

Why do vegetarian restaurants serve hamburgers? Toward an understanding of a cuisine*

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Toward an understanding of a cuisine

Cuisines are mostly regarded as a collection of appropriate combinations of ingredients, cooking methods, and dishes into an acceptable repertoire out of which individuals could select their daily dishes and meals and at a specific historical context. The sociology of food discusses the formation of cuisines, looks at the latter as reflecting upon eating habits and culinary repertoires, and sees cuisines as subject to conventions that guide the correct combinations of ingredients, the order of appearance of dishes, and their cooking and serving methods (Douglas 1974, 1984; Douglas and Gross 1981; Delamont 1983; Goode et al. 1984; Brett 1969; Douglas and Nicod 1974; Fitzgerald 1980; Frosterman 1984; Lévi-Strauss 1966; Murrill 1983, 1982). Following this definition it is possible to claim that nowadays consumers in the U.S. are simultaneously exposed to various cuisines (French, Italian, Chinese, Jewish, Vegetarian, and so forth), each of which is associated with particular repertoires. Just as 'steak and chips' implies French (Barthes 1983), pasta, tomato sauce and parmesan cheese stand for Italian, sushi is associated with Japanese, and vegetarian means vegetables and wholesome foods.

Associating cuisines with certain ethnic groups or cooking styles does not account for the dominance of similar forms in all cuisines regardless of their particular attributes. The present approach, therefore, will look at cuisines as systems of information, as gentrifications and tissues of culinary traditions whose distinctive features are obliterated in favor of constructing one generic cooking style by establishing formal and substantial similarities between what is originally perceived as different and segregated. 'Cuisine' as a term will refer not to segregated units, but to a larger culinary entity with a logic and dynamic of its own that encompasses and modifies the many culinary traditions practiced at a specific historical context. A definition as such accounts for the incorporation of new foods and cooking methods into established culinary forms and

allows me to explain why, for example, Chinese restaurants in the U.S. serve brown rice or why vegetarian restaurants serve hamburgers.

I will conduct a structural analysis of menus from restaurants in New York City and focus on the formal similarities between vegetarian and meat dishes in an attempt to show how their distinctive features (i.e., the ways in which elements are distinguished from and contrasted with one another — Jakobson 1978: 95–96) are obliterated. Centering on the role of vegetables and meat in the meal, I intend to show that the culinary conventions that underlie the structure and content of dishes in all restaurants are similar regardless of their commitment to serve either of the two. I have decided to analyze menus through the meat and vegetables axis because the relationship between the two is of a special kind. From a meat-eater point of view the two are complementary, as vegetables are served with meat. From a vegetarian point of view the two are mutually exclusive because meat is historically excluded from a vegetarian's diet. It is perceived as the strongest taboo, and is associated with killing. Vegetables, on the other hand, are associated with the fresh and the alive (Twigg 1983; Carter 1976). The contribution of written menus to the understanding of the persistence of conventions in general and culinary conventions in particular, and the way in which written forms can reflect upon attitudes toward the incorporation of novelties into existing systems of knowledge, are my concerns. If despite the different attributes assigned to meat and vegetables restaurants that serve meat as well as those which exclude it share a similar meal and dish structure and conceptualize the nature of meals and dishes in a similar way, we can assume their participation in one cuisine.

Written forms and cultural systems are believed to reflect normative frames of thought in a specific social context. Lists, recipes, tables, and designs, for example, must be understood as systems of popular knowledge. Their arrangement implies the dominance of a classification and of a semantic field taken for granted by both the creator and the consumer, since they include some items and exclude others. Written forms, therefore, select certain aspects of social organization and have implicit features that influence behavior (Goody 1977: 129). Goody's (1977: 28–39) analysis of the list is an example of how spatial fixities shape and establish the nature of written forms. Regardless of their unique content, all lists share a similar format: all have boundaries and a discontinuous character.

The relationships between a popular mode of organization of knowledge, popular thinking, and its actual expression in daily life have been discussed in the literature. Foucault (1973) shows how the analysis of natural history expresses ruling mental structures in the eighteenth

century and their reflection in social organizations and academic disciplines. Carrol (1982: 36), Dundes (1968: 401–424), and Fussell (1975: 125–131) demonstrate how habituation can effect the ways in which cultural artifacts appear to the audience. The first two relate culinary conventions to a trinary cognitive pattern emerging in the eighteenth century. Fussell (1975: 125–131) refers to the trinary pattern as affecting the building of three-level trenches during the Great War. It seems, therefore, that the formation and dominance of familiar and conventional forms assists the potential customer to relate and interpret what is presented to him.

