mat-

3 Doctoral student in social anthropology, University of Bordeaux.
ters in the food choices of the persons interviewed. This research, aimed at studying Gersois food habits, was part of a wider project that included the setting up of a ‘quality of life observatory’ in this **département** famous for its gastronomy. Rural and/or farming families were interviewed at length in order to record evolution and permanence, as well as the transformation of the food system. Data used here I personally collected among 12 families, a total of 37 individuals, encompassing two and even three generations, from across the Gers. The semi-structured interviews took place during the ‘mad-cow crisis’, so that many digressions on the themes of food quality and risk appear throughout the interview transcripts.

Throughout the interviews, reference to trust or distrust in food appears significantly whenever the informants make a comparison between the diverse types of food that they eat. The theme of trust-quality is generally recurrent among all interviews. Overall, in fact, trust appears to be the most important criterion in the evaluation of food quality. Even the notion of risk was associated with the idea of not poisoning oneself, with trust. ‘Trust is a feeling of security justified by the reliability of a person or a system, within a given frame, and this security expresses faith in the integrity or love to others, or in the validity of abstract principles (technological knowledge)” (Giddens 1994, 41).

‘Good products’ are those for which people know the producer personally, or even those produced directly on one’s own farm: ‘at least we know what we eat’ says Mrs. S. (68 years old, mayor’s wife and farmer. She cooks daily for her husband and father-in-law). This idea was widely shared among all my informants, even if some of them, because of lack of time or interest, or because of their age, cannot produce their own food themselves. Moreover even those who buy most of their food in supermarkets still look for products which seem to them better than others, sometimes ‘up market’ products, and when they have time they still buy their bread from their favorite baker, get their wine from a specific wine cellar.

These interviews led to the conclusion that the entire food purchasing mode in the Gers is determined by very specific and individual strategies of qualification and evaluation of foods. The study of supply modes and sources reveals a conscious will to reduce to a maximum distances between the Gersois eater and his food (relocation). This seems to confirm the hypothesis that among this population, the quality of a product is...
evaluated according to processes of trust that are based on inter-personal relations.

The research

The main project of the study was to analyse the local transmission of food and culinary processes. Informants were selected because of their long-standing settlement in the Gers (three to four generations), meaning we had to restrict the sample, which led us to examine exclusively a rural population. In effect, during the period covered by our study (i.e. the last 100 years), people who did not own farmland had to migrate towards urban areas in order to find employment. Since the Gers has remained mainly rural, many people had to leave the departement, even the region, in order to find work. Rural emigration has slowed down since the 1970s, and since 1990 many newcomers can be recorded. This explains why we deal exclusively with a rural population, which can be considered as the major limit of the research. Yet this constraint enabled me to study every mode of food supplying existing in the Gers today.

One of the major differences between rural and urban spheres is the existence of more diverse ways of getting food, of networks permitting rural people to get products judged of superior quality, all being non-exclusive and complementary. Therefore, it is usual to find in kitchens food products from different sources, i.e. from the neighbour’s farmyard, from open air markets, from small specialised local shops as well as supermarkets.

Mrs L. (55 years old, part time job. She cooks daily for her husband and son, and has her daughter L. several times a week for dinner) explains how she fills up a good part of her pantry:

I like to go to the market, but, well, I guess I go there more frequently in winter than in summer, because my husband has developed a passion for gardening. So we have organic vegetables as he says. So I’ll name what I generally get [what she buys in the market]. Well, there’ll be vegetables and fruit, er... on Thursdays, there’s good fish on the market, never meat, just fish, there.

My butcher has good meat [...] it is true that [...] from two or three years ago I go more regularly to my butcher’s who serves me a very good meat.

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4 The Region has lost one quarter of its population between 1851 and 1954.
5 In some counties like Isle Jourdin, new comers make up 30% of the population.
No no no, I used to have deep frozen foods [home delivery] some time ago. Then now, well, when I need deep frozen foods I use them, well, so I go to a deep frozen food store in Auch (the administrative center and main town in the Gers) [...] and also in supermarkets I find deep frozen foods.

[...] on the other hand, the baker delivers bread daily, this is very convenient. Even when I’m still asleep, she leaves the bread on the mailbox outside, I leave her what’s needed, it’s fine like that. That’s it …

[...] Now, with the bypass road, it is true, I go more easily to Leclerc at the Leclerc shopping centre, [...] and well Carrefour [two of the major super and hypermarket companies] also but I go more seldom there I don’t know why, but er… the products are about the same, [...] you know, supermarkets.

**Home production**

Almost all families get produce or prepare a large part of their food at home. It must be noted that keeping a vegetable garden is an expanding activity in cities today as shown by diverse studies about the development of the gardening market and the increase of new specialised stores. One of the most common hypotheses is that this phenomenon is an answer to the loss of trust in conventional agriculture and also a way of obtaining vegetables or fruit with a real taste. This hypothesis has been confirmed during a former research on organic foods representations in an urban context.

Mrs L.’s husband, who lives in a suburban area of Auch and who is not a farmer, decided ten years ago to grow his own vegetable garden: he grows green vegetables, tomatoes and peppers which will be sufficient for his family all summer long. Invoking taste as a reason to make this effort is as prevalent in the Gers as in any French city, although it is not because it is fashionable as in the case of organic foods, but rather because it is an extension of farm traditions. ‘At any rate, one must admit that home productions, when you eat them, at home, people see the difference, there’ (Mrs E., about 60 years old, farmer’s wife, who cooks meals for her mother, her husband and once a day for her son, daughter-in-law and grandson).

The difference between produce you find grown in cities and farm production lies largely on the size of land cultivated. It is not just a weekend hobby, but a full time job, the vegetable garden being the size of a field. This field enables one to grow ‘almost everything we need’. Thus, summer or winter, according to the informants, all or almost all seasonal
vegetables (corresponding to my informants’ food habits) are produced at home under different varieties, so that eventually such a vegetable garden offers a wider diversity than any supermarket. Fruit trees are to be found on every property and produce sufficient fruit to cover the family’s needs in season.

Poultry rearing is less common among older and younger people who do not have the interest or time to look after poultry because of the constraints implied; often the family branch who remained on the family property produces enough for the rest of the family. It was with great astonishment, as an urban dweller where storing space is scarce, that I observed the huge amount of preserves, of vegetables, jam and meat that are made for a year in every farm. Breeding pigs on the farm is less common than before, yet most people buy whole pig carcasses and prepare at home patés, sausage, saussissons, coppa, dry ham, ribs, joints, etc. Fresh meat is seldom preserved in jars because deep freeze simplifies the preservation problem. Deep freeze is today the most widespread way of keeping poultry, hens and chicken, guinea fowl, force-fed ducks, etc. On the other hand drying saucisson and ham is still widely done, and the tradition of fat preserves remains very much alive. Only magrets (lean meat of force-fed duck, usually eaten fresh) are deep frozen, and livers and confits (meat of force-fed goose or duck, or even fattened pig preserved in fat) are prepared in fat preserves according to family-inherited knowledge. Even more surprising is the fact that some people breed their own calves, take them to the slaughterhouse and take the meat back to keep in their deep freeze (Guillou and Guibert 1989, 9; Verdier 1979, 276).

These forms of farm food production are never part of my informants’ worries concerning risks, since everybody trusts naturally and logically to what he or she has produced: vegetable garden and poultry are objects of great care. This work has remained in most cases the housewife’s task and, since it is her duty to feed her family, she naturally only wants the best for her family, which she does from the soil to the plate. The only risk perceived is when opening a badly preserved can, but there again the cook’s know-how and knowledge of the products are their

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6 The words of one of Yvonne Verdier’s informants show that beef meat preservation is not a ‘tradition’ and that the use of deep freeze has sensibly modified the way of preserving, supplying and eating this type of meat, which my oldest informants have also confirmed (Verdier 1979, 276).
guarantee (Giard 1994, 290-291). It is also important to note that the quality evaluation of such products is not the same as the quality resulting from sanitary and legal norms offered by ‘quality labels and signs’, because a specific value is added by the knowledge and work required from the person who produced it7 (Warnier 1994, 22).

Home produced foods are usually plentiful, far too much for an average household. In fact, all farm products are redistributed or shared among family members. These gifts contribute to maintain a very tight link between children and parents: the latter are still perceived as the feeding parents who care for the well-being of their younger ones (often young couples) who do not really have time or means to produce food they were used to during their childhood. Such gifts are sometimes passed on during preparation when all members of the family join in to perform the tasks; or whenever parents visit their grown up children or are invited for a meal. This occurs mostly on weekends when children return home for Sunday dinner. This type of gift does not generate any obligation from the recipients; families make such gifts and no compensation is ever expected, not even in the form of help on the property (Bawin-Legros, Gauthier and Stassen 1995, 119-130). This sort of relationship and social expectation has been recognized by M. Godelier (1996, 291):

Among relatives, close relatives or friends, there remains an obligation. Proximity is shown by the absence of calculation, refusing to treat one’s close relatives as a means to get one’s own ends. Thus in our culture, gifts continue to be a matter which logics and ethics are completely different from those of market and profit, are opposed to it and resist it.

Free gifts can be explained, according to J.T.Godbout (1992, 260), by ‘the actual pleasure of giving, by the fact that all these people claim that they get more than they give through the actual act of giving. It is a sort of supplement showing that the gift is not only motivated by the expectation of reciprocity’. According to the type of product given, and the context of distribution to the recipient, it is possible to make a distinction between these food presents and other types of food circulation which are closer to traditional help giving or service exchange in the rural world (Godbout and Charbonneaux 1996, 96).

7 J.P Warnier identifies the same authentification and domestication process with non-food products: ‘With domestication as an authenticity certification process, the subject takes it upon himself to authentify the object by manipulating it and placing it in a domestic context’ (Warnier 1994, 23).
Help and mutual aid

Aid is apparent in the first place through gifts of fresh foods such as vegetables. Many young couples have told me about the vegetables, poultry, eggs and jam they bring back from their parents or in-laws. It can be described as a sort of aid to settle in, many parents being unable to contribute financially to the setting up of a new home. With food aid they help to maintain a certain food ‘quality’ (sometimes also meaning quantity for the more destitute couples) for their children. One can also talk about straight sharing when children take part in the making of preserves, the preparation of poultry, fat or pork. Such mutual aid also applies to meal preparation, since many children share meals regularly with their parents, either for lunch or supper, or whenever the spouse is not available or cannot return home because he or she does not work on the family’s property.

I have only talked about the help that rural parents give their children, which is the most common case. But what might seem more surprising for an urban person is the number of families who live under the same roof or on the same property, several generations together (Attias-Donfut 1995, 57-60). When it is the case, home preparations are given to the more aged persons who nevertheless keep an active role in family life and maintain some autonomy (they can stay in their own home or live on the family property in the heir’s household thus avoiding retirement to an old age home). They often prepare soup for the family, which is an important task since soup generally remains the essential element of evening meals. As it is often said, fresh or preserved foods given as gifts taste far better! ‘In the jar, when I know Daddy took it from his garden and Mummy sterilized it, it is very good. Yes ’L. declares (28 years old, works in the tertiary sector, newly married). Homemade products are judged to be the best, of far better quality than anything one might find on the market, preferable even to up-market goods.

Presents which are not market goods, homemade by the giver, […] are very much sought after: home made knitwear, jams, works of art (sculptures, etc.). The time involved in the making of such gifts and their personifications are obvious; they bear some of the giver’s spirit (Godbout and Charbonneaux 1996, 24).

These goods taste better because of trust and the knowledge of the agrarian and culinary abilities of one’s family, but mostly because of the added value, affection: such goods are given with and because of family
love, so trust in interpersonal relationships is powerful because family relationships are persistent and stronger than any other.

**Networks**

One of the peculiarities in food supplying modes is the way some people rely on specific channels or networks in order to obtain specific goods. ‘It is common here to get meat through one’s own channels.’ (Mrs L. said, 55 years old, part time job). This mode of direct purchase is also done in other areas, particularly in wine regions such as Bordeaux area where people frequently buy their wine directly from producers.

Gersois families give one another addresses of the best places to get meat. Many people buy their meat in bulk directly from the slaughterhouse ensuring that it was bred by a local breeder. It is also possible to order pork meat from neighbouring farmers who breed pigs, then take them to the slaughter house before bringing the meat home and prepare it according to the family taste. It simplifies work. Poultry rearing for personal consumption tends to decrease even on farms; this is partly due to retirement age or to an occupation outside the farm, or a mode of living away from the land. Yet, most persons I interviewed do not give up easily the gustative characteristics of a certain type of poultry (firmness, colour, etc.), and instead of shifting altogether towards mass marketing, they know where to get chickens raised in the open air, like those they knew in their childhood, or like the chickens they reared themselves earlier in their life.

We have a neighbour who rears guinea fowl, […] which means reared in the open air! She tells me what a circus it is every night to get them inside, […], you see a big thing of guinea fowls less than half a kilometre from here, it is incredible, and they are very tasty. Ho la la. Yesterday I bought three pairs from her, […] she feathers them for me, they are ready to put in the deep freeze (Mrs L., 55 years old, part time job).

And it is the same with force-fed geese and ducks, which are bought in various ways: alive or dead, whole with their livers (or only fat livers are bought fresh), or all parts are prepared as confits and fat liver preserves. In the same fashion, some people get their wine or cheese directly from the farm.

Here again it is a matter of personal trust since the producer is often a member of the extended family, a friend or a neighbour, and his/her particular way of breeding and feeding chicken, hens, guinea fowl, tur-
key, ducks, etc. is known by all. Moreover it is possible to see these animals alive when walking by. The meat might be a little dearer than in commercial outlets, but it is eaten with more pleasure, often shared during Sunday meals with all members of the family.

Risk taking is minimal since a farmer’s repute goes by word of mouth: the address is passed on to friends and relatives, and in case of dissatisfaction or doubt concerning the breeding mode, it is simple to change supplier. This range of products falls beyond official certification modes even though meat has been the most controversial food ingredient over the past years, therefore the most controlled. Cattle breeders in the Gers that I met during this research say their income has dropped during the ‘mad cow crisis’, yet probably to a lesser extent than in other regions, thanks to direct sales to private individuals.

Open air markets and shops

My informants prefer to buy vegetables and fruit on the market rather than in supermarkets because they seem fresher on market stalls and more ‘natural’ (meaning free of chemicals and preservatives according to the definition given by my informants). One must bear in mind that houses are scattered, which can partly explain the way inhabitants think about distances. Going to market daily is not a problem. Most informants just do that in order to buy what is not produced on the farm and what seems ‘not as good’ in supermarkets. But the major reason in favor of markets is the widely spread long-lasting relationship people have with the salesperson. There, as opposed to supermarkets, it is paramount for customers to be able to talk with the salesperson who, in the Gers, is generally also the producer of his/her own goods.

Open air markets and shops are perceived in the Gers differently because they involve more conventional purchasing practices. Yet, rural open air markets are different from urban markets in their number and frequency. In the Gers, over thirty traditional markets take place weekly, eight fat markets (marché au gras: specially regulated markets where only fattened ducks and geese are sold by local farmers) to which can be added numerous fairs held between May and December.

Cheese sold in such markets is displayed in a more rustic fashion than in supermarkets where cling films and refrigerators give a remote idea of tradition, or at least do not correspond to the presentation which older Gersois say they have always seen. Such displays enable the cheese-
monger or the shepherd to use different selling claims from those used in supermarkets, which are normally origin, type, fat quantity, and certification. In contrast, the local cheesemonger celebrates the characteristics of the product itself, namely: its smell and its taste, and it is unusual for a cheesemonger not to have his customer taste some of his wares in order to induce purchase.

Buying from the butcher, either on the market or in a shop, is really a matter of habit which some people may have lost until the advent of the ‘mad cow’ scare, and is now on the rise again. Comments on the subject are scarce, and people never discuss trust in national certification. Buying from specific butchers rather than from the supermarket guarantees that meat is from local production, and this seems to have been sufficient reassurance during the peak of the crisis.

