

Gastronomic Revolution: Peruvian Cuisine's Journey from Cultural Entity to Commodity

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Abstract:

The commodification of culture occurs when cultural products gain additional value beyond standard use-value, moving from a non-commercial realm to the commercial. Before ascending to the global culinary stage, Peruvian cuisine underwent a series of changes as the government, a group of Peruvian elites, and chefs explored ways to increase the cuisine's market potential, in an era deemed the gastronomic revolution. This research examines the evolution of cuisine through a qualitative analysis of media portrayals and scholarly understandings of the gastronomic revolution and Peruvian cuisine. I argue that the gastronomic revolution in Peru is contributing to the commodification of Peruvian food culture. Though Peru stands to benefit economically from the transformation of Peruvian cuisine, the contributions of minority groups to cuisine could be left behind in selling Peruvian food culture to a global audience.

INTRODUCTION

Peruvians lovingly describe their homeland as housing the trifecta of landscapes: sea, mountains, and jungle. This spectacular landscape has supplied the ingredients making up the foundation of Peruvian cuisine, a cuisine so delicious, rumor has it Peruvians are more proud of their cuisine than Machu Picchu (Tegel). The result of a nearly five hundred-year melting pot of indigenous, European, Asian, and African influences, Peruvian cuisine is full of unique flavors and ingredients (Fan 32). The variety and complexity of Peruvian cuisine set it apart from other Latin American cuisines, making Peruvian cuisine potentially the most captivating cuisine in the Western hemisphere that surprisingly few people have tried (Singh). However, actors behind the Peruvian gastronomic revolution, a largely elite orchestrated food movement, are bent on taking Peruvian

cuisine to the masses, using delectable dishes and exotic ingredients as instruments to draw people in and spark curiosity about Peruvian culture ("Cooking Up"). Gastronomy has put Lima back on the map, no longer a mere stopover on the way to historic Cusco (Tegel). Global foodies now flock to Peru, a country where food is exalted and chefs are celebrities.

Every person in the world has some type of daily engagement with food, spanning between thoughts of where the next meal will come from to eating elaborate dishes. Eating is a sensory experience possessing certain emotional qualities and creating strong linkages between place, memory, and the food consumed. People take notice of taste bud-exciting cuisines, forming perceptions about the cuisine's place of origin, something governments and people in the food business have realized. Various middle income countries, such as Mexico

and South Korea, have made deliberate efforts to popularize national cuisines on a global scale, leveraging cuisine to create a recognizable nation brand through a public diplomacy initiative best known as “gastrodiplomacy” (Wilson 13). National governments hope investing in branding campaigns will result in financial benefits, such as strengthened economies through amplified trade, investment, or tourism revenue. Beginning in the 1990s, the Peruvian government began envisioning cuisine as the cornerstone of Peruvian identity and a potential platform for economic development, triggering the birth of the “gastronomic revolution” (Fan 30). Other elite groups of people, including chefs, joined the movement to push Peruvian food to a larger audience through a market-oriented approach, reassessing the presentation, marketing, and selling of Peruvian cuisine (Wilson 16).

The driving question behind my argument is whether or not the gastronomic revolution in Peru is contributing to the commodification of Peruvian food culture. As actors behind the gastronomic revolution in Peru explore new ways to promote the national cuisine, efforts could shift how Peruvian cuisine is evaluated, from solely having cultural value to having market value. Assessing a cultural product, such as Peruvian cuisine, not previously considered in economic terms can inflate the value of the cultural product beyond everyday use-value, commodifying the product (Pyykkönen 548). If the economic value of the cultural product becomes more valued in society than the cultural significance, the cultural meaning associated with the product could change. Peruvians could profit from having a more recognizable and widely accessible cuisine and foreigners could

benefit from exposure to Peruvian culture through Peruvian cuisine. However, if certain Peruvian foods become more visible or popularized throughout the gastronomic revolution, foods less inclined to result in economic benefits from wider consumption and the associated cooking traditions could become increasingly scarce or undervalued.

Over the course of the paper, I argue the gastronomic revolution is indeed contributing to the commodification of Peruvian food culture. To begin, I present the origins of the gastronomic revolution, including the key actors and the respective visions of the actors for the future of Peruvian cuisine. Next, I introduce the theory of commodification, in particular the theory’s connection to tourism and emphasis of government involvement in the commodification of culture. The methodological approach follows, detailing the data collection of media portrayals and scholarly understandings of the gastronomic revolution and Peruvian cuisine. I then explain how the cultural significance of food for Peruvians has inspired the government and the Peruvian Society of Gastronomy to form gastronomy-themed initiatives to raise awareness of Peruvian cuisine and to bring in tourism and outside investment. Subsequently, I examine the role of the chef in the gastronomic revolution and draw attention to organizations that feel additional measures should be taken to safeguard domestic and indigenous cooking traditions beyond the actions of the key actors. Finally, I explain how the actions of the Peruvian government, the Peruvian Society of Gastronomy, chefs, and others involved in the food business fulfill aspects of the theory of commodification and discuss how the commodification of Peruvian food culture is relevant to global consumers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gastronomic Revolution: Peruvian Cuisine Takes the Stage