Peirce's (1932: 156–169) distinction between the index, the icon, and the symbol contributes to a formal analysis of restaurant menus. The three differ in the level of abstraction involved in the relationships between the signifier and the signified. While the relationship between the two is inevitable at the level of the index, it is based on physical similarity at the level of the icon and on pure abstraction and association at the level of the symbol, for the connection between the item and what it represents is in one's mind, and is learned through socialization. An analysis that centers on the temporal location of a dish — what precedes and what follows it — and examines the structural aspects of foods rather than their actual ingredients may explain why different dishes look and taste alike while made of different ingredients. A familiar form and name of a dish along with its conventional position in the meal may make up for the absence of an ingredient that is otherwise perceived as central to the dish. The construction of icons by using vegetables as if they were meat, for example, is a common technique used by vegetarian restaurants. Let us consider two examples: the mousaka and the meatless hamburger.

A mousaka (A Greek dish made of alternative layers of eggplant and ground beef) once served in a vegetarian restaurant implies a substitution of beef by nuts, mashed beans, or tofu. Although the meat is missing, the dish is still called mousaka and is so perceived due to the relationship between the ingredients and its position in the meal. The replacement of beef by tofu is defined as irrelevant and technical, designed to transfer the dish from an inedible stage (from a vegetarian point of view) to an edible one. Tofu, therefore, is treated as if it were ground beef. The same holds for the meatless burgers served with french fries, onion rings, and ketchup, for what matters is the way the dish looks and the time in the meal in which it is served. Based on Peirce's concepts, we can argue that although the meatburger and the meatless burger are mutually exclusive from a vegetarian point of view, they are perceived as similar (at the level of the signified), for both are perceived as hamburgers. Based on the physical similarities between the two and their role in the meal, we can

equate the meatless hamburger with the icon, for as long as it resembles the 'real' hamburger it is treated equally, regardless of its composition. Hamburgers are, therefore, recognized by vegetarian restaurants for their shape, function, and name more than for their ingredients. Their inclusion in a vegetarian repertoire implies an awareness about their social value.

Similarities between different cuisines can be traced through the transformation of ingredients. Ingredients are seldom defined as edible in their natural state and require a transformation to a lesser or greater extent. A simple transformation may involve the washing or the peeling of a vegetable or a fruit, while a complex one might call for chopping, cutting, mashing, cooking, carving, and so forth. Both meat and vegetables are detached from their original shape, reshaped and retextured when served. Most of the literature deals with the case of meats. Leach (1972: 212–215) and Sahlins (1976: 170–179) point out that when cooked, animals no longer obtain their original name: a calf is turned into veal, and a pig into pork. Elias (1978: 120–121) refers to the way in which meat is served. Unlike in the Middle Ages, animals are no longer brought whole to the table; this would be considered extravagant. Animals are carved in the kitchen and brought to the table in small pieces. There are no traces in the shape of the steak that remind us of the cow, or in the shape of the chicken that reminds us of the hen, just as there is nothing in the shape of the souffle that reminds us of the shape of the fresh spinach or egg. The association between the ingredient and the final dish involves an abstraction because the relationship between the ingredients and what they stand for is no longer based on physical similarities, but rather on learned conceptions.

In my analysis I will compare and contrast restaurant menus in regard to their attitude toward vegetables and meat. I will focus on the way in which the domination of shared culinary forms and conventions is expressed. If a structural similarity between what is meant to be mutually exclusive and different speaks for itself, it will be possible to claim that the distinction between a vegetarian and a 'meat-oriented' cuisine has ceased to exist as the two have grown to be part of one generic cuisine. Before we proceed to the analysis itself, there is a need to justify the use of restaurant menus as a source of data.

Menus as a source of data

Written texts allow readers to interpret, decontextualize, criticize, and reorder knowledge. All texts conform to a rigid visual consistency, and are adjusted to a fixed predetermined space limit taken for granted by

both authors and readers (Goody 1987: 159, 163, 115, 198; Goody 1982: 138; Foucault 1972: 28; Ong, 1985: 81, 101–102, 127; Leach 1985: 10; Goody 1986: 12, 81, 166). Barthes (1984: 146–148, 155–164) emphasizes that a blending of styles and informations is what assigns a text a uniformed fixity. Texts are tissues of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture. Writers mix writings, counter them with other writings as never to rest on any of them. This multiplicity enters into mutual relations of dialogues. When reaching the reader, the text achieves its unity, for the reader faces all the citations inscribed and holds together all the traces by which the text is constituted.