Good bread is a rarity, because industrial baking does not meet local taste for ‘real good bread’. A real good bread ‘de terroir’, according to my informants, must answer specific criteria: it is a matter of freshness, with a well done crispy crust and soft light inside. Bread from supermarkets is not popular, people preferring bread brought to the door by the baker once or twice a week. And when bread is not delivered in the village any longer, the bakery remains the most obvious place to get bread from. However baguettes are regularly bought from supermarkets, either out of taste (for the children mostly), for a change, or to keep in the deep freeze in case one misses the baker’s delivery.

Why then do small shopkeepers still enjoy such success? It is due in large part to the humane aspect, the social relationship between seller and purchaser. As in home-produced goods, knowing the producer adds an imaginary value to the food which therefore helps it taste better. Because such a person made it, or because another person has told you about it, then food has a good tasting quality. It is also generally safe because one seldom questions the way it has been produced after purchasing. In effect, many craft persons have retained a specific know-how which they like to explain to their regulars customers, with a knowledge of the product that supermarkets cannot provide, where their employees

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8 Several times, during my investigation of markets, cheesemongers, pork butchers, bakers and pastry makers, with the idea of selling me something, have explained to me where the product came from and how it was made. In the course of selling they were displaying a real knowledge of the product. They did this in a very enthusiastic manner, and obviously taking pleasure in answering my questions as well as those of other customers.
are not necessarily specialists. I refer here to Giddens’ (1994, 35) notion of ‘expert systems’: ‘technical fields or professional know-how concerning vast sectors of our material and social environment’.

Informants expressed a preference for fresh products rather than processed or transformed foods. These ingredients are prepared by the housewife and seem to be trusted because they are not ‘anonymous’: they have a history, the story of the person who has produced or transformed them, given or sold them. The place occupied by such basic products is the most important one in the feeding habits of the families, which seems to be different from urban households where the amount of fresh fruit and vegetables is often smaller than the amount of tinned and deep frozen foods.

Yet everything cannot be provided by direct supply systems. Today supermarkets increasingly replace market stalls or functions that village bakeries used to fill, where the older persons interviewed used to buy their groceries. Purchase of agro-industry products is increasing among this section of the population. All families I interviewed admit buying a few prepared dishes, often deep-frozen. Many of these supermarket purchases are neither valued nor status-enhancing, yet they are appreciated for a multiplicity of reasons.

*The paradox of supermarket food*

Such outlets are not numerous in the Gers: 28 supermarkets and five hypermarkets in 1999 (in France, a store with a surface of 400 m2 to 2500 m2 is called a supermarket; stores over 2500 m2 are called hypermarkets), which makes it one of the most poorly provided *département* with this type of shops. Nevertheless small size grocery stores and ‘superettes’ (food store with a surface between 120 m2 and 400 m2) are still plentiful: there were 57 in 2004. All my informants shop in such outlets, everyday for some, or most commonly once a week, or once a month for long-lasting goods which in former times were bought at markets, in bakeries or in village grocery shops. The latter are less and less numerous because of rural migration and price competition with supermarkets. Therefore, such products as pasta, rice, oil, flour, salt, pepper and vine-

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9 This tendency is confirmed by an INSEE survey: executive and agrarian classes have opposite attitudes; ‘farmers rather eat raw products’; executives ‘rather eat transformed foods’ (Monceau, Blanche-Barbat, and Echampe 2002).
gar (which are basic grocery goods) are to be found in supermarkets; having all products at hand in one place facilitates purchasing.

Yet very few people buy all their food in supermarkets. All persons interviewed during this research have felt the need to excuse themselves to the researcher, and to justify their buying in supermarkets, showing that it is a supplying mode which, in coherence with common opinion, they do not value.

Fresh fruit and vegetables are viewed as less trustworthy in supermarkets, in part because they lose freshness in the time spent in their transportation to market. This is why, when they have to buy vegetables in supermarkets, some people prefer to buy them deep-frozen.

Cauliflower, broccoli I buy deep frozen… they make those broccoli cobbles, they taste good. Carrots, I also buy them like that, you don’t need to peel them… and I even bought those bags of mixed vegetables, they’re not bad either (Mrs L., 55 years old, as we explored the matter of supermarket purchasing).

Young women more particularly talk about saving time to justify the purchase of ready cooked frozen vegetables. They are used particularly for lunch preparations since peeling and preparing vegetables take up a lot of time, which they do not have because of their professional occupation which is more and more distant from the family farm. Yet all of them say they would prefer fresh vegetables and dishes that they would normally make a point to cook every evening, which is the time of day when they can take the time.

As opposed to ready-made dishes, this range of frozen vegetable products never led to remarks linked to risks or suspicion, not even questions about the product quality. One may note that information campaigns, certifications and labels are up to now absent from this type of product, probably due to lack of consumer demand\textsuperscript{10}. Is it because vegetables enjoy an image of healthy food, or because of the mental equation of fresh-cold-frozen?

Tinned vegetables, however, are not valued and they are not trusted. This can be understood because, although making preserves in glass jars is a widespread practice among families, the tin can is remote from the idea of freshness and any known preserving operation. Tinned tuna,

\textsuperscript{10} However some vegetables are labelled ‘GMO free guarantee’, mostly on preparations containing soya or corn; those are ingredients which do not belong to this population’s general food categories.
sardines, lentils or cassoulet (a popular dish typical of the South West of France made of baked beans and sausages or duck confit) are, on the contrary, well appreciated by members of all generations, even with people particularly suspicious of the food industry, because such products belong to a range of products which has long been accepted in current consumption. It is also the case for Maggi cubes or Knorr\textsuperscript{11}, of specific sauces difficult to make (armoricaine, green pepper), of Jock\textsuperscript{12} preparation (especially to make custard), all of which are bought and classified as grocery stock.

Meats, fish and cheese are available under different forms: freshly cut, under vacuum or frozen. There again freshly-cut products are more successful, even though they might be put in the deep freeze at home. Freshly-cut goods are displayed in supermarkets in the same fashion as they are in small shops: the buyer is not left alone to choose, he can be helped by the advice of the stall keeper who, although this person might not have a specific qualification, has learnt to know the products he/she sells. Customers know these persons, sometimes fairly intimately, as in the case of the LL family where the three daughters work in a supermarket and advise their parents, relatives and friends about the goods they sell. Such outlets approximate what A. Giddens (1994, 89-94) calls ‘access points to abstract systems’ because the sales persons/experts make the link, and inform customers about products they cannot estimate according to their own evaluation system.

Dairy products are commonly eaten and do not raise any questions among my informants. This can be explained by the existence of numerous promotion campaigns since the Second World War, particularly those supported by medical doctors towards women as prevention against osteoporosis.

However, real distrust exists regarding ready-made frozen dishes. They are bought because they are ‘quick’, ‘convenient’, ‘helpful’, ‘for a change’, ‘they are tasty sometimes’, and despite all these reasons and the fact that everybody has some in the deep freeze, they are widely distrusted, according to what people say. Save for a few persons resistant to

\textsuperscript{11} The \textit{Arôme Maggi} (stock and yeast liquid) is on the market since 1887, and the famous \textit{Bouillon Kab} (dry stock) since 1908. The brand \textit{Knorr} dates back to the same period. These products are used to season soups and meat sauces.

\textsuperscript{12} The local character of the brand \textit{Jock} might explain its success in the region; this company started in Bordeaux in 1938.
new tastes and new recipes, rejection does not bear on the type of dishes themselves, because cooks among the three generations bake their own quiches, pizzas, savoury pies, etc., which are the most commonly bought frozen dishes. Rather, rejection of these frozen foods is related to their additives and unknown ingredients listed on the package.

Preference, therefore, goes towards raw ingredients, fresh or frozen vegetables, rather than ready-made preparations, because cooking necessitates a know-how, a familiarity, which provides specific tastes (particularly duck fat which strongly marks Gersois identity) and allows for mastering ingredients. Sometimes, however, the added value which is the cook’s specific savoir-faire can also be expressed with ready-made products by the addition of seasonings, cream or cheese. J.P Warnier reveals the authentification and domestication process of non-food products: ‘With domestication as an authenticity certification process, the subject takes it upon himself to authenticate the object by manipulating it and placing it in a domestic context’ (1994, 23). So, foods bought from supermarkets have much less value than those bought in small shops or those produced at home.

Throughout this ethnographic research, all persons interviewed made a point to claim their preference for ‘high quality’ foods. The estimation system of product characteristics is built on the notion of trust. But the definition of trust they refer to is different from the one that expert systems of agro-industry try to induce through the use of quality labels. In effect, in this section of the Gersois population, trust in food is based on family and local relationships, in what may be seen as a regionally-specific food qualification system.

References
FOOD FIGHTS AT THE EU TABLE:
THE GASTRONOMIC ASSERTION
OF ITALIAN DISTINCTIVENESS

Erick Castellanos and Sara M. Bergstresser

Abstract
This essay will examine the roles of food and ‘traditional’ diet in the negotiation of Italy’s place in the European Union. As the consolidation of the EU is becoming a reality, Italian citizens and institutional leaders have begun to voice fears that new laws, categories, and definitions will disrupt their ways of life. Recent doubts surrounding the inevitability of Italy’s place in the EU have frequently been described in terms of perceived threats to Italian food products. Using examples such as the debates over product standardization, origin controls, and the contestation surrounding the EU Food Safety Agency, we will show how the distinct identity of Italians is often described in terms of gastronomic specificity or superiority. We will discuss the ways in which food acts as a powerful tool in the maintenance of ‘Italianness,’ and we will consider the impact of the EU incursion into the valued realms of everyday diet and ‘typical’ local foods. Finally, we will outline the ways in which these contestations have often been used as a political tool to promote a suspicious view of ‘European-ness.’

1 This essay is based on data collected in Bergamo, Italy through a systematic analysis of newspapers and television programs, interviews, and participant observation for our respective dissertations (see Bergstresser 2004; Castellanos 2004) between 2000 and 2002. Additional data were collected during short visits over the summers of 1997 and 1998. Funding for this fieldwork came from the German Marshall Fund of the United States and the Fulbright Commission. A version of the essay was presented in the panel ‘Debating Europe: Questioning Culture, Place and History in the New Century’ at the Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association in New Orleans, Louisiana, 21 November 2002.
The European Union summit of December 2002, held in Laeken, Belgium, was to be memorable for the major issues that the member nations’ leaders were to address. These issues included security in Europe in the post-September-11th world and choosing a president for the convention on the future of the Union. In their discussions, the leaders were to debate wide-ranging constitutional issues about power, democracy, and EU enlargement. However, the Laeken summit will now also be remembered for the ‘Prosciutto War’ between Italy and Finland. The clash was unleashed suddenly by an outburst by Silvio Berlusconi, the media-magnet turned Italian prime minister, that questioned Finnish culinary knowledge. For the following six months this ‘war’ consisted of verbal jibes, practical jokes, and a bureaucratic stalemate involving a major European Agency.

The issue at stake was the future location of the European Food Safety Agency. The creation of the agency was established by the White Paper on food safety of 12 January 2000 as a response to the numerous food crises that plagued Europe in the late 1990s. The goal was to have the agency up and running in a major European city and with a director by 2002. At the Laeken summit one of the issues on the table was to decide the future home of the agency. The front-runners were Parma and Helsinki, with Lille running a distant third. While the Finns were relying on their superb organizational skills to impress their European counterparts, the Italians held firm to their belief that the agency should be awarded to them on the basis of their culinary superiority. When Helsinki’s bid seemingly forged ahead, Berlusconi was outraged, and according to reports yelled ‘Parma is synonymous with good cuisine! The Finns don’t even know what prosciutto is. I cannot accept this!’ To which President Jacques Chirac of France replied, ‘With that rationale we should allocate the EU modelling agency to Sweden because they have so many pretty women there.’ Later, in his call for a more civilized debate, the Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen remarked, ‘It will not help for Prime Minister Berlusconi to beat the table with a Parma ham and me with a Finnish Christmas ham.’

2 The details of these events were taken from the following news sources: Corriere della Sera, The International Herald-Tribune, The Guardian, The Times, Helsingin Sanomat (International Edition), Reuters News Agency, Lloyd’s List International, and Agence France Presse.
In the following days, the Finnish press had a field day with Berlusconi’s diplomatic faux pas. On 19 December 2001 Helsingin Sanomat, the largest daily newspaper in Finland, ran a full-page advertisement that explained, ‘Prosciutto is Ham. Now 1.2 million Finns know this. Is that enough for Berlusconi?’ Other newspapers listed the numerous varieties of ham found in Finland, including Joulukinku – the special Christmas ham. Back in Italy, Berlusconi refused to back down, although he did try to unsuccessfully mend his gaffe: ‘Finland may be a country which is probably very proud of its marinated reindeer or Baltic fish with polenta, but certainly it cannot compete with Parma, the symbol of good cuisine.’ The Finnish press quickly replied reminding Berlusconi that polenta is not a traditional Finnish dish because the country is too far north to grow maize.

The fall-out over the incident continued over the following months, mostly with good-natured jesting. For example, in April the mayor of Parma sent the Finnish prime minister a prosciutto. And while many Italians cringed every time Berlusconi opened his mouth in an attempt yet again at diplomacy, few, if any, questioned his reasons for having the food agency in Parma. There is a general consensus in Italy that they eat better than their European counterparts. Many of these counterparts may even agree, as was suggested in the Finnish newspapers. Given these feelings, there is increasing resentment as to the role the EU is playing in regulating the food and the way Italians eat. These regulations are widely viewed as a challenge to the Italian way of life and to Italianness itself. Consequently, the past enthusiasm for Europe in Italy is increasingly being replaced by Euroscepticism.

To understand the gastronomic assertion of distinctiveness illustrated by the Prosciutto War, it is necessary to identify the complex relationship between food and identity construction in Italy. As Borneman and Fowler (1997) point out, studying the manner in which the EU interacts with local communities has been central to the anthropological study of Europeanization. Our research complements the research of numerous anthropologists who have examined the relationship between EU agricultural policy and food (see Leitch 2003; Giordano 1987; Wilson 1989).

Food and identity in Italy
The EU’s imposition of changes to Italian foodways, or the behaviours and beliefs surrounding the production, the distribution, and the con-
sumption of food, are occurring at a time when many fierce debates about issues of identity are occurring within Italian society; the topics of these debates range from a revival of localism and regionalism to the meaning of Italian national identity in a uniting Europe (Galli della Loggia 1998; Schiavone 1998). These uncertainties embody the intellectual response to the tumultuous past decade, which has seen the rise of the secessionist Northern League (Borcio 1997; Diamanti 1998), the transformation of the Italian political system (Kertzer 1996; McCarthy 1995), changing gender roles (Counihan 1988), and a growing trend towards secularism (de Giovanni 1997). Changes in foodways play a pivotal role in discussions regarding identity in Italy.

Italian identity is rooted in different concurrent and often competing levels: local, national, and cosmopolitan. Many scholars believe that the concepts of ‘Italianicity’ and ‘Italianness’ are weak (see, for example, Belardelli 1997; Biocca 1997; de Giovanni 1997; Ilari 1996; Ricossa 1997; Rusconi 1993, 1997; Tremonti 1997). Some of these scholars believe that the weakness in national identity comes as a result of Italy being a relatively young nation, one that came into existence in the 1860s (Biocca 1997), while others point to a social structure that encourage familiar ties rather than civic ones (Putnam 1993). In the absence of a strong national identity there are two main forces at work in the formation of the individual’s identity: localism and cosmopolitanism. The first form of identity is based on an attachment to tradition, the family, and conservatism, while the latter is linked with modernity, Europeanization, internationalism, and liberalism. We use the term Europeanization here in the same manner that Borneman and Fowler (1997) do. In other words, Europeanization is not merely the political and economic construction of the European Union, but rather a broader social and cultural phenomenon that is not limited to the citizens of EU member states. Italians often see these two as being incompatible, yet both are desirable. On the one hand, they feel a strong attachment to tradition and to the values they associate with their home. On the other hand, becoming a modern nation is something they view as necessary in order to legitimize their position in the world. Only by gaining this legitimacy can Italians cure the chronic national sense of inferiority they suffer vis-à-vis other developed nations.