Peru had to reach a certain level of stability for the Peruvian government to have the space to promote food as a meaningful force for change. Politicians needed the time to focus on issues unrelated to national security before Peruvian cuisine could take up room in national consciousness. Between 1980 and 1992, Peru became increasingly excluded from international trade and investment due to economic crisis and intense political violence between the Peruvian Army and radical revolutionary groups (Fan 33). When the violence subsided, Peru experienced a period of economic growth, and the government incorporated food into Peru's ambitious plan for economic development (Matta, "Value Native Eating" 6). Political actors believed if promotional efforts surrounding Peruvian cuisine found the balance between cultural preservation and conformance to international market standards, such efforts could result in positive economic impacts for the country (Matta, "Value Native Eating" 6). National stability and the subsequent economic growth allowed both Peruvians and foreigners to view Peruvian cuisine through a new lens. The future of Peruvian food culture hinges upon the negotiation between local and international players regarding the most important elements of Peruvian cuisine to preserve.

Food has particular value as a common identifier among Peru's ethnically and socially diverse population. The value of food can span beyond a necessary means of survival into a physical representation of a people with a shared history. Peruvian

cuisine has European, Asian, African, and indigenous influences, and the establishment of a direct connection between Peru's culinary heritage and the country itself lends to a larger movement to foster solidarity among the varied communities and "to rediscover intrinsic value in intercultural difference" (Fan 33). In 2007, the Peruvian government raised Peruvian cuisine to the status of National Heritage, with hopes of further increasing the interest in food as a means of identity (Matta, "Value Native Eating" 1). The issue of who has the power to influence Peruvian gastronomic identity emerges as the government puts forth a vision for the future of Peruvian cuisine. As Peruvians increasingly use food to identify with Peru as a nation, the lines between selling a cuisine and selling an identity begin to blur in promoting Peruvian gastronomy to the rest of the world.

A group of Peruvian elites invested in the future of Peruvian cuisine felt the need to develop an organization to promote Peruvian food beyond the scope of government actions. The group hoped to bring Peruvians involved in every level of the food supply chain into one conversation about using food as a means to foster economic and social progress in Peru. In 2007, a collective of restaurant owners, experts in development studies, heads of culinary schools, and chefs came together to found the Peruvian Society of Gastronomy, known as Apega (Matta, "Food Incursions" 346). Both a "lobby and think-tank on food issues," Apega views Peruvian cuisine as a vehicle for "fostering national identity, social inclusion, and economic development all across the country" and places importance on appreciating the role of producers in the food chain (Matta, "Food Incursions" 346). In addition to ongoing

efforts, Apega also plans Mistura, an annual, week long culinary festival first held in Lima in 2008 (García, “Taste of Conquest” 510). Apega has sizeable political clout and influence in Peru as one of the main groups supporting the continued evolution of the gastronomic revolution. Apega initiatives could bolster the image of Peru as a culinary haven through strategic marketing and impact how Peruvians relate to each other through the national cuisine depending on how the organization depicts the origins and traditions of Peruvian food culture.

Peruvian cuisine underwent an aesthetic transformation process before ascending from Peruvians’ tables in the domestic sphere to become a promoted part of national identity. Much of the transformation process centered on legitimizing Peruvian dishes as part of a sophisticated cuisine. By taking an authoritative role in the interpretation of indigenous and rural food traditions, European-trained Peruvian chefs have modernized rural food to appeal to the upper classes (García, “Taste of Conquest” 511). Through the utilization of “haute cuisine techniques and aesthetics,” chefs have developed alternative versions of traditional dishes, preserving the exoticism of traditional ingredients, but at the same time essentially rendering the products unrecognizable (Matta, “Food Incursions” 342). Though incorporating indigenous and rural food elements into contemporary trendy Peruvian cuisine has brought an awareness of the cultural value of the elements, indigenous and rural food knowledge might become displaced in the process. In overlooking potentially adverse effects on traditional food knowledge, chefs’ upgraded dishes have become part of a larger movement to standardize and make

Peruvian cuisine more accessible to a cosmopolitan audience beyond the borders of Peru.