While accrediting the inevitable presence of a wide range of cultures all in one text, Barthes avoids some of its emerging properties. Addressing a text as a static entity, he attributes changes only to the content of the texts, ignoring its formal rules of composition. Looking solely at the content of texts, he refrains from referring to the fixities and uniformities to which all texts, regardless of their content, conform and to the emerging similarities among all types of texts. Written menus can be seen, therefore, as reflecting upon the growing similarities among all culinary traditions that participate in a cuisine. While throughout the menu each restaurant makes a claim for uniqueness and specialty, the desire to attract a large audience calls on the restaurant to appear familiar and rely on common culinary conventions. Menus make, therefore, an explicit statement about what is implicitly regarded as proper by modifying all that is different into a similar form.

Looking at restaurant menus, the uniformity of structures that applies to all culinary traditions speaks for itself. The dominance of a triadic structure in all meals, regardless of their ideological or ethnic affiliations, provides implicit information not only about the position of the dishes, but about the nature of unfamiliar dishes as well. If one enters a Chinese restaurant, for example, without any previous experience with Chinese food, the conventional form of classification of dishes provides him with enough clues for having a socially defined appropriate meal. The position of the dish in the menu will inform the customer that an eggroll is an appetizer while a chop suey is a main dish. Successfully coping with the menu does not imply any previous knowledge about Chinese food, but rather familiarity with a dominant meal structure that applies to Chinese as well as to other restaurants that operate in the U.S.

Similarly, despite the explicit differences between the various culinary traditions, all of them define, concretely or symbolically, certain ingredients, dishes, or courses as more essential to the meal than others. Menus emphasize the differential function of the appetizer and main course in terms of position in the meal, size of the dish, and degree of freedom to

select items to go with it. While diners choose among various appetizers, the selection of the entree further implies a choice among alternative side dishes. One may choose whether he would like to have peas or carrots with his steak, but he is not to choose the type of cheese to cream his onion soup. Focusing on the role of vegetables and meat, it is possible to argue that vegetarian cookery and meat cookery are both an integral part of the same cuisine because the two share not only the same structure of meals and dishes but also similar perceptions regarding the value of meat and vegetables. What appears substantially different and mutually exclusive is structurally similar.

In order to show how attitudes toward vegetables and meat cross culinary boundaries once dishes are introduced to American customers, I have constructed a continuum of six ideal types of restaurants in relation to their attitudes toward vegetables and meat and the symbolic value of the two. Those have been determined according to the following criteria: the position of vegetables and meat in dishes and meals and the degree of freedom to choose them. The greater the space assigned to vegetarian dishes in the menu, and the greater the freedom to choose vegetables, the greater their value. For example, the fact that we are to choose among corn, potato, and broccoli to go with our chicken rather than among beef, pork or chicken to go with our broccoli implies that meat is structurally expected to be the central piece of the dish, while the role of vegetables is limited to side orders only. Different vegetables are, therefore, interchangeable. Let us take a look at the continuum (Table 1).

Reading from top to bottom, the right side of the continuum illustrates the treatment of vegetables, and the left side indicates the differential role of meat. A graphical representation of the six categories shows how the

Table 1

Meat	Vegetables
1) Meats are parts of all entrees. Meat-oriented restaurants.	Vegetables are matched to the meat by the chef in all main dishes.
2) Entrees are made of meat and fish solely.	Vegetables are served as side orders up to the customer's request.
3) Meat is served as entrees and appetizers.	Vegetarian dishes are a part of the appetizers.
4) 'Purely' Vegetarian dishes are an integral part of the entrees along with meat dishes.	
5) Beef, Poultry and Fish are offered as distinct sub categories among the entrees	Vegetarian dishes are a sub category in itself among the entrees.
6) Meat is excluded. Fish may appear.	'Purely Vegetarian' restaurants.

(3) Veg. as a part of Appetizers.

Veg. as entrees among meats. (4)

(2) Veg. as side orders upon request.

Entrees as a sub category. (5)

(1) "Meat-Oriented".

Vegetarian Restaurants. (6)

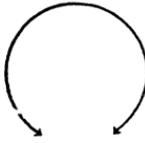


Fig. 1.

latter are structurally and symbolically part of the same cuisine, as the opposite categories along the line share a greater symbolic similarity than the classes that lie in proximity to one another (Figure 1).

