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Beyond beans and cheese: representations of food, travel and Mexico City in the *Australian Gourmet Traveller*

Abstract:

The *Australian Gourmet Traveller* (AGT) positions itself as ‘the country’s premier food and travel magazine’, speaking to those ‘who aspire to the good life’ (ACP magazines). This paper explores the role of food travel writing in *Australian Gourmet Traveller*. Specifically, critical discourse analysis is used to explore the representations and constructions of Mexico City in a short travel piece—‘New Wave Mexico’—which was featured in AGT’s November 2009 edition. Drawing on post/anti-colonial theories and my own reflexive experiences as a reader of *Gourmet Traveller*, the paper examines the extent to which this story reinforces simple assumptions of the exotic Other, and how food is intrinsically bound to this construction. Essentially, I argue that pieces such as ‘New Wave Mexico’, within upmarket magazines like the *Gourmet Traveller*, are powerful media which appeal and speak to the aspirations of privileged groups by differentiating them—in food and in travel—from the ‘everyday’. Ultimately, ‘New Wave Mexico’ leaves little room for readers or travellers to engage meaningfully with the city, its people and its local food. Instead there is no choice but to buy in to simple and imaginative geographies of what Mexico and Mexico City represent. Conclusions are then drawn which might help us move beyond this dilemma.

Biographical Note:

Erica Wilson is Senior Lecturer in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Southern Cross University. Her PhD thesis (Griffith University) was an interpretive, qualitative exploration into the constraints faced by Australian solo women travellers. Erica also holds a postgraduate diploma in environmental studies from the University of Adelaide, and a first-class honours degree in tourism administration from James Cook University. Her research publications have focused primarily on sustainable and nature-based tourism, gender and tourism, special interest travel, and the use of critical/qualitative approaches in tourism.

Keywords:

Food magazines – *Australian Gourmet Traveller* – travel writing – Mexico – postcolonialism – cosmopolitanism

Introduction

Since the 1960s, growing interest in wine and food demonstrates changing eating habits and tastes. However, food is also a marker of our social and cultural status; our ‘cultural capital’ (Desforges 2001; Hall & Mitchell 2005). While people have always needed to eat and drink on holiday, tourists are now a distinct and significant market for restaurants and cafes within Australia, and around the world. Indeed, research on food tourism, culinary and gastronomic tourism has increased greatly over the past decade, and a plethora of niche culinary tours are now on offer to travellers (Hall & Mitchell 2005). As Jennie Germann Molz (2007: 77) states, ‘whether people travel to eat local delicacies abroad or eat to travel by consuming foreign foods at home, eating and tourism are closely linked’.

Few studies, however, have critically examined how food tourism is written and constructed in the burgeoning area of the ‘lifestyle’ media, such as magazines. Furthermore, food travel writing remains an important, yet understudied, sub-genre of both food *and* travel writing. Like these other genres, food travel writing has come under some scrutinisation as to its implications in representation and Othering. As Duruz (2004: 428) points out, the Western cosmopolitan’s search for ‘novel’ tastes—for consuming difference literally, alimentarily—continues to haunt much of the recent writing that traces cultural connections of food, place, and identity’.

This paper attempts to rewrite the menu by exploring the link between food, writing and travel, through an analysis of the *Australian Gourmet Traveller* magazine. In particular, critical discourse analysis is used to explore the narratives and messages that permeate the travel section of the *Australian Gourmet Traveller*. Using one story as an example (‘New Wave Mexico’, November 2009), the study will engage with post/anti-colonial literature to explore the extent to which the *Gourmet Traveller* relies upon and reinforces constructions of the ‘exotic Other’ when writing about host countries, their people and their local food. It also uses hooks’ (1999) concept of ‘eating the Other’ and other research on consumptive geographies (see, Bell & Valentine 1997; Cook 2008; Duruz 2004) to unpack how food tourism—and food travel writing in particular – are inextricably bound with issues of social privilege and aspiration, ethnicity and ‘authenticity’.

Australian Gourmet Traveller (AGT) is a monthly magazine focused on food, wine and travel. Starting out its life as *Australian Gourmet* more than 40 years ago, the magazine now has a circulation of almost 75 000, but a much wider readership of 274,000 people (ACP Magazines 2009). While AGT’s core target is ‘all people aged 25-49’, its readership is predominantly female (58.3%), in middle-to later life (over 71% are aged above 35 years), and employed in full-time work (52.7%) in professional or managerial positions (34%) (ACP Magazines 2009). The typical AGT reader is also relatively wealthy: 32% of AGT readers earn \$60 000 per annum or more.