The media also develops content to advance the solidification of Peruvian food in the realm of sophisticated cuisines. Both local and international media sources have increased the visibility of Peruvian cuisine in publications and television segments through featured articles and cooking shows. Popular media sources’ coverage of Peru as a travel destination has gradually deviated from traditional depictions of iconic Peruvian ruins and landscapes to descriptions of Peruvian dishes and drinks (Nelson 209). On a local level, the media has highlighted successful gastronomic entrepreneurship ventures to promote community building around individual accomplishments (Matta, “Food Incursions” 343). Additionally, Apega produces Mistura each year, a high profile culinary festival cultivating heavy media coverage due to the size and celebrity chef presence (García, “Taste of Conquest” 515). Representations of Peruvian cuisine in the media allow readers or viewers to consume the cuisine in an indirect manner through reading elaborate descriptions or absorbing televised depictions of the cuisine. However, media depictions run the risk of standardizing the types of images circulated about Peruvian food.

Commodification of Culture

When commodified through an exchange, products gain additional value beyond standard use-value. In a social context, commodification occurs when a non-commercial product becomes commercial. Commodification is the process of evaluating people, places, and practices in terms of exchange value in the

context of trade, assigning value to an object “not previously considered in economic terms” (Pyykkönen 548). Under the capitalistic system encompassing much of the global economy, commodities only gain or lose value when exchanged (Roland 4). The gastronomic revolution in Peru has presented an opportunity for an increase in culinary-related tourism and the exchange of Peruvian food products. If travelers and promoters of Peruvian cuisine assign an inflated value to Peruvian food in the exchanges, arguably, the commodification of Peruvian food culture could take place.

The process of commodification not only assigns value to cultural products in terms of market value but can also cause the meaning of the cultural product to evolve as well. Both visitors and local people experience the impact of cultural products changing in meaning. Commodified products respond to market values, resulting in the displacement of cultural meanings onto a different system of regulation outside of local control (Magowan 81). As cultural products diminish in meaning for locals and pressure to present tourists with increasingly exotic and spectacular attractions increases, locals increasingly stage cultural products for tourists, decorating the products to look authentic (Cohen 372). Commodification of cultural products can rob local people of cultural meanings important to organizing daily life as cultural products morph into paid performances for tourists (Greenwood 137). As tourists seek out visions of authentic Peruvian cuisine, accommodating forces might try to match tourist’s expectations. Meeting tourist’s expectations runs the risk of displacing or losing cultural meanings associated with Peruvian food.

Despite negative depictions of cultural commodification, members of the host

culture likely have more agency in the process than critics of commodification imply. Changes in cultural meanings catered to tourists do not necessarily eliminate the possibility of local empowerment. As found in the case of Cuba, members of the host culture actively strategize, manipulate, and perform the images of Cuba elicited by cultural objects in a way that fits in with the national imagery locals desire to produce (Roland 6). For locals, cultural products oriented towards tourist consumption can simultaneously become “vehicles of self-representation” or distinguishing markers of cultural identity before a global audience (Cohen 383). Though Peruvians should not take the potentially adverse effects of diminished or altered cultural meanings surrounding food lightly, such effects should not prevent the outright sharing of Peruvian cuisine with the rest of the world. As a collective body, Peruvians can claim agency in the formation of cultural images regarding Peruvian cuisine and participate in the process of commodification alongside seemingly more powerful entities such as the government.

Governments often play an active role in the commodification of culture due to the potential economic incentives of selling culture to a wider audience. Political actors have a unique ability to manipulate the spread of cultural products in order to benefit society through the use of economic policy focused on increasing tourism revenue and international trade. When policymakers and business interests begin to form plans to market a nation as a tourist destination, the parties place an emphasis on understanding and capitalizing on the symbols and cultural practices best representing the nation (Roland 4). Thus, public policy can act as indicator of the

commodification of cultural products when a government attempts to “combine culture with national innovation and marketing strategies” (Pyykkönen 549). The potential to gain more extensive access to the global market and international distribution networks for cultural products further incentivizes the creation of policies related to cultural industries, particularly in developing countries (Pyykkönen 554). Connection to a wider market and distribution networks allows government and participating cultural industries to push cultural identity in the direction of popular demand. Whether cultural identity can maintain authenticity throughout the push becomes a pressing issue for people like scholars and indigenous people concerned with the preservation of cultural products.

DATA AND METHODS

I collected data from three main types of secondary sources: news articles, journal articles, and books. The sources present historical information about the gastronomic revolution in Peru and academic viewpoints about the role of food in national identity. News articles demonstrate how mainstream media sources in Peru and the United States portray Peruvian cuisine, using pictures and varying reporting techniques such as interviews or opinion pieces. Academic articles and books provide cases of commodification of culture throughout the world, examples of nations using food for self-promotion, and explanations of the rise of culinary tourism. The news articles lend insight into how descriptions of Peruvian cuisine in the media could affect how Peruvians feel about the national cuisine and shape foreign perception of Peruvian cuisine. Combining media portrayals and

information from academic sources into a single analysis will provide a variety of perspectives regarding the possible commodification of Peruvian culture.