Restaurants in the first category do not distinguish among the various types of meat nor vegetables. The role of the latter is limited to side dishes, which are matched by the chef rather than left to the customer's choice. The placement of all types of meat in one class is significant because vegetarians too distinguish among beef, poultry, and fish, and view red meat as the strongest taboo, while poultry and fish are perceived as lower in the hierarchy of food taboos. In the second, third, and fourth classes of restaurants, vegetarian dishes are incorporated into established courses. The second class limits vegetarian dishes to side orders, but unlike the first class they are left to the customer's choice. In the third class vegetarian dishes are offered as appetizers, and the fourth class integrates vegetarian dishes into the entrees. In the fifth class, vegetarian dishes are not only offered as entrees, but are a subdivision of the latter and are presented as an equal alternative to beef, poultry, and fish. Restaurants in the sixth category exclude meat, and offer vegetables in all courses. Like the first class, where neither meat or vegetables are classified, menus in vegetarian restaurants do not distinguish among the various types of meat or vegetables, and if entrees are to be subclassified the classification applies to the distinction between fish and vegetable dishes rather than to a classification on the basis of the qualities of the vegetable. At the same time the dominance of meat is expressed by assigning vegetarian dishes the names, shapes, and roles of meat dishes.

In order to address the similarities in the treatment of vegetables and meat, I will compare each class along the line with its opposite in regard to the distinctive features mentioned above. The first class will be compared with the sixth one. As the two are believed to offer opposing approaches to foods by excluding each other's ingredients, a similar treatment of the vegetables and meat will reflect upon their inclusion in one cuisine. Similarly, being able to show how meat is substituted by meatless dishes that are believed to be functionally equivalent to the meat, the existence of one cuisine speaks for itself. The second and the fifth classes will be

compared because the joint role of vegetables in the two categories forms a complete main course. As vegetables are served as side orders in the second category but as the central piece in the fifth one they are differently treated. If I can show that, despite their opposing location in the meal, the role assigned to the two is formally identical and the two are subjected to similar conventions, we can assume their relation to the same cuisine. The same applies to the comparison between the third and the fourth classes, where vegetarian dishes are part of the appetizers and entrees respectively.

The language of food: A reflection of a cuisine

An application of linguistic models to the analysis of a cuisine allows me to draw an analogy between food and language. An analogy as such enables me to show how cooking styles that are believed to sprout from different culinary traditions can all be integrated into one cuisine. Both words and dishes achieve their meanings from their relationships to other items in the system. The relationship is twofold. On the one hand, elements obtain a meaning from elements that precede or follow them. Such is the case with words in sentences, or dishes in a meal. On the other hand, different elements may be interchangeable with other items in the system: synonyms in the case of words, and alternative appetizers, entrees, or desserts in the case of food.

The distinction between language and speech, as made by Saussure (1959: 123), refers to the distinction between the formal aspect of a language and its actual use. The language exists within a collectivity and outside the individual, who can never create or modify it by himself, but must rather learn its function. It is a system of individual terms in which the value of each term results from the presence of the others. The speech, on the other hand, refers to the system of actual use. The language of food, therefore, refers to conventions that set up the relationships between the items in a meal or a dish (such as the structure of the meal or the dish), while the speech applies to the actual usage of ingredients. Therefore, if all culinary traditions to which American consumers are exposed are part of one larger cuisine, it will be possible to show that all restaurants speak the same language but differ in their speech.

Saussure (1959: 123) relates language to signs, for they, too, are part of larger systemic wholes, and derive their meanings from their relations to other signs within the same system. The relationship between signs can be either syntagmatic or associative. A syntagm involves two or more consecutive units, each of which acquires its value because it stands in opposition or in a physical proximity (as elements in a dish) to everything

that precedes or follows it or both. Barthes (1984: 62) equates the menu with a syntagma because it is a sequence of dishes chosen during a meal. Menus as syntagma are fixed, and are not subjected to individual creativity. They refer to similar structures of dishes and meals despite their usage of different ingredients. Any encounter with an unfamiliar food can be easily resolved by knowing the category to which the dish belongs.

While the syntagm, as a formal construct, is analogous to language, associative relationships are analogous to speech, for both involve individual interpretation and elimination. Choosing one item implies at the same time the rejection of another. The elimination and selection process occurs within a specific social setting, and a choice that may be valid for one setting may be irrelevant for another. Frake's (1969: 36–37) analysis of attributes and their applications to food choices in a lunch counter is a good example of the matter. Frake claims that in order to define an object (a hamburger in his case), one must know not only what it is but with what it contrasts. A hamburger and a hot dog are contrasted in the case of the lunch counter because they are the only two options the customers face. Having a hamburger in that setting also implies not having a hot dog. At McDonald's, on the other hand, hamburgers will be contrasted with cheeseburgers because the two are equal options offered to the clients. Frake (1969: 37) claims for a need to determine to what extent there are models of how individuals make selections, and under what guiding lines. Any method for determining attributes must depend on knowing the contrast set within which each segregate is involved.

