

COMMENTARY

Indigenous Culinary Claims and Cultural Heritage Preservation: A Viewpoint

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge about cooking was traditionally shared orally and handed down through generations in written form or as an oral recipe. These specifications or instructions are a society's claims that provide a unique arena between science and society. This research is an overview of a destinations' cultural heritage preservation of indigenous cuisine through culinary claims using the examples from Africa and Zimbabwe and particularly from the Karanga, Korekore and Manyika ethnic groups and other destinations like France, Japan, Croatia, China and Australia. Using content analysis from secondary sources this paper argues that culinary claims have significance in sustaining cultural heritage and must not be set aside. These claims describe the procedural information present in a recipe (oral and written), which provides added value in terms of improved quality and greater chance of a successful product. Many destinations are striving to preserve indigenous cuisine as a unique and competitive advantage for many benefits. Thus, using local resources such as indigenous food has made destinations more competitive globally. The findings of this study reveal that culinary claims are being used by destinations and renowned chefs, increasing their expertise and passion in the kitchen. These claims have also increased tourist confidence in trying new foods and tastes that are deemed authentic.

KEYWORDS: culinary claims, indigenous food, indigenous cuisine, cultural heritage, preservation, sustainability.

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Introduction

Indigenous food is a “hot” topic today and it is discussed on prime-time television, in the popular press and on the radio (Kalenjuk et al., 2015; Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2013; Mak et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2009). Anthropologists, historians, scientists, artists as well as economists have all acknowledged the role of food culture and tourism in general (Getz, 2014). The characteristics of food are embedded in all these areas, resulting in its different meanings in relation to how food is perceived (Timothy & Ron, 2013, p. 100). Furthermore Kazembe (2018), Mehta (2004) and Radu (2000) posit that indigenous food is a communication tool at rituals, in religion and culture, and offers microcosmic insights into particular worldviews. As indigenous food is a communication tool, it is rich in culture and heritage .in the sense that it even communicates the nature of harvest in the coming season. To the Korekore culture of Zimbabwe the abundance of some wild fruits like *hacha* is an indication of a good rain season, thus a good harvest. The opposite means a draught season and people can make necessary measures. This culture according to Stajcic (2013:7), pertains to the diverse nature of different ethnic groups, their set of values, knowledge, language, rituals, habits, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, folklore, rules, and customs that identify a particular group of people at a specific point in time in a destination and how they interact, organise and live. When tourists eat local /indigenous cuisine at any given destination they explore lifestyles and heritage through the plate (Wijaya, 2016; Karim, 2014). The preparation and cooking are specific differing from one ethnic group to another. This uniqueness in cooking are the culinary claims held steadfast through generations. Culinary claims are the regional culinary traditions practiced by generations on the ways and methods of preparing and cooking indigenous food, how it is served, when and where the food is served (Vartiainen, Aksela & Hopia, 2011; Fooladi, 2009).

Methodology

This review paper used secondary data sources such as refereed journals, books, and magazines to determine the cultural heritage preservation through indigenous culinary claims. Content analysis method was the relevant methodology as the issue of culinary claims reviewed is a new phenomenon with limited literature (Elo et al, 2014). The references were summarized based on authors’ experiences and existing knowledge. This was done by specifically establishing the relationship between indigenous

food and culture, determining the place/ significance/importance of culinary narratives in cuisine development, through their contribution to authenticity, uniqueness and nutrition. The study focused on Africa with specific reference to Zimbabwe: the Karanga, Korekore and Manyika ethnic groups. Japan, France and Croasia represented the global village.

Literature review

Culinary claims help to replicate flavours, which may disappear if not utilised. When the flavours disappear the cuisine then loses its uniqueness and its authenticity. Recipes tell a story of culinary traditions and changes through the periods and adaptations to new foods and techniques. Like storytelling a recipe is a procedural discussion narrating the struggle to produce a product (Santich, 1995). The process of cooking reveals the story, which will end when the food is eventually placed on the table for consumption (Sthapit, 2018). These claims are from “The Kitchen Stories” project which explores the kitchen as a design space and cooking as a social activity. According to Fooladi and Hopia (2013) the project aims to cultivate communication and collaboration in the kitchen by making people’s cooking experiences explicitly recordable and shareable in an interactive digital cookbook. This allows them to preserve cultural and social roots as well as stimulate cross-cultural and cross-generational fertilization. When looking at indigenous cuisine, traditional knowledge is central to the claims. Food traditions were derived from knowledge that has been tested over time and the testing was done through verbatim trial and error. Not everyone had the necessary knowledge skills to replicate flavours through food preparation, thus recipes in most cases became a treasured preserve.