The *Australian Gourmet Traveller* admittedly positions itself as ‘the country’s premier food and travel magazine’, speaking to those ‘who aspire to the good life’ (ACP Magazines 2009). Each issue of AGT features a series of food and wine stories, restaurant reviews, recipes and interviews. The magazine is also replete with

advertisements for luxury-end wines, food products, and kitchen equipment (almost every second page is a full page advertisement). The section on travel (usually in the vicinity of 20 to 30 pages in length) is made up of somewhere between three to five short travel stories, all of which to some extent focus on food.

Going gourmet: my struggle as a subscriber

My partner and I bought a subscription to the *Australian Gourmet Traveller* after our first child was born in 2006, and continued receiving the magazine until the end of 2009. As a full-time academic on maternity leave for the first time, I pictured all this time I was going to have, being able to languorously read AGT from front to back, while my baby slept and I dreamed of concocting new dishes and travelling to ‘exotic’ lands.

We live a rural life near Nimbin in Northern New South Wales, have built our own ‘sustainable’ rammed earth house, and grow many of our own fruits, vegetables and herbs. We also raise and breed beef cattle and pigs, both of which we slaughter and eat. Food is very important to us—of course for our own nutrition and for our children’s, but because we enjoy growing, making, eating and sharing food. Travel is also central to our lives, and we both teach in the field of tourism studies. While we are aware of the negative impacts of tourism, our respective research agendas show how we also see tourism’s benefits for groups such as indigenous people in regional areas and solo female travellers.

I suppose it could be said that we fashion ourselves as ‘food adventurers’ (Heldke 2003), or as cosmopolitan ‘neophyls’ (Beardsworth & Keil 1997; Cohen & Avieli 2004)—always looking for something new and novel to eat, and somewhere new and novel to consume. We also pride ourselves on being able to easily traverse the boundaries between permaculture and gourmet: we feel just as comfortable eating our own home-grown steaks with our hands while camping in the bush as we do in visiting trendy cafes and restaurants around the world. *Gourmet Traveller* seemed a perfect magazine that combined our love for good food and travel.

While I enjoy the magazine, and appreciate that it is one of the few magazines to focus on regional/rural food outside of metropolitan Australia (Brien 2008), I have found myself somewhat *uncomfortable* when reading certain sections of AGT. While I looked forward to each new issue with its mouthwatering cover, savouring the delicious imagery and the restaurant reviews (many of which I will no doubt never go to), it seemed to me at least that the recipes were getting more complicated and extensive, including yet more ingredients I had never heard of, could not afford and could probably not find within the Nimbin/Northern NSW region in which I lived. Moreover, at this point in time, I have still only made one recipe from *Gourmet Traveller*.

As an academic interested in critical theory and its engagement with tourism/travel, AGT became no longer a form of leisure, but a written text to be studied and deconstructed. I also became increasingly disconcerted with my own role as an ‘eater’ of these magazines, passively collecting the ingredients and cultures of ‘other’ places

and ‘other’ people, all in the time it took to sit down and read the magazine. (Not to mention that I also found myself aspiring to the very expensive kitchen equipment and glamorous holidays in Spain where we all eat at El Bulli and rub shoulder to shoulder with the world’s jetsetting glamour set). I was aware that I, too, wanted these exotic people, places and food to ‘spice up’ my life. Was there not a certain bit of envy as I devoured pictures of white women like myself being passed gorgeous cocktails at the pool, served by smiling brown waiters? Perhaps.

As was the case for mid-western American author Lisa Heldke (2003) in her book *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a food adventurer*, my ‘food adventurer’ identity had become problematic as I treaded the imagined and contradictory geographies portrayed in the *Gourmet Traveller*, particularly in stories about the so-called ‘less-developed’ countries. This led me to wonder about the role of food travel writing in shaping and forming the reader’s (my) interactions with these countries. In the same way as being a tourist/traveller raises a complex series of issues, impacts and interactions between traveller and ‘Other, *writing* about food is similarly problematic and laden with the cultural, racial and social values of the writer—and the medium for which he or she writes.

