



Philosophical tenets in the construction of culinary discourse: The case of British celebrity chefs' websites

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the websites of ten British celebrity chefs, ranging between the age of 38 and 82. They were chosen to be a representative sample in terms of gender, age and, above all, culinary personas. Using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) approaches, the study examines the paragraphs that precede the recipes in order to understand the attitude towards food that makes the chefs easily recognizable as specific culinary personas. The ways in which the chefs linguistically construct food-related discourse are interpreted according to four philosophical stances that correspond to four approaches to food found in Ancient Greek philosophers, namely Hedonism, Epicureanism, Platonism, and Asceticism. The analysis reveals that celebrity chefs show a predominant Epicurean approach, at the same time combining elements from the other ideologies. The chefs are also found to shape discourse in ways that challenge the hegemonic, gendered ideologies around food and cooking by positioning themselves as positive role models for a healthy, and yet pleasurable, food experience.

1. Introduction

Numerous studies in several domains have investigated how food-centered discourse influences communication. In this regard, Gerhardt et al. (2013) overviews the state of the art in linguistic and communication studies since the first publications in the eighteenth century, concluding that her "sketchy tour strongly manifests the interdisciplinary nature of the study of food" (p. 11); because "food is one central element of human lives, its study profits from an interdisciplinary approach with multiple perspectives on food" (p. 48). In his pioneering work, anthropologist Audrey Richards (1932, 1939) "launched the formal acknowledgment of foodways as an effective prism through which to illuminate human life" (Counihan & Kaplan, 1998, p. 1).

The most frequently analyzed genres are certainly recipes and cookbooks, generally considered the traditional text types in which a specific discourse of food is constructed for a certain community (Cesiri, 2009). Scholars such as Cotter (1997), Garzone (2017), Görlach (2004) and Diemer and Frobenius (2013) – to name only a few – have illustrated how the recipe is a conventionalized genre, which contains "presuppositions on many levels, necessary incompleteness in the steps of preparations or sets of instructions, assumptions about cultural knowledge, practical skills, and technical equipment" (Gerhardt et al., 2013, p. 43).

Cookbooks have also been frequently analyzed as examples of texts that reproduce the unequal status of women in patriarchal societies (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003) as well as "the division of domestic work (Innes, 2006; Neuhaus, 2003; Shapiro, 2005), and hierarchy in society (Brownlie & Hewer, 2007). Scholars emphasize how cookbooks are not simply a collection of recipes, but are a transformative device in telling readers what the preferred style is, particularly in class and gender norms" (Matwick, 2017).

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The construction of food-related discourse has also been studied in several media, from TV cooking shows to YouTube videos (Gerhardt et al., 2013). Recently, studies such as Cesiri, (2016, 2017) and Diemer and Frobenius (2013) have investigated food blogs as a new kind of computer-mediated communication platforms about food that include the direct participation of experts as well as amateurs, in contrast to traditional cookbooks, in which the communication is unidirectional and proceeds from the expert writer to the amateur reader. In this regard, “virtual foodscapes [...] are becoming a thing in and of themselves, especially in the way Web 2.0 technologies have developed space for multidirectional communication amongst food celebrities, audiences and eaters” (Johnston & Goodman, 2015a, 2015b, p. 209).¹ The expert-public interaction changes the ways in which both experts and non-experts approach and discuss food-related topics. On the one hand, experts are challenged to effectively transmit to a public of non-experts their specific know-how, which also includes the specialized language of professional cooking; on the other hand, non-experts are stimulated to become familiar with this kind of specialized knowledge and language.

Johnston and Goodman (2015a, 2015b) explore the concept of ‘foodscape’, which they define as “a socially-constructed view of the field of food” (p. 206). In this context, the food celebrities’ specialized language and its reception and re-elaboration by the public are determined by the “dialectal relationalities between and amongst food culture” (ibid.), as well by “the relationships that a particular community has with food” (Miewald & McCann, 2014, p. 552). Incidentally, the genre of celebrity chefs’ food websites has not attracted much attention so far because research has rather focused on the relationship between food and social media in general (e.g., Fried, Surdeanu, Kobourov, Hingle, & Bell, 2014; Neuman & Fjellström, 2014; Rousseau, 2012a, 2012b). These websites provide interesting material to investigate since they can be positioned halfway between the traditional cookbook genre and food blogs: they contain recipes like cookbooks, but are also frequently updated and provide multimedia material like blogs. The websites as virtual environments offer direct and virtually free access to the chefs’ recipes, work as advertising platforms for the chefs’ activities, and give the public the impression that a direct contact can be established between themselves and the experts/celebrities. This happens in particular when the chefs describe experiences, memories, anecdotes that involve their families. This way, the public sees the celebrities as friends who are sharing personal details as if in an ‘intimate’ relationship. Moreover, websites do not have the limitations of the printed page, such as space and graphic restrictions established by the publisher; thus the chefs can shape their websites in a way that helps them construct and keep a specific public image of their professional persona, which includes their public image as well as their approach to food.

Considering all these possibilities of food websites that the more traditional genre of cookbooks cannot offer, the present study investigates the websites of ten British celebrity chefs, focusing in particular on the introductory paragraphs that present the recipes. These specific paragraphs, consisting of a few lines of text, are especially interesting to analyze because they contain the description of the ingredients used in the recipe, the chef’s advice on how to best serve and enjoy their dishes, the chef’s preference for specific ingredients instead of others, some nutritional information as well as some suggestions on the preferred quality and origin of the ingredients. These short but elaborate texts are thus used by the chefs to establish their culinary personas by publicizing their approach and attitude to food.

