PASSING ON RECIPES OR PASSING AN EXAMINATION?
Food and Foucault on Two Web Forums in Italy and Britain

Abstract
This article analyses the representation of the social practice of passing on recipes on two popular Italian and British web forums, and the power relationships that they produce.

It draws on Foucault’s category of examination; on Rosello’s links between Foucault’s examination and writing recipes; and on Appadurai’s theory that recipes are fundamental in the construction of national culture. Moreover, specific studies on Italian and British food culture highlight similarities and differences between the two countries.

Qualitative textual analysis is applied to the forums La Cucina Italiana and BBC Good Food. They have purposely been chosen in that they represent two ‘food institutions’, and this study wants to focus on mainstream food media in particular. Finally, this analysis addresses the visual structure of the forums.

The results show that the two forums generate different examples of Foucauldian examination. The Italian users (all women, or at least using female names) approach their examination not on the forum, but at home or among friends, before or after writing the posts. The forum is seen either as a place of resistance, in which they ask help from the other users before being examined by relatives, or as a place in which they may show off that they have passed the exam. In Britain, the examination occurs within the forum, and users (men or women hierarchically relating to each other) are both examiners and examined; each user is examined when they post a recipe, and examines the others when comments are made on the recipes of the others.

Keywords
Food culture; Foucault; Internet; recipes; examination.

This article analyses the internet representation of the social practice of passing on recipes and its links to Foucault’s category of examination in Italy and Britain. The study compares two popular web forums, one Italian and one British, and analyses their differences and similarities in relation to the two national food cultures. Italy and Britain have different approaches to food for historical, cultural and social reasons that are explained below. Therefore, this study points out that passing on recipes and being examined in Foucault’s terms differ from one country to the other. This article argues that nations and the national cultures are constructed entities, and that the media produce “versions of the nation”1 which contribute to this construction2. These versions are the results of a

process of negotiation between “production, text and reception, and the broader social contexts”.

Moreover, in web forums, users are members of the audience but also actively participate in the process of production by writing texts, in this case recipes. Web forums are therefore one of the “particular instances where the reception context is altered because the audience member has (albeit temporarily) become a producer”.

I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. Passing on Recipes

Researchers in food studies have long recognized the social and cultural value of food recipes. Floyd and Forster point out that cookbooks structure society, and Bower underlines the narrative value of recipes. De Certeau et al. highlight that technology makes recipes more banal than in the past.

The social and cultural value of a recipe, however, multiplies when it is passed on to one or more persons, according to who passes the recipes on to whom, for example from mother to daughter.

Moreover, a woman who passes recipes on to other women during a dinner party may become the de facto leader of the group, but another lady that copies the same recipe may be accused of theft, and a cook that passes recipes on to another cook may raise issues linked to ‘originality and plagiarism’. It is clear that passing on recipes is a social practice that deeply affects intimate and social relationships. As with many other important cultural phenomena, it also shapes the construction of national food cultures, as explained in the next subsection.

1.2. Passing on Recipes and the Construction of National Food Cultures

As written above, this study assumes that national food cultures are constructed concepts. This construction draws on pre-existing anthropological, historical and cultural elements. In each nation, these elements are subsequently legitimised/delegitimised.

4 Ibid., 58.
Some of them become part of the national food culture, while others are excluded. The reasons for this process of inclusion/exclusion may relate to politics, the economy, commercial interests, issues of identity and many others. Each process of construction, according to Williams\textsuperscript{11}, has to do with three categories: the dominant, the residual and the emergent, which can be broadly identified with the present, past and future\textsuperscript{12}.

In the construction of national cuisines, recipes are considered fundamental. Appadurai\textsuperscript{13} considers Indian cookbooks as the basis of Indian food culture, and finds that the practice of passing on recipes allows classes to communicate with each other, and the Indian cultural industry to make good business\textsuperscript{14}.

The concept of ‘national’, moreover, is often opposed to that of ‘global’ and especially the new media, which are the focus of this article, are considered global in an era of multiple identities\textsuperscript{15}. So, what about the ‘old’ national identity? This article agrees that there is room, today, for this concept, and that “the media have been and still are agents of the national”\textsuperscript{16}, first of all for economic reasons, as media executives “are acutely aware of the tight link between national culture and consumer preferences”\textsuperscript{17}. Drawing on the importance of the national scale even in global times, the next sections analyse the social practice of passing on recipes in Italy and Britain.

