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Kurzfassung A study defines the term "gastrosophy" and focuses on "chef gastrosophers" whose specialist field is professional expertise in gastronomy and hospitality. The position these individuals occupy today has been brought about by a succession of cultural, metaphysical, and technological factors. Chef gastrosophers have progressed the aims of gastronomy, by becoming leading figures in contemporary cuisine. They occupy positions at the apex of the modern culinary hierarchy, having demonstrated individualism, entrepreneurship, and a willingness to take risks. They set the culinary pace of the hospitality industry, and have invested in the cult of personality, freely utilizing public relations and image creation techniques. Chef gastrosophers have realized that the modern hospitality industry has a dynamic which requires the business proprietor to innovate, to create bold images and identities and to market these. The hospitality they offer is intended to be holistic, where a complete experience, offering fleeting artistic theater, has been distilled from haute cuisine.

Volltext Gastrosophy is a term gaining in currency and may be defined as a specialism for professional expertise in gastronomy and hospitality. Gastrosophy complements the existing and familiar "gastronomy". The gastronome is by general definition an amateur, though prominent exceptions to the rule exist (e.g. Jean Valby and Egon Ronay)[1]. Gastronomes in general may influence the development of cuisine through their writings. Gastrosophers work practically in a given field appertaining to hospitality. The word "gastrosopher" stems from the Greek root sophos meaning wise. Together with gastrosophy it has been variously used throughout history, but was originally coined by a German nobleman, Baron Vaerst, whose book in two volumes entitled Gastrosophi oder die Lehre von den Freunden der Tafel (The Teachings of the Joy of the Table) was published in Leipzig in 1851. Vaerst suggested that the gourmet and the gastrosopher's skills are complementary.

This article focuses on chef gastrosophers, especially the contemporary entrepreneurial chef gastrosophers who are viewed as setting the culinary pace of the hospitality industry, and who are, in the broadest sense, market leaders. In recent times chef gastrosophers have achieved a transformation in public and wider perceptions of their trade, and they have done this, in the main, by investing in the cult of personality. Careful use of public relations and image creation techniques combined with shrewd business allies, marketing strategies, financial acuity and entrepreneurial skills have won many of these chefs international celebrity status. Their importance to twentieth century gastronomy lies in their proficiency at marketing dining out as a holistic experience (that is, as much more than the provision of food alone); merchandizing their own, and endorsing other products; the influence they exert on their peers; and their attempts to represent and develop the image of gastronomy as an "art form"[1].

Modern Gastronomy and Professional Cookery

In any historical account of gastrosophy and gastronomy, George Auguste Escoffier's legacy cannot be ignored. Escoffier (1846-1935) is generally considered to be the main exponent of the ancienne cuisine[2,3]. In purely culinary terms, Escoffier broke with tradition and lightened saucing and garnishing, but he is remembered primarily for his efforts to streamline kitchen working practices and utilize talent more rationally[4,5]. It was Escoffier who instituted the partie system in an effort to eliminate the disorganization and duplication of endeavour prevalent in the conventional kitchens of the period caused by failures to institute clear-cut accountability and work systems. Under Escoffier's brigade or partie system, each kitchen employee was assigned a well-defined role and operated within carefully fixed parameters. A full range of occupational titles were developed (some of which already existed), each one relating to a specialist range of procedures and responsibilities. Escoffier's system was hierarchically stratified and has, over the twentieth century, been retained to some degree, though modified in line with periodic shortages of skilled talent and changes in catering production resulting from technological advances.

At the top of the classically modelled "grand" partie system there was the "maitre chef des cuisines" who had executive status in the hierarchy. The maitre chef was assisted by the "chef de cuisine", the head chef as we know the role today. The head chef was, in turn, aided by one or more sous chefs, depending on the size of the brigade. These too were hierarchically stratified and numerically titled (the lower digits possessing more seniority, e.g. first sous chef; second sous chef). Below this level were the working members of the brigade, the specialists termed "chefs de partie" (section heads) presided over by the premier chefs comprising chef saucier; chef garde manger; chef patissier; chef rotisseur and chef poisssonier who could eventually expect to be elevated to more managerial roles by dint of their knowledge and successful passage through all of the other ranks. The lowest craft rank in the classic kitchen was that of the "apprenti", apprentice cook, who would labour to achieve the rank of "commis de cuisine" or cook in training, and hopefully, thereafter, work his (or sometimes her) way up the hierarchy.

