

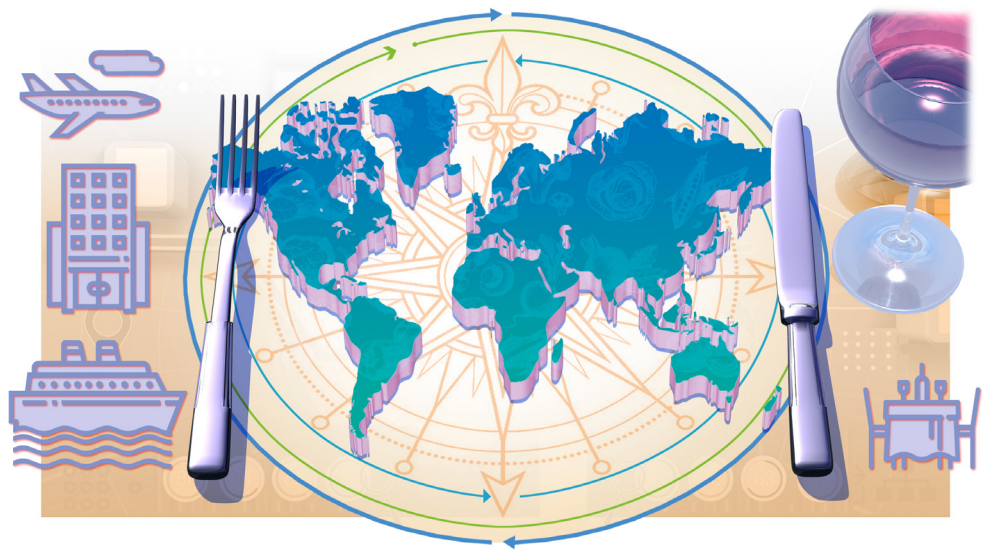
# ESSAYS

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## CULTURAL POLITICS IN CULINARY TOURISM WITH ETHNIC FOODS



### INTRODUCTION

Culinary tourism features food as the primary attraction or motivation for travel (Boniface, 2003; Hall & Sharples, 2003; Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Long, 1998, 2004; Quan & Wang, 2004). It is a highly popular and profitable industry in both international and domestic tourism segments and has a significant impact on food-related businesses. The identification, selection, evaluation, and interpretation of the cuisines and dishes included in such tourism are issues of power, that is, cultural politics. Who gets to make those selections? Whose recipe is used to represent a culture? Whose definition of the cuisine is presented? Who is considered the authority, by whom, and how did they come to be in that position?

Cultural politics become even more complicated when culinary tourism features ethnic foods, that is, cuisines, dishes, ingredients, belonging to a heritage considered outside the foodways of the mainstream culture. Ethnic foods are defined partly by how they differ from the foods of the dominant culture, and their place within that culture reflects a history of being “other.” Culinary tourism focuses attention on the food’s otherness, making that otherness one of its central attractions. It offers new tastes and an entry into strange new cuisines through those tastes. In the US, food businesses have historically offered one of the most accessible contexts for employ-

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ment and financial stability for immigrants. The current popularity of culinary tourism offers a wealth of marketing and economic opportunities for ethnic food businesses, but also poses challenges in terms of how those foods are then selected, defined, and presented.

This essay offers an overview of the intersection of cultural tourism, ethnic food businesses, and cultural politics. It identifies some of the issues involved, and explores examples addressing those issues. It asks whether culinary tourism can be channeled in such a way that it strengthens people's connections to their heritage and identity through food while also using that food for practical and entrepreneurial benefits. Furthermore, it offers a humanities perspective on these issues, emphasizing the ways in which meaning shapes people's behavior. Cultural politics recognizes that interpretations of meaning reflect questions of power over whose voice is heard and listened to.

## DEFINITIONS

The phrase “cultural politics” is used differently in different disciplines. Within cultural anthropology, folkloristics, cultural studies, and other fields with a base in the humanities, it refers to the understanding that all cultural practices are shaped by power structures. It includes the practical ramifications of those structures, as well as the more intangible questions of authority over defining a culture. Jordan and Weedon (1995) summarized the major questions asked in cultural politics: whose culture is considered the official, normative one and who gets to represent it; whose history is recognized; whose voices are heard; and so on. Studies of cultural politics trace the history of power structures to identify who benefits and in what ways from the exercising of that power. They frequently focus on one practice to explore how its meanings and

uses are shaped by various historical and contemporary conditions.