It is astonishing to note how Italians, intellectuals included, fail to appreciate themselves and why they value others positively while casting
themselves in such a negative light. Perhaps it may be a result of social conditioning. Films, jokes and colloquial proverbs have immortalized the image of the familial Italian attached to his *mamma* and living at home until adulthood. While Italy proclaims that there is gender equality (associated with modernity), specific gender roles (associated with tradition) have a major impact on Italian society. The images, however, may be more a reflection of the existing condition: a reflection that reinforces the image but is not the cause. It does illustrate a reason behind the weakness in Italian national identity: it seemingly fails to provide self-esteem. Alessandro Cavalli claims that the negative trend in Italian national culture is the ideological expression of self-critical intellectuals who tend to recognize its vices while unrealistically viewing northern Europe as an ideal model of society (quoted in Sciolla 1997, 31).

Identity in Italy is focussed on three primary levels: local, national, and cosmopolitan. There tends to be a stronger emphasis on the first and the third. Italians see the localist-cosmopolitan dichotomy as occurring on an evolutionary trajectory, moving from tradition to modernity. They see themselves as living at both ends of the evolutionary process: that is, living in a country that exhibits gross provincial differences, yet one that is part of a global, cosmopolitan culture. As Appadurai argues, the ‘central problem of today’s global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization’ (1991, 205).

These alternate identities emerge since there is a lack of symbols to which the identity we would call ‘Italian’ can attach itself. Symbols which a nation might use include traditions, history, political philosophy, religion and language. In Italy there is strong domination of tradition by local culture. Furthermore, there is a reluctance to accept history as a unifying factor, and the state is discredited. The language is not yet uniform, and the secularizing process within Italy does not put Catholicism in a strong position to serve as symbol for national unity. In short, the Italian state has not been successful in fostering a sense of community in Italy.

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3 Tim Parks (1996) provides an amusing but revealing perspective on gender conditioning. He shows that despite claiming gender equality, roles are still very traditional.

4 As a reaction to this mentality, the scene in the Italian film *Pane e cioccolata*, in which filthy Italian immigrants living in a chicken coop spy adoringly on the god-like Swiss youth, satirized the idealization of northern Europe and the self-deprecation by Italians.
Throughout his interviews and conversations, Erick Castellanos attempted to get people to tell him what Italy meant to them or what it meant to be Italian. While most people quickly fired off answers for most questions, this topic usually drew long silences followed by joking replies and laughter that Castellanos interpreted as an attempt to break the tense silence. He attempted to rephrase and to reconceptualise his inquiry as he interviewed other people, but the outcome was always the same. The following excerpt from an interview with Gisella, who is 29 and a sales clerk, and Giuseppe, who is 28 and works as a mechanic, represents a typical response to our question:

Interviewer: What unites Italy?

[Silence]

Giuseppe: I have asked myself this before.

Gisella: Spaghetti!!! [Laughs] ... the first thing that came to my mind was spaghetti!

Giuseppe: No, no, no. I have asked myself this question before and I admit that I have yet to find an answer. Because it is incredible, I have never understood how ... I can say fear of the foreigner [unites Italy]. But when the invader is gone, what will keep Italy together? I don’t know. It seems rather banal to say spaghetti. Although I also thought about spaghetti. Everyone eats pasta. I don’t know, Ferrari. Ferrari is rich, fast, and prestigious.

Gisella: There are certain traditions. When the San Remo Festival is held, everyone watches.⁵ There are other things that are traditions, things from culture that may be food or songs.

Giuseppe: I am not sure if one can define Italy as united thanks to these things. I have not been able to find a moral meaning, a conscience.

Gisella: Identifying oneself in certain things.

Giuseppe: I have just mentioned good spaghetti, pleasant Italian songs, rich and fast Ferrari. We are only Italian with wealthy and winning things. Perhaps the culture from the past. Italy is a depository of cultures: the Roman

⁵ The San Remo Festival of the Song is a popular singing competition held every year in the spring. Most of the entrants in the professional category are well known artists. The festival usually enjoys very high ratings and the songs are compiled in an album that sells well.
culture, the Divine Comedy. It is as though something is missing and we have to go reaching for things.

Gisella: I don’t believe it is like that, I think there is something.

Giuseppe: I don’t know how to answer this question.

Gisella: Neither do I, but there is something there that Italians have in common. You can identify when something is Italian.

Giuseppe: Perhaps the language. A standardized language. The Italian language is the same in all of Italy. But I am not sure if that is the only thing. Berlusconi now. No that is only a joke. Unfortunately, I don’t know, I don’t know.

Despite the uncertainty expressed by these individuals as to what it is that creates Italian unity, certain concepts reappear in people’s responses. Religion, history, and language are all seen as concepts that are shared by most Italians, yet they fail to become symbolic resources for a sense of national pride.

Ferrarotti (1998) states that there is a general feeling among Italians that one is born Italian, as opposed to becoming Italian or choosing to be Italian. In other words, there is inherent genetic connection to Italian-ness, often described in terms of blood or as coming from the local terra. The implications are that just as genetic diseases are passed on from one generation to the next, the negative aspects associated with Italy continue to live on throughout the years. There is little recognition, however, of how cultural practices reproduce this negative self-image of Italy.

These negative images of Italy lead many individuals to downplay their association with the country, while some go as far as to renounce their association with it. A conversation we had with some older men illustrates this:

First Old Man: Our problem is that we fight more than the others [Europeans], we argue more amongst ourselves. We are less patriotic and that makes us jealous of the others. This happens from north to south. And while we may have our differences, in the end we are all Italians.

6 Terra translates as dirt, ground, land, homeland, and country. Both Italians and Bergamaschi use the term frequently, often employing its multiple meanings. It is a trope that is frequently found symbolizing one’s community.
Second Old Man: No, no, no! Just hold on. [In Bergamasco dialect] I am in no way Italian!

First Old Man: [Laughs] See? There you are. Therein lies the problem!

The old men’s comments highlight Ferrarotti’s (1998) claim that national identity in Italy is confused with loyalty to the ‘small homeland’ and with localism. Moreover, the negativity associated with Italy, along with regional cultural particularities, has created an Italian identity that Tullio-Altan (1995) describes as a heterogeneous amalgamation of values that produces a ‘dissonant polyphony.’ Such division creates a situation where:

Sixty million Italians make a fetish of appearing to be different from each other. It is not just that the haughty resident of Milan or Turin loathes being mistaken for a Neapolitan or Sicilian – feelings that Sicilian and Neapolitans fully reciprocate. Residents of towns located within a few kilometres of each other also pride themselves on their cultural superiority over their neighbours (La Palombar 1987, 25).

The attachment to locality should not be surprising, however, given the negative way Italians perceive the nation-state. There is an assumption that these communities offer an everyday culture that is based on a repetitive and habitual way of life that most individuals feel they have mastered. As Featherstone states:

The common stock of knowledge at hand with respect to the group of people who are the inhabitants and the physical environment (organization of space, buildings, nature, etc.) is assumed to be relatively fixed; that is, it has persisted over time and may incorporate rituals, symbols and ceremonies that link people to a place and a common sense of the past. This sense of belonging, the common sedimented experiences and cultural forms which are associated with place, is crucial to the concept of local culture. Yet...the concept of local culture is a relational concept. The drawing of a boundary around a particular space is a relational act which depends upon the figuration of significant other localities within which one seeks to situate it (1995, 92).

Pitt-Rivers’ (1971) accounts of the communities in the Andalusian Sierra provide an illustration of how neighbouring communities see similarity and differences among each other. He describes the manner in which the inhabitants of Alcalá and nearby villages adhere closely to their localities and in the process of doing so fostered antagonism with each other. According to Pitt-Rivers, these communities recognize their common
interests while concurrently revering the differences from each other. Likewise, in Bergamo, people actively draw boundaries between the locality and the national state, but they also draw boundaries between Bergamo and other communities, especially those in the immediate vicinity. We were consistently offered accounts on how different life and the culture were in Brescia, the next city that lies about thirty miles to the east of Bergamo. One individual said that he had moved there to work and he felt like he was in a foreign country: the language was different, the food was different, and people ate dinner much later. One must keep in mind that the dialects in Bergamo and Brescia are very similar; the main difference in one of the most typical dishes is that the ravioli-like pasta in Bergamo has cheese and bread in its filling, whereas in Brescia the pasta has no cheese in the filling; and in Brescia they eat dinner about half an hour later than in Bergamo.

Despite the perceived local differences in gastronomic traditions, food does emerge as one of the few symbols through which Italian identity can manifest itself and consequently a reason behind the staunch defence against the risks that modifications by EU regulation present. As illustrated in the introduction of this essay, the vehemence with which most Italians assert the superiority of their tastes and food products is an indicator that there is an underlying pride in Italy, yet when people think of food as a unifying symbol, they tend to trivialize it. This may be because Italians connect food and eating with the locality first and thus as something anachronistic and banal when thinking of national virtues that need to compete with the ‘modern’ virtues of other nations. Such associations occur with other symbols as well, which leaves individuals without a clear idea of what it means to be Italian.

Food has long been the subject of anthropological inquiry, so it is no surprise that it can be used as an avenue to better understand the dynamics of Italian identity. For what, how, when and with whom Italians eat are guided by understandings of their identity within society. Manners and habits of eating are crucial to the very definition of community, the relationships between people, interactions between humans and their gods, and communication between the living and the dead (Counihan 1999, 13). Because food is so essential and so frequently used to affirm connection, it takes on rich symbolic meaning. In addition, the particular characteristics of food give it semantic wealth, something noted by Levi-Strauss (1997), Mary Douglas (1997), Roland Barthes (1997), and others.
The symbolic power of food enables prohibitions and taboos to signify social boundaries, religious integrity, status, and gender differences. Furthermore, food is a primary focus of much economic activity and a mirror of the organization of society.

When studying food and society we need to ‘attend to the manner in which society, the social, is both identifiable as a set of opportunities and constraints (a structure) into which its members are born and which its members affect, alter and amend (agency) in the process of living out their lives, inalienably engaged in social relationships with others likewise living out theirs’ (Murcott 1998, 312). For example, according to La Cecla (1998), cookbooks are a lie because they attempt to systematize a topic that is very fluid, that adapts itself to be told over and over again from person to person, and when it becomes inscribed it is reduced to something static and unchanging – almost dead.

Italians learn at an early age the strong role food plays in their culture, and they begin to equate food choices with their personal identity. In their research, Ochs, Pontecorvo, and Fasulo (1996) found that in Italian families, children were strongly encouraged to express their individual tastes in foods. At an Italian dinner, members of the family were expected not to share the same food preferences but rather to differ from each other. Individual food preferences are part of what it means to have a personality. The encouragement of individual tastes in this sense is linked to the flourishing of the child’s personality. Likewise it is during these meals that parameters of what is socially acceptable to eat are also set. By comparing similar likes and dislikes of elements of the meal, food becomes a resource for socializing a relationship of identity between family members (Ochs, Pontecorvo, and Fasulo 1996, 11). It is through this socializing process that Italian children learn that food can be regarded not only as an element of nutrition, but it is also viewed as something pleasurable. The perspective of food as pleasure ‘might be understood as an Epicurean Weltanschauung in which the experience of pleasure is fundamental to the health of body and soul...The Italian families we observed discussed a broad range of enjoyable facets of food, including the pleasures of planning, procuring, preparing, serving, and eating particular food items’ (Ochs, Pontecorvo, and Fasulo 1996, 24-5).

Drawing from these formative experiences it is not surprising that food plays an important role in forming a local identity. When one factors in that there is a strong tradition of using local food products in
traditional recipes, the link between one’s identity and the locality becomes even more comprehensible. Counihan’s work in Florence illustrates the strong tie between food and the locality:

Although Florentines will banter endlessly about the ‘right’ way to cook a basic dish like spaghetti with tomato sauce, they recognize that their cuisine is different from all others in Italy. Their cuisine is simple, but delicious, they say, based on the strong flavours of garlic, onion, basil, parsley, and pepper. Their food is rooted in a centuries-old sharecropping farming system that enabled intensive agricultural production on fields near enough to the city to ensure extremely fresh produce all year round. Florentines are passionate about their own cooking and establish their cultural identity through their attachment to it (Counihan 1999, 7).

While food is strongly associated with the locality of origin, food also plays a very important role in the formation of a national Italian identity. La Cecla (1998) claims that food became an integral part of Italian identity during the nineteenth century when migrants left their homes in Italy for the shores of the United States, South America, and other countries looking for work. While their fellow immigrants from other countries had strong national symbols around which they could rally, Italians had few since their nation was relatively young, barely united in the 1860s. Food became the focal point for what it meant to be Italian. It is at this time and in this foreign context that regional differences disappear in favour of a ‘standard’ Italian food. The standard was based on pasta (La Cecla 1998, 53-4). In his seminal work on the role of sugar in the world, Mintz argues that sugar consumption conveyed the complex idea that ‘one could become different by consuming differently’ (1985, 185, italics in the original). By readjusting this idea, we can see that Italians abroad became more alike by consuming the same kinds of food.

Foods began to serve as boundary markers of what was Italian and what was not; regional differences in food persisted, but there were common traits that distinguished Italians from foreigners. As such, food became one of the few rallying points through which Italians could differentiate themselves from, and even could look down upon, their European counterparts and the rest of the world. What has emerged is what La Cecla terms ‘al dente chauvinism’ (1998, 76), the belief by Italians that no one eats as well as they do. This chauvinism can be witnessed by the behaviour Italians exhibit when they travel abroad: they mostly frequent Italian restaurants and pizzerias, always complaining that they are not as good as those they have at home. Why does La Cecla choose the term ‘al
dente’ to mark this chauvinism? Perhaps it is because many Italians constantly lament the tendency of foreigners to overcook their pasta. More likely, however, is the fact that pasta remains one of the few symbols that Italians see as unifying their country. Take for example the response to a query on Italian identity: ‘Italian identity can be explained with two words: la pasta e la Nutella.’ Another similar example comes from Cardinal Biffi of Bologna when speaking to students on the political future of Italy: ‘It is not about dividing up Italy geographically; rather it is about taking up those values that can unify [Italy]. And there are only two: religion and pasta’ (in La Cecla 1998, 17).

Why is pasta such a powerful national symbol? Its strength draws from the fact that its use melds national norms with local traditions. Pasta is made from identical ingredients that do not vary across the country, yet it takes an enormous variety of shapes and forms. Local customs and norms determine which shapes are to be used and when. Italians eat many different shapes and forms and possess a remarkable competence in identifying them. They are able to distinguish the consistency, the surface, the texture, the coarseness or softness, the lightness, the grooves it has, whether it is hollow or solid, whether it is compact, straight, curved, spiraled, ribbed, round, stiff, cut perpendicularly or at an angle. Pasta represents the predominance of shape over taste. So a common concept, pasta, is shared nationally, while its specific form allows for local identity to be represented.

Another layer of complexity is added when we add more variables: sauces, gravies, dressings, and condiments. Any given type of pasta is ‘wedded’ to particular set of ingredients as well as to the manner in

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7 ‘Roberto’ (Interview, 20 July 1997). *Nutella* is a hazelnut–chocolate spread loved by Italians. In itself, it has become a cult symbol. There are a plethora of studies that look into the relationships Italians have with *Nutella*. See Padovani (1999).

8 *Il lunario della pastasciutta* (The Almanac of Dry Pasta) by Gustavo Traglia (1956) catalogues 298 different types of pasta. It starts with acini di pepe, aeroplani, abissine, africaine, agnolotti, agnolotti, anchellini, anelletti, anelli, anelli rigati, anellini (the difference between anellini and anelleti is quite clear: the former are a common type of pasta of medium size, with a large hole that allows it to absorb sauce, while the latter are ‘very small pasta, originally from Naples, that are smaller than anelli rigati (ribbed rings) and are always cooked in broth’), anelloni, animine, anolini, armellete, armelline, arselle and on and on concluding with tagliatelle, tagliatella nervata, tempestine, tempesta, tortiglioni, torta di vermicelli, tortellini, tortiglioni grandi, trifogli, tripolini, tripolini a nocette, trivellini, trivelli, trombette, tubetti, tubettini, tufoli, turbante, turbantino, vermicelli, vuocche ’e vecchia, zero, ziti, zituni, zwarini (cited in La Cecla 1998, 90).
which it is to be cooked (baked, sautéed, boiled). Furthermore there are rules whether a type of pasta is to be served hot or cold. All these norms, rules, cultural regulations are shared across the country. People may eat certain ingredients based on where they live, yet they are quite aware of the allowances and restrictions on what may be combined. What we find in Italy is that a multifaceted nutritional matrix deeply rooted in individual local cultures dominates the discourse on pasta. Consequently, the existing and accepted combinations are unlikely to be altered or changed. The result is that the traditions that have given life to pasta constitute an extremely rigid complex that is concurrently capable of infinite variations (La Cecla 1998, 94).