1.3. Italy

Recipes have been fundamental in the shaping of Italian food. In fact, in Italy the national food culture was constructed around a cookbook shortly after the unification in 1861, Pellegrino Artusi’s \textit{La Scienza In Cucina} (the science in the kitchen). The book became a symbol of the new Italian food culture\textsuperscript{18}. It takes into account the bigger cities’ dishes and just some regions, while

\begin{quote}
there is no mention of the Marches, Abruzzo, Apulia, Basilicata, or Calabria in any of the recipes … this is the country that Artusi knew and presented to his readers. His Italy is incomplete … How did it happen that this interregional recipe collection, with its gaps and lack of balance, became the symbol of Italian cuisine?\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

The answer is really simple, Italy was united, Italians were not, and a cookbook could help. The first edition of Artusi’s book was self-funded and ignored by readers. The second, organised by politicians, was successful and added to by two letters: the first by the

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 27.
poet Olindo Guerrini, the second by Senator Paolo Mantegazza’s wife. What happened in Artusi’s book perfectly exemplifies the constructed nature of national food cultures. Artusi based his book on pre-existing regional traditions, but legitimised some of them and ignored the others.

Once constructed, national cultures undergo processes of inclusion/exclusion, always in a state of flux. Therefore, in Italy (as in the other countries), ‘residual’ and ‘emergent’ foods, regions, food habits and characteristics have always negotiated their presence in the national food culture. For example, in the Italian food culture home cooking, especially when carried out by women, has always overwhelmed a scarcely relevant male, professional cooking. In short, the housewife has long been considered more reliable than the chef. However, for the last six or seven years, male celebrity chefs have acquired space and importance, mostly thanks to food shows on TV. The centrality of the woman certainly persists, even because over the years it has served the purpose of giving the woman power in the kitchen and of excluding her from more important rooms and roles.

Historically, the relevance of female home cooking has led to a cuisine that is never pretentious and based on simplicity and naturalness, while richer dishes “were regarded as the outcome of deliberate falsification”. Another characteristic descending from the dominant role of female home cooking is the belief that cooking is not a technique, but a personal inclination. Even preserved products, in Italy, are sold not completely cooked, and still needing an individual touch, while ready-to-eat foods continue to be viewed suspiciously.

Even the concept of passing on recipes is affected by elements like simplicity and the family and involves personal and intimate emotions. Vagueness and little attention to details is a sign of the Italian style of writing recipes, which takes for granted a widespread good level of cooking knowledge. Finally, even possessiveness may play a relevant role, as just daughters are allowed to gain full access to the mother’s recipes, while friends and other relatives are never shown the real, exact recipe, in order not to give away the valuable secret.

1.4. Britain

In Great Britain, national food culture, and more specifically, writing recipes have been deeply influenced by technology and cosmopolitanism. Certainly, as in Italy, mothers

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20 Ibid.
24 Author Removed 2014.
26 Ibid., 117.
27 Ibid., 120.
28 Parasecoli, Food Culture in Italy, 122.
in Britain also wrote recipes and passed them on to daughters and sons, but other forms of food culture and recipe writing arose, first of all professional cooking, run mostly by men until the first part of the Nineteenth Century. Cooking as a professional practice, in fact, originated from European courts, where cooks were men, and this is the reason why so often in the past chefs were mostly men. This is why British food culture is based more on professional chefs rather than on home cooking.

The professional and commercial aims related to cooking led to the fact that often in Britain it was up to private companies to write recipes. Moira Meighn was sponsored for her cookbook by Primus stoves. Relatedly, regional and local elements have always been underrated.

After the Industrial Revolution, food education and the related practice of passing on recipes were ruled by the state through schools and by food writers through cookbooks. As a result, the recipe became a series of actions aiming to improve a technique. This 'scientific' approach overshadowed the emotional side of writing and swapping recipes, while women's magazines showed "an obsession with economy and an assumption that cookery was a burden." The idea of a recipe as a technical (and not emotional) text has found its apex with the rise of an overwhelming new main character, the TV celebrity chef. Born in the Anglo Saxon countries, the chef that entertains, promotes kitchenware and writes books before cooking has reached many other countries. In Italy it has remained an emergent figure, while the dominant food TV presenter is the figure of the 'celebrity housewife', a woman combining family burden and an active role in society. Blythman points out that the frequent presence of chefs on TV is a sign of cooking skill weakness.