Cultural politics applied to food refers to a similar range of approaches. Anthropologists James Watson and Melissa Caldwell use the phrase in their 2005 reader to explore “food as a window on the political... [beginning] with the premise that food practices are implicated in a complex field of relationships, expectations, and choices that are contested, negotiated, and often unequal.” (Watson & Caldwell, 2005, p. 1) In this sense, the cultural politics of food refers to the practical implications of power, such as geographic access to food or its pricing. Watson, Caldwell, and others also recognize that cultural politics encompasses issues, such as who has the authority to define the meanings and representations of food and eating, how that authority was established, and how it is being exercised. For example, the volume *Political Meals* by folklorists and ethnologists further addresses these questions, allowing also for individual agency within larger power structures (Bendix, 2014). This perspective recognizes the complexity of human beings, who act upon a diverse set of motivations and do not always act in what would seem to be logical ways.

Using cultural politics as a lens for observing culinary tourism and ethnic foods highlights the role of power in how those concepts are defined and applied, both by scholars and the general public.

## CULINARY TOURISM

The tourism industry has begun to recognize food as a primary attraction and motivation for travel only since the late 1990s and early 2000s (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Long, 2004; 2012; 2013). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), using gastronomic tourism in place of “culinary tourism”, defines it as “tourists and visitors who plan their trips partially or to-

tally in order to taste the cuisine of the place or to carry out activities related to gastronomy” (WTTC, 2017, p. 7).

As a biological necessity, food has always been an aspect of travel, but it was perceived in most western cultures as more of an amenity and hospitality service than something that would actually drive tourism. This is partly due to limited perceptions about tourism and what constituted food worthy of attention. There have always been individuals who appreciated fine dining and would travel to the locations that were known to offer it. Certain countries and cities with either renowned cuisines or renowned restaurants and chefs became destinations for those individuals. France, Italy, and Spain tended to be emphasized as offering such cuisines, while only a few cities in the US were deemed of interest—Charleston, SC; New Orleans, Louisiana; and a few restaurants in New York City and Chicago. Travel to such locations for food, however, was not considered tourism, and might actually be more accurately thought of as pilgrimage, in which the traveler holds an appreciation and respect for the food and are seeking it in its authentic form (Long, 2012). Such travelers usually have prior knowledge of the cuisine—enough to know what they are looking for—and tend to represent an elite group within their society. In this sense, culinary tourism as an industry grew out of wine tourism, expanding that niche to include meals, restaurant visits, tours of farms and markets, and cooking classes that represented the chosen cuisines.

Once the tourist industry became aware of the potential for food as an attraction and destination, it began expanding beyond the accepted canon of worthy cuisines to include a larger number of food cultures and regional and ethnic specialties within those cultures. The industry also began recognizing other aspects of foodways beyond simply consumption in restaurants to include production (agritourism and farm tours), procurement (tours of markets and

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groceries), and preparation (cooking classes; cooking demonstrations), and even conceptualization about food (museum exhibits and lectures).

The culinary tourism industry is now a significant force in the global economy. According to a 2016 summary, 88.2% of travelers consider food a significant component in their selection of a vacation destination, as well as in their vacation activities. The recent report by an industry organization claims that travel and tourism contributes \$2.3 trillion to the global economy (WTTC, 2017) shows that culinary tourists can have a major monetary impact.

A variety of forms of culinary tourism have since been developed. Tours or “trails” are probably the most common and usually feature a combination of restaurants, grocery stores, and food producers and makers, including home cooks. Cooking classes and food demonstrations are a way for tourists to more fully experience a food culture and are offered sometimes as a destination in itself, or one among many attractions for a traveler. Food festivals, which had frequently been a part of local celebrations, also became tourist destinations, and food expo’s and “taste of the town” events became popular venues for displaying the food businesses of a location. Food is now seen as a significant resource for “branding” a place, so that local governments and tourist providers frequently develop lists and maps that promote an area. Farmers discovered that tourism could bring in additional money and began offering dinners made from the foods being raised as well as opportunities for tourists to visit and even participate in the daily operation of the farm.