Thematic coding provides a structure for conducting qualitative research through an emphasis on recognizing patterns or themes within the data. The patterns and themes become codes to use throughout the data collection process, as a way to categorize and organize findings. While reading sources collected through archival research, I encountered themes pertinent to the potential trajectory of the gastronomic revolution. As each theme emerged from the data, I developed corresponding documents to deposit key passages from articles related to the themes. After encountering and establishing a theme, I coded key passages of subsequent readings with the theme as applicable and continually added passages to the documents. Though the use of thematic coding, I could determine the strength of a theme according to the number of data types addressing the theme. Additionally, I could ascertain whether individual themes could build the case of the commodification of Peruvian food culture.

The findings and argument within the paper relied upon secondary sources from other authors with research experiences in Peru and data from websites. Identifying any biases or misrepresentations from the ways other authors present information proves difficult without on the ground experience in Peru. Both the media and Apega present the effects of the gastronomic revolution on small agricultural producers and Peru as a whole in a very positive light, with dissenting opinions coming from academic authors. A reliance on the two varied perspectives makes understanding how producers or every-day Peruvians actually

feel about food-centered initiatives like Mistura or government branding campaigns challenging given a lack of primary data from interviews. Time and budget willing, traveling to Peru to conduct fieldwork and interviews with the lesser-heard voices of agricultural producers and indigenous groups could have formed a new pool of primary data for drawing conclusions, strengthening the argument of the paper. Gathering primary data in Peru would have allowed me, through interview hand-picked interview questions, to reach a greater depth of understanding of how Peruvians think the gastronomic revolution might affect Peruvian food culture and whether feelings differ between ethnic groups or social status.

FINDINGS

Even though significant social and geographical barriers separate people in Peru, food provides Peruvians a source of common cultural identity. As a cuisine with diverse cultural influences, Peruvians of many backgrounds can find aspects of individual roots in dishes Peruvians identify with as a whole. In a poll of Peruvians, respondents reported the four aspects of Peruvian culture they felt most proud, with food ranking above Machu Picchu or the nation's history (Fan 33). 94.7% of Lima and Callao residents are proud of Peruvian cuisine as part of Peruvian heritage, with 64% preferring criolla cuisine (developed on the coast) and 10% preferring regional cuisines ("Alianza entre turismo" 57). The deep connection Peruvians have with food spans borders, inspiring, for example, Peruvian migrants in San Francisco to create Peruvian restaurants and to import Peruvian food from food import companies (Brain 83). The government and Apega hope to

capture value stemming from Peruvian cuisine both in terms of inspiring unity among Peruvians and collecting a profit. Food has emotional and intimate qualities for the government and Apega to capitalize upon.

Government Involvement in the Gastronomic Revolution

The Peruvian government has sponsored various gastronomy-centered campaigns to attract global attention. New culinary campaigns give the Peruvian government an opportunity to rebrand the country, pushing away from previous associations with political instability. The Peruvian government strives to create a nation brand with food as the foundation to promote Peru's food culture as both "world-class and distinctly Peruvian" (Wilson 13). National branding campaigns are an outlet for countries like Peru to pour funds into, to support goals like increasing trade and investment and increasing tourism revenue (Wilson 14). Peru's Export and Tourism Promotion board launched such a campaign with "Peru Mucho Gusto" in 2006, a campaign funding the production of cookbooks, the organization high-profile food festivals, and the recognition of commendable Peruvian restaurants globally (Singh). Campaigns focused on building Peru's reputation as a top culinary destination might overlook cultural nuances of regional cuisines in order to form a more condensed picture of Peruvian cuisine. Condensing Peruvian cuisine into several readily identifiable images makes Peruvian cuisine more easily recognized by outsiders.

Despite intentions to lift up Peruvian food culture as a whole, the government branding campaigns rarely give minority groups in Peru explicit credit for

contributions to Peruvian cuisine. The campaigns depict indigenous people and Afro-Peruvians, but the groups' influences on cuisine are not the focal point of the groups' roles in campaigns. In 2011, a new branding campaign called Marca Perú released a video in promotion of Peruvian food culture; however, the video never depicted indigenous people and Afro-Peruvians as cooks or contributors to cuisine, only as artisans, dancers, and musicians (Matta, "Cocinando una nación" 55). In line with the video depiction, the cuisine most frequently presented in campaigns, criollo cuisine, is a result of a process of substituting ingredients in dishes in order to make the dishes less native and more European (Hinostroza 82). Glossing over the role of minority groups in Peruvian cuisine in branding campaigns produces an incomplete picture for outsiders of the cultural influences on Peruvian cuisine. However, the campaigns have found success, making the government agencies creating campaigns less inclined to change tactics in order to continue bringing in profits from culinary tourism.