Another relevant characteristic of the British food culture is its cosmopolitanism, that is, the openness towards foods coming from other countries. It has historical reason, because during the Industrial Revolution many people from other countries went to Britain to find a job and have a more comfortable life. They brought their food habits with them and Britain, over the years, has built its food habits around these foreign traditions. However, cosmopolitanism has also been seen as a strategy aimed at conquering other peoples. Specifically on food, cosmopolitanism has been seen as an opportunity to eat the Other’s food, but also to ‘eat the Other’, in the sense of exploiting other traditions for commercial reasons. This directly links to the multicultural character of British food.

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35 Mason, *Food Culture in Great Britain*, IX.
36 Ibid., 113.
38 Ibid., 60.
40 Mason, *Food Culture in Great Britain*, 114.
43 Heldke, Let’s Cook Thai: Recipes for Colonialism.
culture. Both colonies and immigration since the Industrial Revolution brought an array of ethnic foods to the British table. As will emerge in the analysis, it is impossible to conceive British food without products and dishes coming from India, Vietnam, China, Poland, Italy and many other countries.

1.5. Recipes, Examination and Power

Foucault’s category of “examination”\(^{(47)}\), helps explain what power has to do with the practice of writing recipes. For Foucault, examination is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them… In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of experiment… The superimposition of the power relations and knowledge relations assumes in the examination all its visible brilliance\(^{(48)}\).

It is clear that, in the practice of passing on recipes, the superimposition of power and knowledge has a fundamental role, whereby the recipe becomes a means through which knowledge is transferred and power is exerted. On the one hand, passing on a recipe allows those who receive it to learn something new. On the other hand, this process re-inforces the powerful roles of those who pass it on, as Rosello finds relating to Foucault:

A recipe functions like an examination such as is described by Foucault in *Surveiller et punir*. Written by the master for his students, […] the recipe is a unit combining a lesson and a test: it is both an attempt at transmitting knowledge and an implicit request to do as well as the professional\(^{(49)}\).

Passing on recipes, however, also relates to power in another sense, constituting a place of complicity and sharing. De Certeau et al. find that subordinate people sometimes resist through food, for example when women reject “both mass-culture and a linguistic-patriarchal order”\(^{(51)}\) by cooking. In conclusion, sharing recipes links to power in two different ways: it may support control, as in Rosello’s reading of Foucault, but may also encourage people to challenge the dominant view. This double face of passing on recipes is really important here, as we will find both aspects throughout the analysis.

1.6. Recipes, Mediation and the Internet

The social practice of passing on recipes has become even more popular thanks to the Internet\(^{(52)}\). Today thousands of websites, from those owned by powerful publishers to

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\(^{(46)}\) Mason, *Food Culture in Great Britain*.
\(^{(50)}\) De Certeau et al., *The Practice of Everyday Life: Volume 2: Living and Cooking*.
those run by amateurs, allow users to share and swap recipes. In these forums the role of producer and that of member of the audience intertwine, as in social media “web users are increasingly in the role of message producer, mediator and recipient”\(^3\). On many web sites and in the two web forums analysed here, the two forms of content production, the old and the new, coexist. The structure of the forum, in fact, is created by professionals. By structure, this article means the design of the forum, its colours, the texts that are written outside the threads, and all the elements that are generated to be the ‘structure’ of the threads. These elements are really important, for example, the design establishes the hierarchy among users, as demonstrated below. The second part of these forums is constituted by the threads, the texts written by the users. These texts are instead totally created ‘from the bottom up’, and by writing them, users become producers, as reported above. The coexistence of the two forms of content production is an important characteristic of the two analysed forums described in the next subsection.

Related to all of this, the research question asks: to what extent and how do the internet representations of the practice of passing on recipes link to Foucault’s category of examination in Italy and Britain?

The next section focuses on the methods that this study adopts in order to answer this question.

2. METHODOLOGY

The method of this investigation is textual analysis, but this article means by the word ‘text’ every element that “can be read”\(^4\). Besides words, elements like graphics, visual aspects and the overall design of these web forums are therefore helpful objects of analysis. More precisely, the textual analysis of this study applies to the two different contexts which have been identified above. Firstly, the overall structure, created by professionals, which may be perceived as the container; secondly, the threads, written by users, which may be shortly defined as the content.

The second important methodological element to be explained is sampling, which is the strategy applied to select the object of the analysis. This article has chosen a purposive sampling of two Internet forums, one in Italy and one in Britain. Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling strategy which selects objects of analysis supporting a particular theory or presenting specific characteristics. Given the deep difference between Italian and British food culture, the two selected Internet forums have been sampled because they strongly link to their respective food culture. They are the forums of *La Cucina Italiana* and *BBC Good Food*\(^5\).