Hence indigenous food knowledge became a means of asserting cultural identity and a way to connect people to the natural and the spiritual world. Research has shown that most indigenous food knowledge has not been passed forward, but rather side-lined as an abstract historical concept (Du Rand, Booysen & Artkinson, 2016; Mnguni & Giampiccali, 2015; Fooladi & Hopia, 2013). Only recently have the losses in cultural heritage, such as indigenous food knowledge garnered academic, governments, businesses, and policy attention (Kalenjuk et al., 2015). Transmitting this knowledge is one important means of fostering sustainable livelihoods, ecosystem health and enhanced individual and community capacity to be on the forefront in providing the unique taste to the locals and international visitors. There is evidence of the

use of culinary claims by the French in the development of their cuisine, which is known for its uniqueness (Foodie & Hopia, 2013). Therefore, it has resulted in the distinct expressions of taste and place facing a continuity gap in cuisine development and sustainability. At the same time indigenous claims can provide an individual with the capacity to prepare meals that are nutritious, safe culturally relevant with a distinctive hint of heritage. This distinctiveness may well preserve a destinations culture for future generations and economic benefits.

Significance of indigenous culinary claims in cuisine development.

Culinary claims are significant as they familiarise with a local culture and give a closer touch to a destination, hence its importance in any destination as a cultural emblem. Indigenous culinary claims bring the uniqueness of a cuisine, through use of specific foods processed in a specific way. Through the culinary claims indigenous cuisine is characterised by:

1. choice of ingredients
2. processing methods,
3. the preparation,
4. cooking process/method,
5. how the food is presented,
6. and the ways of consumption. Adapted from (Skry et al, p. 5. 2018).

These variables determine the local cuisine's uniqueness, as they are very specific statements to a group of people or region. They have the answers to the how, when, what and why of the food preparation process and procedures, resulting in the specific results. In addition, the resultant product differentiates one cuisine from another (Kloss 2013), giving it a marketing point. This uniqueness gives an appeal to the culinary tourist. This uniqueness is from the culinary narratives, "the indigenous culinary claims" (Burke, 2016; This, 2013). First and foremost, the type and nature of food used determine cuisine authenticity, which the tourist is looking for. An example is the Karanga people of Zimbabwe have their delicacy of an edible insect (harurwa), which is not popular in most areas of the country. Second, the typical/ method of processing, preparing and cooking determines the type and character of a local, regional or global cuisine and it is in the recipe which spells out the dos and don'ts, the what, when and how of the product

procedure. Though small grains are a common food in most areas of Zimbabwe, the specific on their processing differs from one region In Manicaland pearl millet is soaked before grinding the meal, giving a fermented flavour added with the aroma produced after cooking. A special attention to these claims has all the answers to culinary traditions, culture, heritage and quality and authentic cuisines of a region (Fooladi & Hopia 2013).

Destinations such as France, Italy and Japan among others have maintained their indigenous claims in cooking have continued to lead in their culinary tourism products. However due to globalization, culinary knowledge and skill can change if not shared and used. This justifies the need to collect and use the indigenous culinary claims for cuisine distinctiveness. Indigenous culinary claims can only exist when, indigenous vegetables, green grass seed, edible insects and other starch foods are generally used (Manditsere et al, 2018). The use of such available resources gives a specific product quality, as they also denote how these are combined. These ethnic foods are used to produce the distinct cuisines of a destination (Moyo et al., 2016). Even the same food grown in different regions, is different, it cannot be the same, due to the use of culinary claims. There are specifications on how the indigenous vegetables are prepared, like cow pea leaves (*munyemba*) which is used as a relish in most areas in Zimbabwe, the stage of picking, drying processes and cooking method differ resulting in a quite different product. This unique quality is what the tourist wants to experience when they visit and the taste for that cuisine may be the motivation for choosing a particular destination. Cultural heritage through indigenous food offers a higher level of attachment to a destination, through experiential local culture tourism (Stone et al., 2018: Tsai, 2016).

Culinary heritage is evident with the French cuisines and to this day their styles, equipment and language are used globally in the cuisine world (Foodie & Hopia, 2013). Such is the significance of their culinary claims where over 25 000 collected claims, have been used to develop the chef's personal understanding of taste and texture (Sarioglan, 2014; Ivanovic et al, 2013; Foodie & Hopia, 2013; Kwik, 2008). For the French this resulted in the production of quality and diverse cuisines. Though diverse, their cuisines, they did not lose the French touch. Such cuisines include French onion soup, duck confit, escargots, croissant, beef bourguignon among other cuisines. The influence of culinary claims hence cannot be disputed. The culinary claims give a pattern of food events and eating behaviour in each culture's cuisine, which is an

essential aspect of food and culture (Farb, 1980). Above all, the skill should be documented because cooking is a skill which is learnt over time, skilfully putting together things, and using specific equipment (Kwik, 2008). The documentation facilitates continued exploration and enhancement of quality dishes and cuisines.