The rules and restrictions surrounding combinations of condiments and pastas, and when these combinations are appropriate, not only help create a unifying network across what is a culturally divided country, but they also provide a cultural boundary to mark outsiders (Douglas 1997). Foreigners are often unaware of the taboos involving certain alimentary combinations involving pasta. They often assume that pasta is an open system that allows for dietary innovation open to an infinite number of variations. Such assumptions have lead to some ‘serious’ dietary faux pas committed by foreigners as indignant Italians look on. In addition to the example of pasta, countless other foods and foodways can be used to illustrate the shared norms that Italians have, which help define the ‘we’ and distinguish the ‘them.’ That one should not have a cappuccino after a meal, only coffee, or that one should never put grated cheese on a pasta dish with fish, are only a couple of examples out of the many that are available.

*European regulations and Italian foodways*

It is easy to see how the imposition of EU regulations on food that do not take into consideration the unwritten cultural alimentary norms Italians exercise might disrupt the balance of local and national identities. The matter is more complex since EU regulations accentuate the tension between the local and cosmopolitan identities mentioned earlier. While Europe may be viewed as utopia in the abstract, when the reality of legislation and bureaucracy emerge, perspectives begin to change. Thus Italians have begun to question the modernity and cosmopolitanism that Europe once offered. For example, Leitch (2003) examines how such reactions among Italians resulted in particular type of cultural and politi-
cal activism that involved both small-scale producers of pork lard (*lardo*) and the Slow Food movement. These two activist groups reacted to the EU and its regulation of food production. However, they did not always agree as to what the best response to the supranational imposition of rules might be. Such disagreements arose because Italians cannot escape the fact that they do indeed live in an industrialized country that actively participates and benefits both in the EU and the global market. Furthermore, these conditions are leading to social changes within Italy that greatly impact Italian foodways. Among these social changes are the shifts in gender roles.

Urban Italian women are undergoing a transition in their status relative to men. Whether it is for need or desire, more and more Italian women are joining the labour force, which is leading to changes in the relationships between men and women. Younger women have begun to express their desire for equality with men in both public and private spheres, an equality that ‘goes beyond the traditional complementarity of the sexes where women were socially, politically, and economically subordinate to men’ (Counihan 1988, 56). At the same time, women suffer a strong and debilitating identity conflict between their public and domestic roles. Both are essential to self-esteem and self-fulfillment, and yet individual women cannot materially perform both roles effectively. As a result, they often suffer from frustration and self-doubt. In the domestic sphere, one of the areas that suffers is that of foodways: ‘Young women in contemporary Florence are far less competent in food provisioning and have far less control over the foods they eat than their mothers’ (Counihan 1988, 58).

The industrial food economy has taken over many of the food-processing chores that traditionally belonged to women, reducing the time necessary to prepare meals while simultaneously limiting women’s control over food content and meaning. Hence the cultural norms and regulations associated with food are gradually being lost. Furthermore, prepared and processed foods are increasingly available in neighbourhood stores and supermarkets, and Italians are relying increasingly on frozen, canned, and fast foods for their daily meals. Lunches are gradually getting shorter and shorter, and the attitude is switching from seeing food as pleasurable to food as fuel.

Italians recognize that these changes are occurring and they perceive them as something negative. As Counihan states, while ‘Florentine
women are increasingly likely to buy processed foods for themselves or their families, they consider these inappropriate for guests, reflecting their awareness that these processed foods are stripped of domestic value and meaning’ (1988, 59).

Italians identify that a proper meal is one that is prepared at home by a woman with a large investment of time and effort, yet this is rendered difficult by the impositions of the modern (and potentially ‘European’) cultures that are dominating Italy. Furthermore, there are the ‘temptations’ of industrial and fast foods to lure traditional Italians away from their preferred ways of eating. While many Italians may claim they eat fast food only because they do not have time at lunch to eat a proper meal, an informant who opened an extremely successful fast food establishment in Bergamo recounted that the busiest times are in the evening when people are out with their friends. As he stated, ‘People like fast food even though they will later deny it’ (Interview, 14 May 2002). Parents face the added challenge that their children want fast food because they are barraged by fun-filled images in the media and are drawn in by the special toys that come with children’s meals. Parents view their children’s desire of fast food as a warning sign about the impending loss of local identity (see Bak 1997 for a similar case in Korea). Consequently, parents face a dilemma, either they have to risk their children losing part of their local culture or they have to change their parenting roles by denying children the ability to choose the food they want.

The feelings of guilt associated with these changes in food habits is best expressed by La Cecla: ‘One goes to McDonald’s to infringe upon the dietary rule, then one goes home to feel reassured’ (1998, 103). The threat is very real, however, for McDonald’s is introducing not just a particular set of foods but, much more importantly, the distinctively ‘American’ way of eating – ‘the idea that food is something to be consumed as quickly, efficiently and inexpensively as possible’ (Ritzer 1996, 8). Altering the way Italians eat, an effect of EU regulation, industrialization, and modernization, threatens an important part of their cultural process.

It is easy to see modernization as an overwhelming force, yet as anthropologists will be quick to point out local cultures are not crushed by global phenomena. Local ways of living and traditions are quite resilient and adaptable. Ethnicity, nationalism, and gender can and do counteract the process of ‘McDonaldization’ – the process by which the principles
of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of society (Ritzer 1996, 1). In Italy, food remains a business managed through local guarantees – one only trusts cuisine that has local roots and traditions, not international acclaim. Cuisine remains within the sphere of the vernacular, born within the domestic, or pseudo-domestic walls, where the cooks are the public version of the mamma and not a chef. The forces behind McDonaldization actively seek to neutralize factors of tradition by co-opting them into the system. The spread of fast-food restaurants in Italy, including those that market specific products associated with local traditions, evidences that global processes are having a powerful homogenizing effect on local cultures. This is not lost on Italians, and while the forces of globalization and modernity are probably behind these changes, Italians often associate the process with Europeanization.

The risks of Europeanization and the Italian response

Some people believe that Europeanization, EU regulation, and industrialization are also posing a severe risk to the health of Italians by tainting the food they eat. By introducing health concerns to the act of eating, regulation is leading to a change in people’s attitudes towards eating, shifting the act from eating as pleasure to eating as risk. The health risk is posed in two distinct areas: first, the immediate risks posed through catastrophic outbreaks of diseases and the tainting of foodstuffs, and second, the long-term risks based on consumption of risky foods. The Mad-cow epidemic⁹ illustrates the risks associated with widespread outbreaks of diseases transmitted through foods. Italians, as well as many other Europeans, view the outbreak a result of the industrialization of cattle farming. As a result of the scare, Italian farmers drove their tractors to block the entry of non-Italian beef, a move that violated the principles of the European Union. As the scare grew, many Italians stopped consuming beef all together. These outbreaks lend credence to the belief that industrialization and Europeanization are negative processes and that EU regulations just help perpetuate them. Italians also perceive health risks from the imposition of the consumption of certain foodstuffs through the regulation of ingredients. The allowance of vegetable

⁹ The Mad-cow disease is also known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy or BSE. The risks posed by this outbreak, as well as the more recent foot and mouth disease, could be the basis of further inquiry.
oil in chocolate, the case of tainted olive oil from Spain, and the emerging controversies surrounding the consumption of genetically modified (GM) foods, are a few illustrations of the health concerns Italians have with regard to the content of foods that have been altered as a result of EU regulations (see Heller 2001, 2002; Murcott 1998, 1999).

It is curious to note, however, that health concerns with respect to eating only arise when regulations make healthy Italian foods unhealthy. When the regulations address health risks posed by ‘traditional’ Italian products, the argument changes to risks to traditional ways of life. Newspapers, magazines, and television programs list almost on a daily basis the traditional products that are on the verge of extinction as a result of EU regulation not allowing something in the production or requiring costly changes to the infrastructure. For example, recent articles warned that as a result of EU regulation Italians would soon be forced to eat soft wheat pasta produced in Germany and that the traditional wood-fired Neapolitan pizza ovens would be a thing of the past. This led the Defense Minister to publicly announce after being asked about his vision for Europe: ‘I see a Europe that has a common foreign and defense policy but doesn’t regulate the cooking of pizzas in wood burning ovens’ (quoted in Italy Daily, International Herald Tribune, 10 January 2002, p. 1). Given all the media and political attention, the loss of traditions and the EU become topics of conversation, as this interview with two sixty-year-old men (‘G’ and ‘R’) illustrates:

G: Also among our traditions there are ... well, I don’t know, because now, you see, Europe is trying to throw in a monkey wrench in so many things. For example, a certain type of cheese has been made for three thousand years, and then you can’t make the cheese because it is conserved in certain places. But I say, if people have been eating this cheese for three thousand years and no one has died, why do they want to rip it away from us. Or if not that, it’s our small cheeses, or our strawberries, or the lard ...

R: The meat...

G: Our type of meat. Ok, but now there is the disease...

R: Yes, the disease came because they are not checking well. Everyone should follow the rules...

G: Yes, if everyone had followed the rules, this mad cow disease would have never occurred. Cows are herbivores, and you cannot give it meat. Then they become...they become too sick. But then they mess with us. We
make sauce from our pig, we make at home our salami, that kind of thing, but then we cannot sell it because the EU prohibits it now because it needs to be like this or because you need to package it that way or because it needs to be folded this way. This we can’t accept. We have our pork, we have our cheeses, we have our milk. If they have lived for three thousand years, why should we not also live? We certainly need some hygiene, without a doubt. You can see the difference now. There used to be flies that are not around anymore. They used to be everywhere. These impositions of telling us, you have to grow only certain things and other things you are not allowed to grow anymore, this we do not want to accept. This is another of our battles. Every valley here has its own type of cheese. In the summer the cows go to the mountains to pasture. Then they make a cheese that when they return to the plains it cannot be made because it is a cheese that is based on the grass that they eat. It has a certain taste, a certain…then it is aged in certain caves. These are the things that we want to keep. Perhaps they are imposing on us certain absurdities that we do not want to accept (Interview, 9 April 2002).

In recounting her visit to a cheese-producing farmhouse in Sicily, Paik (2001, 24) illustrates the delicate balance between hygiene and tradition these EU regulations must strike. After the owner explained that he had to spend $12,000 to upgrade his cheese-brining room to meet regulations Paik explains:

I asked Salvatore what the brining room had looked like before the renovation … He shrugged noncommittally, ‘No tile’ … ‘No cement tub.’

‘Well, before the cement tub, what did you soak the cheese in?’ I asked, expecting him to describe a well-worn brining barrel, or some equally romantic, rustic relic. He lifted his chin, visibly gathering the resolve to come clean, and straight away blurted: ‘Asbestos.’ Regulation does have its place, evidently. Preserving authentic traditional methods is one thing. Preserving outdated industrial hazards, such as asbestos brining tubs, however, is quite another.

EU regulation, and Europeanization more broadly, pose a risk to identity in Italy because they threaten the two principal components of this identity: local and cosmopolitan. Risks to local identity are presented by the changing of what people eat, how they eat, and how they perceive food. The risks to cosmopolitan identity come through the realization of the negative aspects of modernization – Europe is not the utopia many Italians thought it would be. These risks have concurrently led to the emergence of a new form of nationalism. This is occurring through the amalgamation of traditions that need to be protected. What is local is
something the nation must protect. National identity is also taking root through a newly shared symbol: consumerism. Foods increasingly represent not the values of home, family, and women, but the values of consumerism. As the symbolic meaning of food and eating have changed from something of pleasure and comfort to something associated with consumption and risk, it has impacted gender roles and how they are performed. As Counihan writes:

In many discussions of the body, Florentines emphasized the pleasure of eating rather than the moral benefits of dieting, bodily action rather than appearance, and the body as a product of family nature rather than of individual will. Florentine women were empowered by the active and agentive definition of the body prevalent in their culture, which emphasized doing – working, having children, making food, wearing beautiful clothes – rather than having a perfectly sculpted body. However, Florentine women also struggled with increasingly prevalent images in the media and fashion that proclaimed thinness, female objectification, and beliefs that women should cultivate their body to please men. Whereas older people cared more about good food and convivial meals than staying in shape, younger women – especially those of the upper middle classes – expressed a strong concern with body beauty and thinness through dieting and visits to the spa (1999, 188).

In this transition, women’s bodies have been transformed from reflections of a way of life to consumer products to be consumed by men. Similarly the role of women within the family is being transformed from provider of food and nurturer to one of guardian and protector against the multiple risks that are associated with the food supply.

Ultimately, Italians will react to the risks imposed on food and foodways by EU regulation, industrialization, modernization, globalization, McDonaldization, and Europeanization, in part by (re)constructing and asserting a nationalist agenda that is often couched in terms of gastronomic superiority. Consumer awareness and protection will define this agenda either through government policy or the creation of special interest groups based at the national or regional level designed to defend groups of people from the risks imposed by any or all of the aforementioned processes. As a result, the consumption of food will be transformed to a selective consumerism, where purchases will require an element of caveat emptor, with preference given to local and certified foods. This is precisely the role the Slow Food movement in Italy (and elsewhere) has filled within European cultural politics. So while the agenda of the EU has been to tear down the borders that divided Eu-
rope, its regulations and the risks they present to the different levels of Italian identity paradoxically are reaffirming some of the old borders and creating new ones to protect consumers. It is in this context that food and identity become ‘a single discursive currency through which to debate Europeaness and the implications of economic globalization at the beginning of the twenty-first century’ (Leitch 2003, 442).

Conclusion

The complex dynamic between food and identity in Italy and Europe is indicative of the complex process through which local, national, and European identities are constructed. Many scholars who study nationalism focus on what brings a group of diverse people into what constitutes a large, symbolic, and imagined community. Fewer have addressed how, as in the case of Italy, people stubbornly resist the process of imagining themselves as part of the larger whole even though they are enjoined by history, language, religion, and other cultural traits. They prefer instead to imagine themselves as belonging to smaller communities or regions. These people do recognize the need for the larger state as it validates their place in larger entities they want to belong to, such as Europe (which may or may not mean the European Union) and the modern industrialized world. As a result, Italy lives with a society that:

chronically oscillates between a tradition that no longer exists, save for in rhetorical celebrations, and a modernity that labors to grow and fails to be distributed in a homogenous manner through the country. It is a society that is concurrently Bourbon and electronic, that is suspended in a limbo of ‘familialism’ that privatizes the public and a bureaucracy that cannot bite the substance of everyday life (Ferrarotti 1998, 112).

The lack of a strong cohesive national identity exists in part as a result in the successful appropriation of community symbols and rituals by the regions and localities in Italy, which have exploited them to their benefit. Consequently, without strong national symbols and myths, Italians are left with the bureaucracy of the Italian government as the principal symbol they associate with Italy. With the emergence of the European Union as an alternative political actor that has the power to influence and change, Italians are reevaluating the meanings of what it means to be Italian and their relationship to both the locality and the state. It has accelerated the broader meaning of Europeanization as discussed by
Borneman and Fowler (1997); it has led to a reevaluation of identification with territory and people.

In an attempt to dispel some of the Euroscepticism in Italy that has stemmed from EU food regulation, the EU Commission President Romano Prodi, also a former Italian prime minister, has written numerous letters that have appeared in most Italian dailies.\(^\text{10}\) In these letters he attempted to address some of the misconceptions that have circulated in Italy with regard to EU food regulation. He explained that Italians would not be forced to eat soft-wheat pasta. According to EU regulation, pasta packages would have clear labelling indicating the type of wheat used so that Italians would be able to choose. The EU would protect the wood-fired pizza oven as a traditional production method, with the only regulations being those for hygiene, most of which are already observed by reputable pizzerias. He continued to address the concern of Italians with regard to the vegetable oil content in chocolate, the shape, the curvature, and the lengths of bananas and cucumbers, and the freshness of tortellini. The fact that the President of the Commission devoted so much attention to the issue of food indicates the importance of food to Italians and their identity. It also illustrates that food will continue to function as means to assert Italian distinctiveness in a growing Europe.

