

DEFINING CUISINE AND TYPES OF CUISINE

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ABSTRACT

When people are discussing about cuisine often there are inconsistencies on the perception of what exactly cuisine is and what it includes, especially when talking about a specific type of cuisine. The problem with precisely determining the types of cuisine is active. The goal of this paper is to give a universal definition for cuisine and to determine the categories of cuisine based on different criteria. Therefore the different definitions will be analyzed to summarize the most important elements into one definition. Achieving the second goal of this paper will be approach by the different adjectives given to cuisine (such as national, international, vegetarian etc.) that can help identify the categories of cuisine in which later different types will be determined. The results of this paper will help future researches to easily identify what is and what isn't a part of a specific type of cuisine and how to approach the identification problem further by giving a frame of the different types of cuisine are.

KEY WORDS: *cuisine, national cuisine, hospitality, food, culinary tourism*

INTRODUCTION

The word *cuisine* can refer to few things, the room or space in which the food is being prepared or the style of cooking. Even in the language of the authors, Macedonian language, the word *cuisine* (кујна) has those two meanings.

Its origin is from the French word *cuisine*, which refers to cooking as art or kitchen. However this word has become internationally used by many countries whose languages are not connected to the French language. Its use has become so accepted that nowadays it is used in the other languages in its French form – *cuisine*.

Some of the dictionaries define the word as follows:

The Cambridge definition of *cuisine* is simple and states that *cuisine* is “a style of cooking” (Cambridge dictionary, n.d.).

In the Macedonian language the word *cuisine* is defined as “way of cooking, typical food (for specific people, regions)” (Дигитален речник на македонскиот јазик, n.d.).

The Meriam-Webster dictionary gives a similar definition stating that *cuisine* is “manner of preparing food : style of cooking” adding also “the food prepared” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

This paper is focused on the later meaning of the word –*cuisine* as art or style of cooking, the complexity behind it and the types of *cuisine* that can be determined.

Literature review

Before presenting our own definition that will introduce the *cuisine* with its entire characteristic, meanings and complexities, we are going to look into few other definitions from different sources. When it comes to the encyclopedias their approach is more detailed. Two are presented below:

“*Cuisine*, the foods and methods of preparation traditional to a region or population. The major factors shaping a *cuisine* are climate, which in large measure determines the native raw materials that are available to the cook; economic conditions, which regulate trade in delicacies and imported foodstuffs; and religious or sumptuary laws, under which certain foods are required or proscribed. (Encyclopedia Britanica, n.d.)”

“Cuisine (from French *cuisine*, "cooking; culinary art; kitchen"; ultimately from Latin *coquere*, "to cook") is a characteristic style of cooking practices and traditions, often associated with a specific culture. Cuisines are often named after the geographic areas or regions from which they originate. A cuisine is primarily influenced by the ingredients that are available locally or through trade. Religious food laws, such as Islamic dietary laws and Jewish dietary laws, can also exercise a strong influence on cuisine. Regional food preparation traditions, customs and ingredients often combine to create dishes unique to a particular region.” (World Heritage Encyclopedia Edition, n.d.)

Some other definitions on cuisine are:

Cuisine –art of attractive taste, luxury which is passion and leads to good mood... Motagne shortly defines it as a science of the person. With this term are strictly determined scientific methods, to manage simple cuisines and those of poor people, art of preparing the simplest meals to satisfy more than the biological needs. (Ferguson, 2003:7)

“A characteristic manner of style of preparing food: (eg.) Spanish cuisine. A style of manner of cooking: French cuisine. (Cookery) the food prepared by a restaurant, household etc.” (FarlexInc, n.d.)

The style of cooking formed by specific dishes, techniques and ingredients, usually connected to a specific geographic region or culture is cuisine. The cuisine of a particular region is created by combining regional customs, ingredients and food preparation traditions, thus creating a unique cuisine particular for the region. (Albala, 2011)

Defining cuisine

Following these few examples, as well as additional literature on the problem of cuisine and its meaning, we are giving the following definition:

The cuisine is a specific set of practices and traditions in cooking, often connected to specific culture or time period of history.

