

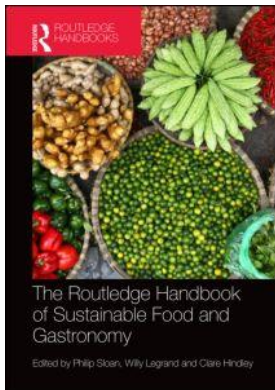
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4

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Culinary heritage, nostalgia, and food history

Paul Cleave

Introduction

Our food, how and what we eat is constantly changing. Food historians have documented the evolution of our diets (Drummond and Wilbraham, 1957; Spencer, 2002; Tannahill, 1973), suggesting that change is stimulated by many factors: political, social, economic, and ethical. These are complemented by Visser (1991: 345), who draws on examples of culinary tradition in the consumption of special, celebratory meals and day-to-day eating. Spang (2000: 2) identifies the origins of modern commercial hospitality, and the restaurant as a space of urban sociability since emerging in the late eighteenth century. Learning from the past and the experiences of others develops our understanding of society and the evolving role of gastronomy.

This chapter proposes that an appreciation of food history in the context of Lashley's (2007) domains of domestic and commercial hospitality is significant in future gastronomic/culinary development. Drawing on the valuable work of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century food writers – for example, Newnham-Davis (1912, 1914), Hartley (1979), White (1932), and the English Folk Cookery Association in the 1930s – it includes examples of European hotels and restaurants. These provide a framework for investigation, and demonstrate how foods are influenced by other cultures and traditions, and are subsequently presented to the visiting public.

Utilizing the timescale of a century, the changing experience of hospitality will be employed to show how food is subject to trends and fashions and that, as our taste and lifestyles change, so does food consumption. Examples from the early twentieth century demonstrate how culinary taste is influenced by world events and technology, and that the experience of eating away from home has evolved. This is an important period in the historiography of gastronomy and hospitality. The public were becoming accustomed to travel for leisure, whether on a day excursion, staying at a holiday camp, or on a European tour (Graves and Hodge, 1941: 380–381). Trends in leisure consumption are identified by Pimlott (1976: 241–242), who suggests that, by the early twentieth century, holidaymaking had become a cult and was for many associated with the prevailing attraction of health resorts and an interest in fitness (Fortescue-Fox, 1938). Hall and Gössling (2013: 10–14), assert that there is an increasing public and academic interest in local foods, sustainability, and food tourism. A

growing world population and changes in dietary preference are contrasted with the proliferation of local food systems. These are characterized by a close relationship between producer and consumer. The origins and logic of farmers' markets, Slow Food, and sourcing local produce and suppliers can be detected in examples from our collective culinary history. This chapter explores origins and influences of current trends in sustainable food production and consumption.

Food consumption: eating away from home

As the public became accustomed to travel for leisure and pleasure in the early twentieth century, food and hospitality became an important component of the experience. Guide books – for example, Muirhead's, *The Blue Guides, England* (1939) – provide details of food and hospitality provision, indicating an interest in regional food that would later contribute to the emergence of food tourism. Hall and Sharples (2003) include in their definition of food tourism: visiting food producers, food festivals, and restaurants, with food as the primary motivating factor for travelling to the destination. Earlier generations, too, had demonstrated an interest in food and travel.

Writing soon after the end of World War I, Rey (1920: iv–v) acknowledges that French cuisine is '*de rigueur*' at all the first-class hotels and restaurants. Menus, it is suggested, at these establishments were always written in culinary French, some of the terms considered irksome, even to epicures with some knowledge of French. The encyclopaedia reflects on the social mores of the day regarding dining out, for example lavish dinners with extensive menus. However, it does indicate an interest in traditional food. There are few references to regional specialities, but readers are advised that the United Kingdom has some appetizing national dishes, for example Irish stew and haggis. The average Englishman, Rey (1920) concludes, does not think he has made a good dinner unless he has partaken of a 'large joint of meat, a pie, or pudding, Cheddar or Stilton cheese, accompanied by a good supply of wine or beer'.