Associative relationships are therefore relations of contrast for they involve a selection between two or more elements in a specific setting. It is necessary to look at the actual domain of association each culinary tradition sets in order to show that different traditions are all part of one cuisine. While we will expect the domain of association in a vegetarian restaurant to be different from the one in an Italian, Chinese, or Mexican restaurant, it is possible to show that the range of the specific associations is determined by similar symbols because all the culinary traditions speak the same language but differ in speech. This being the case, we will turn to the actual comparison of classes of restaurants and let the menus speak for themselves.

Meat-oriented restaurants vs. vegetarian restaurants

'Meat-oriented' and vegetarian restaurants can be best compared and contrasted along the line of the main courses and their center pieces. As

vegetables and meat are complementing in the first class but mutually exclusive as well as complementing in the sixth class, structural and symbolic similarities between the two will emphasize their subjection to one language and cuisine and their differences in speech. Both 'meat-oriented' and vegetarian restaurants refrain from subclassifying their entrees according to major ingredient and treat the differences among them as irrelevant. Beef, poultry, pork, and fish are all grouped into one category, and so are vegetables when offered as side orders. In vegetarian restaurants vegetables are assigned a double role. On the one hand they stand for what meat does in 'meat-oriented' restaurants, and on the other they are served with the entree as a side order. Neither as a main course nor as a side order are they subclassified on the basis of the distinctive attributes of the vegetable.

The first class of restaurants is mostly composed of Italian, Mexican, and American (steak houses) restaurants. Italian restaurants will group under one category dishes as chicken parmigian, shrimp parmigian, steak pizzaiola, sauteed filet de sole, medallions of pork, marinated grill lamb, and an Italian sausage. Similar groupings are found in most American restaurants, only with a greater emphasis on fish. The Edwardian Room in the Plaza Hotel offers customers a variety of alternative dishes: poached fresh salmon; filet of dover sole; fresh Maine lobster; casserole of fresh seafood; sauteed duck breast, chicken supreme with chanterelles; roast filet of veal; broiled center cut veal chop; escalopine of veal; three medallions of lamb loin; broiled filet mignon; chateaubriand; and broiled New York sirloin. In Mexican restaurants fish is usually excluded, and the different meats are grouped according to their cooking method. Therefore, we are likely to find beef, poultry, or pork a few times along the menu based on whether they are served as a chili, an enchilada, or tamales.

Some American restaurants place fish as a distinct category of the menu, while beef, pork and poultry are grouped together under the title of entrees. In many cases beef dominates the entrees and less space is assigned to poultry and pork. The classification of dishes in the menu of Cafe de la Paix is an exception that proves the rule. Main dishes are subclassified into three main classes: *From the Sea*, a combination of salmon, sole, swordfish, and shrimps; *For the Beef Eater*, which includes a variety of steaks; and *Entrees*, which are a melange of lamb, liver, and chicken. While fish and beef enjoy a special status in the first class of restaurants, the differences between lamb, chicken, and liver are treated as irrelevant.

This structural pattern applies to vegetarian restaurants as well. Like their 'meat-oriented' peers, vegetarian restaurants do not sub-classify their entrees, except when offering fish. Vegetables are not subjected to

any sort of classification either on the basis of their type or of their cooking methods. No restaurant distinguishes, for example, between entrees made of broccoli and those made of spinach. Beans and greens are grouped together regardless of their calling for different cooking and serving methods, and we are likely to find, side by side, a vegetarian quiche and vegetable creole along with a vegetarian chili, couscous, or meatless hamburger.

The menus in the first and sixth category will inform the eater that all entrees are served with fixed side orders. Panchito, a Mexican restaurant, serves all the main dishes with rice and refried beans. Many Italian restaurants serve all their entrees with what they call 'Fresh Vegetables of the Day'. The existence of such a category reflects on the relative value of both the meat and the vegetables. Vegetables are to be matched by the chef to the center piece of the dish and are not believed to be important enough to be left to the customers' choice or to involve a different composition on the basis of the qualities of both the center piece and the vegetable. Every vegetable has an equal chance to be served with all types of meat, and the harmony of the dish is believed to depend on the nature of the meat rather than on the nature of its side orders. The same holds for the vegetarian entrees. Quantum Leap serves different dishes with either a house salad (a mixture of greens) or with a soup that will precede the main course. In both cases, therefore, a dish is marked by a center piece that distinguishes one dish from another. The role of vegetables is limited to the transformation of the center piece into a unity without attributing to the dish any distinctive quality.

