Digitizing Dinner: Representation of Four Peruvian Fine-dining Restaurants on Instagram

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This project examines four fine dining restaurants in Lima, Peru—Central, Huaca Pucllana, Mayta, and Panchita—in connection to the manifestos the restaurants have on their websites to determine if the representation of the restaurants matches the goals, purposes, and inspirations on the websites. Peruvian cuisine has achieved international recognition, thanks to the Peruvian gastronomic boom of the 1980s, and now several Peruvian fine dining restaurants rank on several lists of the world's best restaurants. Previous scholarship suggests a debate exists between two concepts surrounding Indigenous foods—foods common in Peruvian cuisine—of cultural control, meaning the Indigenous group can control the demand for cultural foods, and the opposing side which states chefs must invent and reinvent culturally significant foods to keep the attention of tourists. Neocolonialism and postcolonialism in global society have influenced the rise of elite structures, such as fine dining restaurants, in previously colonized countries, continuing the pattern of Western influence in other parts of the world. Instagram posts and website snippets from each of the four restaurants were thematically and semiotically analyzed. Further, the prevalent themes of the posts revealed which posts to select for deeper analysis and comparison to the website pages. This research concludes fine dining restaurants in Lima, Peru emphasize more contemporary aspects of fine dining and mostly ignore the traditions and founders of Peruvian cuisine—misaligning with the messages of the manifestos. Determining if the chefs of Lima's haute dining scene are helping Indigenous communities by highlighting Indigenous people on Instagram or if the restaurants are simply reaping the benefits of the Indigenous people's kindness could improve Indigenous representation in Peruvian cuisine.

Keywords: Peruvian gastronomy, cultural appropriation, post-colonialism

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At the very center of the human experience are our most basic needs: food, water, and shelter. In our world today, the commodification of our most basic needs has led to tiered levels of fulfilment of these needs based off many elements such as socioeconomic class, gender, race, nationality, and language. Food is not only a basic need, but also a cultural product, a livelihood, and a form of connection. Fine dining is a relatively new invention—having started in the wake of the French Revolution. Since then, fine dining has been a signifier of wealth, prestige, and culture and has expanded to include many more cuisines and locations in the world. Fine dining is an art form in a way, but there seems to be a homogeneity to fine dining as well. When fine dining expands to other regions of the world, specifically areas with Indigenous groups, the Indigenous foodways and ingredients are taken and adjusted in the fine dining kitchens. The question we should all be asking ourselves is, "How do these adjustments to Indigenous foods in fine dining restaurants impact the identity and perception of the Indigenous communities the foodways came from?"

In the 1980s and the 1990s, Peruvian cuisine gained a lot of popularity in the global market. This interest in Peruvian cuisine skyrocketed several Peruvian chefs to international fame—beginning the Peruvian gastronomic boom. The Peruvian gastronomic boom occurred in tandem with the Peruvian Civil War and came about as an attempt to draw tourists to Peru to help the economy (Matta, 2014). The wealthier families were able to send their children to receive formal culinary education in Europe, which the chefs later incorporated into their restaurants, effectively Europeanizing Peruvian fine dining at its inception (Del Pozo Arana & Zúñiga, 2022). Understanding the Peruvian gastronomic boom sets into motion the recognition of the contributing factors to the initial boom and the factors driving the continuation of the movement today. The perceived culinary advancement of Peru in global dining spaces by celebrity chefs and their followers may be connected to the globalization of Peruvian cuisine, depending on how Peruvian fine dining chefs choose to represent their restaurants on Instagram.

Indigenous Peruvian ingredients are at the center of current Peruvian cuisine and Peru's fine dining restaurants. Indigenous knowledge and experimentation with food spread to mainstream Peruvian society, incorporating Indigenous Peruvian techniques and ingredients into the mainstream food culture of Peru. The Incas, ancestors of the Quechua people of the Peruvian Andes, handed down 50 varieties of corn, 2,500 varieties of potatoes, and other crops such as quinoa, as well as the knowledge of how to cultivate the crops to the Quechua community, mostly through word of mouth (Huambachano, 2019, p. 101). Peruvian society nationalized certain Indigenous foods, specifically quinoa, and erased the Indigenous altiplano context of quinoa's significance in the Indigenous Andean society (McDonell, 2024, p. 88). While research on up-and-coming cuisines is plenty, researchers can

omit, intentionally or unintentionally, the Indigenous communities inspiring the culinary creations of these celebrity chefs. Recontextualizing indigeneity as an integral part in the creation and prosperity of the Peruvian gastronomic boom and sequential rise in fine dining restaurants in Peru through Instagram could help raise awareness to one of the reasons for the success of the gastronomic boom.

This paper investigates how Peruvian fine dining restaurants portray themselves on Instagram. Looking at data such as the photos, videos, and captions of the posts, among other factors, will help encapsulate a more holistic view of the ideas the companies most often perpetuate while promoting the restaurants online. The key data for this study are Instagram posts from four different Peruvian fine dining restaurants—Central, Panchita, Huaca Pucllana, and Matya—and the manifestos from the websites of the four restaurants (see Appendix 1). A neocolonialist framework can assist in explaining the new-age fine dining atmosphere and determine the true motivations behind these restaurants. Indigenous foods and people, both intertwined in Peruvian cuisine, deserve to have fine dining restaurants depicting the foods and people accurately and respectfully. These restaurants should portray Indigeneity in such a way to prevent the commodification of Indigenous products without giving credit to Indigenous Peoples.