In the United Kingdom, consumption of local food, including that produced in the Empire, was encouraged through initiatives such as the National Mark scheme, introduced in 1928. Walter Elliot, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, writing in the foreword to *National Mark Recipes* (Anon, 1935: 6), described the National Mark in terms of its standardization, and guarantee of food quality. The food produced in Britain was considered to be of a high standard (Herbodeau and Thalamas, 1955: 2). In purchasing National Mark produce, consumers were advised that they were helping to 'restore prosperity to our oldest industry – agriculture'. Trewin (2010) suggests that by the late twentieth century, consumers were again encouraged to demand local and home-grown produce in order to revive agricultural and artisan food production.

Looking at food through the lens of history provides an insight into the experiences of consumers and producers. This is evident in the reflections of Lieutenant Colonel Newnham-Davis, food writer, gourmet, and gastronomic correspondent of *The Pall Mall Gazette*. In the early twentieth century, Newnham-Davis compiled two comprehensive restaurant guides, *The Gourmet's Guide to London* (1914) and *The Gourmet's Guide to Europe* (1912). These are significant in that they present in detail the restaurant and culinary landscape of the belle époque, an era of conspicuous consumption, eating out in public, and leisured travel. Newnham-Davis' narratives may be contrasted with the trend for more modest hospitality outlets, notably, cafés and tea rooms (Kinchin 1991, 1998; Cleave, 2011). Shaw et al. (2006) identify tea shops as significant social spaces for women, encouraging eating out in public. Examples of restaurants and tea rooms show that the public were becoming accustomed to and aspiring to eating out for pleasure, entertainment, and experience, at home and abroad.

In *The Gourmet's Guide to London*, Newnham-Davis (1914: 313–319) visits the Cavendish Hotel. This was run by Mrs Lewis, ‘A great British woman cook’, with a female kitchen brigade. He provides details of the ‘splendid, airy and spacious’ kitchen, where he met Margaret, the cook who was to prepare his lunch. After the meal of grilled oysters on celery root, followed by a quail pudding (invented by Mrs Lewis, and a favourite of her patron, King Edward VII), he resumed his tour of the kitchens where coffee was served. Here, backstage, Newnham-Davis discussed changes in gastronomy with Mrs Lewis, who informed him that, in her experience, diners had become more demanding, discerning, and knowledgeable about their food.

In contrast, *The Gourmet's Guide to Europe* (1912) identifies a wide range of hotels, restaurants, and cafés, where, when eating out in Imperial Europe on the eve of World War I, a universal culinary French terminology was used in most establishments.

It is interesting to note that, in the Berlin chapter, Newnham-Davis informs readers that the city is plentifully supplied with restaurants. These are differentiated as: the *classic* restaurant, the *hotel* restaurant, and *restaurants of the people*. Borchardt's, shown in Figure 4.1, whose patrons included Prussian royalty, aristocrats, and diplomats, is described as a *classic* restaurant with the dignity and atmosphere of a classic restaurant in any capital (Newnham-Davis, 1912: 216–217). Its public dining room of crimson silk and dark wood, an ample menu of German dishes, the great variety of the lunchtime cold buffet, and admirable wine cellars, are praised. The classic dish, *Schnitzel Holstein*, is said to have been created at Borchardt's for Friedrich Von Holstein. The original restaurant was destroyed during World War II, but almost half a century later the culinary landmark reopened in an adjacent building.

Similarly, another gastronomic legacy is identified in the *Hotel Adlon* (Newnham-Davis, 1912: 221), one of Europe's leading luxury hotels of the belle époque. Destroyed at the end



Figure 4.1 Postcard, Borchardt's, Berlin, c. 1900.
Source: author's collection.

of World War II, it was symbolically rebuilt on its original site following the reunification of Germany in the 1990s. It is portrayed in the context of a *hotel* restaurant, ‘mightily gorgeous with its marble and gilding’, and it is noted the Kaiser had paid the chef, M. Bodart, the compliment of visiting his kitchen. The *Café Josty*, described by Hessel (2010) as belonging to the old times, and reawakened almost 80 years after it had closed, marks a nostalgic return to another era, one evocative of the gastronomic, cultural, social, and artistic past of the city.