Indigenous culinary claims and health/ nutrition

The knowledge and use of indigenous foods and culinary claims also enhances the capacity to prepare meals that are nutritious. According to UNESCO (2005), research has supported dietary diversity that is promoted through many traditional diets as beneficial for nutrition. Today's tourist is health conscious and is looking for healthy foods (Oktay & Sadikglu, 2018). Most indigenous foods are natural and hence nutritious. Healthy menu items are provided which satisfy the health-conscious tourist. Even those who are not culinary tourists may seek indigenous cuisines for health reasons. Certain indigenous foods are recommended for those who are living with HIV and AIDS and other ailments as they boost their immune system. On the list in Zimbabwe: finger millet (*rapoko*) porridge and wild vegetables such as: blackjack, wild okra and edible insects. Hence the use of culinary claims in assisting cuisine development may aid in preparation and production.

Apart from indigenous food being unique, they present the world an opportunity for culinary tourism to offer tourists functional foods. Functional foods are indigenous as they are more organic (Zsamoczky, 2018). The production methods of indigenous foods from farm to fork apply no or very little inorganic methods. The functionality of the cuisine is in the use of these organic foods as opposed to inorganic foods. Destinations such as Croatia make use of a variety of flavours, indigenous meals, and traditions, therefore offering cuisines of high quality, healthy and attractive (Drpic & Vulkman, 2019). Their cuisines use a lot of fish cuisines making dishes such as black risotto, where they use cuttlefish, olive oil, red wine, and garlic. Grilled fish is also another popular cuisine, whereas in Malawi they also use a lot of fish, but their traditional method of cooking is stewing. Lamb and mutton are common meats, and they are well flavoured with red wine. In culinary claims such aspects are emphasized, making them significant to specific indigenous cuisines.

Indigenous culinary claims' significance and current cuisine trends.

The most recent trend in cuisine development is molecular gastronomy. One of the aims of molecular gastronomy is to collect culinary claims for verification (Burke et al, 2016). The culinary claims are then analysed to determine their authenticity, of which the information is used to develop and produce quality cuisines (UNWTO, 2017). The cuisines produced “molecular cuisines”, do not change the taste of the food, but only colour and appearance (Prabodhani, 2018). A wide variety of cuisines are produced through the introduction and use of science and technology without changing the authenticity of the cuisine. The starting point as explained are the indigenous culinary claims and molecular cuisines explain their significance in cuisine development for uniqueness, authenticity, and differentiation. Molecular gastronomy advocates for using methods which are sustainable by serving fuel, time, and most important testing the food for its nutritive value. Testing for nutritive value is part of authenticity and information is revealed for today's customer who wants to have information about what they are consuming.

The slow food cuisine is another style in cuisines development, which has its roots in indigenous culinary claims. It opposes the standardization of taste and the habits of unhealthy foods (Caporaso & Formisano, 2016). It protects cultural identity related to food and gastronomic traditions, preserves breeding and processing techniques, and protects domestic and wild animals and plant species (Mohmar, 2007). Specifically, the term 'slow' is used because the cuisine advocates for the prevention of the extinction of indigenous foods, by slowing down the introduction of foreign foods, if ever they are to be introduced (Kwik, 2008). In fact, slow cuisine refers to a slow pace in the introduction of new forms of gastronomy. The other styles of cuisines include, fusion cuisine and modernistic cuisines, which are intercultural forms of cuisine developed from a variety of cultures. Their influence is mainly by globalization and use of modern technology. These new trends and others also have their basis in indigenous culinary claims. The indigenous culinary knowledge becomes very important to preserve a country's cultural heritage through its local food and food consumption patterns. Resultantly according to Stone (2018) currently economic opportunities for ethnic food business are offered by the popularity of culinary tourism.

Provision of local authentic cuisines has strengthened people's connection to their heritage and identity through food, while also using food for practical and entrepreneurial benefits. In this context it can be argued that the promotion of culinary heritage encourages the establishments of independent and collective culinary initiatives (Bessiere 1998; Mnguni & Giampiccoli, 2015). Therefore, the use of local foods prepared in an authentic way still remains vital in destination that have neglected their culinary heritage like Zimbabwe.