Central, Huaca Pucllana, Mayta, and Panchita do not follow the manifestos set out on the websites in comparison with posts on the restaurants' Instagram pages. The four restaurants, while being well-intentioned in the origins of the restaurants, do not follow through on the themes of Peru's history, people, and culture laid out on the websites. The literature review dives into a scholarly debate about Cultural Control Theory, Indigenous foodways in other countries, and the portrayal of Latin American fine dining in media. The research design section includes the process of collection, by screenshotting and screen-recording posts, and the process of analysis, by thematically coding post captions and semiotically analyzing the images and videos of the posts to show the entire research process. In the analysis section, I used the semiotic and thematic analysis of the selected posts from all four restaurants to argue the lack of connection between the website manifestos of the four restaurants and the Instagram posts on the restaurant Instagram pages. The discussion section includes a description of Cultural Control Theory, Neocolonialism, and Postcolonialism in the context of this paper, as well as some recent newspaper articles proving the relevance of this topic in current media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Control of Culture and Capital

A debate amongst scholars exists about the connection between culinary tourism and neocolonial adjustments to Indigenous dishes. Some scholars

argue chefs can choose which parts of the cuisine to share in order to can control, to a certain extent, the desire for these cultural dishes. On the other hand, some scholars argue chefs are forced to change, adapt, and create Indigenous foods to draw and sustain attention from culinary tourists. Researchers studying the evolution of five recipes originating in Oaxaca, Mexico discussed the possibility of Cultural Control—a theory positing the existence of, in this case, a cultural food under the control of the Indigenous group and under the control of an outside group (Reyes-Santiago et al., 2024). Allen (2017) disagrees with this idea, and in the researcher's study of the Māori people and food noted the power the Māori people possess when deciding to share very little of the Māori cultural foods while continuing to offer cultural experiences to tourists. Fine dining restaurants draw many culinary tourists from across the globe. Given the popularity of Peruvian cuisine, this research will contribute another perspective to this debate.

Researchers observed the control of different types of capital changing the representation of Indigenous culinary spaces. Social, gastronomic, cultural, economic, and human capital are some of the types of capital existing in Indigenous culinary spaces. Some scholars argue powerful people and organizations such as the governments of nations, wealthy individuals, and privileged people have wielded these different capitals and have used social structures, cultural dynamics, economic disparities, and other human beings to change culinary spaces to benefit the people and organizations already in power. In a study about multiculturalism, food sovereignty, and gastronomic capital, the authors argue Indigenous people should have the ability to control the Indigenous community's gastronomic capital, meaning Indigenous groups should dictate where, when, and how the food of the Indigenous groups will be served as well as determining how, why, and when certain Indigenous dishes change and evolve (Grey & Newman, 2018). In an article by Freitas et al. (2020), about Brazil's professional restaurants, the authors examined a discrepancy between how the owners of the restaurants valued high-tech appliances versus the human capital. The restaurant owners exploited the employees of the restaurant due to the tradition of paying little to nothing for labor—a tradition dating back to colonial times in Brazil (Freitas et al., 2020). The interchange and flow of gastronomic and social capital on social media is a branch of capitals not thoroughly explored in Latin America. The investigation highlights the treatment of Indigenous representatives in a different part of the world than the previous studies.

Latin American Fine Dining in Media

Scholars studying fine dining in the Global South noticed the fine dining restaurants in the Global South typically draw much less attention from restaurant critics and culinary tourists than fine dining restaurants in the Global North. This fact assists in explaining the importance of accurately showing Latin American fine dining restaurants in media. In a study about

Netflix's television series *Chef's Table,* the authors examine the themes of male superiority in fine dining spaces in Latin America. The authors argue the filming and editing of *Chef's Table* is presenting the viewers an idealized version of Latin American fine dining and cuisine (Santos & Mansey, 2022). This research will connect with the aspects of Latin American cuisine in media the authors list in the previous study. This research will dive into a different form of media, social media, and ascertain if the representation of Latin American cuisine stays consistent across different types of media, or if Peruvian fine dining restaurant Instagram posts have completely different representative themes.

Given the existing research on subsistence in Latin America, and other previously colonized regions of the world, there is space for further discussion and research on one of the largest contributors to Latin American gastronomy, Peru. Previous authors have discussed neocolonialism in food in Latin America and the effects this process has had on Indigenous communities and voices. In my research, I will use semiotic analysis and qualitative methodological approaches to analyze Instagram posts and website manifestos of four fine dining restaurants in Lima, Peru to discover how well or poorly Peru's top chefs represent Indigenous foodways on the Instagram pages. The studies discussed earlier focus mainly on in-field work and lack a more objective and uninvolved approach. My contribution to the field of neocolonial foodways in Peru will assist in drawing attention to how culinary artisans represent Indigenous people and how to improve the representation of Indigenous culture in culinary art. Hopefully, these contributions will continue the discussion on the ideal type of Indigenous representation for both parties involved: the chefs and the Indigenous people the chefs learned the cooking techniques from.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The data in this study were Instagram posts and the manifestos from the websites of four fine dining restaurants in Peru. I collected the manifestos from the official restaurant websites, and I collected the posts from @centralrest, @maytalima, @panchitasazoncriolla, and @restauranthuacapucllana on Instagram.com. These data allow the cross-checking of the claims of the restaurants about the inspirations, goals, and messages from the blurbs on the restaurant websites to the actual representation of the restaurants on Instagram. The Instagram posts show the subjects the restaurants choose to exhibit to market themselves. To see how Peruvian fine dining restaurants represent Peruvian cuisine and Peruvian fine dining restaurants on Instagram, I needed to collect Instagram posts to see the main focuses of each individual restaurant and potentially discover patterns across all the restaurants. Collecting the manifesto from each site deepened the comparison and acted as a baseline for the themes of the Instagram posts.