Examples from Newnham-Davis’ guides not only introduced his readers to some of the best hotels and restaurants in Europe, but also invited them to learn about the patrons, chefs, and waiters who contributed to their success. Newnham-Davis encouraged potential diners to discover more about their gastronomic encounter, and to search for regional food and specialities. This heralds consumers’ interest in exploring further the elements of Goffman’s (1959) front-stage and backstage social interaction – in the context of the theatrical environment of hospitality provision. The influential *Gourmet’s Guides* (Newnham-Davis, 1912, 1914) identify the chef as a celebrity, the importance and social status of place, and that travel has influenced the foods we eat.

London too has recently revived one of its former luxury restaurants, Boulestin, 70 years after the death of its founder, Xavier Marcel Boulestin. Its revival draws attention to Boulestin as an influential food writer, restaurateur, and first (BBC) television chef in 1937 (Parkin, 1981). Houston-Bowden (1975: 44) suggests that the instantaneous success of the original restaurant is attributed, in part, to Boulestin’s policy of running an authentic French restaurant with Parisian atmosphere, and an *a la carte* menu. The new Boulestin menu uses traditional recipes inspired by the past, but presented in a contemporary style. Boulestin not only encouraged the British public to dine in his restaurant, but also to prepare similar, classic French dishes in their homes through demonstrations, and numerous cookery books, for example *Simple French Cooking for English Homes* (1923) and *What Shall We Have Today?* (1931). Burnett (2004: 198) describes him as the ‘culinary icon of the age’, influential through his writing, restaurant, cookery school, and television appearances, a celebrity model that would be developed by subsequent generations.

These examples, perhaps, affirm the public’s interest in and affiliation to the culinary past. Wechsberg (1953: 110) reflects on the influence of some of Europe’s leading restaurants in the turbulent period following World War II. He notes that Gundel’s in Budapest had combined the very best of Hungarian ingredients (sourced from local markets by its patron, Charles Gundel) and culinary traditions, with the techniques and influence of French haute cuisine.

The celebrities, grand hotels, cafés, and conspicuous consumption of a former era appear to have a relevance to the present and a new generation of diners. Examples from Europe provide a perspective of regional differentiation, but could be applied to other areas. It is interesting to note the nostalgia for another age and to understand in some way the longing for a previous era. Hotels, restaurants, and hospitality outlets are important in illustrating the evolution of eating out and the evolving interest in food through the twentieth century.

Contemporary records of chefs and hoteliers tell us much about the way our interests in food have evolved. Two influential figures from the nineteenth century, Escoffier (Herbodeau and Thalamas, 1955) and Ritz (1981: 60) – who is said to have realized the power of imagination and value of illusion early in his career – are important in developing an awareness of culinary influences and a gastronomic heritage that, today, in its diversity includes versions of everyday dishes of peasant origin and culinary creations of Michelin star chefs and restaurants.

Grand hotels encouraged dining out for pleasure and many resort hotels provided dinner dances and entertainment. However, during the inter-bellum and the depression, in the

period between the two World Wars, some establishments encouraged business with relatively modest charges. Lyons, famous for its tea shops offered its customers a competitively priced dinner dance menu (see Figure 4.2). Lyons' menu, with its caviar, *hors d'oeuvre*, and jellied consommé, is typical of the food served in hotels at that time, and would have been considered sophisticated (Spencer, 2002), stimulating a buoyant demand from aspiring middle-class customers (Burnett, 2004: 193). Simon (1930: 13) describes the impact of Lyons as significant in terms of popular catering provision and encouraging the public to eat out for enjoyment and leisure.



Figure 4.2 Lyons' menu, souvenir postcard, 13 August 1931.
Source: author's collection.

Regional food and local specialities

It is important that the simple dishes and local foods that are examples of the ordinary and commonplace in a local diet are not overlooked. In the context of tourism these are frequently transformed into the extraordinary as foods are re-localized, and tourists search for the authentic, regional, and local specialities. Towner (1995) suggests that, in tourism, the everyday and seemingly mundane experience, including food, is often discounted. Although in the environment of tourism and hospitality these are often overshadowed by elaborate, Michelin-starred food experiences, they both have their place.