According to this definition the cuisine includes specific customs, habits and traditions in cooking, methods of preparing the food and techniques of cooking, the time needed for food to be considered cooked, the use of ingredients, the choice and combination of products that consist the meal, the quantities being cooked, types and quantity of spice that are being used etc., that are specific for a current geographical or historical area. This means that the cuisine refers to a

geographic unit –region (e.g. Mediterranean cuisine), country (e.g. Chinese cuisine) or a region within a country (e.g. Sicilian cuisine); refers to current timeline of history (e.g. antique cuisine) or it can include both aspects (e.g. Haute cuisine, that refers to French cuisine near the end of the XIX century).

Types of cuisine

To determine the criteria by which the cuisine can be categorized, we have started with the different adjectives that are added to cuisine, looked into the floodways that require specific cooking techniques and such. Based on that we are suggesting the following criteria for determining the types of cuisine:

- the origin of the food
- types of diets
- geographic aspect
- historical aspect

Types of cuisine based on the origin of the food

Based on the origin of the food the cuisine can be defined as national, international and traditional.

National cuisine is probably one of the most complicated types of cuisine. There is a lot of debate on how to define ones national cuisine. The problems occur from the fact that the national cuisine is not simply defined by the territorial aspect. A lot of other factors influence it, such as geographical, economic, historical, political, religious and so on. (Anderson, 2005) What these influences are showing us is that the national cuisine is not a constant category, but it is changing under these influences. A lot of time needs to pass before these changes take place and are also happening during a long period.

One of the most important sociological factors is the taste of the individual as a group. It means that each individual has a specific taste of his own, preferences characteristic for one. Most of these preferences in a society are coming through the process of growing up and education by the parents, friends, relatives, friends and such, that shape the taste of the person to fit the taste of the community. This taste can simultaneously change at more individuals that can further influence the change of taste within the community. The national cuisine changes when this happens. (Ferguson, 2003)

Anderson (2005) talks about two ways of approaching the complex matter of defining one's national cuisine. One way is to give a very broad definition,

stating all the meals and type of meals within the national cuisine that is being defined. The second approach is to determine a simple rule that will refer to the basic characteristic of what is considered one's cuisine, thus being clear without being perfect.

An interesting principal that can be used is the flavor principal (E. Rozin 1983) which points out that each national cuisine is determined by a specific flavor given by different combinations of ingredients and ways of preparing and cooking the food, as well as the use of spices.

One very important thing to keep in mind when talking about a national cuisine is that what is determining the cuisine today doesn't mean it will be its main characteristic after five, fifty or hundred years.

International cuisine. There are two approaches in defining the international cuisine. The first one is that the international cuisine is something that is internationally accepted, meaning a cuisine whose characteristic is same all over the world. An example of that would be the McDonalds' fast food chain restaurants. Their offer is the same all over the world, thus making it an international food.

The second approach talks about international cuisine as cuisine prepared and consumed outside its country of origin. To simplify this, an international cuisine is the national cuisine of a country prepared in another country. This means that the international cuisine is at the same time national cuisine of another country. The Italian cuisine in the USA is international, but in Italy is national cuisine.

We are supporting the second approach toward defining the international cuisine. Our argument is that if the international cuisine is viewed as cuisine that is accepted all over the world, then we are talking about *universal cuisine*. The universal cuisine is broadly accepted food that is always same, no matter where it is being prepared. It is consisted of individual recopies of different national cuisines, or food whose origin can't be clearly stated.

Traditional cuisine. The food and foodways are part of people's culture and as such it becomes part of the cultural values that tradition includes. Even more one can talk about traditional foodways, referring to the habits of food consumption, types of food being consumed, as well as the ways and techniques of food preparation and cooking the food, which have been passed on from generation to generation.