I collected the data from the four accounts listed above on Instagram and the websites linked to each Instagram page. I screenshotted or screen recorded each Instagram post starting on January 14, 2025, and going back up to a year depending on how many slides were in the posts. To begin, I searched "fine dining restaurants in Peru" and chose four restaurants advertising connection to the land, history, and/or the culture of Peru located in Lima, Peru. After selecting the four restaurants most closely following the themes above, I screenshotted the manifestos on each restaurant website, found under the *Sobre Nosotros, Mayta, Nuestra propuesta,* and *Huaca Pucllana* tabs on each site. Clicking on the link to Instagram on each website, I began screenshotting and screen recording each post and ended with 111 posts from Huaca Pucllana, 83 from Mayta, 89 from Panchita, and 71 from Central. The best way to save Instagram posts is to screen record or screenshot the posts because using the bookmark feature to save posts on an Instagram account allows the account manager to archive posts, making the posts disappear from the saved file. Additionally, websites are also subject to change, so screenshots provide a certain amount of security to ensure the analysis process goes smoothly with consistent and unchanging data.

To analyze the posts, I used semiotic analysis on the photos and videos and thematic coding on the captions of the posts. Conditions such as lighting, angles, focus, and color made up the elements of the semiotic analysis. For the thematic coding, some main codes I found in analysis were nationalism, education, food, and culture. From the large groups of screenshots, I coded the main subject of each post based on the first photo or frame of video of each post. From my categories, such as food, events, drink, décor, and people, I calculated the percentage of posts about each topic. I selected five to eight posts of different themes following the previously calculated percentage and analyzed the posts more deeply by self-translating the captions from Spanish to English, thematically coding the captions, and performing semiotic analysis on the images and videos. This project focuses on many qualitative aspects, but to create a selection process with the most sense and prevent bias, choosing the images based on theme was the fairest way to accomplish this goal. The posts of some restaurants have many more slides and longer captions, as many as fifteen slides in one post and several paragraph captions. To make the amount of data collected for each restaurant more equal, the number of posts collected from each restaurant had to differ.

ANALYSIS

Pride for Peru and a desire to share the essence of Peruvian culture with the customers is the purpose of the restaurants according to the restaurant websites, despite some varied themes in each of the website snippets. The four restaurants proudly outline Peru and the country's cuisine in the descriptions of the restaurants. Central reaches to increase the connectivity that the restaurant claims is lacking from Peruvian society through the discov-

ery and rediscovery of Peruvian ingredients, cultures, traditions, and history (Central Restaurant, n.d.). Mayta explains on the website the origins of the name of the restaurant—meaning "noble land" in Aymara—and how the restaurant was born as an ode to the land of Peru (Mayta, n.d.). Panchita's website manifesto promoted feelings of home and grandmothers' cooking in the context of traditional Limean recipes, while Huaca Pucllana also highlighted Peruvian flavors and traditional cooking methods on the website (Panchita: Restaurante de Comida Criolla y Tradición Limeña, n.d.; Restaurante Huaca Pucllana, n.d.). This may be true for other aspects of the restaurants, but on Instagram the restaurants barely post anything about the groups of people these recipes came from. While the four restaurants may have other social media sites or organizations staying true to the claims on the website pages, the Instagram posts do not seem to follow the goals on those websites.

Deficit of Humans in Instagram Posts

Across the board, the four restaurants lack human representation on the restaurant Instagram pages. The restaurants feature very few people in the posts, and most of the restaurants feature the same people. Central posted a picture of the restaurant team, but did not include any posts of the Indigenous people supporting the restaurant with ingredients and cooking methods (Central, 2023). For the most part, the Instagram posts show the representation of humans on the Instagram pages through hands holding a food item (see Figure 1). Half of the restaurants did not have a high enough percentage of posts with people as the subject to qualify to have the posts of people analyzed (see Figure 2). The separation between humanity and food is prevalent in the Instagram posts and proves the humanitarian aspect of the cuisine is missing from the Instagram pages. With such a large Indigenous population, most traditional Peruvian dishes draw inspiration from, at the very least, Indigenous Peruvian foods, but there is little to no presence of the people responsible for creating the recipes and teaching the cooking methods the chefs use and rework in the restaurant kitchens.

Figure 1

Restaurant	# of slides with just hands	# of photo slides	#of video slides	Total # of slides
Central	10	14	22	36
Huaca Pucllana	2	8	0	8
Mayta	4	24	2	26
Panchita	7	8	9	17
Total	23	54	33	87

Figure 2

Restaurant	Accomplishment	Food	People	Drink	Questions	Décor	Posts collected
Central	5	54	9	0	0	0	71
Huaca Pucllana	0	60	5	17	0	25	111
Mayta	4	66	5	2	0	3	83
Panchita	1	60	5	6	7	0	89
Total	10	240	24	25	7	28	354

In the sample, seeing a whole person is very rare, but if a whole person is in one of the posts, the person is typically an employee, an owner, or a customer. The chefs of some of the restaurants are present on the Instagram pages, making the representation of the restaurant on Instagram about the food and the celebrity chefs. Panchita shows in video posts the chefs, waitstaff, and customers in the restaurant (Panchita, 2024a; Panchita, 2024b). Central made a post in appreciation of the entire team at the restaurant (Central, 2023). Mayta has a post of Jaime Pesaque, the restaurant owner, holding an Amazonian eel in an industrial kitchen (Mayta, 2024a). While Central is showing appreciation for the restaurant staff, there is still little appreciation for the origin of the food in the sample of the posts. The other restaurants confirm, through the posts, the depiction of people on the Instagram pages is to show the prestige of the restaurant by showing the classically trained chefs and the mannerly waitstaff.