Numerous traditional English recipes were collected by Florence White, and published as *Good Things in England* (1932). This was important gastronomic and cultural research as it stimulated an interest in gastronomic regional differentiation and food heritage. It was followed in 1935 by White's and the English Folk Cookery Association's (EFCA) *Good Food Register*, a booklet for travellers interested in regional cookery. It listed catering establishments serving regional dishes. For example, the Royal Clarence Hotel in Exeter, Devon (believed to be England's first hotel) was apparently noted for its 'Dripping Cake', a simple fruit cake made with fat from the roasted joint and served for afternoon tea.

The EFCA were concerned that many traditional dishes and regional specialities would be lost if not recorded and brought to the attention of the public and the catering industry. Mennell (1985: 221), indicates that, in England, industrialization and urbanization had disrupted the transmission of rural lore and traditions, including food.

The work of the EFCA is important at a time when the many sectors of the hospitality and catering industry were still under the influence of Escoffier, a man of vision and a perfectionist (Herbodeau and Thalamas, 1955), and classic French cuisine. At this time Dorothy Hartley was travelling the country gathering material for *Food in England* (1979). Together, Hartley's and the EFCA's work recorded dishes and culinary skills that were disappearing. Some of these have now experienced a renaissance, such as regional cheeses, artisan bakers, and rare breeds. The emergence of local food groups – for example farmers' markets and Slow Food – who are keen to return to traditional methods of production has also contributed to the renewed interest in regional and traditional food. Dougherty et al. (2013: 1–3) suggest that such groups are significant in current models of local food tourism networks, encouraging food consumption by a host and visiting market. Farmers' markets, local restaurants, and speciality food shops are identified as key actors in the network.

Case study: Devon, the south-west of England

It is interesting to note that historically there has been an interest in the food of the locals, rustics, and peasants in the south-west of England. This was noted by numerous travellers (Fiennes, 1984; Defoe, 1962; Mavor, 1798) who demonstrated a public interest in the routine and ordinary food, in addition to that produced in hotels and restaurants. In contrast to many urban developments, with a concentration of city hotels and restaurants, the south-west of England is a region with a long tradition of food production and tourism. Its history, climate, landscape, and agriculture contributed to its appeal as a tourist destination. Trewin (2010) indicates a renewed and specialized 'food' interest in the county that draws on elements of its culinary and agricultural past. A similar situation could be found in other areas, for example Italy, and France (Croce and Perri, 2010).

The county of Devon's culinary past is influenced by its agriculture, and that it is a maritime county. Both have contributed to its appeal as a tourist destination. Harris (1907: 65)

describes Devon as the land of junket and cream, and as apple country. He suggests that the Phoenician tin traders taught the old people the secret of making clotted cream (Harris, 1907: 35). Trewin (2010: 16) identifies a diversity of landscapes in the county, two contrasting coastlines, moorland, and lush farmland contributing to a wide range of local ingredients, including fish, meat, and dairy produce. These are apparent in its agricultural history and culinary traditions, and in the legacy of its hotels, restaurants, and commercial hospitality.

The Imperial Hotel in Torquay (Figure 4.3) provides an example of a nineteenth-century outpost of commercial hospitality. It dates from the development of the south-west of England as a fashionable tourist destination. A resort benefitting from a mild climate and lush vegetation, it was frequently equated with the south of France, Monte Carlo, and the Riviera. Boxer (1994: 9) indicates that the rapid development of the 'grand hotel' in the nineteenth century