Apparently, *La Cucina Italiana* and the BBC are different in nature and one could find it difficult to compare one to the other. In fact, the BBC is a broadcaster and *La Cucina Italiana* is a magazine. However, the similarity between the two lays in the role of institution that both companies play. *La Cucina Italiana* is a monthly food magazine edited by Condé Nast and founded in 1929. Its website has German, Dutch, Czech and US editions and 4 million pages seen every day\(^6\). It is considered the most famous Italian.

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food magazine\textsuperscript{57}, praised and extolled by both food professionals and amateurs\textsuperscript{58}. Moreover, for ten years its vivacity has reinforced the magazine’s brand, image and sales\textsuperscript{59}.

\textit{BBC Good Food} is a popular British magazine that “has grown by 12% since 2004”\textsuperscript{60}. The chef Orlando Murrin finds that it and the other BBC food magazine, \textit{Olive}, “cover every imaginable aspect of the British food scene”\textsuperscript{61}. Besides, it is one of the products of the BBC, the most representative British media company in the world, “a kind of church, a management, a profession, an industry, a foundation… a national institution”\textsuperscript{62}. \textit{La Cucina Italiana} and \textit{BBC Good Food} have therefore been chosen because they are two ‘national institutions’ deeply rooted in and associative with their respective countries and culinary traditions. Finally, it must be said that comparing two broadcasters or two magazines would have been impossible. In fact, RAI, the Italian public TV, does not have a forum on food, and there is no food magazine in Britain with the history and tradition of \textit{La Cucina Italiana}.

This study analyses ten threads, five from \textit{La Cucina Italiana} and five from \textit{BBC Good Food}. These threads have been chosen randomly. As in each forum the new or updated threads continuously replace the others on the top of the homepage, this study has analysed the five threads that were positioned on the top of the homepage of each forum on the 20\textsuperscript{th} of June 2015 at 19.00.

3. The Analysis

3.1. La Cucina Italiana: The Overall Structure

The forum \textit{La Cucina Italiana} is divided into four broad strands: food, wine, restaurants, and ethnic cuisine, which is empty. In the section called ‘food’, the graphics of the first page of the forum are really basic, with no photos or images and small lettering. To gain visibility, many users write the titles in capital letters.

Just by looking at the titles, the reader can guess the reasons why users write their posts: sharing recipes and asking for advice. The language of the titles is quite informal and the help requests are highlighted by words such as ‘\textit{Aiuto!}’ (Help!) or ‘\textit{SOS}’. In the majority of the cases, users ‘sign’ their posts with first names and surnames, rarely with nicknames.

Within each thread, the graphics do not change, but photos of many users appear. In the five analysed threads, the users posting the threads all have female names, and among the comments, only one is by a male name, Luigi. No thread suggests dishes coming from other countries. The photos of the users are often scruffy and small. Answers to the first post are listed below the initial message and have the same space, fonts

\textsuperscript{57} L. Bragagnolo, \textit{Internet Yellow Pages 2010}, Milano: Tecniche Nuove, 2009, 158.
and dimensions as the first post. Therefore, there is no difference between the user who
opens the thread and the users who answer or comment.

3.2. La Cucina Italiana: The Threads

Among the Italian threads, there is ‘Chiedo aiuto per un pranzo di compleanno’ (I ask
for help for a birthday lunch), by Alma Chiampo. Alma needs help. Her son will arrive
from the USA, where he lives, with his family. Alma underlines that she is writing the
message many days in advance, because she wants to organise the day meticulously.
There will be about 25 people, and no space to allow them to sit around a table. Alma’s
message is informal, immediately gets to the point and in a few words states the anxiety
for the lunch.

Immediately the other users help her. They warn Alma of the risks of such lunches.
The ice cream melts in a few minutes, elderly people may need special foods and there
are often relatives who suffer from allergies. After this, they suggest recipes that match
Alma’s needs.

Another interesting thread is ‘Consiglio strudel diverso’ (advice on a different
strudel). The user asks the other members for a new way of making strudel, as her
friends have been getting bored with the strudel she usually prepares. The thread sheds
light on the relationships between the (female) members of the Italian forum. In fact,
shortly after LidiaB writes her post, Maria Chiara writes that the women of the forum
do not know LidiaB, and also asks the writer of the thread for an e-mail address. LidiaB
immediately shows her references (“I’m here because Supermammy suggested that I
join the forum”) and writes her e-mail address on the following post.