To paraphrase Jean Duruz (2004: 428), ‘obviously, I am not the first traveller on this terrain’. Several other authors have questioned, reflected, critiqued and decolonised the intersection between food, travel, identity and representations of the ‘Other’ (e.g. Bell & Valentine 1997; Cook 1998; Duruz 2004; Germann Molz 2007; Heldke 2003; Monrreal 2008; Probyn 2000; Wilson & Ateljevic 2008). This paper merely draws from and attempts to add to this already established body of literature. However, what advances this literature is the context: very few studies can be found on the role of food travel writing in the niche world of food magazines.

Method

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was utilised as the framework for the textual analysis used in this paper. In this case, the text under study is a distinct sub-genre of both travel *and* food writing: the food travel piece as exemplified in luxury-end magazines like the *Australian Gourmet Traveller*. In sociological studies of tourism, discourse analysis makes use of ‘texts’ such as brochures, signs, magazines, guidebooks and so on, in an effort to understand the underlying cultural and social meanings and messages that those texts may represent (Dann 1996; Hannam & Knox 2005). Hannam and Knox (2005: 23) state that critical discourse analysis, however, ‘is not just interested in what is within the text itself but also in what has been left out and the ‘secret’ meanings that are not obvious’. CDA is especially concerned with the relationship between language and power. According to Wodak (2001: 2), ‘CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language use (or in discourse)’.

For the purposes of this study, I relied upon Fairclough’s (1993) three-dimensional model of: analysis of the text; discursive practice; and socio-cultural practice. In this way, I as the analyst focus on these dimensions in their analysis, examining the content and wording of this food travel story, but then also trying to understand its

connection to the macro social and cultural issues at play. The goal here thus was to provide a richer understanding of the link between how AGT is written and broader societal issues. Analysis of the text (in this case an excerpt story from the travel section) focused holistically on both the written and pictorial elements. I felt it was also important to extend analysis beyond the audience of AGT to also critique the 'representers' and those who write the magazine; only then can such analyses reveal underpinning discourses and networks of power (Aitchison 2000; Small *et al.* 2008).

An analysis of the 12 editions prior to November 2009 reveals a prevalence in the travel section of stories on Western European countries such as Spain (featured in 5/12 issues); France (5/12) and Italy (4/12). All of the 12 editions also feature a travel story on a domestic Australian destination. Apart from four special issues dedicated entirely to the food of a particular country (for example, Spain, Italy, France and Australia), almost every remaining issue features a story from the so-called 'less-developed' countries or destinations (such as, Thailand, Bali, Mexico and Vietnam). For this paper, I purposely draw in-depth from only one story on Mexico City from the November 2009 edition to make some pertinent points about *Gourmet Traveller's* representation of food and travel in less-developed countries. While this does limit to some degree my ability to make any wider generalisations beyond this one story, I can say that as a regular reader of the magazine, the 'New Wave Mexico' piece does tend to exemplify the normal style, tone and positioning of the AGT's travel writers.

November 2009: 'New Wave Mexico'

The cover of the November 2009 issue of *Australian Gourmet Traveller's* is typical of the magazine's polished sumptuous production style. It features a glorious-looking strawberry, yoghurt and pistachio layered cake, against a background of red, black and white, and uses luxe gold lettering to capture the reader's attention. This issue's theme is 'Smart Entertaining' with the bylines of 'breezy barbeque party, sweet strawberry desserts, Longrain banquet, spring racing lunch menue, and retro-luxe cocktails & canapes'. The reader is also enticed by the 'Best Bubbles...New Season Champagne', could 'Win a Luxury Tropical Holiday', and partake in an armchair visit to 'Dream Destinations ... the Magic of Mexico City; New India: Vibrant Bangalore ... plus Glam local gourmet getaways'.

As is indicated on the front cover, the travel section of the November issue of AGT focuses on three stories: 'New Wave Mexico', 'Gourmet Getaways in Sydney', and 'From Raj to Riches'. In this paper, only the first story on Mexico is examined. Of course, there are many other travel stories in many other issues of AGT, and this certainly is only one of those. However, I would argue that 'New Wave Mexico' does represent the common thread of tone and style in many of the travel stories that feature less-developed countries.