Traditional cuisine is similar to national cuisine in the process of being sustained through socializing and learning. While one child the decisions of what and how food is consumed is done by parents. Later when one can make choices one is

influenced by what he was thought when being a child, meaning that one's habits and food preferences have already been formed by the influence of his family and the environment (school, faculty, working area, food on events etc.). At this point it is unlikely that one can make changes in the foodways. The thing that pushes apart traditional from national food is the fact that the national food is referring to the current foodways including newly accepted ones, while traditional food always refers to the practices that have been passed on from generation to generation. These changes are happening due to the new ways of living that come with the progress and modernization. A great example is the process of globalization which broths cultures closer together. Due to this process new products were introduced in different cuisines that slowly became part of their cooking habits, thus changing the traditional foodways and becoming part of one's national cuisine.

Types of cuisine based on the diet

These categories of cuisine come from the different diets that individuals are practicing. They refer to specific rules to what can be eaten, how it should be consumed, the techniques of preparing and cooking, time of consumptions, exclusion of products and so on. These types of cuisines are constantly growing, due to the changing opinions of what is healthy or not and how food influences our organism. Some of the types of cuisine based on the diet are: vegetarian, macrobiotic, diabetic and other health issue related cuisines, the currently popular chrono cuisine and keto cuisine and others. Some of these diets are not connected to the trend of the popular opinion and are constant, such as the vegetarian and diabetic cuisine.

Vegetarian cuisine is the cuisine that follows the vegetarian diet rules, which is excluding food of animal origin. The individuals following these rules are called vegetarians. Although this definition seems clear, there is a debate concerning few animal products, such as milk, eggs and honey. Those who respect the rules of vegetarian diet are known as vegetarians, with few subcategories depending on whether they consume or not the three previously mentioned products, presented on the table below:

Table 1: Types of vegetarians based on what they consume (own source)

Type of vegetarian	Meat, fish	Eggs	Milk and dairy products	Honey
Lakto-ovovegetarians	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lactovegetarians	No	No	No	Yes
Ovovegetarians	No	Yes	No	Yes
Vegans	No	No	No	Rarely

The vegetarian diet is considered a healthy diet. According to the American Dietetic Association and the Dietitians of Canada the well planned vegetarian diet can fully satisfy the needs of a person during all the life stages, while many researchers have proven that this cuisine lowers the risks of cancer. The vegetarian diet can help in sustaining a healthy weight and lower the risks of heart diseases. Another advantage of sticking to this diet is having healthy teeth, due to the avoidance of the lactic acid which is bad for the teeth. When it comes to cancer of the abdomen, breasts or prostate cancer, there are no significant differences between vegetarians and meat consumers.

We shouldn't forget that although many of the nutritional values can be provided through vegetables, there are few vitamins such as A, D and K, as well as some proteins and the essential amino acids that can be found in animal products only. The **health related cuisine** is different from healthy cuisine, healthy food or healthy diet. The main reason is that the latter refer to products that are considered healthy in general, but some can be harmful for a group of people that are suffering health issues. For example, fruit is generally considered healthy food, but for diabetics it can be harmful if not consumed properly. The health related cuisine refers to strict rules of foodways to prevent worsening of the current health status of an illness. This cuisine is prescribed by a appropriate doctor or a nutritionist. As an example within this type of cuisine we are going to elaborate the diabetic diet.

The diabetes is a condition that prevents the normal dissolving of carbohydrates as in a healthy person. This is the reason why the foodways are the most important chain in curing this illness. Many of the diabetics can live a normal life, avoiding the intensive consumption of cures (pills, insulin and such) thanks to the diabetic cuisine. There are six basic principals of the diabetic diet (Центар за дијабет, n.d.):

1. The following food products shouldn't be consumed at all: sygarm honey, jam, marmalade, cookies, chocolate, cake, dry fruits, syrups, fruit juices with sugar and alcoholic beverages.
2. The food should be sweetened with artificial sweeteners.
3. Precise quantities of bread, pasta, rice, beans, potatoes and fruit can be consumed.
4. The body weight should be kept in the frame determined by a doctor. That is the standard or ideal body weight that suits one's height and age.
5. Balanced and regular food consumption –each day specific quantities of:
 - a. milk and dairy products
 - b. bread and other starch consisting products
 - c. meat and fish
 - d. vegetables
 - e. fruit
 - f. just a little bit of fat.