Finally, another trend is suggested by ‘La cena di pesce di Michela’ (Michela’s
fish dinner), by Daniela Cuzzocrea, in which Daniela shows the whole menu of the
dinner that she prepared the day before for her friends. Daniela attaches six photos of
the dishes with their recipes. She writes that she copied some recipes from other users
and food writers, modifying them with a personal touch. The following posts are just a
list of compliments for Daniela.

3.3. BBC Good Food: The Overall Structure

Good Food is a website that stores recipes from celebrity chefs and food writers, from
BBC TV programmes and, in a specially made section, from registered users.

The pages dedicated to chefs are strongly structured and those who write the rec-
ipes must fill in a fixed form. Centred above the recipe, there are the photo of the dish
and the recipe ratings, on the right side there is a box with the list of the ingredients and
in the central area of the page the box titled ‘Method’, below which there is a numbered
list with all the steps necessary to cook the recipe. At the bottom of the page, users may

63 A. Chiampo, “Chiedo aiuto per un pranzo di compleanno”, La Cucina Italiana Forum, accessed Oc-
65 D. Cuzzocrea, “La cena di pesce di Michela”, La Cucina Italiana Forum, accessed October 20, 2015,
comment on the recipe in smaller boxes, and rate it. The pages dedicated to the users are identical.

3.4. BBC Good Food: The Threads

In the analysed threads, male and female names are both present as recipe authors, and among the five recipes analysed, two explain how to prepare a dish coming from other countries (chorizo and Moroccan soup). Each recipe contains a brief text written by the publisher aiming at avoiding responsibilities in case the recipe causes damages or illness to anyone.

Among the recipes, one is ‘Vegetarian Sausage Casserole’66 and, as in the other cases, is on a form which has been filled in. Visually, robsten’s recipe is a form identical to the chefs’ ones, with the preparation time and the number of servings. Another link allows the other users to print or save the recipe. The language of the recipe is necessarily formal and precise, affected by the format.

Ingredients are always specified and quantities are stated either by measure (‘1 tbsp’, one table spoon), or units (‘4 white potatoes’) or number of table or tea spoons.

Each of the seven steps (every user may choose their number) is summarised in a few lines, and explain the technique precisely with impersonal language and brief phrases.

Among commercial ads of the BBC and Good Food, there is no space, for the author, to state more: why the dish has been prepared, who ate it along with the author, how other people reacted to it.

Occasionally, the users who comment add these details. “I gave this five stars”, says oneghing, as any recipe may be rated by the other users. Besides compliments on the recipe, comments are mostly written to modify the original recipe. Vintagemunchkin suggests using Linda McCartney’s sausage and to discard potatoes, Elihanna excludes tomatoes, ssjchar adds mushrooms, etc. Only a few posts add more intimate details. Elihanna in particular says: “My carnivorous boyfriend asked for seconds :)”.

In ‘Moroccan Sweet and Sour soup’67, sibelhodge writes that “Moroccan food is all about flavour and colour, and this gluten-free/wheat-free dish is an explosion of both”. The dish is dairy-free and there is also a vegetarian alternative. The style is formal, technical and short as in the previous recipe.

4. RESULTS

The two forums represent two different ways of passing on recipes on the Internet and two different forms of Foucault’s examination. Interestingly, these differences mirror the different cultural traditions and strongly relate to the overall structures of the websites.

The simplicity of the Italian forum, with the scruffy photos of the users and the small font of the writing, does not give more prominence to who writes the recipe. The forum underlines the idea of sharing among people on the same level. The BBC forum,


instead, shows that there is hierarchy: on the one hand, the author of the recipe (the chef), has more relevance than the others, and also a visual structure that is similar to that of the famous chefs on the food channel on the BBC website68; on the other hand, those who comment on the recipe do it in a smaller box. Moreover, those who write the recipe fill in a form, which suggests a more schematic style69. The form to fill in helps this technical structure, with the list of the precise ingredients and each moment of the cooking process, exactly as in the British traditional way of writing recipes70. In Italy, instead, recipe composition and style are left to the creativity and personal inclination of the writer, as in the Italian forum.

What is more, in Italy, the exclusive female presence mirrors the dominant role of female cooking, while the men and women of the British forum reflect a more balanced relevance between men and women in much British food culture.

