Appadurai (2008) How to Make a National Cuisine - Cookbooks in Contemporary India

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During the last two decades, the number of Indian cookbooks written in the English vernacular has increased. However, Appadurai expresses notes that there are issues pertaining to how cuisines are created and what the cookbooks mean or create. He elaborates on these issues by explaining them through relevant and specific subtopics such as cities and ethnicity, language and literacy, and women and domesticity (Appadurai 2008c). Appadurai concludes that cuisine in India can't be generalized, rather it is ranked. Like the caste system, Appadurai suggest there to be "high" and "low" cuisines. These two distinctive cuisines created not only because of cultural differences, but also economical, financial and social differences as well (Appadurai 2008c:4).

Appadurai expresses his claims to be valid through the idea that cookbooks are generally dominate in literate civilizations. The earliest signs of cookbooks were rooted from high class societies in developing civilizations not only in India but in China, Europe and Middle East as well. This suggests that the cuisines traditionally associated with class hierarchies and has been the pattern till present day. Ultimately, Appadurai claims that a national cuisine in India has to be based on regional cuisines because of the high levels of diversity in cuisines throughout India. It can't be focused and centralized on what cuisine is more frequently seen or favored (Appadurai 2008c).

Appadurai makes some valid points, yet after reading his research, I can't help but wonder why one topic was barely touched upon. This topic has to deal with the western influence on the cuisine. Appadurai's work is a focused-study as he emphasis the connection of traditions and class. However, western influence has had some major and minor modifications and/or additions to the exclusive Indian cuisine. It's hard to say that India is adopting the American cuisine, rather, it's "blending" or incorporating it into their traditional cuisine. It makes sense since India has a high tourist rate. Such westernized foods are recognizable and grabs the attention of foreigners to India. Ultimately, this concern of western influence on the cuisine does nothing but question Appadurai's assumption of how traditions alone affect cookbooks and cuisines today in India.