The similar relationships between the components of the dish in the two classes tell us about the dual role of vegetables in one cuisine. While in the first class meat and vegetables differ in their value and position in the meal and the dish, in vegetarian restaurants vegetables can be served simultaneously as a major item and a side order. Almost every vegetable can be adjusted to either of the roles. Theoretically at least, a vegetarian meal can include a spinach souffle, creamed spinach, and a spinach salad. An equivalent composition of meat is impossible. In order to prevent a repetition in form, texture, and name, vegetables are disguised. The cooking and serving methods of the same vegetable will differ according to the course it is entitled to. As such, spinach, when served as an entree, is likely to be served as a souffle or a quiche, but once served as a side order it will come creamed or as a salad. Even if a spinach souffle and creamed spinach are served together, which is not likely to happen, their different texture, shape, and name are enough to distinguish them from one another.

In an attempt to avoid the overlapping of ingredients in a vegetarian

meal, main dishes are sometimes dressed and textured to be as similar as possible to familiar meat dishes. The dish maintains its original name and the substitution of meat by tofu, mashed beans, grains, or nuts is deemphasized. The meatless hamburger or the couscous (originally made of semolina and lamb, that is substituted by chick peas, once cooked in a vegetarian restaurant) offered in Boostan serve that purpose. They look familiar to the potential customer and involve the same selection and elimination process used in the first class of restaurants.

Both classes limit the associative relationships among the dishes to predetermined domains. In the case of the entrees, choosing a veal parmigian implies not having chicken or fish just as the selection of a vegetarian lasagna, in a vegetarian restaurant, implies not having a vegetable creole or a mushroom quiche. Aside from the structural similarities between the two categories, it is possible to show that the associative relationships in both cases are identical on the level of the signifier because dining in either of the two classes of restaurants implies a selection of foods based on the image of meat. While in the first class the associations are among various kinds of meat, in the sixth class the associations are based on symbols, on the ability to abstract and distinguish between what a dish is and what it actually stands for. There, one is to choose between dishes in the image of meat (such as the meatless hamburger) and dishes where the inspiration of meat is less obvious (such as a vegetable quiche or steamed vegetables on top of brown rice dressed with tahini sauce). Vegetarian restaurants therefore do not attempt to challenge the dominance of meat in the meal; rather, they justify their dishes by making them as similar to meat dishes as possible. Based on their physical and structural similarities to the meat, it is possible to equate meatless dishes with symbols, for as long as they stand for the 'real' dish, they are treated equally, regardless of their distinctive composition that excludes the meat. This is why vegetarian restaurants claim that their vegetarian mousaka 'tastes like the real thing' without any attempt to disregard the image of meat or its centrality to the meal.

Despite the different valuation and treatment of vegetables and meat and the exclusivity of ingredients, the extreme poles of the continuum are part of the same cuisine. They both speak the same culinary language by referring to one major structure of meals, and by involving an identical elimination process among dishes that are associatively related at the level of a course. The difference between the two is substantial rather than structural, a difference in speech rather than in language, because the major ingredients of the associatively related dishes at the level of a class are mutually exclusive.

Vegetables as side orders vs. vegetables as entrees

The second and fifth classes of restaurants assign vegetables to different categories of the menu. A different amount of thought, space, and degree of freedom to choose them is given to vegetables. In the second class along the continuum, vegetables as side orders are left to the customer's choice. In the fifth class they obtain a distinct sub-category among the entrees. As side orders and center pieces complement each other and form one main course, the value attributed to vegetables in the two classes must be different. A structural similarity between the two in regard to the role of the vegetables will therefore be a sign of their speaking the same culinary language.

Vegetables from the second class on are associatively related at the level of a course, and their consumption is an outcome of selection and elimination. Coffee shops or diners, for example, ask their clients to choose two kinds of vegetables to go with their fish or meat, treating the former as an inevitable part of the dish. The presence of spinach on one's plate informs us not only of what the person is eating, but of what he is not eating as well. For having spinach means leaving the okra, green beans, broccoli, cauliflower, and other vegetables for other customers or other dinners.

The different entrees in the fifth class are subclassified on the basis of their major ingredient. This being the case, the diner has first to select the major component of his dish (beef, poultry, fish, or vegetables), and then proceed to the elimination at the level of the concrete options in every subclass. Vegetarian entrees enjoy an equal space in the menu and require an equal amount of thought as meat and fish in the elimination process. The position of the vegetables constructs certain expectations. Once part of an entree, we may expect the vegetables to be of a greater quantity, and of a different texture and shape than those offered as appetizers or side orders.