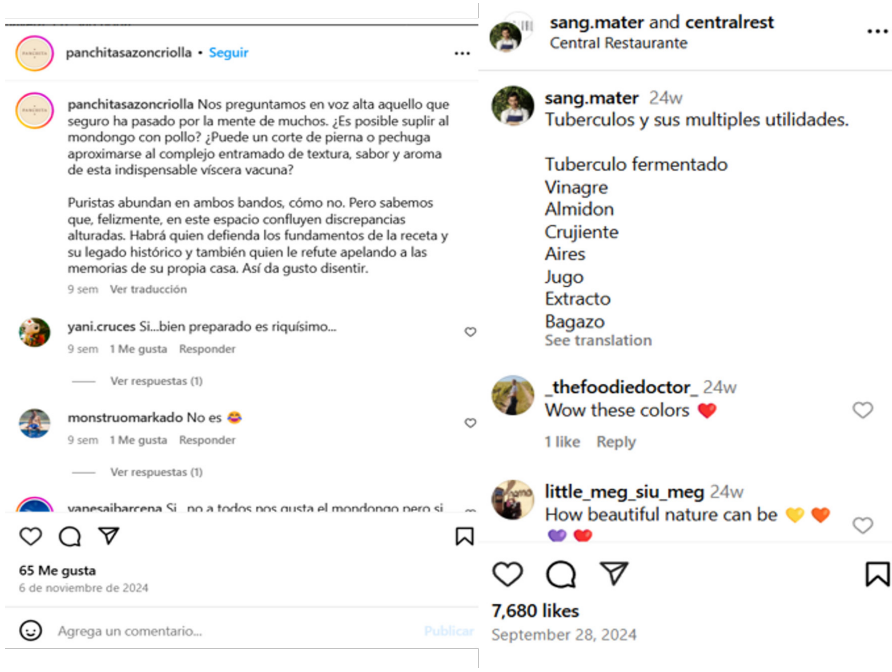
Only two restaurants spoke about people in their captions; Central and Mayta posted about the restaurant's employees. The other two restaurants had no mention of people in the captions of the posts. Central congratulated and praised the team for the employees' hard work on Employee Appreciation Day (Central, 2023). Mayta, in a reflection on the past year of business, promised to continue exploring the Peruvian territory and gastronomic history in the following year as a team (Mayta, 2024g). Half of the restaurants talk about people directly involved in the restaurants and not the impact other people may have had on the businesses in the captions. The other half of the restaurants have no mention of people in the captions of the posts in the sample, completely erasing the purpose and focal point of these restaurants according to the website snippets.

Instances of Contemporary Instagram Features

The captions of the posts range from complex histories of dishes to simple lists of ingredients. The four restaurants have different styles of captioning the Instagram posts; each caption uniquely suited to the accompanying image or video. Huaca Pucllana captioned in Spanish an image of a dessert as follows: "Lemon and white chocolate cheesecake, coconut crust, and berry sorbet. We wait for you Monday to Sunday, reservations until 10:00pm…" (Huaca Pucllana, 2024c). Appearing in Figure 3, Central's captions varied in length and detail, but the posts about food were typically short as well.

Panchita's captions were long and descriptive, providing additional details and context to the images (see Figure 3). The captions of the posts do not provide much additional information about the goals of the posts and typically serve as descriptors of the images, losing human significance through the mostly straightforward captions. Words are a powerful tool to share thoughts, opinions, and hopes, and yet the restaurants do not seem to carry over the messages from the websites into the captions of the posts.

Figure 3: (Panchita, 2024d; Central, 2024c)



The use of emoticons [emojis] among the four restaurants was strangely rare, considering how much importance the restaurants place on contemporary marketing tactics. Emojis were not prevalent, but the symbols that did appear may be aiming to advertise to a younger crowd. Seen in Figure 4, Huaca Pucllana used the brown heart emoji on a post on January 9, 2025 along a picture of the terrace of the restaurant. Central posted a roulette including many photos and videos of uncooked ingredients and finished dishes on December 22, 2024, with a caption including a piñata emoji (see Figure 4). The use of emojis in the sampled posts, while rare, is uncharacteristic in relation to the manifestos on the restaurant websites. The presence of emojis suggests an attempt to modernize the Instagram post captions, but since so few emojis appear in the posts, the restaurants are, in a way, following the statements from the restaurant websites.