Available indigenous culinary claims

There is a paucity of literature on the indigenous culinary claims, because they have not been shared orally within the families or communities. Traditional knowledge has always been a secret as a way of preserving it, not considering that it would perish with those dying. Even for that which was shared, most was not documented, and not much is therefore known and in use. The few indigenous culinary claims are going to be discussed in this section of the literature review. Most of the work is from Ken Albata's 2013 book, *Food: A Cultural Culinary History Course Guide*. The culinary claims will be revealed through the foods used, food taboos and beliefs, fuel used, equipment used, cooking methods and techniques, presentation, and consumption practices among other aspects.

First and foremost, culinary claims influence a cuisine by way of food taboos. In Zimbabwe there are specific foods not eaten by pregnant women or specific chicken cuts not to be given to children. A common claim is that children should not be allowed to eat eggs (Muchinei & Hebert, 2018). Eggs are said to cause hallucinations specifically to the boy child. Scientifically the thinking is relevant because eggs have high biological value proteins, which facilitates growth, so, too much may mean one having too many calories resulting in a child being overweight (Rehault-Godbert, Guyot & Nys, 2019). Many cultures in Africa did not eat eggs until recently (Chakona & Shackleton 2019). Many countries including Zimbabwe and other African countries one is not allowed to eat meats from animals or part of the animal that represent their totems (Makamure & Chiminige, 2015). All those from the heart "*moyo*" totem do not eat the heart from any animal, even the birds. Some claims are attached to religion, like not eating meat, because Adam and Eve ate vegetables in the Garden of Eden. Another biblical belief was by those who observe Kosher, were prohibited from what was called "boiling a kid in its mother's milk" and was

related to “culinary adultery”. The kid in its mother’s milk represented milk being mixed with other foods and in most cases the other foods are salty. To them it simply meant that milk or any milk product cannot be mixed in the same meal. Basically, salt cannot be added to milk according to its taste (Albata, 2013). When it comes to cooking banana, leaves are believed to be a good steamer and flavour enhancer. The leaves serve as the steaming container as well as the plate (Albata, 2013). The practice is used in Zimbabwe and Uganda where leaves are used to cook mealie-meal buns or to serve food during gatherings life funeral. Though plates may be available mourning crowds would not be expected to be in comfort, therefore food would be served on leaves, to show bereavement. After all there was no sauce served with the meat, as the food was just boiled with nothing added except salt. Such practices are a demonstrate the value of food in expressing bereavement, while also some sense of place and belonging. Another side of that could be food being used to show that we belong to the earth, so we will go back to the earth.

The Greeks from the area of Galen of Perganum believed very much on the health of a meal. The Greeks have a claim about peaches. Peaches came from Persia, thus their name and *persika*. However, despite their lovely taste, it was believed that the juice and flesh of peaches easily corrupts the system, therefore they should not be eaten at the end of the meal (Albata, 2013; Partarakis, et al, 2021). They claimed that peaches float on the surface of the stomach. However, they are better served before the meal, where they serve as a lubricant, by helping other foods down the digestive tract (Albata, 2013).

Culinary studies have revealed that China has the longest and most complex culinary tradition on earth, which believes in the family and household as the basic unit of production. (Tian et al, 2018). Their household is extended in which members of many generations live together and pass down cooking techniques from generation to generation (Albata, 2013; Tian, et al., 2018). Furthermore, there is obedience to parents, respect for the elderly and even ancestors’ worship, resulting in food customs and cooking techniques being passed down for centuries. Old ways are respected, resulting in the methods changing less over time (Albata, 2013; Tian et al., 2018). In addition, the Chinese were the first to season the pan to make it non-stick, since there were no non-stick pans, and the technique is still being used today, even for the non-stick pans which have lost their non-stick properties (Albata, 2013).

The Australian Aborigines claim that food taste and appeal is heightened by the bowl used (Food Networks, 2009). They paid attention to size, shape, and colour of the bowls food is served on. Bowls are chosen carefully to heighten the tactile and sensory quality of food and its perfect tone for them to be different shapes and sizes unlike the Western culture (Albata, 2013). Food is well arranged on a plate to heighten attention to the different senses. Visual appeal is more important than in any other cuisine is achieved by careful attention to overall design, also to texture of the food in your mouth and to the aroma as it enters the nostrils. Unlike the west, that seem to appreciate a single ingredient on their own than complex combination of flavour and texture (Schifferstein, Kudrowitz & Breuer, 2020).