In October 2003, Geoffrey Podger from Britain was chosen as the new EU Food Safety Agency director, in what is perhaps an ironic turn considering the Foreign Minister Robin Cook’s 2001 declaration of Chicken Tikka Masala to be Britain’s national dish (Wintour 2001).\(^\text{11}\) As for the location, though rumours circulated in 2003 that Helsinki had pulled ahead of Parma, it now appears that Berlusconi got his wish after all. At the December 2003 EU Summit in Brussels, though the primary issue of the European Constitution was not settled, the contentious issue of the food agency location was finally resolved. Parma will indeed be the future home of the agency, and as somewhat of a consolation prize, Finland was awarded a new agency to evaluate chemicals. But, lest ten-

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10 Two of these letters appeared in Corriere della Sera, 15 March 2002 and a special issue Il gusto del benessere (The taste of well-being) in La Repubblica, 1 April 2002.

11 There are competing claims that Italian food in general, and pizza and pasta in particular, are actually the preferred food of the British people: ‘A survey of 4,000 people has found that UK residents spend more money on Italian food than on Indian meals. Pasta and pizza accounts for almost half of the average person’s yearly expenditure on restaurants’ (Gray 2001, 3).
sions settle, Berlusconi was able to initiate a new theme of *faux pas* immedi-
ately thereafter:

They say that to be a great comedian you need to know your audience and have an impeccable sense of timing. From his performance at the EU sum-
mit in Brussels over the weekend, it would seem Italian Prime Minister and
current EU chair Silvio Berlusconi has neither. Attempting to lighten the
mood during tense discussions about voting weights and majority voting,
the former cruise ship crooner quipped: ‘Let’s talk about women and foot-
ball.’ Realizing that the audience included Finland’s female head of state,
Tarja Halonen, and seven female foreign ministers, Berlusconi asked:
‘What’s it like being a woman in a man’s world?’ (United Press International
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FOOD, NATIONAL IDENTITY, 
AND EMERGENT EUROPEANNESS 
AT THE EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

Stacia E. Zabusky

Abstract

In this paper, I explore how participants in European space science mission development at the European Space Agency became Europeans in the organizational contexts of working, talking, and, most especially, eating together. The analysis is based on data collected during a year of participant-observation fieldwork from 1988 to 1989 at the European Space Research and Technology Centre (ESTEC) in the Netherlands. In an ethnographic analysis, I show that in the everyday contexts of working together at ESTEC on European space science missions, a cultural process of Europeanization was taking place. In this process, food often served as both a technique and an icon of national identity (i.e., where there was food, there was bound to be national identity, and vice versa), thus making consumption an integral component in producing an emergent ‘Europeanness,’ especially in contexts of leisure or ritual activity linked to the organization.

In this paper, I explore how participants in European space science mission development became Europeans in the organizational contexts of working, talking, and, most especially, eating together at the European Space Research and Technology Centre (ESTEC). Designing and building space science missions requires a high level of expertise, personal commitment, and political support and funding, and in 1988, when I began a year of ethnographic fieldwork at ESTEC, the European Space

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1 Some of the ideas discussed in this paper appeared in a preliminary form in Zabusky 1998. My thanks to Donald Spector for his careful reading of the initial drafts of this paper.
Agency (ESA) had these in abundance. Indeed, at the time, ESA was widely regarded as the most successful post-war organization dedicated to European interests, at a time when the European Community had only just begun to look towards the development of a ‘Single Market.’ Europe very much was only a ‘virtual’ reality at that time (and, as Abélès 2000 argues, so remains). Although ESA was an explicitly ‘European’ organization, the scientists and engineers I knew at ESTEC were not much interested in Europe; in fact, these professional participants rejected the idea that Europe was at all relevant to their day-to-day work. It would seem then, that ‘becoming European’ (Wilson 2000, 139) was the least of their goals.

Despite their explicit denials, however, I would argue that in the process of working together on European space science missions, a cultural process of Europeanization (Borneman and Fowler 1997) was taking place which was not a matter of official pronouncements or institutions. Nor did it proceed as a linear progression from one kind of identity (national) to another (European), such that once it was achieved, the other identity was nullified. Nor did it represent a rationalization, through professionalization, of what some perceive as primordial identities. Europeanization is instead an iterative process in which both the rejection and acknowledgement of national identity together form part of the process of becoming European. In this paper, I will show how at ESTEC professional and national identities appeared and disappeared in the organizational flow of work and leisure. In the negotiation of these identities, food often served as both a technique and an icon of national identity (i.e., where there was food, there was bound to be national identity, and vice versa), thus making practices and discourses of consumption constitutive components in producing an emergent, if largely tacit, ‘Europeanness.’

Fieldwork in Europe before the EU

The European Space Agency is an intergovernmental organization dedicated to European cooperation in the fields of space technology and space science. The work of the Agency is carried out at four major organizational centers, of which ESTEC, located in the Netherlands, is the largest. In 1989, at the time of my research, thirteen nation-states were
full members of the Agency. In hiring ESA staff members, personnel policy included criteria of national distribution as well as professional expertise to insure a balanced distribution of staff across national lines. Once hired, these employees became members of the international staff, and no longer represented the interests of their nations of origin.

From September 1988 to August 1989, I carried out ethnographic fieldwork at ESTEC, where some 1,600 people worked on space technology design and development. The goal of my research was to understand how people (scientists and engineers in particular) cooperated in the complex organizational, technical, and European milieu that was space science mission development in ESA (see Zabusky 1995). During my stay at ESTEC, I was based in the Space Science Department, which comprised about 90 people, although during my time there I interacted with people in a variety of Departments, as well as with professionals from industry and universities elsewhere in Europe and the United States who were participants on individual missions. My primary informants were drawn from members of the European professional and technical staff of scientists, engineers, and technicians. I conducted fieldwork in

2 Full members were: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom; Finland was an associate member. As of 2004, Finland had become a full member, as had Portugal; Greece and Luxembourg now had the status of associate member but were expected to become full members soon. Note that this membership overlapped with, but was not the same as, EC membership at the time. ESA is not part of the EU administrative structure; it is a fully independent organization. Member states contribute funds to the overall administration of the Agency and send national political delegations to the main governing Council. The participation of these states is financially rewarded through the allocation of contracts to national industries for the development and production of space mission technology.

3 ESA space missions have included both commercially profitable missions, such as telecommunications satellites, and basic science research missions; it was the latter that were the focus of my study. Although it was basic science research that started ESA’s progenitor organization, at the time of my study such missions constituted only 10% of ESA’s budget.

4 There were other professional categories among the staff, including: computer programmers, publications editors, librarians, human resource managers, accountants, lawyers, and senior administrators, all with the requisite training and expertise, with hiring reflecting the national distribution policy. In addition, there were large numbers of support staff, including engineering technicians, equipment support personnel, secretaries, custodians, groundskeepers, and food service workers. The maintenance and food staff, who were recruited locally (and were primarily Dutch), were not actually ESA employees, but were hired by Dutch agencies that contracted with ESTEC to provide these local services. Technicians and secretaries, on the other hand, were, like
English; international staff members, although they were expected to be able to speak both of ESA’s two official working languages, English and French, in practice used English nearly exclusively in daily interactions.

Although the scientists preferred, when possible, to spend time on scientific research, comparatively speaking they spent little time in the laboratory or on research computations. Instead, for them daily work at ESTEC consisted primarily of administrative and diplomatic tasks related to negotiating, facilitating, and coordinating the interests and contributions of the many participants in ESA missions, most of whom did not work at ESTEC, or even for the Agency. This involved a range of mundane and sometimes tedious activities, such as reading a great deal of engineering documentation, drafting reports of various kinds, and, invariably, spending a great deal of time in meetings. It was this professional work that formed the focus of my research interest; I interviewed scientists and engineers about their work, and I spent considerable time in meetings, trying to follow the ins and outs of such things as mission design, spacecraft integration, and vibration testing. (For the results of this study, see in particular Zabusky 1992 and 1995).

Two dimensions of this fieldwork require further elaboration here before I pursue my analysis. First, it is clear from the preceding discussion that the focus in my original research was on cooperation as an organizational and political ideology and as an aspect of professional work practice. I was not interested in food, eating, consumption, or even, really, national identity, except insofar as this category of identity provided participants with resources in their work process. Yet as I wrote my book (Zabusky 1995), I could not help but notice that food and eating kept reappearing in my field notes as objects and moments with particular resonance, both for me and for the European scientists and engineers whose work I studied.5 Thus, my attention to food in this

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5 Although I did incorporate some of these findings into my book, for the most part, I come to this paper, with its special focus on food and eating, somewhat after the fact; for me, they are the ‘leftovers’ (Heath 1987 quoted in Wilson 2005, 4) rather than the ‘main course’ of my research in Europe. In other words, my attention to food is an ‘unintended consequence of research…which had other constellations of behaviour and cultural meanings as [its]… principal… focus…’ (Wilson 2005, 5, is here discussing the research on alcohol and drinking, but the point is relevant to this

the professional staff, recruited from all of the member states, but the majority of these staff were Dutch citizens. Because of the focus of my fieldwork project (scientific cooperation), I did not collect enough data to pursue a discussion of the experience of these local Dutch support staff who worked at ESTEC.
paper is a by-product of my focus on identities at work, rather than the other way around.

This kind of turn-around is, in fact, rather typical for anthropologists; ethnographers often find themselves exploring analytic topics that differ from their original intent. Indeed, the strength of ethnography as an inductive research method is its close attention to everyday life, so that, in this case, despite my analytic attention being elsewhere, I still made note of much of the details of ordinary life, in part because I could not be sure beforehand that I knew what would be important. This kind of experience is repeated over and over in ethnographic works. For instance, in a recent ethnography that examines, in part, the role played by food and consumption in the experience of (national) identity, Daniel Linger (2001) compares two restaurants, one frequented by Japanese-Brazilian migrants in Japan (Restaurante 51), the other (Dona Lica’s) frequented by the locals in the community in Brazil where he lived with his family in 1991. His comparison builds on comprehensive ethnographic notes collected in Japan on the one hand, to, on the other hand, a more impressionistic treatment of the restaurant in Brazil, where ‘at the time occupied as I was with research on politics and violence, Dona Lica’s was of no particular ethnographic interest to me’ (Linger 2001, 77).

The second point I want to emphasize is the historical context of the material I discuss here. In 1988, when I arrived at ESTEC, the EU was still the European Community, the EC, and that was what people talked about and thought about – that is, if they thought about it at all. Within anthropology, at least in the United States, no one at the time was much interested in European Community or wider integration processes. Indeed, as I prepared to conduct fieldwork at ESTEC, I could find few published ethnographic or anthropological accounts of EC institutions or issues.6

discussion of food). To say they are leftovers, however, does not mean they are less important. I use this metaphor simply to suggest that food was not the original focus of my research.

6 Today, the situation could not be more different, as I discuss below. In fact, my study proved to be part of a vanguard of projects focussing on such European issues, and more and more publications addressing European-wide and European institutional issues began to appear (one of the first with an explicitly European Community focus was Wilson and Smith 1993).
This lack of interest in EC issues also characterized the perspective of the European scientists and engineers working at ESTEC at this particular moment in time; for them, the EC was a topic that elicited yawns and shrugged shoulders, if it came up at all. Its economic machinations just did not seem that relevant or interesting to people, even to these people who were deeply engaged in a kind of European work. They saw their technical and scientific work as quite distinct from the bureaucratic and political work of the EC. Moreover, they were sceptical about the longevity of the EC, and doubted very much that it would ever expand or evolve into much of anything, even though the Single European Act had already entered into effect and the Commission was hard at work preparing for ‘1992’ and the Single Market. Of greater concern and interest to participants were the ongoing developments in the Soviet Union, as Gorbachev pushed through reforms of glasnost and perestroika, and the moribund U.S. space shuttle program, which had grounded European as well as American space missions. These were different times indeed. At that moment, no one could foresee that the EC would become the EU, that eleven countries would come to share a common currency (although the scientists liked this idea for the convenience it would represent), or that it would enlarge to incorporate countries of the former Soviet bloc.

The time-bound nature of my research provides some interesting challenges in the writing of this paper. After all, the data I analyse here were collected in a particular historical moment; the institutional, political, and economic parameters have all changed dramatically. Yet despite this historical context, the analysis I offer here is not a historical one per se; it is ethnographic, based on participant-observation fieldwork and interviews carried out with scientists and engineers engaged in the on-going work of space science mission development. My goal is not to explain something about how things have come to be the way they are today, or what historical forces figured in the development of national identity, European identity, or even to understand the role played by food in those developments. Instead, I seek to explicate something about social and cultural processes of Europeanization that were occurring at a particular moment of time, as I explore how food figures in people’s negotiations of diverse identities in a European arena.

7 At the time, the shuttle was grounded due to the Challenger explosion in 1986; as I write this in 2005, the shuttle is grounded again, but this time because of the disintegration of the Columbia in 2003.
Studying Europe and food in anthropology

Although when I set out to do fieldwork there was not much interest in Europeanization in anthropology, in the last ten years, cultural anthropologists have shown increased interest in the social dynamics and cultural values at work in European integration. Many of these scholars focus on the people working for and at the institutions of the European Union (Abélès, Bellier, and McDonald 1993; Abélès 1993; Bellier 1997; Holmes 2000, McDonald 1997; Shore 2000; Weiss and Wodak 2000; Wilson 1998), while others focus on the response to EU rules and regulations, by people in more local (national, regional, municipal) arenas (e.g., Jenkins 2000; Leitch 2003; Malaby 2002; Wilson 2000). One of the things that makes this kind of work challenging for anthropologists interested in cultural processes is the ‘symbolic deficit’ characterizing the EU (e.g., Abélès 2000, 37-38), a deficit noted not just by scholars, but by ordinary people as well. This perspective is one that views Europe as a domain of symbolic absence, in which the EU flag and anthem are so much political puffery without any real substance or significance. Ethnographers struggle to find ‘real’ identity or belonging in the European project, since ‘European-ness’ seems entirely artificial, an artifact of political and economic union. For instance, on the institutional level, Abélès (2000, 32-39) finds that for the professionals working at the European Commission, identity is not what is at issue; for them, Europe is ‘an ideal device’ connected to bureaucratic and political work. Europe, for these professionals, is not about ‘belonging’ so much as ‘efficiency and effectiveness’ while they work on regulations and procedures that bring Europe into being. Similarly, on the local level, Malaby (2002, 597) finds that what made Greek citizens feel ‘European’ after the introduction of the euro was a de-localized ‘competence in the intricacies of bureaucratic life.’ In neither case was there an appeal to territory, history, community, or any of the other more essentialist kinds of markers on which national identities have been built in the modern era. Instead, Europeanization appears as a largely a-cultural phenomenon, one composed of rationalized techniques or expertise. By this logic (among other logics), Europe could only ever be ‘official,’ never ‘meaningful.’

8 The notion that what is rational cannot also be cultural is itself a cultural idea, one found especially among scientists (see Travecek 1988 for her discussion of the ‘culture of no culture’ she found among American high energy physicists) and bureaucrats (e.g., Herzfeld 1992). In my book (Zabusky 1995), I also explore the way in which
A second challenge for anthropologists interested in Europeanization processes is that any talk about identity in Europe seems to lead inevitably back to *national* identity, and other forms of more local identities. The persistence of these other forms of identity suggests to many that European identity can not possibly emerge in such a context. Thus, stories (scholarly and not) abound about all the myriad ways in which people in different member (nation-) states resist the encroachment of Europe, or perhaps grudgingly accommodate to it; Europe appears in these stories in the form of rules, regulations, and laws implemented (by national governments to be sure) in response to EU-level treaties. What ethnographers seem to discover over and over is that Europe exists primarily as a threat and not a source of belonging; specifically, viewed from the vantage point of various local contexts (whether national, regional, or municipal), Europeanness threatens diversity with a one-size-fits-all kind of homogenization. Ironically, from a focus on the way in which nations were ‘invented’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), scholars increasingly find themselves accepting the integrity of such national identifications, as people use these to resist such political and bureaucratic encroachments.