In 'New Wave Mexico', author/travel-writer Kendall Hill starts out as such:

In the weeks before arriving in Mexico City, I was confronted by hysterical headlines about crime waves, drug wars and a litany of civil problems that made the Mexican capital sound like Pulp Fiction come to life. And yet hours after landing at Benito

Juarez International Airport, I was relaxing on the jasmine-scented roof terrace of the hip hotel Condesa DF amid a siege of stylish and beautiful chilangos (city dwellers). With a chilled pinot grigio in hand, a selection of stunningly good snacks (fried calamari with jalapeno and ponzu sauce, chicken brochettes, spicy tuna rolls) and funky rhythms handpicked by the in-house DJ, Mexico City felt decidedly civilised. Rumours of its demise appeared to have been exaggerated.

In one fell swoop of a paragraph, Hill has offered his stereotypes of Mexico City (drugs, crime, societal problems, poverty), and then within hours had them reversed through his retreat into a stylish hotel in Condesa (apparently one of the city's most 'exclusive' neighbourhoods). Here, Hill sounds surprised at the 'decidedly civilised', modern nature of contemporary Mexico City, reducing the place to a collection of luxury-end foods that symbolise modern Mexico (and no doubt suit AGT readership).

Hill rests heavily on the stereotype of the dichotomy: 'traditional' versus 'new wave'; 'native' versus 'modern'. Not surprising given the higher-end AGT readership to which the author writes, his story goes on further with descriptions of where tourists can find 'leafy neighbourhoods', 'neoclassical buildings', 'exclusive clubs and bars', 'five-star hotels' and 'languish in the upmarket neighbourhoods where boutiques and galleries now stock the brightest local stars'. At the same time, he seems to suggest to the reader that if or when they are in Mexico City, they can also partake in more 'traditional', street-wise pursuits of tearing around in green-and-white VWs, browsing traditional arts and crafts, and hanging out with the funky crowd, eating 'risotto with grasshoppers'.

Most of the pictures featured in 'New Wave Mexico' are of stately buildings, unhurried people sitting in parks, and cobbled streets lined with artists' works and dappled with the shade of leafy trees. Other images are of Mexico's contemporary hotels, bars, nightclubs, chefs and there is one picture of a Mexican dish in the new deconstructed style.

Underlying Hill's 'New Wave Mexico' is a story of a 'new' and cosmopolitan Mexico City; a city ready to overcome its 'gory epic', 'turmoil' and 'longstanding ills' and reveal itself to the world through its luxury food, five-star hotels, glam chefs and glitzy nightclubs. However, it is also interesting to witness the strong tone of Mexican patriotism undergirding Hill's piece, due largely in part it seems to a culinary movement whereby Mexicans continue to resist their colonial heritage and define their own food. According to Hill, many of the so-called 'new wave' Mexican chefs are women. This is indeed the case, led by an earlier wave of prominent, yet upper-class female chefs and writers such as Zarela Martínez and Patricia Quintana. As one young chef in Hill's story is quoted as saying, 'In Mexico we are starting to understand that as modern cooks, we embrace our tradition and are proud of it'. Or, as Kendall Hill puts it in his story: 'self-respect is seeping into the city's finest restaurants, where a cabal of talented cooks is transforming Mexican staples into sophisticated cuisine'. What is seeping through here also is a tone that Mexican 'staples' (such as the widely available and traditional dish of 'beans and cheese') are somehow not quite adequate if Mexico City wishes to put itself on the cosmopolitan food map.

Beyond beans and cheese: cosmopolitanism ... or cultural colonialism?

Ultimately, Hill seems delighted to discover that Mexico City, and Mexican food, ‘extends deliciously beyond beans and cheese’. In a critical reading of this story, it is important to transgress such simplistic assumptions. Mexican food is diverse, complex and tied inextricably to its colonial history and violent subjugation by the Spaniards in the early 1500s. The concept of *mestizo* is central to Mexican ‘identity’, and is revealed in the mixed and melded nature of its cuisine. Like ‘identity’, however, food is also ever-changing and never entirely fixed (i.e. ‘beans and cheese’); a nation’s food is also open to mixing, to change, and to influence from other countries. Prominent Mexican food writer, restaurateur and anthropologist, Zarela Martínez (1992: 1, 3), explains the relevance of *mestizo* to Mexico’s food history in this way:

To understand Mexican culture you must see at first hand how the Catholic faith melded with a system of pagan beliefs to make a uniquely, truly Mexican religion. The same melding holds true for our distinctive culture. It is *mestizo*—‘hybridized’, ‘of mixed blood’, a concept central to our identity—and it took time to develop ... This process of synthesis, *mestizaje*, has never stopped since.