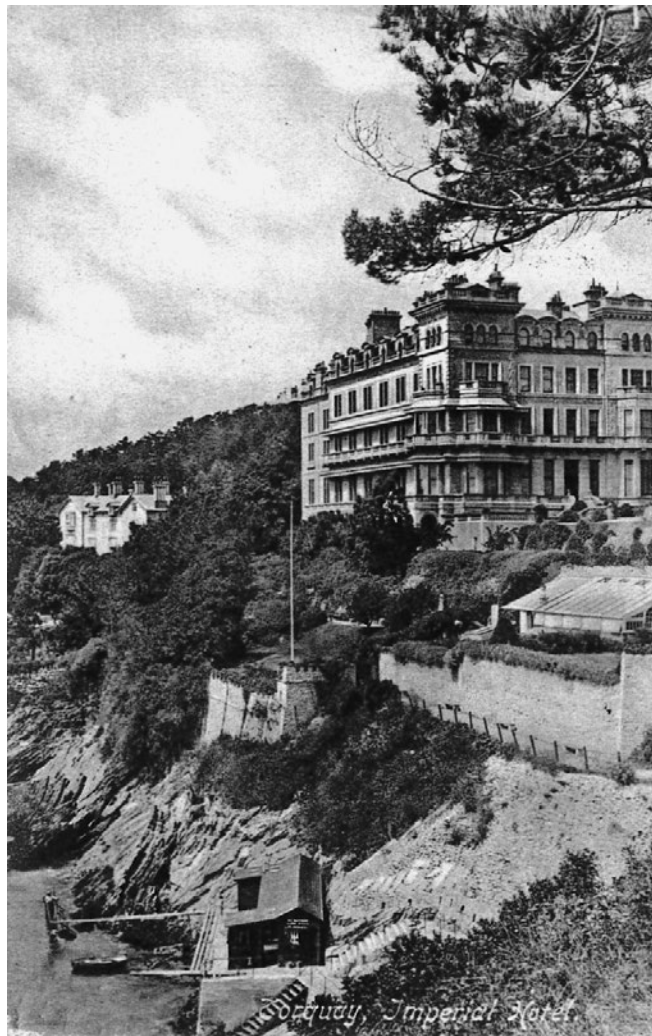


Figure 4.3 Imperial Hotel, Torquay, postcard c. 1890.
Source: author's collection.

revolutionized our social life. This is, in part, due to the influential partnership of hotelier Cesar Ritz and chef Auguste Escoffier, whose work in many of Europe's grandest hotels left enduring global gastronomic influences; food, modernity, innovation, management, and, later, the trend for celebrity chefs and hoteliers. The influence of Escoffier and Ritz is evident in the style and ambience of the Imperial, and the hotel soon became widely known for its food, service, and luxury.

A leading article in *Picture Post*, 1947, describes the Imperial in terms of complicated machinery designed for luxurious comfort and pleasure. Journalist Marjorie Beckett (1947: 11–12) indicates the importance of such establishments in raising standards in the industry, and that well-run hotels like the Imperial are the universities of the hotel profession, exemplars of good food, service, and hospitality education. Lethbridge (2003: 148–149) states that the Imperial followed a pattern of greatness and unostentatious splendour found in other smart resorts. The Imperial Hotel was important in the development of Devon as a place to visit for good food and eating out. Denes (1982: 97) traces the gastronomic tradition of the Imperial back to the nineteenth century, the time when Torquay was regarded as a resort for the upper classes and visiting aristocracy.

The county is now promoted as a food destination. Enhanced provenance of foodstuffs, competitive advantage, history, and tradition in the context of food are used in marketing the county. *Visit Devon* (2012) encourages local and sustainable food consumption thus:

When people mention Devon holidays, the first thing they tend to think of are the beaches and the rolling countryside. However, there is another aspect of Devon that has been gathering steam over the last few years. The West Country has established itself as one of the prime gastronomic hotspots of the UK.

Tourists are advised that they will find excellent, fresh, locally sourced ingredients and a wide range of superb places to eat in the county.

Food souvenirs: taking food home

An important aspect of travel and tourism is the souvenir. These are frequently food-based and enable consumers to extend, relive, and share their food experiences at home in the domestic hospitality domain. There are many opportunities for consumers to purchase food souvenirs. Farm shops, farmers' markets, food festivals and fairs, inspired by examples of regional pannier markets, and livestock fairs in many cases are now transformed for the visiting public, encouraging consumption of local produce. They have, in many instances, become food-themed events, celebrating and showcasing new and traditional regional foods, chefs, and producers.