Culinary tourism initially appears to be a highly beneficial industry that can bring money to communities while also affirming their food culture. However, aside from the usual problems with tourism, in general, in its potential harmful impacts on local environments, economies, and societies, cu-

linary tourism raises questions about the understanding of food itself (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Heldke, 2003; Long, 2013). Food becomes valued for its potential to attract tourists, entertain them, and satisfy their aesthetic sensibilities. It is then treated as a source of revenue, as a commodity, rather than as a carrier of memory and identity. Emotional connections to a dish or ingredient may be threatened or manipulated as the dish is put on display for tourists. Definitions of the industry tend to emphasize the “exotic” quality of the food necessary for tourism. The US-based World Food Tourism Association points out that, in order to attract culinary tourists and create a favorable experience for them, the food being offered should be unique, high quality, and memorable. While marketing surveys attempt to quantify those qualities, they are perceptions that can differ according to each individual, social group, and culture. Again, cultural politics comes into play in who gets to define what foods are unique and high quality, and memorable.

These issues are further complicated by the fact that culinary tourism involves a number of stakeholders representing different interests and concerns, including tourism providers, tourists, governing institutions in the location of the tourist activity, and the host community. What may be beneficial to one group or individual might be considered harmful to another. These categories may overlap or individuals might be members of more than one stakeholding group at a time. This means that there can be not only multiple interests and motivations for participation in tourism projects but also multiple understandings of tourism, food, and culture. When ethnic food is the focus of culinary tourism, the stakeholders can be further divided into ethnic tourism providers, ethnic food providers, ethnic communities, and ethnic consumers. This adds again to the multiplicity of issues around the authority to define and represent a food culture.

These issues of cultural politics can be clarified by applying the original scholarly definition of culinary tourism. (Long, 1998; 2004) This humanities-based definition emphasizes that the perceived exoticness of the food is one of the primary motivating factors for tasting it. It draws from tourism scholarship pointing to curiosity as an essential quality in tourism, so a cuisine, dish, ingredient, or other aspect of foodways needs to be different enough to warrant leaving home (Urry, 1990; Hall & Sharples, 2003). Culinary tourism in this sense can be negotiation of exotic and familiar. Foods need to be exotic enough to elicit curiosity but familiar enough provide a sense of safety in trying new odds. Perceptions of what foods are exotic and familiar reflect not only cultural patterns, but also individual experiences. Who then has the authority to determine where a particular food is on that continuum? From a culinary tourism perspective, these questions of who gets to select and present foods for tourism reflect larger questions over how societies and cultures are structured and separate groups into “Others.”

## DEFINING ETHNICITY AND ETHNIC FOODS

This leads us to the question of what is meant by “ethnic” within the framework of culinary tourism (Long, 2014). The term is frequently used to refer to a culture other than one’s own. For example, Ray (2004) states in his study of Bengali-American foodways, that “ethnic food is other peoples’ food.” (p. 78) Implicit in that definition is the idea that “ethnic food” is more than just foreign or international food. It reflects a social status of being Other, and of existing within another larger, more dominant culture. It is the foodways of a cultural heritage perceived as not belonging to the mainstream culture. This means that another culture is understood as the

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normative one, and the ethnic one is evaluated and defined in relation to that culture. A differential identity emerges around the ethnicity in that the characteristics recognized as defining it are those that differ from the dominant one (Lockwood & Lockwood, 1991).

Similarly, foods that seem “different” may also be used by the mainstream culture to lump together ethnicities that in other ways are dissimilar. Asian American has become an enduring category based on the use of rice as a staple, ignoring differences in spicing, flavor principles, and other ingredients as well as other cultural features, such as language and religion.

If ethnicity is based on such perceptions of a shared heritage contrasting with the mainstream culture, it is easy to see how cultural politics comes into play. Who gets to define what either the mainstream or the ethnic culture are? Who shapes the perceptions and interprets them? These perceptions are also essential to culinary tourism, since such tourism is based on a perception of otherness and difference. Such tourism becomes a negotiation between outsiders and insiders but also between members of the group itself. Some individual members of an ethnicity might want to highlight those differences, while others choose to downplay them and emphasize similarities.

## FORMS OF CULINARY TOURISM

Culinary tourism initiatives featuring ethnic foods take a variety of forms, the most popular being tours and trails, restaurant visits, public events, such as festivals and “tastings,” and cooking classes or demonstrations. Each form has its own set of issues pertaining to cultural politics, involving the negotiation of the exotic and familiar in different ways by different stakeholders.