This cuisine regulates the way of food preparation and also the quantity and intervals in which the food can be consumed. Because of its complexity the newly diagnosed diabetics are being given a manual with instructions.

Geographic aspects

The geographical aspects are defining cuisine by a specific geographical territory. This territory can include a country, a region or a whole continent. When we are talking about the territory of country then we are talking about the national cuisine of that country. This aspect considers that within a national cuisine a further division can be made based on the geographical sub regions of the country.

The regional aspect includes different national cuisines of more country whose traditions and practices of cooking have a lot of common elements and similarities. These common characteristics are often determined by the climate as a factor that influences the products that can be grown in a region (vegetables, fruits, life stock and so on). A good example of this is the Mediterranean cuisine (which includes the cuisines of Greece, Italy and Spain) or oriental cuisine.

When the cuisine is considered on a level of continents, as the name itself suggests it includes the most common characteristic of the cuisines of that continent. The most popular category in this type of cuisine is the Asian cuisine.

Historical aspect

The historical aspect used for determining the types of cuisine refers to the evolution of the practices and habits in cooking and food consumptions starting from beginning of the cooking process till today. The historical aspect is tightly connected to the style of preparing, cooking and serving food and their evolution. So when this aspect is analyzed the style is one of the most important elements. Another important thing that needs to be considered is the geographical factor, since historical events have always been connected to specific territories and regions. This aspect can be used on a different scope, starting from a country to a whole continent.

As an example of historical cuisines we are going to take the food evolution in Europe as a continent, where we can determine the following cuisines:

- ancient cuisine
- middle-age cuisine
- early modern European cuisine
- classic cuisine (which before was referred as haute cuisine)
- modern cuisine

The ancient cuisine has its foundation in the Hellenistic cuisine (ancient Greek), which is followed by the Roman cuisine. The Hellenistic cuisine is considered to be the beginning of the gastronomical traditions in Europe. The base of this cuisine is the “Mediterranean triad”: wheat, olive oil and vine. The Roman cuisine took the philosophy of the Hellenistic cuisine as a core value.

The one common thing for all the countries in Europe is the class division. One way for the rich to separate themselves from the poor were the huge and rich feasts, where the accent was on abundant of food by both types and quantity.

The early modern European cuisine is introducing the switch from quantity to quality food consumption. It is a period in which the taste are being refined and the use of spices is adding to the taste instead of dominating.

The cuisine that starts near the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the following is named as classical cuisine. This cuisine is practiced today as well, while its recipes are widely accepted and spread all over the world. During the period in which this cuisine was formed it had the name haute (high) cuisine.

The modern cuisine is a reflection of today’s foodways, especially the new dynamic way of living and the globalization. Its beginning is determined by the

appearance of the fast food chain restaurants, food deliveries and half-cooked meals.

CONCLUSIONS

The cuisine is a very complex term that goes beyond its basic dictionary meaning. The complexity comes from uniting different traditions and practices in the foodways. One cuisine refers to the common elements starting from buying a product and preferences during this, the preparation of the product for cooking, the mixture of different products, the herbs and spices that add to the flavor, the way the products are being cooked, the way they are being served and eaten. Sometimes the elements that are common can be determined by a geographical territory or by a time period.

Cuisine is diverse, which can be concluded by the different criteria by which a cuisine can be categorized. Yet there are elements that connect this diversity into a whole with its own characteristic, which may be unique to a geographical area or universal and go beyond the borders of country. Cuisine should be something that brings people together.

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