The number of tourists coming to Peru specifically seeking gastronomic experiences has risen since the beginning of the gastronomic revolution. In regards to culinary tourism, the Peruvian government's gastronomy-centered branding schemes seem to have persuaded international travelers to visit Peru. PromPeru, the Commission of Peru Promotion in Exports and Tourism, completed a study that claims between forty-two and forty-three percent of tourists arriving in Peru have gastronomic motivations for choosing Peru as a destination (Hurtado and Salas). Receiving prestigious awards like the World Travel Award for Best Culinary Destination for

four consecutive years, promoting gastronomic travel routes, and offering culinary experiences like cooking classes all place Peru in tourists' culinary consciences ("Peru Tourism Sector"). Strong interest in Peruvian cuisine creates real economic impact in Peru from activities such as culinary tourism, an estimated \$1.4 million industry in 2015, almost double the 2013 amount (Singh). The staging of Peruvian cuisine for tourists also has the potential to incite pride in Peruvians for the national cuisine as something valuable enough to promote internationally. However, with swelling outside enthusiasm for gastronomic experiences in Peru, locals will seek out new ways to package Peruvian cuisine to hold tourist attention.

Bringing Peruvian Ingredients to a Larger Audience

One area of concentration for Apega is contributing to the economic and social inclusion of small agricultural producers and small business owners associated with gastronomy. The organization recognizes small-scale producers as the backbone of Peruvian gastronomy and hopes to improve producer access to markets. Apega created an initiative in conjunction with agricultural unions to promote the consumption of products symbolic of small producers and finances publications to highlight native Peruvian products like quinoa, potatoes, and ají ("El boom gastronómico" 33). Apega also sponsors "media trips" to agricultural areas with the goal of Peruvians having a better understanding of where food comes from and a better vision of the producers growing the food (García, "Culinary Fusion" 49). To make Apega initiatives more successful, the organization pushes for a greater commitment from the government to design policies to promote and support

gastronomy and culinary tourism, both domestic and international (Roca Rey). The Apega efforts to promote the diversity and raise awareness of traditional food products have the potential to make economic differences in the lives of producers. However, the organization must continue taking the small producer-initiative seriously in order to ensure stability for producers, and not become sidetracked in pursuit of potentially more lucrative initiatives such as culinary tourism.

People in the food export business have manipulated the marketing of Peruvian food products as part of the push to connect small producers with international markets. The manipulations stem from attempts to intrigue international consumers and meet international market standards. As part of the strategy to export commodities such as potatoes, salt, coffee, and fruit, exporters attempt to assign “terroir,” unique flavors and aromas attributed to growing environments, to the products in order for the products to reach a premium status (Fan 34). Mariano Valderrama, the Apega general manager, hopes exported products will expand to include sauces and preserves, providing additional value for potential customers and new jobs in Peru (Tegel). Marketing the terroir of food products in order to see higher margins has the potential to push food products from associations with cultural significance. If the narrative formed about the food products appeals to consumers, exporters lack an incentive to stop accommodating perceived international tastes for specialized products, even if the narrative differs from or overrides cultural significance of the products.

Despite well-intentioned government and Apega support, exporting food products has not always maintained the cultural

integrity of the products or distributed profits evenly. Selling products for profit in an international market places the products in the hands of people who do not value the products in the same way as local people. Government support to increase the export of trending products such as quinoa and aguaymanto, two iconically Andean and Amazonian products, has made the products less accessible to rural communities due to price increases and government encouragement to producers to focus efforts on a narrower range of products to meet growing demand (García, “Culinary Fusion” 52). Additionally, people in the culinary industry have frequently highlighted Amazonian and Andean ingredients for having high nutritional value instead of cultural significance (Matta, “Valuing Native Eating” 9). In the case of foreign based Peruvian food export companies, some revenue indeed reaches Peru, however, a large portion of the revenue remains concentrated in Lima, with very little distributed to rural agricultural areas (Brain 96). With time, the ways foreigners value Peruvian food products could permeate society, shifting the meaning of the products away from traditional significances. Local familiarity with a large variety of Peruvian food products could also change as farmers shift production towards meeting outside demand for select products.