As food is not only consumed in commercial outlets but is frequently purchased as a souvenir gift and memento, it often becomes a touchstone of memory (Morgan and Pritchard, 2005) and associated with its place of production. Croce and Perri (2010) allude to the trend for food-focused visits and souvenir opportunity with the example of vineyard visits and wine souvenirs. Fudge, a confectionery product originating from America, is popular with tourists in the south-west of England. The addition of clotted cream and butter give it a local appeal, and added value, although its connection to place (Devon) is attributed to the addition of Devonshire dairy products (Cleave, 2013). Menus and postcards have also served as souvenirs, and now digital images are used as a means of recording foods consumed, perhaps the current version of the postcard and photographic image. Figure 4.4 shows a range of rustic dishes considered

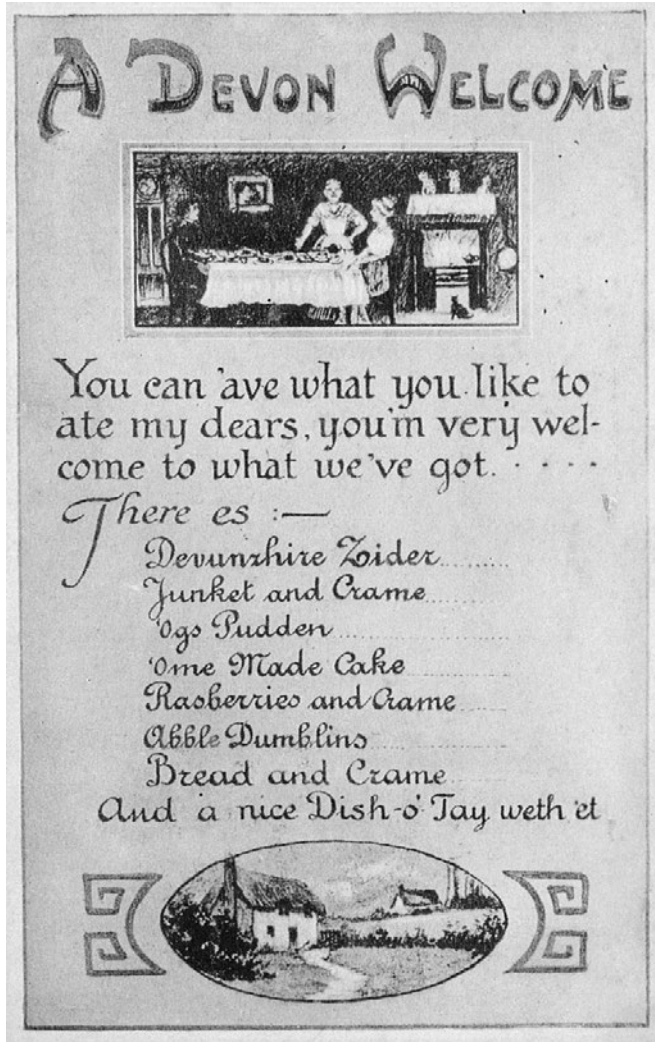


Figure 4.4 Postcard, 'A Devon Welcome', c. 1920.

Source: author's collection.

typical fare of the period. A combination of nostalgic, stereotypical bucolic imagery, and range of traditional dishes listed in the local dialect would appeal to the tourist market.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the influence of the culinary and gastronomic past. It has identified the domains of domestic and commercial hospitality, developing an understanding of the differences and commonalities of the two. What has gone before influences the present and the future. Memories of food are evocative and frequently stimulate a culinary longing for food from the past. This is often what is perceived to be authentic, whether a peasant dish,

regional speciality, or the ambience of a grand hotel, restaurant, or café. Schouten (2006: 191) states that souvenirs as well as experiences are conceived as being authentic when they reflect the perceived core values of the destination visited. We can learn from what has gone before, the legacy of the past, elements of which are sometimes incorporated in a new style and presentation.

Croce and Perri (2010) suggest that in the late twentieth century, in our food and eating habits, there was a return to natural and authentic foods, with traditional recipes revisited and an interest in native species, organic farming, regional products, and sustainability. Archival and contemporary data provide the researcher with numerous examples of the evolution of gastronomy, hospitality, and food consumption.

Looking at the food consumed by the public away from home, eating for pleasure and leisure, and investigating a specific region, destination, or location we discover the culinary influences that have shaped its evolution. Our food production and consumption is evolving, and reflects changes in lifestyle, ingredients, knowledge, and culinary aspirations. By developing our appreciation of the past we are better able to understand the present, and plan for the future.

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