This is where food enters the European scene; food policy has provided a rich arena to explore this kind of resistance to and accommodation of Europe by locals and nations. In fact, Leitch (2003, 441) argues that ‘deepening concerns in Europe over food policy are linked to questions of European identity.’ To illustrate this dynamic, Leitch shows how the imposition of European hygiene regulations on an artisanal food product prompted an extensive outcry in the Italian media, and a rallying of the Slow Food movement in defence of *lardo* (a form of pork fat produced in a central Italian town). Italians were incensed about this forcible attempt by ‘the European Union to regulate Italian food production and determine Italian eating habits’ (Leitch 2003, 445-6); in this forum, local *lardo* producers were regarded not as peasants ‘standing in the way of progress’ but instead as ‘a quintessential modern subject, a holder par excellence of national heritage’ (Leitch 2003, 447). The local became the national in this debate pitched against a looming, supranational force; in this way, people articulated their concerns that the eradication of local variety would lead to a tasteless, if healthy, blandness.

Rationality serves as a cultural value for scientists and engineers at ESTEC, and indeed, for modernity and its subjects in general.
In this case, a locally-made food product came to stand in for the nation; to eat *lardo*, to protect its producers, was to take a stand for Italian custom and culture. This appropriation of local and regional specialties into the umbrella of the nation is a process that has been and is being repeated over and over, not only in Europe but outside it, in a variety of non-Western, post-colonial contexts as well (see for example Appadurai 1988; Klopfer 1993; Pilcher 1996). Significantly, too, although in internal contexts, these foods have often been characterized as ‘quaint’ relics of regional custom now superseded by the nation-state, in the transnational context of Europeanization, they instead come to represent modernity itself. As Leitch suggests, part of being modern is having a national identity, and part of the way we distinguish others is by the (national) foods they eat. Richard Wilk (1999, 248), whose work focuses on the development of Belizean national identity, makes much the same point when he argues that in this era of globalization, ‘national identity is essential costume’; it is, as it were, the mark of membership in modernity. Wilk shows how Belizeans, in their drive to be considered truly modern actors in the world, produced a national cuisine in less than 20 years, with the clear understanding that in order to participate as legitimate, equal players in the global arena, they needed to have such icons of nationality to trade in the ‘cultural supermarket’ (Mathews 2000) of identities. In both these cases, as in so many others, the national has emerged as a strong force of identification primarily in the context of a kind of global awareness that is now part of everyone’s experience as they explore the world through television and mass media, through the internet, and through travel (whether tourism or migration). In this arena, we increasingly recognize and communicate with each other through icons of national identities, including especially those of food and cuisine.

Yet as I suggested above, national identities are not the only kind to circulate in the European arena, let alone the global arena, where bureaucratic and institutional identities have significant value as well. What is significant for our purposes here is that food is not connected to these other kinds of identities. Although Leitch (2003, 442) argues that ‘food and identity are becoming like the ‘Euro,’ a single common discursive currency through which to debate Europeanness…’, I do not think that food and the Euro are equivalent symbolic markers, even if they allow people to debate about the same kinds of things. This is because the
'euro,' as Malaby (2005) argues, is linked to ideas about professional competence and bureaucratic rationality, and as such offers a competing kind of discourse to that offered by food. Whereas expertise is linked to an open Europe in its transnational, ‘technocratic’ guise, food instead forms part of the corpus of ‘essentializing’ characteristics that confine people in singular, often national, identities. And because, as Mintz (2002, 102) indicates, ‘Next to breathing, eating is perhaps the most essential of all human activities, and one with which much of social life is entwined,’ it is thus no surprise to discover that, at ESTEC, national identity and food went hand in hand.

In the analysis I offer here, I show how national identity appears and disappears in the space of everyday Europe that characterizes organizational life at ESTEC. In this space, professional identity seems to trump national identity over and over again. What is particularly noteworthy about the fluid processes of working together at ESTEC, however, is that Europe emerges as one possible identity of belonging, and not simply as an official ideology to be resisted or denied. Thus, at a time when people were not yet talking explicitly about ‘globalization,’ at a time before the World Wide Web, before the widespread use of e-mail, before the ubiquitous use of cell phones, and at a time before the expansion of the European Community (let alone the Union) was even on the horizon, Europe nonetheless did make an appearance as a meaningful identity, even if only in particular social circumstances.

My analysis in this paper explores three different emergent Europes: an official one, an everyday one, and a ritual one. I begin the ethnographic analysis with the ‘official Europe’ that provided the contextualizing ideology and structure for ESA as an organization. This Europe was much on display at the time of my research, which fortuitously occurred during the 25th Anniversary Jubilee year of ESA’s founding. This official Europe offers not a European nation of belonging, but instead a political Europe founded on and through expertise. In contrast to this official Europe, I offer an ethnographic analysis of the everyday Europe that was implicit in organizational life. This Europe was the medium of discourse and practice in the organizational contexts of work and leisure at ESTEC. At work, Europe was assumed and then ignored even as it made possible the work itself. At leisure, Europe emerged in and through nations, especially as people ate together. In the last section
of the paper, I reveal a final alternative vision of Europe, one not yet fully realized, but emergent in the symbolic space of ritual.

**Official Europe: ESA, Europe, and expertise**

Although much of the history of the founding of European cooperative efforts in space reads like a manual for red-tape (lists of dates, committees, congresses, politicians, treaties and so on; see Longdon and Guyenne 1984), the myth of that origin begins, romantically enough, with a walk in Paris’s Luxembourg Gardens, during which a French and an Italian professor discussed the possibility of ‘collaborating on artificial Earth satellites’ (Battrick 1984, 20). This conversation, which took place in August 1959, was followed by another, equally informal discussion during a gathering in Nice in 1960, when ‘during a lunch break’ one of the assembled scientists turned to his colleagues and said: ‘Let’s do something in Europe’ (ESA 1989, 36). Since the governments of Europe were, at this same time, themselves hard at work forging new and firm alliances and interdependencies, scientists’ desire to create their own alliance found fertile ground in the political-economic climate of the 1950s and 1960s. In this way, science and the idea of a united and peaceful Europe mingled from the very beginning in the establishment of a European space agency.\(^9\)

\(^9\) The following account of the history of ESA is drawn exclusively from published materials available around the time of my research, since that is the contextualizing rhetoric that was relevant to participants’ practices. For readers interested in more recent publications about ESA’s history, consult the ESA History Project, which began in 1990, under the guidance of three historians of science (John Krige, Arturo Russo, and Michelangelo de Maria, the last replaced in 1993 by Lorenza Sebesta). This Project has produced many reports concerning different aspects of the history of ESA and the history of space programs in individual European states as well (see Reuter and Oberlechner 2004 for more information).

\(^10\) Activities in space were still in their infancy in the 1950s, when nuclear research was viewed as being much more significant to national security; this perspective led to the establishment of another pan-European institution, CERN in Geneva, Switzerland, in the early 1950s (Dickson 1987). The Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1957 changed all that; although this event did not engender mass hysteria in Europe, as it did in the United States, it undoubtedly played a not insignificant role in bringing a sense of urgency to developing European efforts to compete in space. Although the regional cooperative efforts focused on peaceful and commercial applications, as ESA’s Convention stipulates, the military implications of space research and development were not lost on all observers, and may have influenced the decisions by European governments to participate in joint space endeavours. (After all, basic research in nuclear physics also had no direct applicability to military projects, but the lessons of WWII...
Significantly, in ESA’s mythology, it was the scientists who took the initiative, rather than the politicians, and it was their dreams that motivated the practical and political effort to create a European organization. Dreams, of course, are not enough, and the spark of an idea (during a break from lunch, I should point out) led finally to the necessary, if ponderous, practicalities of drafting protocols and establishing committees to develop organizational guidelines. This process finally culminated in 1964 with the signing of the convention forming the European Space Research Organisation (ESRO), a dedicated science organization.  

Things went well enough for a number of years, with many successful basic research missions built and launched, and many scientific papers written and published. Gradually, the explicit goal of doing something ‘in Europe’ to build unity rather than enmity out of the ashes of WWII gave ground to more economic and pragmatic goals of improving economic competitiveness in Europe. As the potential economic benefits of space technology became increasingly apparent, Member States advocated an expansion of ESRO’s mandate, downplaying basic science programs and instead emphasizing more practical endeavours, such as remote sensing, communications, and meteorological satellites. An amended convention, produced in 1975, established the European Space Agency in its current institutional form, with its focus on applications missions and heavy launcher development.

By 1989, ESA was able to celebrate its undeniable success as a European organization on the occasion of its 25th anniversary (dating not from the 1975 convention, but from the 1964 treaty establishing ESRO). To recognize this landmark, a special logo marked publications and other public documents and materials during this 25th year, proclaiming ‘To prepare for the 21st century – 25 years of European cooperation in space.’ The Jubilee was also the occasion for a variety of celebrations, beginning with a major convocation held for the VIPs of the Agency and leading political, scientific, and industrial figures in Europe, an event which took place at Paris Headquarters in April (local ESA sites also

had not been lost in that regard either.) Still, it is remarkable that the threat of Soviet (and a competing U.S.) domination in space does not figure in this retelling of ESA’s history by those who were there at the outset.

11 ESRO’s projected research programs included sounding rocket missions, small satellites in near-earth orbits, small space probes, and large satellites and large space probes. The organization, with its complement of engineers, scientists, and technicians, was to build the satellites itself.
organized celebrations; below I will discuss ESTEC’s festivities in more detail). The convocation provided an opportunity for leaders in European politics, industry, and science to portray the ‘Europeanizing’ role that ESA had played, and it was widely covered in the European media; it was also broadcast to all the other ESA sites, including ESTEC, so that all staff members could feel as if they were part of this important event.\(^{12}\) The speeches were collected in an edition of the *ESA Bulletin*; in his Foreword to this edition, Reimar Lüst, Director General of ESA in 1989, emphasized the explicit connection of ESA’s technical work to the ‘project’ of Europe: ‘That all of this [success] has been achieved through the united efforts of nations and cultures long-split by enmity and suspicion is sometimes forgotten, yet European space ventures have shown just how barriers can be lowered in pursuit of peaceful objectives’ (Lüst 1989, 7). Part of the ‘Europeanizing’ effect of ESA, then, seemed to be the successful transcending of the political and cultural boundaries of nations in the production of economic competitiveness and space technology.

Europe’s political and industrial leaders also emphasized the way in which ESA served as an instrument of Europeanization. Germany’s Chancellor Helmut Kohl announced that ‘The joint European conquest and utilisation of space also strengthens the European identity, and this makes ESA’s activities a major factor in building Europe as a political entity. ... European unity is more than a matter of declarations. It must also prove itself in a field like space, which is so important for the future’ (ESA 1989, 20). France’s President Mitterand, too, echoed a similar theme: ‘What will bind Europe together will be the development of science in association with culture; in short, all the functions of the mind. Seen from space, Europe is showing the way forward by its actions’ (ESA 1989, 28). And Pher Gyllenhammar, CEO of Volvo, asserted: ‘When we hear the frequent question ‘Does European cooperation

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\(^{12}\) In fact, however, everyone did not feel included, and the televised event (which staff members did not all have equal permission to observe) was experienced, by my informants at least, as a sop extended to the rabble. At lunch there was much discussion of who was actually invited to this event, and who not. The scientists in particular were dismayed that Headquarters staff members of the same administrative level as the Space Science Department Division Heads were invited to be present at this event, while their Division Heads were not invited to attend. They saw this as a symbolic statement of the low value placed on science and scientists in the organizational ethos of ESA (see Zabusky 1992).
work?, we can now answer in three words: ‘European Space Agency’. We have an incontestable success on our hands … [and] we have to spread the good news as part of our efforts to capitalise on success; to bring more success….’ (ESA 1989, 12-13).

In this official rhetoric, Europe appears to have been achieved. Although the three quotations cited above reveal three different versions of this official Europe – a political Europe, a Cartesian Europe, and an economic Europe – in each case, the rhetoric emphasizes expertise as the key ingredient. It is expertise (or competence) that is propelling Europe into the future, that has indeed already materialized Europe before everyone’s eyes. As the speakers at the Jubilee celebrations made clear, ESA’s major contribution to Europeanization was to produce tangible artifacts – in this case, space satellites and heavy launchers – that instantiated European action. Thus, it was the pragmatic application of expertise that made official Europe possible; however, this official Europe was a Europe of things and institutions rather than people.13 To put the people back into the picture, I turn now to a consideration of everyday life at ESTEC.

13 The emphasis on expertise as the route to Europe matches what Abélès (2000, 39) refers to as the ‘philosophy of action’ that motivates those working in and for the European Commission. In this ‘philosophy,’ the goal is to get stuff done; because the outcome is less significant than the action itself, this philosophy provides a most effective ‘method’ (Abélès 2000) for imagining Europe even while simultaneously building it (Bellier and Wilson 2000). Abélès further argues that a philosophy of action is one in which ‘the symbolic dimension has no place’ (Abélès 2000, 39). In support of his claim, he notes how, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the European Parliament, there was little ceremony; instead, there were ‘brief speeches from most of the officials…[but] no particular splendour and none of the gestures and signs which give to rituals their power of evocation.’ For Abélès, this points to the ‘disenchanted’ quality of Europe in the eyes of politicians and bureaucrats; Europe, thus, lacks substance and meaning, and exists only as a technique.

In the case of ESA’s 25th anniversary celebration, however, there were plenty of ‘gestures and signs’ that went beyond speechifying and that had symbolic resonance, especially when it came to ‘imagining Europe’ (Bellier and Wilson 2000). It is true, nonetheless, that their form was very pared down and spare compared to, say, the elaborate ritual encrustations that are part of religious observances such as mass in the Catholic Church, or that adhere to national anniversary celebrations such as Bastille Day in France. But this is not, I would argue, a problem of ‘European Union’; it is part of the more general cultural process of modernity (for a discussion of the significance of this ‘stripped down’ kind of cultural form as a component of modernity, see the Epilogue of Zabusky 1995).
Everyday Europe: Work, leisure, and national identity at ESTEC

Before I left ESTEC in 1989, I gave a talk to about 70 scientists and engineers in which I shared with them my very preliminary findings about European cooperation in space science, the explicit topic of my field research. I described to the audience how I had found that people never talked about their work in terms of national identity; much more important were the distinctions they drew between different occupations. In fact, it seemed to me at the time that the key relationship in this process of cooperation was that between scientists and engineers; these professional identities and the practices associated with them were an integral part of producing space science missions. I described how, when discussing the circumstances of their work, participants identified others and themselves according to their domains of expertise, making statements such as: ‘scientists are crazy dreamers,’ or ‘engineers don’t know how to look at the big picture,’ or ‘technical people just don’t understand how things really work’ (see Zabusky 1992). I ended this presentation with an image of Don Quixote (the scientist) tilting at a space satellite orbiting overhead, while Sancho Panza (the engineer) rode at his side, to provide a visual association of the roles these social actors played vis à vis each other. Scientists, engineers, technical people – these were identities that resonated powerfully with participants, and provided participants with a language for talking about work and the important, if frustrating, dynamics of cooperation.

At the end, a few people objected to the specific characterizations I outlined (‘we scientists aren’t dreamers’ argued one space scientist indignant), while others confirmed my analysis and gave me more examples to illustrate those claims. In retrospect, I found the most interesting comments to be from those who were disappointed in the content of my talk because of everything that I left out. That is, some participants expressed to me their expectation going in that I would be discussing ‘nationality,’ and they were sorry that I had not given any examples of the kinds of things that ‘the French,’ ‘the Germans,’ and ‘the Italians’ do. They had been looking forward to some ‘juicy’ examples of the kinds of problems and missteps that arise due to the interference of these kinds of cultural traits. I had the sense that they had hoped, even as they feared, that I would indulge in a kind of gossip, in which I would expose the national characteristics and customs that people exhibit, so everyone could have a good laugh. To these critics, I reiterated my observation that national
identity just did not seem to be an important or relevant factor in social interaction.