Chinese and Indian restaurants belong, in most cases, to the fifth class. In Chinese restaurants vegetarian dishes are of two kinds: they are either purely vegetarian, such as mixed vegetables, sauteed bamboo shoots with mushrooms, or bean curd in spicy sauce; or a combination of meat or fish and vegetables such as eggplant with meat garlic sauce, or mushroom Szechuan with chopped meat in spicy flavor. Although most of the entrees in a Chinese restaurant involve some combinations of vegetables and meat or fish, only part of them are defined as vegetarian entrees. Being named after the vegetable places the meat as an item of secondary order on one hand, but at the same time elevates the vegetable to a stage where it can mark the entire meal. Dining in a Chinese restaurant therefore

involves a selection between a mixture of vegetables and meats named after the meat or after the vegetables. The two are associatively related. As side orders, vegetables are a distinct sub-category, just as rice or noodles are. This implies the flexible nature of vegetables, for they adjust to whatever category they are placed in. As entrees they contrast with meat, while as side orders they relate to other optional matchings.

Indian restaurants, on the other hand, seem to meet different criteria of restaurants along the continuum. They are a reminder that the continuum refers to ideal types of restaurants only, and as such, variations may occur. Some Indian restaurants group beef, poultry, lamb, pork, fish, and vegetables together if cooked similarly. The elimination process will involve a primary selection at the level of the cooking methods, and only then at the level of the alternative dishes of the course. Here chicken tandoori, for example, will imply not only not having beef or lamb, but leaving out all curry or biryani dishes as well. As their 'meat-oriented' and vegetarian peers, Indian restaurants too tend to serve all their dishes with rice and dahl regardless of the customers' preferences.

Although the second and fifth categories differ in their actual placement of the vegetables and meat in the menu, they belong to the same cuisine, for the composition of a meal in each of these restaurants involves similar procedures in regard to the selection of meat and vegetables. Although the presence of the vegetables is predetermined for the customers as center pieces or side orders, the selection of the vegetables in both cases is structurally similar in respect to the elimination association they involve.

This being the case, it is possible to claim that the space and degree of freedom assigned to vegetables accounts for the classification of restaurants along the continuum. While in the first and sixth classes vegetables, as side orders, are not assigned any space in the menu or associated with any item, from the second class on this is no longer the case. In both the second and the fifth classes vegetarian dishes are treated as objectives for elimination and enjoy more of an independent status in the meal. Based on the analysis so far, it seems the four types of restaurants I have referred to speak the same language because they share an identical meal structure and apply similar eliminations when choosing a meal. They differ, however, in their speech, because the actual ingredients associated and the amount of space and thought they enjoy is different.

Vegetarian dishes within established categories

The third and fourth classes of restaurants are formally similar because they treat meat and vegetarian dishes as interchangeable within estab-

lished courses of the meal. In the third class vegetarian dishes associate with meat and fish at the level of the appetizer, and in the fourth category the two associate at the level of entrees. However, the status of the vegetables in the two classes is different because appetizers and entrees differ in their status in the meal. The comparison between the two classes illustrates the differences in value between meat and vegetables and the social difference between the appetizer and the entree.

The contrast between appetizers and entrees shows how the presence of vegetables lowers the value of the meat in the third type of restaurants, but elevates the value of vegetarian dishes in the fourth class as being one out of many entrees. Salads, when served as appetizers, illustrate the dialectic between vegetables and meat in the third class of restaurants. When salads are served as side orders they are made of greens cut into small pieces topped with a dressing. When turned into appetizers the variety of their potential ingredients increases. They could be made of chicken, tuna, cheese, eggs, or shrimps as well as vegetables. If the last option is the case, the salad is most likely to include vegetables that are excluded from a typical garden salad, such as asparagus, broccoli, or artichokes.

Just as vegetables are dressed and textured as meat when served as an entree, once meat and fish are turned into a salad they are treated as if they were vegetables: they are cut into small pieces, mixed with a dressing in order to form a unity, and called after a vegetable dish. The equal treatment of the two reduces the value of what is supreme to the vegetables to the same level. The prices of fish and meat as part of a salad are lower in comparison to their peers in the entree, but their relative superiority over the vegetables is kept because once meat is part of a salad it assigns the salad its name. This is further expressed through the issue of prices, for shrimps salad, seafood salad, or chicken salad are more expensive than egg salad or a garden salad made of lettuce and tomatos.

In the fourth class the opposite is the case. As meals are marked by entrees, once vegetarian dishes are capable of fulfilling an equal function to meat dishes they are given full credit to do so. Restaurants in the fourth class use two major techniques to justify the equal status of vegetarian entrees. Some address the dish to vegetarians exclusively rather than to all. Statements such as 'For Vegetarians'; 'Vegetarian Delight'; or 'Our Vegetarian Choices' are likely to be part of the description of the dishes. This implies that vegetarianism has won recognition as a legitimate cooking and eating style and he who does not touch meat is no longer excluded from 'conventional' restaurants. Other restaurants try to legitimate the inclusion of vegetarian entrees as an integral part of a culinary

repertoire instead of restricting the dish to a specific group. In those cases vegetarian dishes are not legitimated due to their unique ingredients, but rather claim to contain all that meat dishes include in terms of their nutritional value, their shape, texture, and position in the meal. Statements such as 'You will never miss the meat'; 'You will never realize the meat is not there'; or 'After you try it you'll never want the "real" thing again' indicate that dishes are defined in terms of their resemblance to meat even when the meat is excluded. Those statements are likely to describe dishes that are widely associated with meat such as mousaka, hamburgers, vegetables creole, couscous, or spaghetti with 'meat balls' (made of tofu). If vegetarian dishes were believed to be equal to meat in their social and use value, there would be no need to compensate for the meat's absence. Stressing its absence indicates that the presence of meat is believed to be inevitable in a meal.

