Gvion, Trostler (2008) From Spaghetti and Meatballs through Hawaiian Pizza to Sushi


From Kim: Just about perfect. You may have learned about this article through WorldCat Local but the actual text probably came from a database like Academic Search Complete. This is the database to be named in your citation.

Excellent work! Another article I must read!

"From Spaghetti and Meatballs through Hawaiian Pizza to Sushi: The Changing Nature of Ethnicity in American Restaurants," by Liora Gvion and Naomi Trostler is a study of how the ethnicity of food in restaurants has changed from the 1960s to the 1990s based on a comparison of the content of restaurant menus from across the United States spanning this time period. In the 1960s, the ethnic food served in restaurants “expressed the melting pot atmosphere” (Gvion & Trostler, 2008, 970) (incorrect in-text citation style). Ethnic foods were modified to cater to American tastes, making them less exotic. Gradually this changed and by the 1990s restaurants were serving more exotic dishes. Considering more knowledge of cultural cuisine and now catering to a specific audience rather than pleasing the average American, as well as combining different cultures onto one plate, allowed for “more daring dishes” (Gvion and Trostler 2008:971) (this is the correct format–use throughout) and “combinations that could not have been envisioned as recently as two decades ago” (970).

During the 1960s, “ethnicity was neither integrated into the mainstream culture nor acknowledged as a distinctive identity” (955). Dishes were Americanized in order to make them seem less strange and foreign. For example, pancakes were considered German when served “with lemon and powdered sugar” (957). This certainly does not deviate far from the average American’s taste and is not a particularly exotic German dish.

During the 1970s, the serving structure became more true to the culture which the food was aimed to represent, though the food itself was not. There was a great lack of knowledge about the traditional food being served. True to the Chinese way, Chinese restaurants would serve the food all at once, without appetizers or entrees separately; however, the food remained quite Americanized (960).

The 1980s were a time when multiculturalism really emerged in United States dining. Restaurants opened that specialized in two or three ethnicities of food combined (962). Americans also began to favor restaurants that seemed accurate in their representation of the specific foreign culture. They wanted the restaurant experience to be symbolic of the culture (966). Social norms had changed to incorporate healthy eating, curiosity and interest in other cultures, and a desire for an experience (966).

In the 1990s, ethnic dishes began to lose their novelty (967). Dishes which once needed to be explained were now assumed to be known. It also became increasingly attractive for food to be “healthy and natural” (968). Meat-oriented take-out foods became a popular trend which also catered to a multiethnic menu of food choices (969). This was a time when everything began to mesh together and combine in the true melting pot, American style of life.

This article gives a great amount of insight into the idea of accepting the traditions of other cultures into our own. What foods were once considered too strange to accept or even try became novelties that soon turned into American norms. These changes represented by the menus reveal “ethnicity as a social construct” (950). A movement which began with the Americanization of ethnic foods ended with a multicultural way of dining. Though it is something which people tend to find difficult, accepting other cultures into our own is important when considering globalization and the meshing of many cultures into that of the American way of life, which includes people of so many different backgrounds.

References

Gvion, Liora, and Naomi Trostler