While serving equipment was claimed to be important, cooking utensils were not left out. Specific rules apply in indigenous culinary claims; for instance, the removal of the clay pot when there is still some water. This demonstrates knowledge of carryover cooking. The clay pot retains heat much longer after being removed from the heat, unlike other materials which loose heat faster. There is every need to leave the clay pot with some water or a sauce when removed from heat so that the pot does not steam out. (McGee, 2007; This, 2009). In Zimbabwe and the Masai people practiced because they use clay pots are generally used for their relish delicacies like dried meat in peanut butter sauce.

The Japanese claim that food must be cut into sizes which one could bite with the mouth, or even larger. The reason for that was that they like to get from the food an entirely mouthful fill at a time, as they also eat with their fingers before the introduction of chop sticks from China (Albata 2013). Many destinations claim that eating with your hands is inherently more pleasurable than using the fork and knife (Albata 2013). Eating with the hands is related to immediate tactile sensuality and connection to the food when eating with your hands rather than using cold metal utensils (Tian et al., 2018). The culinary claim is that when one is using a fork and knife you are distancing yourself from your food. Today eating using hands is viewed as unhygienic, to some, but still practiced by culturally entrenched destinations (Muchinei & Hebert, 2018). Albata (2013) gave an example of enjoyment brought by using hands when eating barbeque ribs or pap [*sadza*] prepared from mealie-meal which is eaten using hands and generally shared from one plate. The aspect of being unhygienic seems not to hold water, because all those who practise use hands to eat emphasize washing hands before eating. The sitting posture also does not encourage one to touch the ground, which shows that hygiene is part if the part of their culinary claims.

Moslems also eat using hands, seated on a mat, with three fingers of the right hand. Albata (2013) opines that “there is a strange satisfaction, perhaps primal in a Freudian science of eating flesh this way”.

The Japanese do not use chairs: they sit on *tatami* mat or on the wooden floor. When seated on the mat they like drinking out of a bowl, which forces the person to do everything slowly and more methodically. For soupy/saucy foods, at times they would sip directly from the bowl, which is said to be more focused activity than eating liquids from a spoon (Houston, 2000). In Zimbabwe the same ritual is known as ‘sipping from the bowl’ [*kunwamuto*], which expression was related to a sign that one has enjoyed the food and really want to take up to the last drop of it.

Some of the interesting culinary traditions were that the head of the house eats alone, and wives and slaves eat later. It was also taboo for men and women to eat together. In addition, a bit of the stew or beer was poured on the ground to feed the ancestors. They also stressed the importance of hand washing before eating food, because everything was eaten by hands (Albata 2013). There were no individual plates, but eating was from a common bowl, and everyone takes from it with hands. Although they had alcohol, beer, and fermented beverages, they stressed no drinking during a meal. Therefore, the recipes used in food preparation and the culinary claims determine the flavour from how and when the combinations of ingredients are done. This brings the difference in cuisines, where even the same ingredients are used. Thus, indigenous culinary claims are explained by the cuisine type, uniqueness and its authenticity which is identified by its flavour.

Conclusion

The study gave an overview on indigenous culinary claims as a vehicle for cultural heritage preservation. As highlighted at the beginning indigenous culinary claims have been used historically in the kitchen and are still being used by renowned chefs. Culinary claims are distinctive to a destination and offer a platform to showcase their cultural heritage. These indigenous culinary claims are traditional theory and opinion and have remained unquestioned. The Chinese culinary claims are based on family relationship and respect, such that the old ways have been passed through generations. Culinary claims from the Australian Aboriginals were emphasised on the equipment, specifically the serving bowl, its size, shape, and colour in relation to visual appeal. The Japanese claims are on the sizes of food cut in relation to

mouth fill and they eat when seated on a mat. The study, therefore, identifies the multifaceted characteristics of culinary claims to indigenous cuisine that deserve 'scholars' and marketers' attention. This research established that there is need for documentation, of culinary claims as a destination's cultural heritage manual or the knowledge may be forgotten or distorted. Information distortion is as good as losing authenticity. However, there is every need to take bear in mind the of dynamic of cultures and the recreation of intangible cultural heritage. While that may come in the specific claims will trail within. Documented information becomes a culinary product on its own. Another study can be carried out in validation of indigenous culinary claims as part of the model for culinary tourism in a destination. No one destination is devoid of indigenous cuisine culinary claims. The significance of culinary claims to molecular gastronomy needs to be investigated in tandem with today's cooking, because in molecular gastronomy there is no loss of cuisine's authenticity and food is prepared using sustainable methods.

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