Modern developments have meant that few hotels or restaurants maintain a brigade of any size, though in various modified forms, the partie system persists, even if the organizational structure of the kitchen brigade is somewhat flatter. The partie system has always provided the means of sensitizing, stimulating, training and developing individuals to the stage where a thorough grounding and eventual specialism in the craft of the chef could be codified. To some, Escoffier's regime was viewed as a bureaucratically founded phenomenon constraining innovation in cuisine. However, the consequences of the partie system for chefs was that it created a formal career structure and spawned a culinary aristocracy comprising those who had made it through the hierarchy to become chefs de cuisine. The partie system was and remains a means of managing the division of labour in hotel and restaurant kitchens providing developmental stages of packages of skills which have to be mastered as a requirement for promotion, while supplying the employer with a mechanism for breaking up the division of labour into more calculable units, thus allowing tighter financial and human resource controls.

Inherent to the rise of chef gastrosophers in modern times has been the partial rejection of the partie system which over the century has come to be perceived as: stultifying cuisine; limiting scope for creativity; and taking responsibility away from the individual and giving it to the group[1, pp. 138-9].

Fernand Point (1897-1955) is generally regarded as the father of modern gastrosophy. Point typified to the gastronomic world the ideal of the chef and of the high class French restaurant. He had few other interests than his cuisine, and was regarded by his peers as a genius and brilliant teacher. The career paths of his noviciates bear out his influence and include some of the best-known names in modern cuisine, among them being Roger Verge, Raymond Thuillier, Alain Chapelle, Paul Bocuse and the brothers Troisgros. The mark of Point's cuisine was its polished simplicity. This cooking was of the classical cuisine model, following traditional and conventional wisdom of the time, but he sowed the seed for what subsequently became known, in the 1970s, as nouvelle cuisine, and commenced the breakdown of professional secrecy among chefs, viewing such behaviour as generating sterility. Figure 1 displays a historiographical route of descent from acknowledged leaders of ancienne cuisine to contemporary cuisine. (Figure 1 omitted)

Justification for the genealogy postulated in Figure 1 rests on the observation that the individuals named have in some fashion progressed the aims of gastronomy by becoming leading figures in the expression of either classic or neo-classic cuisine. Direct beneficiaries of Point's gastronomy spawned their own proteges. However, Point, like many other premier chef gastrosophers, gained allies to his cause who had never worked with him, but were subsequently unified as indirect beneficiaries of his gastrosophy, either by assuming his work practices, or those of his proteges. One such is Anton Mosimann. Just as Mosimann can be seen to be influenced by the ideas of Point and an earlier generation of chefs, then he, too, has his proteges. They include Anton Edelmann, Executive Chef des Cuisines at The Savoy in London; Alan Hill, executive chef de cuisine at Gleneagles Hotel in Scotland; and Stephen Goodlad, executive at Burnham Beeches, Victoria, Australia. In this way have modern culinary styles been developed and perpetuated, with the formal bureaucratic partie system based on time-serving and the acquisition of skill being largely supplanted at the level of the entrepreneurial "chef as star" by a system of personal association and mentoring.

Ever fashion conscious, practitioners of nouvelle cuisine like Bocuse, Guerard and others respected Escoffier but evolved their cuisine unfettered by strict classical codifications. Stereotypic dishes from the era between Careme and Escoffier were rejected as over-rich and complex, as firmly associated with a previous age[1, pp. 141-6]. In came the principal canon of respect for flavour and texture of individual food commodities. Nouveaux cuisiners embraced and advocated authenticity, natural production and simplicity and nouvelle cuisine became assimilated into gastronomic culture emphasizing contemporary visual aesthetics derived from modern art, nutrition, lightness and creative culinary artistry, championed by diverse media including Gault and Millau in their magazine, Vive La Nouvelle Cuisine Francaise, gastronomic guides, and a flourishing trade in cookery titles offering increasingly more visual imagery of food. According to Norman, in Britain in 1991, some 800 food and wine books were published. Norman observes that in the modern cookery book, expenditure is more likely to go on photography, design and production than on the text[6].

Nouvelle cuisine has become the modern form of haute cuisine. Unlike with Escoffier's classical French cuisine, systemization of nouvelle cuisine goes against everything it stands for, namely innovation and experimentation. The lack of a codified repertoire for the new cuisine has led, in the view of some, to its dilution. Bocuse, Guerard and other founding members felt that the new cuisine opened itself to abuse from those who jumped on the culinary band-wagon, having little or no understanding of the "authentic" nature of nouvelle cuisine. As Levy has claimed[2], it was all to easy for the exquisite to become the ridiculous as young chefs' interpretation of nouvelle cuisine grew increasingly outrageous (in content and price) sparking criticism from those chefs regarded as its progenitors, from gastronomic writers and from the dining public more generally.