## FORMS: RESTAURANTS

Restaurants are perhaps the most obvious destination for culinary tourism. They are promoted as such by a variety of stakeholders, including individual ethnic entrepreneurs. As public and commercial spaces, restaurants are open, in theory, to anyone interested in the food being offered. I say “in theory” because these spaces might not present a welcoming feel to certain groups of people. Smaller “Mom and Pop” types of ethnic restaurants, for example, are frequently run by a family and focus on a clientele that has same ethnicity as the owners. Signage and menus, therefore, might be in a language other than English, and patterns for interacting with cooks or wait staff might be unfamiliar to individuals from ethnicities other than that of the proprietors. Such details might be perceived as unwelcoming by individuals unsure of the cuisine or the culture. Some of these restaurants are in fact, more oriented towards the local community, but as a commercial business, they technically are open to all. Furthermore, their in-group focus might be the actual attraction for certain culinary tourists--the more adventurous ones or ones who already have some familiarity with that cuisine.

Be that as it may, people go to restaurants for a variety of reasons, not just to “eat out of curiosity.” Hunger, necessity, escape, comfort, entertainment, and socializing are just some of the reasons. Ethnic restaurants are no different. They also provide a relatively safe environment for trying a new cuisine. Certain health and safety standards have to be met in order to operate legally, and an adherence to mainstream aesthetics and ethos are usually expected. Also, the exchange of food in this context is a business transaction, although it may include a sharing of friendship or an expression of cultural identities. Rejecting the food then, is not a personal affront to the owners, making it possible for customers to select and

consume dishes according to their tastes, values, or circumstances.

Ethnic restaurants in the US are a growing presence within culinary tourism. A 2014 study estimated that across the US, there were about 7100 Mexican restaurants and 43,000 Chinese ones. It also found 16,783 Italian restaurants in 10 large cities, leaving the reader to assume that there are actually many more. The most popular cuisines remain Chinese, Mexican, and Italian, but not only new cuisines, but also new approaches to ethnic cuisines are gaining interest. A study on the leading trends in consumption of ethnic foods in restaurants in the US for 2015, offered some of the following statistics. “Fusion cuisines” were projected to be popular by 58% of the chefs, followed by “authentic ethnic cuisine” (56%), “regional ethnic cuisine” (54%). Those were followed by specific cuisines, such as Peruvian (54%), Southeast Asian (e.g., Thai, Vietnamese, and Malaysian; 52%), Korean (50%), Native American (49%), Nordic/Scandinavian (44%), and African (42%) (Institute of Food Technologists [IFT], 2013; Statista, 2018). Interestingly, there was also a 45% projection of regional American cuisines being popular.

These statistics do not represent the number of actual restaurants that are specializing in ethnic foods. The multicultural eating habits of Americans mean that ethnic dishes may be offered in mainstream restaurants or by restaurants of other ethnicities. Similarly, a restaurant offering an ethnic cuisine may be run by individuals of other ethnicities, frequently by other heritages that are grouped together, but also by individuals from the dominant culture, raising controversies around cultural appropriation.

Cultural politics comes into play on several levels with culinary tourism, restaurants, and ethnic foods, and the commercial character of such enterprises complicates these issues. The power to define a cuisine seems to rest with the restaurant owners. They select the dishes to include

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on their menus and determine the actual ingredients and cooking styles for preparing them. They also make decisions over how to present the ethnic identity of the restaurant—the name, the décor, the languages used on signs and menus. These selections may reflect the owners' understandings of their own food and their attitudes towards it as a carrier of identity, but these are also business decisions. If an owner is trying to expand their clientele beyond their own ethnic community, they need to satisfy the palates and pocketbooks of those new customers. They may hope to introduce their cuisine to new eaters and in so doing, teach about their culture, but they also need to satisfy those customers in order to make their venture financially sustainable. This may require adapting the food being served.

Korean restaurant owners in the MidAtlantic in the 1980s, for example, frequently offered a milder version of *kimchi*, a fermented vegetable dish that is a staple of every traditional Korean meal. Believing that American customers would find the dish too spicy and too malodorous, they often watered it down or changed the fermentation time to a minimum. Korean food was considered exotic enough for culinary tourists without needing to offer potentially offensive dishes. Contemporary culinary tourists want the exotic—but they also want it to be tasty and frequently, innovative, so restaurant owners must negotiate between what they might consider authentic with innovative in order to please those customers.