Figure 4: (Huaca Pucllana, 2025)

Restaurant	Caption	Translated Caption
Central	Breve descanso	Brief break
Huaca Pucllana	Nuestra terraza con vista a la huaca Los esperamos de lunes a domingo, reservas hasta las 10:00pm al 445 4042 #huacapucllanarestaurant #huacapucllana #huaca #eatingwithaview #view Restaurant Huaca Pucllana S.A.C. 20500732891	Our terrace with a view of the huaca We wait for you Monday to Sunday, reservations until 10:00pm at 445 4042 #huacapucllanarestaurant #huacapucllana #huaca #eatingwithaview #view Restaurant Huaca Pucllana S.A.C. 20500732891

The restaurant Instagram pages tagged other Instagram accounts in captions on posts and on the images to show similar organizations and accounts related to the restaurants. The restaurants often tag other Instagram accounts in the posts to show other people or organizations involved in the subject of the posts. Central tagged the account @virgiliocentral on the first slide of one of the posts from the sample (Central, 2024d). Panchita tagged Gaston Acurio on the first slide of the post the restaurant made about Aji de Gallina (Panchita, 2025). Mayta tagged their own account in several posts (Mayta, 2024b; Mayta, 2024c; Mayta, 2024e; Mayta, 2024f). The emphasis on the celebrity chefs in the tagged posts suggest the chefs draw the most attention from Instagram users to the restaurant Instagram pages. Since the celebrity chefs have such a strong following on social media and in real life, the restaurants likely post with the chefs' accounts to draw more people to the restaurants.

Peruvian fine dining restaurants use hashtags to further specify the topic of the post. The hashtags the restaurants use show the people the restaurants are trying to reach depending on the language the hashtags are in, the themes of the hashtags, and the frequency certain hashtags appear. As seen in Appendix 2, Huaca Pucllana mainly uses English hashtags in the Instagram posts. Panchita, on the other hand, only uses hashtags in Spanish. Central only has one example of hashtags in the sample, but Central also used hashtags in Spanish (see Appendix 2). The use of hashtags shows a drive to become more well-versed in contemporary restaurant practices and advertising. The languages of the captions suggest some restaurants may be advertising the restaurant to locals while other restaurants may be advertising to tourists, which emphasizes a shift in the type of customer the restaurants are aiming for.

Photographic Representation on Instagram

Among the food posts, prepared dishes dominate the other types of food posts. While many of the posts are of the raw, uncooked ingredients culminating in a fully prepared dish eventually, the restaurants post the prepared dishes more often. Huaca Pucllana only posted fully prepared dishes, all on a worn wooden table with different plates and bowls, among the food posts in the sample (see Figure 5). Mayta also posted several posts of fully prepared dishes in the sample, including many colorful dishes against a dark stone background (see Figure 6). Panchita more commonly posts the process of the creation of the dishes than the finished dish, as in many video posts Panchita films the chefs in the kitchen preparing the dishes (see Figure 7). While the posting of prepared dishes on a fine dining restaurant Instagram page is consistent with the types of posts a person may expect to see, these posts do not necessarily connect fully with the message the fine dining establishments put on their websites. All of the restaurants emphasized community, Peru's land, and the history connected to Peru in the manifestos, and yet the restaurants have many dishes and little evidence in the samples to show the presence of those themes in the posts.

Figure 5: (Huaca Pucllana, 2024b)



Figure 6: (Mayta, 2024g)



Figure 7: (Panchita, 2024a)



While ingredients are not the most common display of a representation of food, the ingredients are still a large part of the Instagram posts. Three out of four of the restaurants included posts of the unassembled and uncooked ingredients in the samples. As seen in Figure 8, Central is the only restaurant out of the four which posts more images and videos of ingredients than prepared dishes. Panchita also shows many ingredients during the videos of preparing a dish (see Figure 8). Mayta only has one post featuring unprepared food: a video of a fish native to the Peruvian Amazon (see Figure 9). The presence of ingredients on the Instagram pages may impart a sense of origin of the dishes—a connection to the Indigenous people who cultivated, collected, and cooked with these ingredients long before the emergence of fine dining restaurants—and while not entirely inexact, there still needs to be more representation of the actual people on the Instagram pages. These posts are the initial steps in including Indigenous people in the Peruvian fine dining narrative, as the restaurants aimed to do according to the websites, but we have not reached the end goal yet.