As I later realized, however, it was not correct to say that national identity was irrelevant; it was just that people did not, and could not, foreground national differences in work contexts – to do so would be highly inappropriate. The ‘embodied’ and essentialized aspects of national identity were certainly present – in the different accents and different competence with the common language of English, in different styles of dress, styles of presentation, and habits of comportment. And clearly people were aware of such differences even during meetings; the critical point here is that they could not acknowledge this awareness in a public way.

For instance, several times I had the experience, during a seminar or a meeting, of someone leaning over to me to comment *sotto voce* on the nationality of the speaker who stood at the front of the room. On one occasion, during a series of presentations, in English, by engineers from a French aerospace company, an Italian scientist leaned over to me and whispered: ‘it is always impossible to understand the French; they have the worst accents.’ On another occasion, I was at a meeting at which a visiting American scientist, a collaborator on the mission, gave a long presentation. During a coffee break, I asked an English scientist what she had thought of this scientist’s presentation. She answered ‘we all had to laugh, it was so American.’ But, she went on to explain, it just was not ‘honourable’ to bring up such distinctions of nationality in public. So it was that national identity was repeatedly repressed and cleaned up for work (for the significance of this kind of cleaning as a rite of purification, see Zabusky 1995).

But people did more than work at ESTEC; there were also places and times when people took a break from work, and in fact I spent much of my time at ESTEC engaged in informal, friendly conversation, usually in the break room or the cafeteria, although also on the bus and even in visits to restaurants. It was in these kinds of interactions, even the ones taking place on site at ESTEC, that national identity was asserted, assessed, and acknowledged. Thus, professional and national identities were, in fact, equally present at ESTEC, but they were, to some degree, mutually exclusive. Professional identities emerged in contexts of work; national identities emerged primarily in contexts of leisure; in each con-
text, the other identity was subsumed, dismissed, or denied (Zabusky 2000).

This dichotomization of work and leisure is characteristic of modernity (Linger 2001; Frykman and Löfgren 1987), and as Linger shows, it affects both the quality of time and the quality of selves. Linger (2001, 74) argues that whereas work is an arena for conformity, standardization, and rationalization of self, ‘at play, one was permitted to indulge idiosyncratic fantasies, tastes, and pleasures. … [and] In these postmodern times, playful self-affirmation acquires a national twist.’ This ‘nationalization’ of leisure time and space especially characterizes the experience of migrants of all kinds, including professional expatriates, for whom national identities are experienced in a context of displacement.

For the international staff at ESTEC, every moment of play was, by definition, a ‘transnational leisure scene’ (Linger 2001) and it is thus no surprise to find that a corresponding kind of self-consciousness about national identity was part of social interaction and experience. What is particularly significant, I think, is that at ESTEC, the leisure contexts in which I found national identity emerging were almost entirely constructed around eating – over coffee and biscuits during a morning break, or during lunch in the cafeteria, or while eating apple cake at a party in one of the offices or laboratories. Eating together made possible both discursive and material exchanges of national identity; it also made possible the discursive and physical production of a latent Europeanness. This was, in so many ways, the practice of Europeanization, enshrined not in artifacts but pursued in everyday life.

_Eating (with) each other at ESTEC: Consuming national identity at lunch_  
As anthropologists have long pointed out, ‘food events encode and regulate key social relations’ (Counihan and Van Esterik 1997, 3); moreover, it is by now commonplace to observe that food items can serve as symbols of national identity (e.g., Appadurai 1988; Fenby 1999, 80-94;

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14 In his book, Linger (2001, 75) explores how a Brazilian restaurant in Japan serves as ‘a transnational leisure scene,’ one which Brazilian migrants enter ‘not just to eat, as they might in Brazil, but to eat Brazil – to engage in the self-conscious reaffirmation and reformulation of their identities as displaced Brazilians.’ See also Mankekar 2002 for a discussion of shopping, food, and the development of ethnic and transnational identities.

15 The discussion in this section draws on the analysis I provide of lunchtime conversations and national identity in Zabusky 2000.
Raviv 2003). In the cafeteria at ESTEC, the ‘key’ relationships were those determined by professional work on the one hand, and by national identity on the other. These social relationships were expressed in the social arrangements of commensality at lunch: some people sat at what people called ‘nationality tables,’ exclusive groups of French, Italians, Spanish, Germans, Swedes, and so on, sitting together over lunch, while others sat at what I have called ‘professional tables,’ people sitting together with their professional colleagues, either those from the same Department, or else those working on the same mission. Significantly, for most people it was the ‘professional tables’ which represented the norm (which is why they remained ‘unremarkable’ and thus unnamed by participants). This reflects the dominant view that ESTEC is, primarily, a space of work and not of leisure, even if there are moments during the day when people might ‘take a break.’

Lunch was almost a liminal time, taking place at work and yet not about or for work. At lunch, categories of work and leisure mingled ambiguously. Thus, often when people pointed out the nationality tables, it was with disapproval. They viewed the ‘nationality tables’ with distaste in part because of the widely shared conviction that this was an inappropriate criterion to use in distinguishing people at ESTEC, which was primarily a site of work; thus, to focus on and privilege national identity in this way transgressed the normative view that national identity did not, even should not, matter. Professional tables, by contrast, gave people the opportunity to interact informally, and they took pleasure in the fact that here, in a space where work details did not have to dominate discourse or define relationships – in other words, in a liminal space where people could potentially be released from their professional status obligations – people from different countries elected to sit together and to interact through selves released from professional roles, even as those remained the cultural categories that defined the relationships at the table. Thus, an explicitly ‘non-national’ space was privileged at the professional tables; at the same time, what people called attention to at these tables was the multiple nationalities that were present. Thus, it might be more accurate to describe these not as professional but as ‘European’ tables in distinction to ‘nationality’ tables, although this Europeanness was largely latent and not explicit for participants.

I never sat at a ‘nationality table’; I could not, by definition, since my own ‘national identity’ would by definition exclude me. I always sat at
these ‘European’ tables, where conversation, as I suggested, often focused on nations and national identity. These conversations unfolded in a familiar and well-worn pattern, as participants traded information about the ‘cultural’ variations among European nation-states in such things as attitudes towards electoral politics, driving laws and styles, or the ever popular coffee-drinking customs. These conversations took the form of a mutual exchange in which each member of the table (including me) was an equal and independent contributor to the conversation. In this way, participants came to share the same general, if superficial, knowledge about each other. Simultaneously, they also bound themselves together through relationships of exchange, such that in the very act of trading information they simultaneously established a common ground. In a sense, it was not so much the contrasts that emerged as significant, but instead the experience of talking together about the same things that was the pre-eminent experience of such conversations ‘about’ nationality. This was Europeanization in practice, a largely non-reflexive exercise in a discursive crossing of boundaries, as participants constructed a collectivity, one that incorporated but also transcended the distinctions of national identity.

Sometimes, however, this transcendent product did become an object of reflection, and became explicitly European. In the production of this identity I often played a role, when a conversation about diversities in Europe mutated into one about the unity of Europe in opposition to the singular other that I represented: the American. This ‘othering’ was a significant mechanism by which participants engaged in a discursive effort to make Europe over lunch. Suddenly, ‘European’ approximated a national identity in its own right, commensurate with ‘American’, a monolithic category silencing the diversity so significant only moments before. And yet, at the same time, within this monolith, the diversity of European national identities still bubbled beneath the surface. In Europe, my conversation partners would argue insistently, you are always encountering differences; in the words of one scientist: ‘it is stimulating and fun to have this possibility of experiencing difference [when traveling in Europe].’ It was this ‘seductiveness of variety’ (Appadurai 1988) that gave pleasure to my colleagues at the table. It was also a pleasure that, they were convinced, was not available to people working (and living) in nationally-based workplaces, or for that matter, to their colleagues sitting at ‘nationality’ tables where everyone was ‘the same.’
Who one ate with, thus, said something about who one was, and also provided routine discursive opportunities for Europeanization (marking diversity, discovering unity). At the same time, what one ate also provided opportunities to explore national identity in material form. The cafeteria made an effort to cater to the wide variety of tastes and food habits that the staff at ESTEC brought to their daily meals. Thus, staff members had many resources with which they could materialize their national identities, and so assert them to others. I felt a supreme self-consciousness the first several times that I ate with colleagues in the cafeteria, and worried about my food choices and what they would reveal about who I was, as an American in a European environment, as a woman in a mostly male environment, and as a student in a professional environment – there were many identities that I could signal through the food that I ate (Mintz 2002).\(^\text{16}\) In an effort not to make too egregious a faux pas, I carefully observed the choices others made, intent on conforming to the norm. But there was no ESTEC norm; or perhaps more accurately, the ESTEC norm was, in fact, for people to conform to the expectations of others – people’s food choices largely fell into fairly (stereo-)typical national categories: one French scientist always sat down with a hot entree and a small bottle of red wine; the Dutch engineer always ate a sandwich with a glass of milk; the German scientist nearly

\(^{16}\) I experienced this self-consciousness repeatedly in different venues. For instance, early in my research I had occasion to attend an out-of-town meeting in Bruges (Belgium) with ESTEC scientists. The scientists had let me know, in no uncertain terms, that Belgium’s cuisine is first-rate, especially in contrast with the apparent absence of ‘cuisine’ in the Netherlands, and so I looked forward to eating with them at one of the many elegant restaurants in this medieval town. As I opened the menu that first night, my eyes widened, not at the succulent menu choices, but at the exorbitant menu prices, in which even the appetizers cost more than my hotel, which was already a strain on my meager graduate student budget. One of the senior scientists, no doubt seeing the expression on my face, leaned over and said that of course, since I was a guest at ESTEC, they would treat me to dinner that night. I thanked him profusely, and sought to order the cheapest thing I could see, so as not to place an undue burden on the scientists’ hospitality. This complex social situation thus affirmed my identity as a student, rather low in the hierarchy. Moreover, by making this meal a gift to me, they reinforced my subordinate status and placed me in their debt, one which I would struggle to repay over the ensuing months. There was also a significant gendered dimension to this exchange, as my vulnerability also seemed linked to my anomalous status as a woman in a male-dominated environment (although at dinner on this evening, the senior scientist was accompanied by his wife).
always drank beer with his lunch. Our tastes seemed stubbornly set in particular national ways.\textsuperscript{17}

Part of the routine at lunch was drinking coffee at the end of the meal. Typically, one person would offer to buy coffees for everyone at the table, and as we placed our orders, it became apparent that coffee choices, too, provided people with opportunities to assert national identities. Now what mattered was whether one ordered espresso or not, whether one asked for coffee with milk or not, or whether, instead, one wanted tea. Invariably, conversation would turn to a discussion of these coffee choices, as people would comment on each others’ selections, often mockingly (‘the French never drink milk in their coffee after lunch’; ‘Germans don’t like cappuccino’; ‘why do Americans like their coffee as thin as water?’). Once, an Italian scientist and I went over to the coffee bar to order coffee; he ordered a \textit{macchiato}, something that was not even listed on the menu by the cash register.\textsuperscript{18} I expressed my bewilderment, and he smiled condescendingly and said, ‘oh, this is something only Italians know how to order’; the implication was, furthermore, that only Italians had the sophisticated ‘taste’ for this kind of coffee. I implicitly endorsed this view as I drank my regular coffee with cream, a standard, unremarkable choice.

As I have suggested, however, because there were many varieties of food available, there was also the opportunity at ESTEC to consume what somebody else was. Had I desired, I could have, for instance, bravely sampled a \textit{macchiato}, and in so doing say something simultaneously about who I am, who others are, and who we might become. These kinds of opportunities to mix and match tastes were always available, but sometimes a special event would foreground this possibility. For instance, from time to time, the catering company that ran the cafeteria offered a ‘nationalities’ festival, when the foods and customs of selected nations were celebrated. Once during my stay, the cafeteria celebrated Scandinavia, each day focussing on the cuisine of a different Scandinavian member state (Norway, Sweden, and Denmark). During this week, food and the entire ambiance of the cafeteria expressed the

\textsuperscript{17} My choice was often salad (marking me both as a woman and as an American).

\textsuperscript{18} In order to appreciate this example, it is important to remember again the temporal context of this fieldwork. I was drinking coffee with these colleagues at a time before Starbucks had spread \textit{macchiatos} around the world and made \textit{latte} a household word.
distinctiveness of national identity. There were appropriate ‘traditional’ decorations, performance by music and dance groups in ‘native’ costume, and small kiosks that displayed Scandinavian arts and crafts and provided information about travel to Scandinavia. The people I sat with at lunch (including, among others, a Norwegian and a Swedish scientist) remarked on the food, exposing their national identities through their familiarity with or ignorance of particular delicacies. There was good-natured joking about some of the offerings, as people with other national tastes recoiled in distaste at the thought of consuming some of the items that, for the Scandinavian nationals in question, were perfectly ordinary.

On this occasion, people took the opportunity to do more than talk about food, however; some took the opportunity to try on their colleagues’ national identities by sharing their ‘tastes’ for certain foods and actually ingesting some of these unfamiliar items. For the most part, participants’ primary experience seemed to be of ‘national’ identity, their awareness of difference somaticized through the taste of different foods. But this very sampling was significant; as Meigs (1997, 103) points out, ‘eating, the sharing of food, is a means by which to establish physical commingling, interdependence, and oneness… [it is] a way of establishing a physical unity… with one’s fellow humans.’ In this way, sharing others’ foods was a way to take into oneself others’ identities, and so to break down the boundaries between national identities and national tastes. There could be no more effective way, it seems, to produce a shared European identity than through this ‘physical commingling.’

Between official and everyday Europe: The Fun Run and ritual Europe
For the most part, in the routines of organizational life, the official Europe kept its distance from the everyday Europe, and within the everyday Europe, work and leisure kept professional and national identities apart. The boundaries between these different identities were marked by the discourse and practice of participants, and food and consumption played key rules in maintaining these boundaries. But during ESA’s 25th Jubilee

19 It is important to point out that this embracing of diversity (of foods as of customs) has another dimension, and that is the valorization of ‘sophistication.’ In other words, to be able to enjoy and understand all these different tastes is itself a marker of elite status, of one’s cosmopolitan, non-parochial orientation in the world. It is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this paper to delve into this matter further. See also Appadurai 1988, Bourdieu 1984, and Wilk 1999 for further considerations of the links between national identities, catholic taste(s), and elite status.
festivities, ESTEC organized a series of events that provided a different kind of space in which people could engage with these identities and these Europes. In this section, I will explore an organizational ritual in which the boundaries between the three Europes (official, national, and professional) collapsed, affording participants an opportunity to recognize self-consciously that they were ‘becoming European’.

In the symbolic world of ritual, the social world in which people live out their everyday lives is simultaneously suspended and condensed in a sacred space in which the normative rules do not apply, or at least, in which they are subjected to question. In this symbolic performance of core cultural values, rituals provide occasions for re-orienting participants through the unusual, sometimes frightening, sometimes playful, recombination of symbolic elements to provoke reflection on what people otherwise take for granted (Norget 2000).

Following the Paris convocation, each ESA site organized its own Jubilee festivities. Those at ESTEC occurred during the last week of June, in two days of activities which ended a week full of events not related specifically to the celebration, yet clearly organized with the intent to take advantage of the excitement surrounding the anniversary. As the glossy edition of the estec news, the in-house newsletter, announced – ‘26 June / 1 July 1989: What a week! // 26 juin / 1er juillet 1989: Quelle semaine!’ The events at ESTEC included:

– the inauguration of the new Satellite Communications Building
– the inauguration of the new office and conference Centre (which included a visit by the Dutch princess’s husband)
– a two-day meeting of the ESA Council of political representatives from the Member States (this meeting of the governing body of ESA was usually held in The Hague)
– a visit to ESTEC by European high-school students who had won an essay-writing competition organized by the Scientific Directorate on ‘Astronomy from Space’ (one winner was chosen from each member state)
– a Fun Run relay race and award reception
– an evening cabaret at which ESTEC staff members and their families performed musical and dramatic numbers, with food and drink provided
– an International Food Festival accompanied by demonstrations of diverse sports and other activities by members of the ESTEC staff sports and cultural clubs
– the ESA Silver Jubilee Party, held on the ESTEC site, a fancy buffet and dancing affair lasting from 8pm until 4am, and free for all staff members and their families.
These festivities combined formal, more official, events (e.g., the first four on the list, including the Council meeting and the building inaugurations), with more informal, local ones. The formal events emphasized the political and bureaucratic structures through which ESA operated, with invitations and participation restricted to people high up in state and organizational hierarchies. They also emphasized progress (‘to prepare for the 21st century’) through new buildings, new projects, and new policies. These events for the staff members I knew, represented the ideology of ‘European cooperation’ that they typically rejected as inimical to their own work; this was the official Europe that preoccupied states and industries, one that they found constrained their own efforts at working together.