The Rise of the Chef Gastrosopher

In understanding the rise of the chef gastrosopher as "superstar", it is important to recognize the extent to which nouvelle cuisine provided the opportunity for many chefs to capitalize on the nouvelle style and make their reputations by developing highly personalized, even customized variants on the general themes propounded by culinarians such as Bocuse, Guerard, Verge, Witzigmann, Muller, Meneau, Haeberlin, Mosimann and others.

As noted earlier the chef gastrosopher is in most cases a businessman or woman who has to juggle to resolve artistic, marketing (especially branding) and financial imperatives. Creating and keeping up with the latest trends is an expensive affair. Some chefs undoubtedly accessorize their menus with dishes pirated from others. Analogies with fashion, music and the theatre are unavoidable. Chef gastrosophers vigorously market their businesses to ensure continued interest and support in their work, often to the extent that the restaurant becomes theatre, with chefs as the lead artists and the brigade as supporting cast. The client at this level of operation becomes patron of the art. They do not attend the restaurant or hotel only to feed. Mere feeding can be carried on elsewhere at a fraction of the cost since chef gastrosophers have a tendency to apply haute couture prices[1, pp. 146-93].

Gastrosophers' restaurants and businesses have been readily assimilated into gastronomic culture. They have been promoted as not only observing the indispensability of feeding for life, but as celebrating hospitality and cuisine as an art form. Without offering these unique selling propositions based on the idea of culinary art many of the world's premier chef gastrosophers' restaurants and businesses would cease to exist as viable concerns. What is constructed around these individuals is the idea of a planned quality environment with great emphasis placed on fresh, high quality foods. The art of presentation and overall packaging is one where the product (the restaurant) is imbued with a unique personality and identity[1, pp. 210-11]. This, then, is the holism alluded to earlier, for it is not food alone that is important in modern haute cuisine, but the complete dining concept which needs to reconcile artistic and business tensions.

Chef gastrosophers being businessmen and women, and many of them chef patrons (owning their own restaurants, hotels and related ventures), cannot always be at their stove, and their success and survival depends to a very large extent on marketing themselves and their establishments as widely as possible. The international dimension to gastronomy is becoming increasingly salient as chef gastrosophers seek to establish European identities for their businesses in order to provide them with a key area for expansion in the foreseeable future [1, pp. 253-7].

Alliance between gastronomic art form and the commercial world is not necessarily a comfortable one however. The partnership between fashionable culinary art and hospitality business imperatives requires an overall communications strategy. Both rigid traditionalists and the outrageously interpretative seek to communicate appeal to specific markets. Anton Mosimann has involved himself in the sponsorship market which has seen rapid growth even in a prolonged period of recession, as have Paul Bocuse and Roger Verge and others. They address key marketing objectives, where any sponsorship has to enhance the public's positive image of the gastrosopher's business[1, pp. 146-90].

Food, Gastrosophy and Fashion

Top chef gastrosophers are therefore not only in the business of running restaurants. In order to enhance the potential for commercial success, many have necessarily become media personalities. For the premier entrepreneurial chef gastrosophers, public relations play an essential role. It is they (or their PR machinery) who disseminate information to the specific media the gastrosopher wishes to reach in order to maintain a recognizable profile. One commentator, David Levin, has stated: "I believe the restaurant business is more in the fashion business than anything else. Restaurants cannot escape that, you cannot stand still. You must not maintain, you must not even endeavour to maintain the same product over a period. You have to move with the times"[7].

Today's premier chef gastrosophers then, have recognized the importance of fashionability by establishing their own marketing niche within contemporary culinary culture. They have been astute enough to recognize that the international hospitality industry has a dynamic which requires the business proprietor to innovate, to create bold images and identities, and to market these. Presentation is often the secret of competitive advantage. The merchandizing of own label product ranges is one very simple and very effective way of doing this. More and more chefs today lucratively endorse other merchandise, equipment, plant and companies[1, pp. 146-90]. In many cases the range is sold in-house as is the case with Blanc, Mosimann, Bocuse, Guerard, Verge, and others. Much of the range can be taken away (purchased by diners and visitors) thereby extending chefs' links with purchasers and eventual users. If sold externally in boutiques and shops (as is the case with Bocuse, Blanc and Verge) it can introduce new custom and thus generate extra income.