Importantly, the threads perfectly reflect the respective structures. In the Italian forum recipes are often linked to family and intimate occasions, such as cooking for friends and son’s friends. Moreover, the users stress the importance of regional cuisines, the real origin of Italian food culture71. Quantities and details are never precise, because an emotional act does not need precision and, as seen above, also jealousy may play a part and suggest hiding some elements of the recipe72. The everyday dimension of the threads is finally confirmed by the simple language and by the fact that the users do not greet each other, swapping messages continuously.

On the British forum, the ‘wannabe chefs’ use formal language and state the ingredient precisely. They present cooking as a professional act, which has nothing to do with their emotions and private lives, apart a couple of exceptions, such as the user mentioning her carnivorous boyfriend. Thus, the BBC users also sometimes involve private elements of their cooking, but these represent a smaller quantity than those in the Italian forum.

As regards the power relationships, if we look at the analysed threads, it appears that in Italy the act of passing on recipes is exempt from examination. The first user needs help, the others suggest their recipes and she will be free to decide what to cook. Another user simply boasts about her dinner, and the others pay homage to her. She probably gains power among them but she does not undergo any examination. Certainly, the small number of the analysed threads does not permit generalizations, however finding differences among small samples is one of the main aims of qualitative research.

However, an Italian form of examination does exist. In fact, on the Italian forum the examination may be found in the everyday life of the female users, as seen when Alma must demonstrate her ability with her son’s family and Daniela with her friends. The examination is at home, while passing on recipes on the forum serves to help users to solve the problem of examination, or to prove that the exam has been passed. Therefore, the forum is the cosy den73 labelled above as the ‘complicity’ model.

In the British forum, the examination has a professional, rather than emotional,

68 http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/chefs
69 Humble, Culinary Pleasures: Cook Books and the Transformation of British Food; Goody, Cooking, Cuisine and Class.
70 Humble, Culinary Pleasures: Cook Books and the Transformation of British Food.
72 D’Agostino Mautner, Living La Dolce Vita: Bring the Passion, Laughter and Serenity of Italy into Your Daily Life.
73 Leonardi, Recipes for Reading; Ashley et al., Food and Cultural Studies, 13; Counihan, Food, Feelings and Films; Newlyn, Redefining “Rudimentary” Narrative, 45.
dimension and totally occurs on the website. In their attempt to be professional cooks, the users pass recipes on to the others to be examined, even in the most classic way of examining: rating the recipe, while on La Cucina Italiana users cannot rate each other. One of the most important of Foucault’s intuitions is the fact that not only do those who have the power exert it on those who do not, but also that people on the same level horizontally examine each other\textsuperscript{74}. Horizontal power\textsuperscript{75} is the form of power relationship existing in these analysed threads. Certainly, also in the Italian analysed threads there is a similar form of power. However, while in the Italian posts it relates to a form of soft, hegemonic power, here it mostly refers to a kind of strong competition. In these British threads, in fact, each user is examined by the other users when posting a recipe, and examines the others when commenting on others’ recipes. Again, the small number of the sample analysed in this qualitative investigation does not allow the researcher to generalise the results, and contradictory elements have already been pointed out above. However, if Alan Warde writes that in our technological age cooking may be either a technical activity or an emotional act\textsuperscript{76}, it seems that the Italian analysed threads have chosen the latter option, while the British analysed messages have chosen the first, all of them echoing their respective food national culture.

In conclusion, besides the specific outcomes of this study, what more broadly emerges from the analysis of both forums may be summarised in two points. Firstly, it is possible to say that Foucault’s examination may be found in food media and that the way in which it is represented relates to the complex relationships between food and the nation. In fact, as for Bourdieu’s cultural capital\textsuperscript{77}, also Foucault’s examination, when applied to food, is also a category that each national food culture applies according to its inclusions/exclusions and legitimisations/delegitimisations. It is impossible to universalise this category at least when it applies to food, because each national food culture constructs it in a specific way, giving different agents the roles of the examiner and of the examined, and placing it in different places. This underlines the role of the nation, even in a global era such as the present one.

Secondly, this study, based on the qualitative analysis of only a few threads, has found that not only the users, but also the layouts of the forums favour support of rather than challenge to the respective food traditions. Further research, also quantitative, may confirm or contradict what is found here, that is, that the media (also a progressive medium like the BBC) at least in relation to food, prefer the conservation of national traditions rather than change.

\textsuperscript{74} R. Boelens et al., \textit{Searching for Equity: Conceptions of Justice and Equity in Peasant Irrigation}, Assen (NL): Uitgeverij Van Gorcum, 1998, 23.