Figure 8

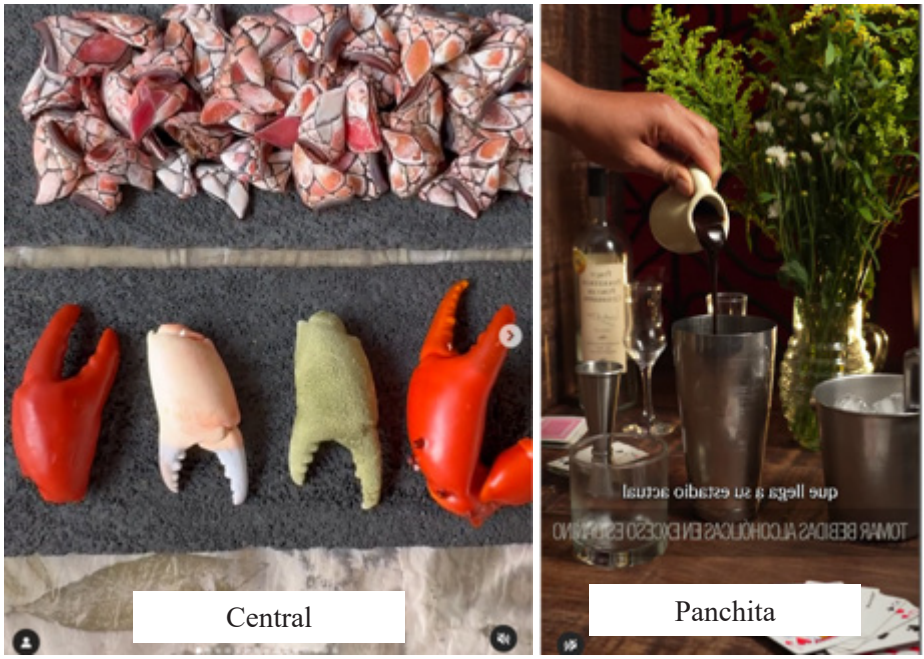


Figure 9



The restaurants employ similar colors on the Instagram pages to convey a message of neutrality and connection to the Earth. When examining the color scheme of the posts, the majority of the posts for all of the restaurants used natural colors such as green, brown, and gray, among others. Although Huaca Pucllana has pops of color in the sample, the most common colors in several posts were brown, beige, white, black, and green (Huaca Pucllana, 2024a; Huaca Pucllana, 2024b). Central has the most colorful posts and the greatest variety of colors, but the majority of posts in the sample are earth tones (Central, 2024a; Central, 2024b). Panchita used many more warm tones in the images and videos on Panchita's Instagram page to give off a sense of comfort and familiarity (Panchita, 2024c; Panchita, 2025). Apart from Panchita, the restaurants promote nature and the agrarian elements of life in Peru through the color schemes the restaurants use, alluding to the emphasis on Peru's environment in the website manifestos. However, meeting the themes of the manifestos through this covert path of aesthetic color scheme is only one concern of many the restaurants have fulfilled in regards to living up to the claims on the websites.

At times, the videos on the Instagram pages can share more information about the way the restaurants aim to represent themselves. The background sounds and music of the videos portray the priority the restaurants put on the sounds of Lima, the sounds of nature, or culturally significant instrumental music for Peruvians. In Central's posts including videos, a mix of urban sounds, such as the sounds of vehicles driving and honking, and nature sounds, like wind rustling through trees and birds chirping are present (Central, 2024c; Central, 2024d). Panchita opted for instrumental music in some of the video posts in the sample (Panchita, 2024c; Panchita, 2024e). The audios of the videos of Central's posts point to embracing Peru in all of its facets, but the audios of the video posts of Panchita emphasize the culture of Peru by playing music. Central continues to highlight the contemporary aspects of Peru in the posts, but Panchita embraces tradition, meaning the two restaurants depict the missions from the websites separately, with one restaurant focusing on a holistic view of Peru, and the other embracing traditional Peruvian culture in the audios of the video posts.

Besides food, the restaurants had some other notable categories, some unique to only one restaurant, out of the posts of each restaurant. Huaca Pucllana and Panchita had posts in drinks and décor, and Panchita was the only restaurant to have question posts. Huaca Pucllana had 17 drink posts and 25 décor posts out of the 111 posts in the sample, and Panchita harbored merely 6 drink posts out of the 89 in the sample (see Figure 2). Panchita highlighted drinks and hypothetical or opinion-based questions about Peruvian food as the two largest categories besides food on the Panchita Instagram page (see Figure 10). While the category of cocktails strays far from the proclamations and themes of the website manifestos in Huaca Pucllana's posts, Panchita embraced the more traditional, Spanish-inspired pisco sour—a culturally significant drink in Peru in several of the drink posts. Likewise, Huaca Pucllana's emphasis on the interior of the restaurant and the terrace overlooking the Pre-Colombian constructed *huaca* is a major attraction for tourists and locals alike. Yet, the modern décor and emphasis on stone in the images fights to modernize this religious and cultural center, finished in approximately 200 C.E., while also novelizing the perceived primitivity of the Lima culture of the Pre-Colombian era. Therefore the imagery embraces the topics of the website excerpt, while also performing Indigeneity at the same time. In contrast, the hypothetical questions Panchita posed on Instagram opened up the floor for people of all walks of life to learn about and discuss Peruvian cuisine as a community, supporting the elements of community and acceptance of the website manifesto.

Figure 10

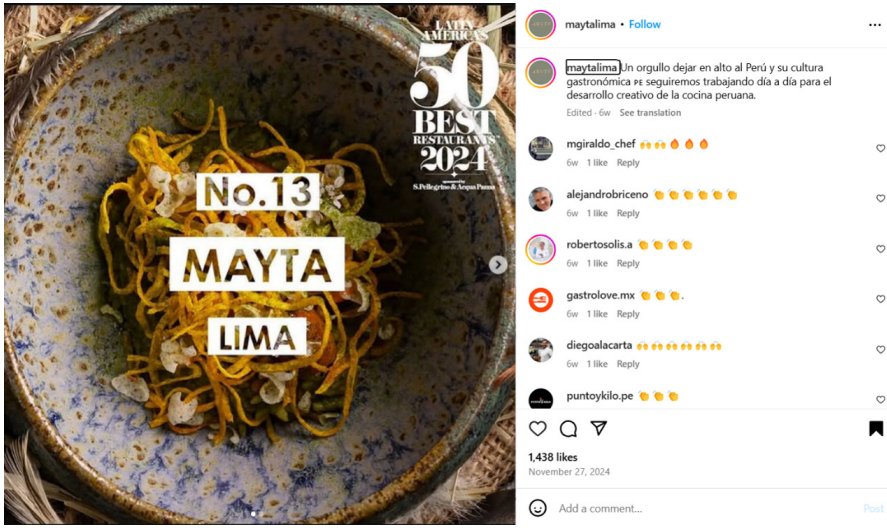


Other notable categories of posts from the four restaurants were the categories "people" and "accomplishment." Central and Mayta both have people and accomplishment as the second and third most prominent categories. Central posted a picture of their team and an image of the restaurant securing a spot as one of the best restaurants in the world (see Figure 11). Mayta posted a picture of the head chef holding a fish and an award the restaurant received because of Mayta's culinary achievements (see Figures 9 and 12). As touched on previously, just because one of these accounts posts a person does not mean the restaurants have measured up to the claims on the restaurant websites. The extra categories mainly focus on the prestige of the restaurants themselves instead of the impact the restaurants might have outside of the fine dining realm—ignoring the Indigenous context of much of typical Peruvian cooking.