It was not an easy hybridization of course, and I do not believe that Martínez is trying to gloss things over here. Martínez (1992: 2) goes on to explain the astonishment of Cortez and his men at finding Emperor Montezuma at table, among a vast array of foods ‘so numerous’, says Díaz del Castillo, ‘that I cannot finish naming them in a hurry’. The best and most sumptuous table of foods, however, could not stop the bloody Spanish Conquest that broke out shortly after; a series of battles during which indigenous Mexicans suffered so profoundly and in which much of ‘the older culinary lore was sadly lost forever’ (Martínez 1992: 3; Pilcher 1998). What remains in much of Mexican cuisine today is a fusion of the country’s indigenous and conquistador struggles and influences. Despite many attempts to destroy indigenous products like maize and corn (by both the conquerors in the 16th century and the Mexican elites of the ‘tortilla discourse’ of the early 1900s), they are still ever-present on the Mexican menu (Pilcher 1998).

It has been said that food tourism and food travel writing are reflective of an increasingly globalised, cosmopolitan society that emphasises freedom of mobility, an exchange of ideas and ingredients (Duruz 2004; German Molz 2007; Heldke 2004; Thurlow & Jaworski 2003). Food tourism can enable an embodied ‘encounter with Otherness’ (Germann Molz 2007) that has the ability to open understandings between stranger and friend, us and them, host and guest (Germann Molz 2007; Swain 2009). Cosmopolitan food tourism also offers the potential to breakdown barriers between/among home, city, region and nation (Bell & Valentine 1997).

Indeed, a magazine like the *Australian Gourmet Traveller* has the potential to be written—and read—in this cosmopolitan vein, given its focus on travel, mobility of foods and of eating, on globalised encounters with local people and local cuisines. Without even leaving home, AGT readers can be food adventures and ‘eat the Other’, simply through buying the magazine and trying out some of the recipes consisting of novel, international ingredients that look, taste and smell like Otherness. Through

reading the *Australian Gourmet Travellers*, the consumer can feel like he or she is 'truly cosmopolitan, truly a citizen of the world' because as Bell and Valentine state (1997: 187), he or she 'know(s) their rambutans from their kiwano' (and maybe even knows what to do with them).

Yet I would argue that the 'New Wave Mexico' travel piece by Kendall Hill is merely playing with the edges of cosmopolitanism. Being cosmopolitan, in the AGT sense, is being able to have the money to travel the world, stay at five-star hotels or guesthouses, eat expensive food and drink expensive wine, and indulge in all that the exotic 'Other' has to offer. It is not clear how the AGT audience to which Hill writes is supposed to negotiate on any real or meaningful basis with the Other, with 'host', with the local people. They are merely directed to 'eat the Other', through a strangely disembodied and aspirational consumption of upmarket foods, nightclubs, celebrity chefs and restaurants. Cultural capital is collected through these products, and the cities and people seem to serve only as backdrops as the author and his readers are rushed through the streets and sites of Mexico City. Hill is torn between wanting the 'authentic', the 'old', the 'traditional' Mexico and its food, and its modern, contemporary offerings. When this tension occurs, it is an example of what Duruz (2004: 438) calls 'the usual dilemma facing the cosmopolitan rear[ing] its ugly head'. In the context of travel writing about Mexico, Duruz goes on to state that 'while desiring the 'old' Mexico, at the same time, the cosmopolitan heralds the 'new' of high-tech culture and 'stylish' consumerism' (p. 438). The continuous uncertainty of 'who am I?' and 'what have I come to see?' played out in travel pieces like Hill's are expressed in the paradoxical interplay of ethical discomfort about, and romanticisation of, the 'exotic Other'.

It is this type of eating the Other, this 'courageous consumption' (hooks 1999: 191), that is problematic when read through the lens of post- and anti-colonial literature. As bell hooks ruminates, 'the over-riding fear is that cultural, ethnic, and racial differences will be continually commodified and offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palate – that the Other will be eaten, consumed, and forgotten' (p. 193). In this way, food travel writing like that demonstrated in this 'New Wave Mexico' piece is a form of 'cultural food colonialism' (Heldke 2003: xv). Adventure eating is inextricably linked to culture hopping: seeing, taking, using the lives, cultures and foods of other people and other places—without giving back or developing any real relationships with others. Hill's Mexico City is an 'imagined geography' (Monrreal 2008) of what Mexican food and lifestyle should be like for AGT readers.