Ethnic restaurants now also frequently promote themselves as tourism destination. Some hold events to attract “outsiders” and offer to educate audiences about those foods. Other restaurants describe themselves in advertisements and other marketing material as a place to satisfy one's curiosity about a cuisine or dish, appealing specifically to culinary tourists. In these instances, the ethnic restaurant owners have power over the ways in which their cuisine and culture are being presented.

## FORMS: FOOD TOURS AND FOOD TRAILS

Food tours and trails are currently a popular form of culinary tourism being developed and sponsored by tourism businesses and government tourism and economic development divisions. Tours take visitors to specific venues where they can view or taste food, while trails are venue listings and maps that can then be followed by tourists on their own. Since the venues chosen will presumably receive more business than those not chosen, the selection process reflects issues of power in a very practical sense. As with other forms, though, the selection process oftentimes reflects what is considered exotic and familiar to the potential tourists rather than what is perhaps representative of the group. Some tours do try to address that possible discrepancy, including everyday types of foods that are representative of that ethnic group, or dishes that carry special meanings to the group but are challenging to mainstream palates.

Food tours are organized in a variety of ways. They may be around a particular dish, such as wine, chocolate, tacos), neighborhood, or as ethnicity. They may also try to mix public with private venues, taking tourists into homes as well as restaurants and grocery stores. For example, an advertisement for a tour in the city of Columbus is typical of other tours in that it emphasizes the best and the unique in ethnic food.

Travel the world without leaving Columbus – If you're looking for fun things to do in Columbus, this guided culinary tour will introduce you to some of the best ethnic food in the city. We'll experience Somali cuisine, eat Vietnamese sandwiches, sample Nigerian food, visit a Mexican bakery, learn about Southern Indian delicacies ... and more. This unique city tour centers on the thriving ethnic enclaves of north Cleveland Avenue, where much of Columbus' immi-

grant community lives, eats, and plays. (Columbus Food Adventures, n.d.)

The ad continues, however, with an assurance of familiarity and comfort, so that the experience will not be too exotic in an unpleasant way. Also, individual preferences can be taken into account.

Join us in our comfortable 14-passenger van and learn about the cuisines and cultures of some of Columbus's finest immigrant kitchens. If you're a food lover, this tour is not to be missed!

This food tour is priced at \$60.00 and includes: tastings at five stops; air-conditioned van transportation (to and from downtown Columbus and all stops in-between); and an experienced guide with plenty of local culinary knowledge. This tour runs on Friday evenings at 6pm. We can accommodate vegetarians on this tour with advance notice. (Columbus Food Adventures, n. d.)

Food tours are organized with different purposes in mind and address different groups of stakeholders. The issues surrounding them differ accordingly. Educational and community institutions also offer food tours as a way to teach people about ethnic cultures or to raise awareness of the diversity within a place. Food is used as a window into different cultures, besides being an attraction in itself. It can also serve the practical function of refreshment while enabling the hosts to extend hospitality.

Ideally, individuals of ethnic heritage are involved as stakeholders in all tours of these types; thus, the needs of the ethnic food businesses, as well as the ethnic community as a whole, get represented. However, the ventures do raise questions about who represents a community. Individuals of ethnic heritage will have their own opinions on what best defines that ethnicity, as well as opinions on how busi-

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nesses should be run, and what the relationship with outsiders should be. Individual ethnic food business owners do not necessarily feel obligated to serve the community, but might be focused more on their own personal survival and success. Just as with restaurants, the existence of a tour organized by members of an ethnic group does not necessarily mean that they speak for all other members and that they will ensure that the community benefits. Cultural politics comes into play again.

## FORMS: PUBLIC EVENTS— FESTIVALS AND “TASTINGS”

This category of culinary tourism takes a variety of forms, ranging from festivals to expos or “taste of the town” events promoting local food businesses to tastings—offerings of samples of food, usually accompanied by discussions of the culture of that food or how to evaluate its aesthetic qualities. Since these events are public and oftentimes commercial ventures, they raise issues similar to other those for other forms over the selection and presentation of dishes as well as the representative image of the ethnic group. These events are frequently fundraisers, so foods are selected partly for their potential to first attract, and then, please visitors. Foods become a commodity, and their experience, a business transaction, although it may also serve other functions.