Figure 11



Figure 12: (Mayta, 2024d)



DISCUSSION

Theoretical Frameworks Surrounding Peruvian Fine Dining

Scholars debate the idea of Cultural Control Theory in fine dining and Indigenous foodways, and this research defends the idea of Cultural Control Theory after seeing how the four restaurants post new or reinvented cultural dishes more often than anything else. Scholars disagree about the possibility of a culture being able to control the demand for certain goods, such as cultural dishes, versus having to constantly invent and reinvent cultural products to keep up with the demand from tourists, but this research finds on Instagram the studied restaurants commodify Indigenous Peruvian cultural foods. Cultural Control Theory connects with other relevant discussions such as cultural homogenization and cultural property debates to defend the stance of researchers on the Cultural Control side (Overgaag & Nass, 2018). Correspondingly, the analysis of the data of this study suggests a certain favoritism for showing new-age, contemporary dishes and celebrity chefs on the restaurant Instagram pages. This paper delves into the nuances of media in conjunction with Peruvian fine dining, effectively determining an elitist structure, which solely caters to upper-class patrons and ignores the messages of the restaurant websites in support of Peru as a nation, people, and culture. This study is a bare-bones application of the theory and does not necessarily center around Cultural Control Theory, but the theory, as far as I am aware, has not been applied to social media posts in previous research and thus creates a fresh outlook of the debate in relation to social media.

Neocolonialism strives to show how the networks of control of previously colonized nations by countries in the Global North persist in the modern day, despite those societies being removed from colonization by a couple hundred years. In Peru, fine dining has exploded in popularity, but not without the encouragement of certain groups such as the Peruvian government, western countries, and the upper Peruvian class. Fine dining originated in Europe to begin with, meaning European ideals and cooking methods permeate the system of haute cuisine itself—forcing many fine dining restaurants outside of the West to conform to uncustomary practices and expectations to be able to compete with the best restaurants. This struggle neocolonializes some cuisines, including Peruvian cuisine. Latin American cuisine, including Mexican cuisine, has been subjected to major neocolonial shifts to act in accordance with United States and European palates through chain restaurants such as Taco Bell and Chipotle (Martinez-Cruz, 2019). Similar neocolonial shifts are present in the Instagram posts from the four fine dining restaurants due to the increase in English-use in the captions and hashtags, the focus on the achievement of the restaurants, and the emphasis on the finished, contemporary-style dishes. Neocolonialism at the beginning of this project appeared to be the perfect theory to aid in the analysis of the data, but, upon further reflection, I think Postcolonialism would fit this proj-

ect more accurately. Neocolonialism still fits the narrative of this paper, but the impact of colonialism in present day seems to be more accurate than the purposeful control of Peru by Western powers.

Postcolonialism draws connections between the history of colonization in Peru and the adoption of Western foodways because of the structural violence present in Peruvian society from colonization. Countless subaltern groups have adapted cultural foods to a European palate and vision in the pursuit of haute cuisine. According to Wilson (2020), one of the issues with identifying postcolonialism in the cultural foods of previously colonized groups is the struggle between researchers—typically educated, privileged people from the Global North—looking for and categorizing these groups as victims of postcolonial adoption of foodways and victimizing groups that may not identify with the victimhood the researchers assigned to them, while the same groups accept and embrace postcolonial shifts in the foodways of the group. Embracing this tension, postcolonial and Indigenous peoples have distinct and unique reasons for adopting Western foodways because of the structural violence present in previously colonized societies (Wilson, 2020). The way the four restaurants, Central, Huaca Pucllana, Mayta, and Panchita, placed most of the emphasis on prepared dishes in Instagram posts corresponds to typical media representation of western fine dining restaurants, alluding to a possible postcolonial adoption of media representation for these specific restaurants. Postcolonialism fills in some of the gaps left when looking at Peruvian fine dining restaurants on Instagram through only a neocolonial lens, and the two theories work together and reinforce each other to show structural violence in different aspects of everyday Peruvian life. Neocolonialism shows the targeted attacks against subaltern groups, while postcolonialism suggests the issue goes deeper than current events and may, at times, be a purposeful shift in food culture.