It was, then, the local, informal events, that provided ESTEC staff members with opportunities for expressing their own, more irreverent, take on what was worth celebrating about ESA. These informal events took the form of organizational rituals, in which people played with the bureaucracy and politics that, in work contexts, they experienced as oppressive and restrictive. In this playful ritual space that was neither precisely work nor precisely leisure, the dual idioms of professional and national identity served as a symbolic means by which people sought to achieve some measure of control over these constraining structures. Moreover, in these local festivities, food and drink played key roles, demonstrating again that food is always ‘good to think’ and not just ‘good to eat’ (Levi Strauss 1963), especially when it comes to national identity. In the remainder of this paper, I focus on the Fun Run, one of these ritual encounters when the boundaries between leisure and work, so assiduously marked in the routines of everyday life, momentarily collapsed.

The Fun Run was an ESTEC-wide event, a relay race organized to promote good health and good staff relations. Although the Fun Run was a twice-yearly event, the one held at the end of June 1989, not long before my departure from the field, was special because it took place as part of the Silver Jubilee festivities. The Run was organized by the Triathlon Club, one of the staff clubs at ESTEC, for the benefit of the entire organization. Although it appeared to provide a ‘leisure’ context (where one would expect to find food and national identity as key elements), the event subverted this contextualization in multiple ways. For one thing, the Fun Run was scheduled to take place in the mid-after-
noon, before the official end of the work day, thus highlighting a tension between work and leisure in the event itself. Another indication of the seriousness of this event was given by the Director of ESTEC himself. About two hours before the Fun Run was to begin, as I was sitting with colleagues at lunch in the Canteen, the Director announced over the PA system that those staff members who wanted to observe the Fun Run and cheer on their colleagues were excused from work as of 2pm; staff members not running and not wishing to observe were also free to leave work early, at 3pm. However, he added, the road around ESTEC would be blocked to car traffic as of 2pm. This announcement brought hoots of laughter from those seated around me in the cafeteria, as they recognized the not-so-subtle pressure either to participate in this community effort or else to continue working, since either way, staff members would be trapped on site.

Still, this was clearly a different kind of context, distinct from either everyday work or everyday leisure. After all, the community invited to participate was not limited to staff members; in this event, family members were invited to join in as well. Family never entered the work environment during the day, and yet on this occasion, many spouses and children did turn out, some to run, others simply to cheer on the runners. This emphasis on inclusiveness was made clear in the flyer advertising the event: ‘For those who do not yet know: the Fun-Run is a fitness event in which EVERYBODY can participate irrespective of his/her running speed and fitness. The Fun-Run is open to ESTEC staff, contractors and their families. The teams can be division teams, section teams, project teams or family teams.’

Two things are worth noting about this announcement. First, it was immediately clear that, of the possible categories for organizing a team, nationality was conspicuous by its absence. It was, as always in ESTEC contexts, just not ‘honourable’ to call attention to national identity, at least publicly or explicitly. This lack highlighted the way in which this event was an organizational ritual, and as such more explicitly connected to the official context of ‘European cooperation in space’ and to the ‘work’ context of daily organizational practice, more than a ‘leisure’ one. Second, this announcement suggested that expertise was not required to join a team; being able to run multiple laps at a fast time was not a criterion for participation. Here, we see the usual ‘work’ values turned upside down, as people without any professional competence were encouraged
to run (and run they did, or at least they walked, sometimes limping quite slowly for the last stretch).

As indicated, the Fun Run was a relay race, in which the goal was for each team to run as many laps around the main buildings of ESTEC as possible in one hour’s time (one lap was 1.5 km). A team had to have at least three members, but there was no maximum limit, and some teams had as many as ten; the rules stipulated that each member had to run at least one lap, but others could run as many as they were able. There was certainly a winner in this event – it was a race after all – but the emphasis was not only on which team was the most expert. The emphasis was on play – again turning to the announcement flyer, the organizers emphasized especially the creative dimension of the event: ‘Teams who, in any way, can show that they meet the theme [of 25 years of ESA] through remarkable achievements, spectacular appearances or in any other way, stand the best chance for receiving any of the judges’ cups and prizes.’ Thus, the Fun Run highlighted diversity and creativity (i.e., having the best ideas) rather than technical competence and progress toward a uniform goal (i.e., having the fastest time). This statement also encouraged a playful rather than serious or competitive orientation toward this event, again undercutting the ‘professional’ aspect that had been signalled by the suggestion for organizing teams. The potential was there for this event to subvert the normative message of ‘preparing for the 21st century.’

At this Fun Run, 33 teams, comprising some 225 runners, took part. This was a high degree of participation, marking this again as an unusual event. In the Fun Run held in the fall of 1988, when I had just arrived at ESTEC, there were many fewer teams and participants in that Fun Run, and virtually no spectators who were not actual runners. That event took place at the end of the work day, thus decoupling it from the work context and making it more explicitly a ‘leisure’ kind of event. This time, however, work was suspended so that people could run. Moreover, the runners were cheered on by a motley crew of spectators, including professional colleagues and family members. Three people took it upon themselves to be the ‘official’ cheerleaders, dressing up as clowns and cheering on all runners, irrespective of their affiliation, ability, or identity, as runners neared the finish line.

As in the cafeteria at lunch time, most of the teams organized to run in this event reflected work-based status, with members of departments
OR subdivisions joined together to run. Some teams chose clever names, and some chose to dress in costume, in keeping with the emphasis on creativity, while others focused primarily on the running itself. It was in the costumes of those who dressed up for the Fun Run that diverse idioms of identity were most on display, here juxtaposed in symbolic form. Given that the teams were mostly ‘professional teams,’ several costumes reflected elements related to the professional identities of participants; engineers and technicians celebrated the technological artifacts they were responsible for producing, while scientists highlighted the natural objects that were the focus of their research work. For instance, the members of the team from the division working on space robotics wore t-shirts that read ‘I ♥ space robotics’; they carried a cardboard representation of a robotic arm as their baton in the relay. Another team, from the division working on the ‘Man-Tended Free Flyer,’ a component of ESA’s contribution to the US-led space station project, constructed a cardboard representation of this free flyer, complete with large panels representing the solar arrays.\(^{20}\)

Three of the four teams fielded by the Space Science Department, the only ESTEC unit employing scientists, expressed their professional identities not through technological artifacts, but instead in the form of natural objects, those objects that the scientists wanted to study by building instruments.\(^{21}\) For instance, the team from the Solar and Heliospheric Sciences Division gave themselves the name ‘the Cosmic Rays,’ referring to the focus of their scientific research work (although they did not dress up in any way). Similarly, the team from the Planetary and Space Sciences Division called themselves ‘the Giant Planets,’ and over their standard running attire wore large, colourful photographs depicting

\(^{20}\) Each member of the team had to wear this costume in order to run his or her lap. During the course of the race, this cardboard costume proved troublesome; because it was difficult to put on and take off, the team completed only seven laps. Furthermore, because the costume had to change hands so often, it progressively disintegrated; towards the end of the race, as the runner from the Man-Tended Free Flyer team approached the baton-passing point, the costume fell apart and someone in the crowd commented jokingly that this was the result of ‘too much vibration.’ The comment referred to the vibration tests which are a standard part of engineering routine when preparing space hardware to be able to endure the rigorous vibrations of launch.

\(^{21}\) I must point out, however, that each of these teams included runners who were not, in fact, scientists, but technicians and engineers working in the Department; here, it was the bureaucratic status (rather than profession) that counted.
Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and the Earth (not all giant planets, per se), again calling attention to their research focus. The Astrophysics Division fielded two teams. One team, the one considered the more ‘serious’ in its single-minded dedication to training and winning the event (which ran counter to the prevailing ethos of ‘fun,’ just as these scientists fancied themselves the most serious researchers of all), called itself ‘the Supernova Remnants.’ This same team combined their professional research orientation to their role as ESA employees: dressed in silver clothes and their bodies and faces sprayed with silver paint, their costumes symbolized the 25th, silver, jubilee, a nod to the official Europe that had made this event possible.

Professional identity, whether as engineer or scientist, or as ESA employee, thus provided much of the symbolic language exchanged at this event. But as I suggested above, national identity also appeared; just as in the cafeteria, where there were ‘nationality tables’ violating the normative organizational expectations of a professional orientation, so too a few teams called attention to nations and national identity in their names and costumes. One of these was the fourth team from the Space Science Department; this team consisted of postdoctoral research fellows, two administrative/secretarial staff, and two technical staff members (in other words, no senior scientists); this was the only team from the Department to include women among its participants. They called themselves the ‘Southern Silver Dream’ – the meaning here, as it was explained to me by one of the participants, emphasized the ‘Silver’ Jubilee (ESA) and the fact that most of the team members were from southern Europe (which included for these purposes Italy, Spain, France, and Austria, with the two British members seen as anomalous and the others all seen as the same). This team explicitly called attention to the national identities of the participants in a way that would be inappropriate in an explicitly work context.22

Two other teams also emphasized national identity, and it is here, finally, where food made its appearance as the means to articulate this identity. One team’s shared costume (each runner wore it during his/her

22 I asked about the ‘Dream’ part of the name, but here no one had a precise explanation except to point out that this made their team the SSD team, pointing to their professional affiliation. One possibility here is that there was a ‘dream’ of unity on display in this team: theirs was the only SSD team with a number of women participating, and it was also the only SSD team to include secretarial staff in addition to technical staff.
lap) was a body-sized wine bottle, green in colour and with a label in French; if there was any uncertainty left about who the team members were, one had only to look at the baton they carried – it was a baguette. This costume called attention to the fact that the team members, although all colleagues in one Division (so a ‘professional’ team), also all happened to be French; in this ritual, it was acceptable, even fun, to celebrate national identity, and so they did by showing off their cuisine and their wine, elements easily understood as marking French identity (see Fenby 1999). Here, ‘you are what you eat’ seemed clearly to be the message.

The team that received the most acclaim and accolades from spectators was also one that played with national identity; however, this team did not stay confined to geographic or customary elements of cuisine. Each member of this team, made up of colleagues from a single Department, wore a white chef’s hat and a chef’s apron; each apron bore a flag of one of the ESA member states. The baton that this team carried was a cardboard representation of a sheet cake decorated with small flags of the European member states and the number ‘25’. Food was the medium for communicating about national identity, but this time the ‘mixing and matching’ of tastes produced not an experience of difference (as in the cafeteria), but an artifact that incorporated differences and eradicated the boundaries between them. In this cake, differences were transformed into something completely new. This costume, alone among all the others on display that day, gave explicit recognition to Europeanness. It did so both in the clothes and in the baton. While it was true that each team member wore a flag, what was significant was that those wearing the national flag aprons did not themselves share the national identity of the flag they wore. Furthermore, the costumes suggested that every participant in European cooperation was a participant in a collective effort to ‘cook’ their differences into a whole. One could not ask for a more self-conscious representation of Europeanness.

The awards ceremony that followed the Fun Run was a moment of true ritual communitas, in which the symbolic elements of work and leisure circulated equally, those of leisure repeatedly undermining those of work. All the participants and spectators sat together in a large tent, everyday social boundaries suspended as senior managers sat with ordinary technicians, and family members sat with staff members. Although some people had been barely able even to complete one lap, while others ran many
and swiftly, every participant received a gift (an ESA Jubilee commemorative mug), violating the highly valorized criterion of work by rewarding not expertise but effort alone. Food and drink were part of this celebration at the awards ceremony, signifying again the crucial role played by commensality in producing community. As the awards were announced, people chatted quietly among themselves, shared beer, orange juice, and pieces of the sausage that had been so uncERemoniously bestowed on every 25th runner to cross the finish line. The prize for the winning teams in each category was a bottle of champagne.23 Winners opened their bottles of champagne and shared them with everyone on the team and with nearby spectators.

In this ritual space, people were in the mood to enjoy their achievements and accomplishments, which included not only artifacts of expertise but artifacts of belonging as well. Food again played a role in bringing essential identities to the fore; the national icons of champagne, an ‘elite’ food associated with France, and sausage, a ‘low’ food associated with Germany, were sacrificed and consumed in this celebratory commensal rite.24 This juxtaposition of high and low, of French and German, in the same space and in the same mouthful made people momentarily European in an essential way.

The costumes showed, too, that food could serve as an important metaphor to communicate about national identities of belonging: As in the everyday work and leisure contexts, sometimes national identity was irrelevant, and then so, too, was food (the Man-Tended Free-Flyer costume), and sometimes national identity was the only thing that counted, and then there was food (the wine bottle and baguette of the French

23 The awards criteria ran the gamut, and gave new meaning to the idea of expertise. For instance, there was a prize for the team with the most ‘bad luck’ (the Man-Tended Free Flyer team, whose technology disintegrated as they ran), a prize for the ‘slowest,’ a prize for the silliest team, and a prize for the team that best celebrated the Jubilee (the ‘Supernova Remnants’ won that one).

24 My evaluation of these as ‘high’ and ‘low’ foods is based in part on the reaction of the team of the Supernova Remnants when they were called up to receive their award for the team best representing the theme of the 25th Jubilee. As they stood up, the announcer handed them two sausages ‘because they are so thin,’ he quipped; while the crowd laughed, they looked genuinely chagrined at receiving such a ‘low’ food item (cheap and plebeian) as their reward for best representing ESA. As they were about to sit down with this ‘prize,’ the organizers whipped out a couple of bottles of champagne, to much applause and genuine relief on the part of the team as they accepted what was clearly a more valued (expensive and elite) prize.
team). But what became possible at this ritual was a new combination of expertise and taste, expressing a new identity – not official Europe, not everyday ‘now you see it, now you don’t’ Europe, but instead the ‘cake’ of Europe. In the cake of Europe, we can no longer discern the separate, distinct ingredients that went into making it. Whereas in the cafeteria, diversity always bubbled beneath the surface of an emergent Europe, in the ritual, participants offered another vision, as for a brief moment people could glimpse an essential Europe where the differences have been cooked away. In this we see a ritual Europe offering the potential of an identity of belonging, one made possible through the crucible of work, but identifiable only in play.

**Conclusion**

In the alchemy of European cooperation, national identity is a source of tension, something simultaneously held on to and transcended. In 1988, in the environs of a European organization where people were engaged in explicitly European work, participants often communicated a profound ambivalence about their national identities. Sometimes what mattered more, or even the only thing that mattered was professional identity; this was the source of expertise, the competence that it took to design and build space missions of incredible complexity. But sometimes what really mattered was national identity, even though so often at work this identity was discounted, silenced, and shunted aside. I think the European cake that drew so much attention during the Fun Run itself communicated this ambivalent message about national identity in Europe. It suggested that what people produce in ‘European cooperation’ is sweet and delicious, but it is not essential, it is not nourishing, it is not substantial. Moreover, cake comes at the end; it may not be the foundation, but it is the fun part, perhaps the part that makes all the rest worthwhile. After all, we do not live by bread alone.

This, I would suggest, is also what we learn from food talk and consumption at ESTEC – that for participants in European cooperation at ESTEC, national identity is not practical or professional, but it is the stuff of dreams, and dreams are essential to a full life (as the saying goes, all work and no play ...). So even if Europe only comes at the end, after all the serious business is said and done, satellites launched, papers published, and accounts reconciled, what people find the sweetest part about the whole business is the sharing of tastes that indulging in food,
whether materially, discursively, or symbolically, allows. With or without conscious reflection, this is part of the process of Europeanization, a process that takes into account national tastes in order to broaden the palate, and with it, the meaning of Europe.

References