Showcasing Peruvian Cuisine

In places unfamiliar with Peruvian cuisine, Peruvian restaurants become platforms to showcase Peruvian food culture for curious customers. The restaurants serve as spaces for people to first encounter Peruvian dishes and, perhaps, spark an interest in other aspects of Peruvian culture. The Peruvian government has incorporated restaurant creation as part of a “culinary

diplomacy project” to transform Peru’s image abroad (Wilson 17). Within the past decade, Apega estimates restaurateurs have created several hundred Peruvian restaurants around the world (“Cooking up”).

Government officials hope restaurant creation will bolster appeal for Peruvian food and create a larger demand for ingredient exports (“Cooking up”). The restaurant owners and chefs or cooks in Peruvian restaurants abroad have discretion over the types of dishes and the aesthetic presentation of dishes that will represent Peruvian cuisine to the foreign population. The Peruvian government hopes the food presentation and experience in restaurants will encourage foreigners to visit Peru or at the least, think highly and speak well of Peruvian cuisine.

Mistura, Apega’s annual, high caliber food festival, is the largest staging of Peruvian cuisine in the country, striking a balance between cultural practices and tourist consumption. The event attracts foreigners and Peruvians alike, looking to sample a wide variety of Peruvian foods. With 400,000 visitors in 2016, Mistura attracts an increasing number of journalists and recognized international chefs each year to observe how Peruvian cuisine has evolved in addition to Latin American government officials coming to analyze Mistura success factors in order to emulate the success (Roca Rey). Agricultural producers from the far corners of Peru, fisherman, and popular cooks of various regions come together at the direction of Apega to put on Mistura (“Mistura es de todos”). One Andean producer represented expressed gratitude for Mistura as an event providing incomparable support to improve producers’ aptitude for business (“Mistura es de todos”). Food products with cultural meanings transform

within the space of Mistura into consumable commodities. At Apega’s direction, tourism and material consumption blend with Peruvian food traditions, into a new expression of Peruvian food culture: the festival.

Chefs Shape the Direction of the Gastronomic Revolution

As hypervisible public figures in Peru, Peruvian chefs see themselves as the foremost ambassadors of Peruvian cuisine. Since the beginning of the gastronomic revolution, the status and influence of chefs in society has steadily risen. Chef Gastón Acurio proclaims the most groundbreaking achievement of Peruvian chefs was the formation of an alliance between chefs and agricultural producers as a way to give applause to producers for high quality ingredients and to increase producer income (García, “Taste of Conquest” 515). Chef Adolfo Perret recognizes carrying out Peruvian gastronomic events, attending international gastronomic fairs, and promoting culinary tourism as essential to the role of Peruvian chefs (Perret 53). Chefs view Peruvian cuisine as an expression of culture, “full of roots, traditions, historical legacy, and above all, full of identity,” and any dissenters “are simply unpatriotic” (Wilson 16). Placing chefs in the limelight in media coverage of Peruvian cuisine exposes the general public to an elitist, one-sided vision of the gastronomic boom, of food as a way to unify Peruvians. Despite attempts to share accolades with agricultural producers, chefs still receive a vast majority of credit for making Peruvian cuisine desirable to the rest of the world.

In the quest for recognition as an exceptional chef in Lima, the social origins of the chefs, not simply culinary prowess,

bolster a chef's chance at fame. The most famous of Peruvian chefs come from elite families and frequently had the privilege to develop culinary skills abroad. Chefs trained abroad heavily proscribed to a discourse describing cuisine as art, distancing the chefs from chefs trained in Peru through the perception of domestic chefs as purely profit driven and unskilled in the "artistic requirements of haute cuisine" (Lauer and Lauer 67). In likening haute cuisine – a result of passion for the art of cooking and openness to the world – as the premier aspect of Peruvian food culture, only foreign trained chefs can incorporate such high levels of technique into dishes (Matta, "Valuing Native Eating" 4). The now-famous chefs did not have to face social or cultural barriers in presenting "unconventional" native ingredients and new culinary creations to clients; status gave the chefs credibility (Matta, "Valuing Native Eating" 8). The social background and training of elite Peruvian chefs gave the chefs authority to revisit Peruvian cuisine with little suspicion or pushback for modifying the historical elements of Peruvian dishes. Mapping Peruvian cuisine onto a new, internationally dictated standard of artistry excluded chefs not able to reach the new standard from actively competing for spots as a top chef in Peru.