Current Events in the Peruvian Fine Dining Sphere

Globally, Peruvian fine dining restaurants have been achieving high-ranking positions on the lists of the best restaurants. Many Peruvian fine dining restaurants, including some of the restaurants in this paper, gained international recognition because of the rise in Peruvian cuisine's popularity in the global food market. Peruvian fine dining is often the topic of news articles, including a *CE Noticias Financieras English* article discussing Peru's most well-renowned restaurants and alternatives for tourists unable to snag a reservation at one of these celebrity-chef-owned restaurants ("Lima, the city," 2025). In a similar manner, another *CE Noticias Financieras English* article outlined the continuous climb of the number of restaurants in Miraflores, a more affluent part of Lima ("Restaurants in Miraflores," 2025). The follower counts of the Instagram pages of Central, Huaca Pucllana, Mayta, and Panchita (396k, 63.5k, 110k, 147k as of the 9th of June 2025), and the interaction from followers the posts receive in the form of likes and com-

ments, unite the idea of the popularity of Peruvian cuisine with the reality of the popularity of Peruvian fine dining. Social media is not only a tool for advertising and sharing ideas; our current society has completely intertwined social media and everyday life, meaning the implications of follower counts and Instagram posts reflects the real-life interest in and representation of Peruvian fine dining restaurants. Even after around 40 years of the beginning of the Peruvian gastronomic boom, interest in Peruvian cuisine continues to grow.

Peruvian fine dining restaurants are not only notable in the fine dining sphere, but the restaurants have also gained popularity among the citizens of Peru and Latin America. The pride Peruvians feel for their cuisine is palpable in the tourist reactions to their experiences at fine dining restaurants in Peru and in the reactions to the restaurants and chefs by the Peruvians themselves. In a news article about the best restaurants several food critics wished to visit again, MIL, one of Central founder Virgilio Martinez's restaurants, was the very first restaurant on the list ("The one restaurant," 2024). Other newspapers found more interactive ways to include the public in the fine dining sphere; one such newspaper invited people to vote on the best restaurants for many different categories of foods ("Somos Awards: you," 2023). The enduring investment of the public in Peruvian fine dining ensures the restaurants, particularly the restaurants of celebrity chefs, will keep Peruvian fine dining restaurants in the global discourse. While Peruvian cuisine is relatively new to the global market, the inception of the Peruvian Gastronomic Boom in the 1980s and the evolution of Peruvian fine dining points to Peruvian fine dining having some staying power.

CONCLUSION

By no means are the four researched restaurants here evil in nature despite the lack of Indigenous representation on the Instagram pages. The long history of marginalizing these groups, started by colonizers in the 15th century, still has an impact on this post-colonial world, making the representation of these restaurants on Instagram integral for understanding the possible impact the commodification of Indigenous foods can have on Peruvian society. Some fine dining restaurants are able to separate from the Western World but often do not. In this case, all the chefs of these restaurants have been classically trained in fine dining in France, Italy, Spain, and other parts of Europe. The chefs use these techniques in the cooking of Peruvian foods, modernizing, changing, and evolving Peruvian cuisine to include aspects of other cuisines. The transformation of foodstuffs into an art form for only the most financially well-off people to enjoy should be called into question. Are these restaurants promoting Peruvian cuisine as a representation of the people, places, and culture of Peru, or are the restaurants adjusting Peruvian cuisine to fit the needs and desires of the Western elite? The answer to this question can only arise from further investigation.

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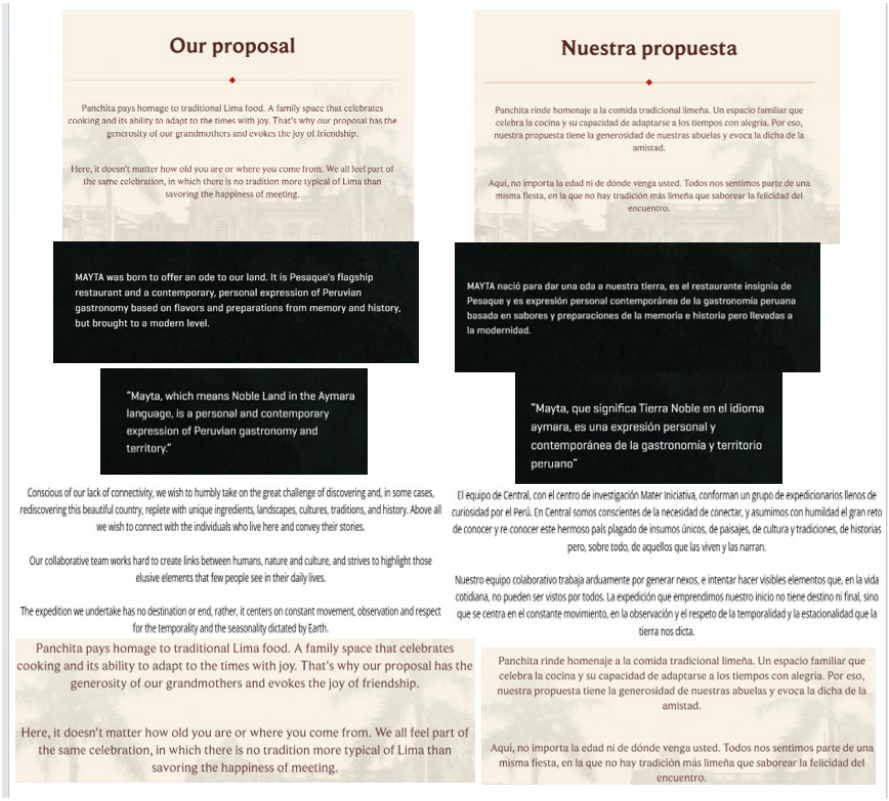
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Appendix 1: (Mayta, n.d.; Central Restaurant, n.d.)



Appendix 2: (Panchita, 2025; Huaca Pucllana, 2024a; Central, 2024b)