Food expos and “tastes of the town” events are the most blatantly commercial of these events. Oftentimes organized by local governing or civic organizations, they promote local food businesses, providing a venue for them to show off their specialties. They purport to stimulate local economic development and oftentimes contribute to creating a “brand” for a geographically specified area (neighborhood, town, city, county, or state). That brand or image created is used for mar-

keting the area to bring in culinary tourists, as well as new businesses and residents. These events usually promote what the organizers consider to be “the best” of what is available—an idea that automatically brings up cultural politics. Ethnic food businesses might be included in these events, if they exhibit the “best” characteristics, as defined by the organizers. They frequently need to have Americanized their menus, recipes, and settings to an extent that they are not considered too foreign or exotic for mainstream tourists. They also frequently need to address more elitist notions of “good food,” catering to individuals interested in fine dining and the culinary arts. Entrance prices for tourists are usually high enough to be prohibitive to many, and these events usually charge a fee from the participating businesses as well, again an obstacle to a full representation of the ethnic foods available in an area.

Atlanta’s “Must Do” Food, Wine, Beer and Cocktail Event. Taste of Atlanta, the city’s must-do, unforgettable three-day food festival returns October 20, 21 & 22, 2017 at our new location in Historic Fourth Ward Park! More than 90 neighborhood favorites will show off their most craveable dishes, the hottest local chefs will strut their stuff on three live demo stages...

The 2017 event will take YOU on a foodie adventure through the city’s many diverse neighborhoods by featuring the chefs and restaurants that give these communities their unique flair. (Taste of Atlanta, n. d.)

Festivals appear in a wide variety of forms and are more varied than food expos in their treatment of ethnic foods. These events are celebrations and emphasize the more positive aspects of whatever is being celebrated. Thus, the food selected is frequently based on assumptions of what the anticipated visitors will find appealing. Of-

tentimes, this translates into “snack foods” or “finger foods” that can be easily carried and eaten while tourists wander.

Ethnic Food festivals are oftentimes organized as educational outreach to tourists. Food is seen as a window into a culture, so a festive event featuring an ethnic food can be a way of teaching others about that ethnicity. Schools, churches, and civic organizations sometimes hold international food festivals for that purpose. Further, because sharing food is considered a way to build respect and understanding, these events can have social justice and peace-building as their purpose. An Islamic mosque in northwest Ohio draws numerous culinary tourists every year to its food festival, which features cuisines of different Muslim cultures. As a public event, tourists unfamiliar with those cuisines or with the Islamic religion are welcome to taste foods selected to appeal to “outsiders.”

Some of these festivals also include foods thought to be representative of the particular ethnic communities’ culture or history. A Hungarian festival, also in Toledo, Ohio features a food—“hunky turkey,” which is bread with bacon drippings, chopped onions, and tomatoes that used to be considered an indication of the poverty and poor taste of Hungarian Americans. The name itself uses a derogatory name for the ethnicity and makes a joke of the lack of meat availability for immigrants. Now considered a celebratory food, it is presented along with the history of the community.

## FORMS: COOKING CLASSES AND COOKING DEMONSTRATIONS

Cooking classes are the fourth form of culinary tourism currently popular is. Such classes are not always a form of culinary tourism, but many are part of culinary tours and other tourism initiatives. Ethnic food

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classes are extremely popular and tend to appeal to tourists who are already familiar with the ethnic cuisine. They have experienced it previously, liked it, and want to learn more about it by preparing it or being able to recreate the dishes themselves. Additionally, cooking classes are sometimes connected to tours of markets and groceries or to producers' farms.

Cooking classes offer tourists opportunities for one-on-one experiences with cooks presumably steeped in the culture of the cuisine. In such settings, the reasons for selecting certain dishes or ingredients can be fully explained, and tourists can interact with an individual, not just an amorphous group. An example of a typical advertisement for a class is given: "Street tacos--Learn recipes and techniques for traditional Mexican street tacos at this cooking class that doubles as a meal. Menu includes authentic street corn, grilled *carne asada tacos*, *tacos pastor*, *calabacitas tacos* and homemade *churros*. Tickets (\$50)" (Isthmus, 2017, p. 30).