Chef Gastón Acurio built a restaurant empire while using his fame to speak out about the connection between cuisine, national identity, and economic and agricultural development. As the most prominent Peruvian chef, Acurio promotes Peruvian cuisine both domestically and on an international scale. In public talks, Acurio sheds light on the immorality of poor Peruvians going hungry in country with such a rich gastronomic culture, especially in

regions exporting food products and supplying ingredients to Peruvian restaurants (García, "Taste of Conquest" 512). Acurio wants to globalize Peruvian cuisine in an equitable way, benefitting all Peruvians in the food supply chain through the formation of new business culture in Peru to attract more investors, and thus more financial resources (Herrero 48). Acurio has certainly put his rhetoric about globalizing Peruvian cuisine into practice, opening thirty-seven restaurants in eleven countries over the past two decades, each featuring different kinds of Peruvian cuisine ("Cooking up"). Despite speaking from a position of privilege, Acurio seems genuinely dedicated to addressing social problems, such as hunger and poverty, through the augmentation of the culinary industry in Peru. Acurio speaks to the political implications and lucrative potential of Peruvian cuisine, pushing Peruvians to participate in the continued development of Peruvian food culture.

The evolution of Peruvian food culture on the part of elite chefs includes the appropriation of indigenous food elements, incorporating the elements into daily menus and often removing the food elements from any previous cultural context. Chefs identify positive attributes of the indigenous food elements beyond cultural significance to create new selling points for innovative dishes. Chef Pedro Miguel Schiaffino is well known for seeking out Amazonian ingredients and experimenting with the ingredients in novel ways that intrigue customers and "speak to Peru but are not always easily identifiable as Peruvian" (Carman). Even if chefs highlight the traditional value of the ingredient, a chef might serve ravioli stuffed with guinea pig meat, presenting the opportunity for tourists

to try a “traditional” animal, but in a masked and aestheticized way (García, “Taste of Conquest” 511). An increased focus for chefs to create cosmopolitan dishes pushes Peruvian gastronomy in a direction geared towards attracting tourists and catering to tourist preferences. The extraction of indigenous food elements becomes a way to turn higher profits at trendy restaurants, but does not place indigenous people in a position to benefit from the profits of indigenous-inspired dishes.

Protecting Culinary Traditions

Amidst pushes to globalize Peruvian cuisine, several organizations have felt the need to safeguard domestic and indigenous cooking traditions. Despite famous chefs highlighting the role of rural, indigenous producers in the food supply chain, organizations strive to help Peruvians see indigenous people in roles beyond food production. From an international level, the World Tourism Organization of the UN detailed in a report the need to promote domestic and traditional cooking techniques (“Alianza entre turismo” 59). On a local level, Chirapaq (the Center of Indigenous Cultures in Peru), an indigenous organization, has likely worked the most on food issues, focusing on food sovereignty and security and the recovery and revalorization of ancestral knowledge (García, “Culinary Fusion” 51). Tarcila Rivera, president of Chirapaq, says many Peruvians are not aware of the indigenous roots in Peruvian gastronomy, a reason why the group puts on a cooking fair for Peruvians to learn about indigenous cooking, ingredients, and preparation methods (“Perú: cocina indígena”). Organizations like Chirapaq might not feel called to create separate spaces to honor indigenous cooking traditions if groups such

as chefs and Apega actively preserved all the traditions. In hopes of aligning Peruvian cuisine with a progressively business oriented agenda, indigenous cooking traditions might be left behind.

DISCUSSION

Peruvian food gains value beyond ordinary use value as sustenance when exchanged in market settings. Though arguably an important part of Peruvian identity throughout history, Peruvians did not always consider food in economic or commercial terms. Domestically confined preparations of the past have become put on public display in the ever-growing number of restaurants in Peru, assigning a new type of value to the dishes through market pricing. Chefs’ use of indigenous ingredients to add flair to restaurant menus takes the ingredients out of the ingredients’ original context and inflates the traditional value when a restaurant customer agrees to pay for the menu item. If traditional food products only begin to gain value when commodified through an exchange, an amplified push to place the products in consumer hands makes sense as a way to increase the products’ values. However, the cultural significance of the products could become separated from the product unless the promoters see cultural significance as a way to further increase market value.

In gaining additional value through increased exchange and commodification, the cultural meanings associated with Peruvian food products have evolved from traditional notions of food as a source of cultural identity to an advertised representation of Peruvian culture. The market value of the products can impede upon cultural value through the staging of

products for export and tourist consumption. As certain Peruvian food products become trendy or emphasized for having health benefits, the demand and price increases, making the products less accessible for the traditional consumers in Peru unable to meet the new market prices. With hopes of premium status products, the terroir assigned to Peruvian products is at the food exporter's discretion; the exporter creates the narrative about the product origin, and can choose whether or not to include traditional meanings associated with the product. Additionally, as the culinary tourism industry grows, such paid performances of Peruvian food culture could increasingly deviate from tradition in order to create tours with amplified exoticism to excite tourists. The cultural meanings of food exports and the food or activities produced on culinary tours are placed on an outside system of regulation, the market. Although people in the food export or culinary tourism business can inscribe products with "authenticity," with time, separating true authenticity from created meanings could become difficult, obstructing the traditional cultural meanings for local people.