In the case of 'New Wave Mexico', Mexicans (the 'Other') are reduced to a disempowered, colonised people, merely existing to offer their food to a Western, wealthy traveller/reader who can afford to consume. This type of consumption has been shown in other research on travel texts, such as in-flight travel magazines, where their advertisements speak to a certain 'elite' type of traveller who is mobility-rich as well as financially wealthy, with the time and money to buy an array of expensive luxury products (Morgan & Pritchard 2004; Small *et al.* 2008; Thurlow & Jaworski 2003). This is the 'alchemy of the upwardly mobile' (Thurlow & Jaworski 2006). As Small *et al.* (2008: 17) assert, travel magazines can be a subtle (or, perhaps, not so

subtle) way of ‘socially sorting’ ... travellers into those who are socially and culturally acceptable ... and those who are not’.

With ‘New Wave Mexico’, a similar kind of social sorting occurs. AGT food travel readers are constructed as cosmopolitan, globalised individuals who can afford good food, consume Mexico City’s best and most expensive, or play with the edges of the ‘local’ if they so wish. But can much of its readership actually make these aspirations a reality? Where does this leave those who cannot afford such luxuries? And moreover, where does this leave the ‘host’—do they remain constructed as powerless Others who are there to provide novel food travel experiences for the tourist? All of this ultimately creates a socially sorted gap between those who can and those who cannot. As Thurlow and Jaworksi (2005: 131) state in their critical analysis tourism texts, magazines such as AGT become ‘instrumental in reinforcing the normative ideas which this (life-)stylization invokes, powerfully reconstituting old-fashion modes of travel and traditional ideologies of class and social distinction’.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that food/travel magazines like the *Australian Gourmet Traveller*, however ideologically innocent they may appear, are powerful social tools in terms of how they construct the norms and values to which food/travellers should supposedly adhere. Ultimately, it is the reader’s choice and agency as to how he or she responds or resists to this representation, but we must consider the wider social and political forces within which such food travel writing is positioned. We could argue of course the author of ‘New Wave Mexico’ is only doing what he should and working within the confines of the *Australian Gourmet Traveller* magazine for which he writes. He is writing for his readership, and no doubt AGT has a strict team of editors, ensuring his words are melded and reshaped to its market’s apparent desires.

A critical content analysis of the story, however, demands that we take these assumptions a step further, and reconsider them in light of our goal to ‘rewrite the menu’. No matter which way the sorting occurs, food travel writing such as that in *The Australian Gourmet Traveller* is a powerful medium which overwhelmingly appeals and speaks to privileged groups in society. It has the potential to exclude any real agency or meaningful interaction with the so-called ‘Other’; instead, we are left with no choice but to eat the Other. As a result, further critical discourse analyses are needed to explore post- and anti-colonial approaches to food, travel, and food travel writing.

Having said all of this, it is important that in our eagerness to write about food and travel in anti-colonial and anti-racist ways, we do not further essentialise chasms between ‘host’ and ‘Other’. By this I mean that in our trepidation and guilt and concern about eating the Other, we refrain entirely from eating, or travelling, or even writing about food and travel. We do not want to become wholly ‘Otherness machines’ (Aitchison 2001), because this does not leave us with many options for progress. This would merely serve to limit connections and interactions and relationships between (and among) tourists and the people who live in the countries we visit. This is where the positives of a cosmopolitan agenda can be realised: where

there is still hope and power in the meaningful relationships that can occur when we do cross borders, speak to each other, learn from one another, taste each other's food (Swain 2009; Wilson & Ateljevic 2008). In finalising this paper, I draw from the thought-provoking words of cultural food geographer Ian Cook et al¹ (2008):

'Culture'—like 'race'—therefore has this paradoxical identity. It is *both* the enactment of a 'powerfully determined idea' of neat, relatively stable, essentialized, homogenous, bounded, separate 'cultures' as 'things which act ... *and* messy, changing, non-essential, heterogeneous, embodied, diasporic, hybrid, everyday, leaky, viscous 'cultural' practices (824).

I am not sure where this leaves me in my quandry about subscribing to *Gourmet Traveller*. Perhaps I should stop writing about it and just read and enjoy it, but I don't know if I'm ready to re-subscribe just yet.

Endnote

1. This author, 'Ian Cook et al', refers to himself in this manner.

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