Unlike the first and second classes of restaurants where vegetarian and meat dishes complement rather than contrast each other, the third and fourth classes show how the two can be associatively related at the level of a course by being included in the same category of the menu: the appetizer in the third category and entrees in the fourth. While in restaurants from the third class clients are asked to choose between vegetables and what symbolically stands for vegetables, in restaurants from the fourth class customers have to select among meat, fish, and what symbolically stands for meat. This supports Frake's (1969) claim that relations of contrast are situationally specific, as the definition of elements as opposing or complementing is structurally determined. In other words, while vegetables and meat are widely perceived as complementing each other, they can also be contrasted by fulfilling the same culinary function, as in the case of their position in the meal. This will further determine the social value of both vegetables and meat.

It is therefore possible to claim that the inclusion of vegetarian dishes as an integral part of courses and meals does not challenge the normative structure of both meals and dishes, nor is it an attempt to introduce new culinary conventions or to establish a new cuisine. The opposite is the case. Vegetarian dishes are defined and socially constructed according to their potential similarities to meat dishes, and are cooked according to leading culinary conventions strongly inspired by the notion of the inevitable presence of meat on one's plate. Therefore, they participate in the same cuisine of which meat-oriented, Chinese, Italian, Indian, coffee shops, and other restaurants are a part. By speaking the same language they reflect upon common conventions that guide the elimination process involved in the construction of a meal, in all types of restaurants.

On language and cuisine: Some concluding remarks

An analogy between language and cuisine as suggested in this paper is an essay to show how differences among various culinary traditions are obliterated in favor of establishing culinary gentrifications — one major cuisine that encompasses all that is originally segregated. Looking at written menus as tissues of quotations, as combinations of various cultures and styles enables me to argue that the adjustment to one major written structure, to spatial uniformities and fixities, has resulted in emerging similarities among what was meant to be distinctive, unique, and different. Centering on the role of vegetables and meat in various classes of restaurants, I have shown how the two, although mutually exclusive or complementary, are part of one dominant cuisine.

Whereas different culinary traditions differ in their speech by making use of different ingredients, they all speak the same language by establishing similar syntagmatic relations and domains of associations. Reading down the continuum, it is possible to see a gradual appropriation of vegetarian dishes into existing associative relationships by translating the language of vegetable cooking into the language of meat cooking. While in the first two classes of restaurants associations at the level of the entrees are limited to meat and fish, from the third class on vegetarian dishes are associatively related to the former's. The further down we read, the more abstract the relations become. The third and fourth classes offer a selection among meat, fish, and vegetables at the level of the appetizer and the main course respectively. This process involves a selection between vegetarian dishes and dishes in the image of vegetarian dishes in the third class, and between meat dishes and dishes in the image of meat in the fourth class. Dining in the fifth class, however, requires a primary selection between meat and meatless dishes, and a secondary selection among the various dishes within each sub-category. Similarly, in vegetarian restaurants one is to choose between meatless dishes in the image of meat and dishes where the inspiration of meat is less obvious and limited to the structure of the meal and dish.

Looking at a cuisine as a body of popular knowledge that informs customers about the ways in which culinary traditions are appropriated and adjusted to existing culinary conventions reflects upon a possible way in which changes within established systems of knowledge occur. Rather than challenging existing conventions by providing an alternative body of knowledge, novelties are often introduced by stressing their familiar features rather than their distinctive ones, by claiming to contribute another layer of knowledge that does not contradict what is already known. This is not exclusive to the appropriation of vegetarian dishes.

Atkinson (1980) has shown how products in Health Food Stores are designed to resemble orthodox commodities in order to appeal to customers. Posner (1983) has centered on the means through which diets, recipes, and 'sugar free' products meant for diabetics are defined not in terms of their differences from conventional products, but rather in terms of their similarities in both taste and function to the latter. The construction of resemblances facilitates the introduction of novelties, reduces the amount of suspicion they may raise, reinforces and relegitimizes existing conventions that are taken for granted by all creators and customers.

Note

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