Following the trend of government involvement in the commodification of culture, the Peruvian government found food to be both a strong symbol and cultural practice of Peru, with the potential to appeal to a global audience. In order to facilitate an increased awareness of Peruvian cuisine, the government orchestrated culinary branding campaigns as a marketing strategy. Growth in the restaurant sector of Peru and in culinary tourism, an industry generating over a million dollars a year, gives the government incentives to continue promotional activities. Strength in the two

sectors enhances Peru's allure as a tourist destination and tourist exposure could help Peruvian food products break into new international markets. Because Peru is a developing country seeking forms of financial stability, the demonstrated potential economic incentives motivate the Peruvian government to continue encouraging Peruvians to use cuisine as a means of securing a profit. Though government supported connections to international markets secure real material benefits for real people, the food products sold are put at risk of losing traditional significance as a side effect of profit seeking.

Although commodification might cause cultural meanings associated with food products to change, Peruvians have agency in the process of commodification in deciding how to present Peruvian cuisine and can profit from the chosen depictions. Peruvians can actively strategize the ways to perform Peruvian food culture for outsiders, as expressions of national identity and culture. Groups at the forefront of the gastronomic revolution, such as the government and Apega, create the most visible representations of Peruvian food culture, with the goal of creating an image for Peru as premier culinary destination. The Peruvian government uses culinary branding campaigns to illustrate the importance of cuisine to Peruvian identity and to foster an automatic association between Peru and stellar cuisine in the minds of outsiders. In every rendition of Mistura, Apega acts purposefully in vendor and theme selection in order to showcase the best of Peruvian cuisine before an international audience. While the government had the agency to create campaigns, the resulting images decrease the awareness of the influences of

minority groups on Peruvian cuisine, something minority groups might not have the voice to challenge. Though perhaps not a form of pushback, the Chirac organization feeling called to organize a food festival outside of Mistura further hints at the notion that large-scale representations of the food culture of “all Peruvians” are not truly inclusive. Without financial strength or celebrity, smaller groups may struggle to present Peruvian food culture from a perspective varying from more visible perspective of the government or Apega.

Today, increased international travel and globalized consumption has facilitated the purchase of cultural products through increased accessibility. However, the relationship between creators of cultural products and the global consumer is increasingly complex, with cultural products changing hands, and potentially marketing strategies, many times before reaching a final destination. Although the organizations coordinating culinary experiences or promoting food products might highlight the cultural significances, consumers of the products might not have the capacity or insight to identify authenticity. Intermediaries between consumer and culture creator have the power and the opportunity to support cultural preservation throughout any promotional efforts. Through an increased understanding of how consumer demand could impact the production of cultural products to meet consumer tastes and the careful discernment in product selection, consumers, too, can participate in the preservation of culture. Consumer education could help move towards a richer type of diversity, fueled by a genuine interest the preservation of other cultures rather than solely participating in the commercial economy.

CONCLUSION

Though well-intentioned and with hopes to make Peru better off as a nation, the gastronomic revolution has been a top-down approach. Elite groups at the helm dictate the direction of the gastronomic revolution, having influence over how Peruvians identify with and perceive Peruvian cuisine. The gastronomic revolution began as a government platform with hopes of reaping economic benefits post economic and political crisis in Peru. As time went on, a group of elites formed Apega to supplement the government's food-based initiatives and to work towards the economic inclusion of small producers. Chefs of elite stature with European training have acted as advocates of small producers while becoming the most visible creators of Peruvian food culture. Celebrating and lifting up aspects of culture, such as a Peruvian cuisine, are worthy causes for elites to support, particularly if the movement lifts people up economically as well. However, an elite-dominated movement can run the risk of overpowering already marginalized voices, especially if elites act as stand-ins for marginalized opinions.

Despite championing Peruvian cuisine and creating economic benefits for Peru, the gastronomic revolution has not materialized without revisions and adaptations of Peruvian food culture. Actors in the gastronomic revolution make the changes in order to meet international standards and tastes. Government culinary branding campaigns have underrepresented indigenous and Afro-Peruvian cooking traditions in advertising Peruvian food culture. Each year, Apega stages Peruvian cuisine for tourists and Peruvians during week-long Mistura, selecting the vendors the

group believes best represent Peruvian food culture. Though making use of authentic, indigenous ingredients, chefs have taken liberties with Peruvian dishes, aestheticizing the dishes in ways not always recognizable as Peruvian. Cultural movements such as the gastronomic revolution can warn against pushing aside potential detriments to smaller

sects of culture in order to make a profit selling the more dominant culture to a wider audience. If small sectors of culture become progressively marginalized, any lost traditions will become increasingly difficult to resurrect.

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