Cultural politics is still at play in that the individuals, organizations, or businesses offering such classes have the authority to select the dishes that are included and their presentation. In the class, the teacher is established as the authoritative spokesperson, although class members may challenge that authority and introduce their own experiences or opinions. However, these contexts generally offer more opportunities for discussions around representativeness of dishes or recipes and the role of personal taste or circumstances, as well as issues connected to cultural politics.

Cooking demonstrations are similar to cooking classes in the issues they raise. They differ in the participation of the audience, making these events more "touristic" than classes. Tourists are passive viewers, and the lack of hand-on experience with the foods being demonstrated means that their full engagement with that food will

depend a great deal on the prior experience and interest they bring to the event. Depending on the type of culinary tourist in the audience, the authenticity of the dish is oftentimes emphasized.

A different type of food demonstration is intentionally educational and attempts to convey a deeper understanding of the dish itself as well as the cuisine and culture surrounding it. The food is a vehicle for engaging the audience and uses a cultural form considered universal—cooking—so that audiences can then relate the demonstration to their own interests and experiences. While restaurants and food businesses may also offer such demonstrations, they are especially popular in museums, particularly "living history village" and "folk park" types of venues, as well as cultural and educational institutions. The model is frequently presented as a tourist attraction but expects audiences who are motivated by curiosity about that particular or are just curious about the event or venue. The organizers, then, must address a wide range of interests and previous knowledge in the audience.

The Smithsonian Institution, for example, has developed models for such demonstrations at their long-running Folklife Festival (Long, 2015; Long & Belanus, 2011). These demonstrations are given by a "community scholar," an individual considered knowledgeable and representative of their ethnic community. Such individuals can range from home-cooks to restaurant owners to famous chefs who have gained attention from mainstream or "foodie" audiences. The question of who best represents a community is discussed among the organizers and community members, allowing for as many voices to be heard as possible. The same process is used to select the dishes being presented. The demonstration itself occurs in a public space with a "presenter" who introduces the cook and the food being presented, helps to mediate questions from the audi-

ence to the cook, and may fill in with additional information, as needed. The purpose is to give audiences a sense of the historical, contemporary, and personal meanings of that dish. Culinary tourists, individuals motivated by an interest in food or curious about a particular food culture, are frequent audiences to these more educational events, but the events also try to reach audiences who do not hold those motivations. Issues of cultural politics frequently arise in the manner in which these demonstrations are presented, in the selection of individuals representing the community, and in the interactions with diverse audiences. The organizers are frequently scholars from folkloristics, anthropology, or other ethnographic disciplines and tend to be well aware of the presence of these issues and the need to negotiate them. One approach is to explain the issues to the tourists themselves, so that they also have a voice in that negotiation.

## CONCLUSIONS

This overview of cultural politics in relation to ethnic food within culinary tourism suggests the complexity of those issues. Culinary tourism industries, ethnic food entrepreneurs, and other providers of food-related hospitality services need to juggle the demands of business with sensitivity to the nature of food and power. Culinary tourism projects trade in food as more than a commodity. They draw upon the meanings and emotional associations that food has for individuals and cultures. They emphasize food as carrying identity and history. As such, defining and representing food highlights the variety of interpretations that can be given to those meanings. Selecting interpretations then reflect issues of power, that is, who has the authority to make those decisions and why. Ethnicity further complicates the issues.

A number of culinary tourism initiatives, organizations, and businesses are

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aware of cultural politics (Hall & Gossling, 2012; Long, 2013; Parasecoli & Abreu e Lima, 2012). Sustainable tourism offers perspectives and strategies for tourism providers to address some of the issues. The UNWTO proclaimed 2017 the international year of sustainable tourism for development and included in their 2017 report the following statement:

The intangible cultural heritage of gastronomy differs from that of traditional sites and monuments in that it evolves and develops alongside its respective culture. Thus, we must take into account the emergence of new cultures and traditions and recognize gastronomic tradition as a process of continuous evolution. (Perdomo, 2017, p. 14)

A first step in addressing cultural politics is recognizing that food itself is complex, intertwined with all aspects of life, and carries multiple meanings (Long, 2015; 2017). A recognition of the complexity of ethnic identities is also needed. Ethnic groups are not homogenous, but made up of individuals with diverse experiences and interpretations of that identity. That diversity carries over to food. Culinary tourism needs to recognize that diversity, enabling the variety of voices to be heard, and have a role in the selection and representation of ethnic foods.

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