The "star" status of these chef gastrosophers is self-cultivated and a major driving force of these individuals. Utilizing the strategies and techniques identified above, the gastrosopher chefs have been able to differentiate themselves from other chefs quite startlingly. Whereas status and rank in the Escoffier style culinary world was based as much on training, length of service and apprenticeships -- "doing one's time" -- the status hierarchy of chefs in the modern age is much flatter. Serving in the world's great hotels is no longer a guarantee of star status, recognition or deference -- either from peers or public. Those who occupy positions at the apex of the modern culinary hierarchy are those who have demonstrated individualism, entrepreneurship and a willingness to take risks. In this sense, modern chef gastrosophers have reflected, in Britain at least, the spirit of the age, and in this they have been aided and abetted by a copy hungry media.

Accepted standards of what gastronomy comprises have never been established, even within a gastronomic elite. Furthermore, gastronomy and the development of a gastronomic culture has been of little interest to the majority of individuals. The transmission of gastronomic culture has, to a large extent, been confined to, associated with and fostered by a small but socially prominent elite who have banded together to promote eating as a social activity which cultivates refined taste in the pleasure of the table. But, at the same time as gastronomy is perceived as elitist, there has been, paradoxically, a dilution and devaluation of many of the images associated with it, which can be viewed in the context of change in the meaning of the word gourmet. The word "gourmet" (precisely a noun) has over the last few years become adjectival. In this new formation, it in the main, confers distinction and exoticism on foods and food products not normally associated with traditional, elitist, gastronomic concepts, but which, by virtue of such labelling, have acquired gastronomic legitimacy in the eyes of much larger markets, in many cases to the detriment of the original tenor of the word.

Conclusion

A succession of cultural, metaphysical and technological factors has brought many chef gastrosophers to the position they occupy today. They would like us to believe that their overriding qualification is a sense of responsibility for their actions, dedication to their craft and professionalism when, in point of fact, much of their activity has been much less romantically directed to sustaining independence and fulfilling driving ambitions for culinary stardom. Gastrosophers mainly operate within the upper reaches of gastronomy. They have created a virtual revolution in culinary philosophy and practice, and spurred an eclectic profusion of concept cuisines. This new breed of professional offers much more than a meal experience alone. The hospitality offered is intended to be holistic, encompassing food, decor, design, wine, people and service. At the pinnacle of culinary expression chef gastrosophers attempt a total experience, offering fleeting artistic theatre distilled from haute cuisine. Just how successful they will be in the long term is open to question, but research to date suggests a willingness on the part of wealthy consumers to pay for this new and luxurious theatre. In chronicling the cuisine of chef gastrosophers, it is possible to draw parallels with top fashion houses whose designers bi-annually produce new collections or remodel and update existing themes or lines. The homology has not been lost on many of today's chef gastrosophers. Michel Lorain (a top French chef gastrosopher) scrutinizes the pages of Vogue and is then able to assess the seasons colours and possibly combine some of these in the creation of dishes for his menu[1, pp. 146-90]. Essentially, the chef gastrosopher, like the designer, constructs the ensemble (menu) in the mind, taking into account changing tastes and food fashions of the year. Current and past examples of the outcomes of these processes are Thai inspired concoctions on the menu, gourmet pizzas, the oriental spicing of dishes, risottos, anything in a sausage skin or wrapped in caul, and anything smoked. These were the chef gastrosophers' "food" collections of the past few years and worked their way across European frontiers, often being piratically remodelled by chefs in all kinds of hotels and restaurants.

Most chef gastrosophers will construct few true designer creations in their lives. Most remodel that which has been worked on in the past, by changing ingredients, cooking methods and menu terminology, by utilizing their own culinary repository, from their staff's pooled ideas, by looking for ideas on foreign travels, and through the culinary piracy of the work of other gastrosophers. The phenomenon of fame and star status in gastronomy is not created by a single individual. The true success of chef gastrosophers is dependent on a company of skilled crafts people functioning collaboratively and fraternally, of which the chef gastrosopher (borrowing musical metaphor) is really the conductor.

This international and privileged class of premier chef gastrosophers firmly believe in their destiny to rule twentieth century contemporary cuisine. In general it is a fraternal elite, (women have not featured in 2-3 star Michelin awards) which has established its own old boys' network. It has, since the 1970s, spun a web of its own proteges across Europe, set up exchanges of personnel, and maintained amicable (though fiercely competitive) links with other key players. The major difference between this art form and others, and why it has developed such an articulate fashion conscious band of devotees, can be partially explained by reference to Bocuse's view that it is une fete rapide, epherneral[1, p. 151]. All that is left at the end of the meal is the experience set to memory.

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