The ways in which the chefs construct the discourse in the text that anticipates each recipe are examined critically and positioned – ideologically – in a space between ‘philosophy-inspired’ approaches that indulge in the pleasures of food and those that are here considered the opposite, healthy eating. The aim is to characterize the celebrity chefs’ approach to food, which is also at the basis of the construction of their culinary personas (cf. Cesiri, 2018) as well as of their popularity among the general public. The study centers around three main research questions: (1) how do celebrity chefs linguistically construct their culinary personas in their ‘official’ websites?, (2) How do celebrity chefs contribute – through specific linguistic choices – to the construction/challenging of hegemonic food-related discourse? And finally, (3) how do the chefs’ linguistic and discursive choices guide their public in making healthier attitudes and establishing virtuous nutritional practices?

The websites are most likely administered and updated by a team of experts in public relations, rather than by the chefs themselves, however it is the chefs’ public image that the websites ‘sell’ to the public. So, whoever writes the texts needs to keep the virtual public image of the chef consistent with the real one, which has become famous and followed by those in the audience who share the specific values and attitude towards food. Nevertheless, when the introductory paragraphs contain personal details and memories, it is the ‘voice’ and persona of the chefs that are directly communicating with the public, regardless of who actually wrote the text. For this reason, the texts here analyzed will be considered as if personally written by the chefs, who construct for themselves not only a professional role as chefs, but also a specific social role as conveyors of good practices regarding food and nutrition, for instance through their careful selection of healthy ingredients and cooking procedures, through nutritional advice and suggestions on how to live actively, etc.

The ‘social role’ of celebrity chefs has already been investigated by several studies on TV cooking shows (cf. Caraher, Lang, & Dixon, 2000; Mathiasen, Chapman, Lacroix, & Powell, 2004; Woods & Bruhn, 2016, to name only a few). In this regard, the virtuous practices that are established by the chefs for their public could be used, for instance, as models (cf. Bartlett, 2018) for the construction of similar websites (and achievement of the same level of popularity) by new generations of emerging celebrity chefs, as well as models for “successful social change” in the public (Martin, 2012b, p. 3), who might take inspiration from the advice and recipes proposed by the chefs to change their habits towards healthier dietary choices.

In the next Sections, the attitude to food and nutrition as found in the celebrity chefs’ websites will be analyzed: the Section on

¹ Even though Johnston and Goodman (2015a, 2015b) explicitly refer to Web 2.0 technologies, the concept is here applied to websites, which are still Web 1.0 technology, since the public can interact with the chefs, for instance through the comments sections after the recipes. These sections are used as a ‘feedback wall’ by the users, even though the chefs never reply, while food bloggers do (cf. Cesiri, 2017).

'Data and Methodology' presents the chefs investigated in the present study along with a description of the method of analysis chosen to examine the chefs' 'official' websites. Then, the following Section introduces the four philosophical stances that correspond to four approaches to food in Ancient Greek philosophers. These stances are used to characterize the celebrity chefs' attitudes to food and nutrition. The 'Analysis' Section illustrates the evidence found in the websites that supports the categorization of the chefs, while the 'Discussion' Section critically position the chefs' construction of food-related discourse. Finally, the 'Conclusion' Section illustrates the limitations of the study and offers insights into further research on computer-mediated communication on food and nutrition.

2. Data and methodology

2.1. Data: the celebrity chefs and the introductory paragraphs to the recipes

The celebrity chefs chosen for the present study are the most 'mediatically' influential celebrity chefs working in Britain at the moment of writing. They were chosen according to their visibility on specific channels such as "BBC Food" and according to rankings compiled by influential media such as "The Telegraph". The sample is representative in terms of gender, age, and culinary personas. Five women and five men were chosen, from different age groups. The female chefs include Ching He Huan (38 years old), Lorraine Pascale (44), Nigella Lawson (57), Delia Smith (76), and Mary Berry (82). The male chefs include Jamie Oliver (42), James Martin (45), Paul Hollywood (51), the duo called The Hairy Bikers (50 and 60), who was considered one celebrity chef, and Rick Stein (70).

The characterization of the chefs according to their culinary persona was chosen as the main characteristic to be considered when selecting the sample of chefs to be investigated in the present study. It is the construction of their culinary personas (i.e. their public constructed identities) that emerges in their websites and that is shaped through specific discursive choices. Moreover, it is through the specific characterization of these culinary personas that celebrity chefs publicly present their individual attitude to food and nutrition. They use these personas to construct their websites, to present their recipes, and to become univocally recognizable to their public in a scenario which sees a great number of competitors present every day on traditional and social media (cf. [Gerhardt et al., 2013](#)).

Another study ([Cesiri, 2018](#)) has already identified the characterization for each one of these chefs into specific culinary personas². For instance, the culinary persona identified for Ching He Huang and Lorraine Pascale focuses on healthy living and entertaining friends with food. [Johnston, Rodney, and Chong \(2014\)](#) call it 'the home stylist', namely the prototype of a persona that "includes cooking as part of a larger home-management project, and offers advice on how to transcend the mundane and the ordinary" (p. 10). Following [Johnston et al.'s \(2014\)](#) categorization, and according to data presented in [Cesiri \(2018\)](#), Delia Smith and Mary Berry could be categorized halfway between the categories of the 'homebody' and the 'self-made' chefs, since they embody both the prototype of the mother who cooks for her family as well as that of the person who has successfully built for herself a career in professional cooking. The 'borderline' categorization here proposed is based on the previous study ([Cesiri, 2018](#)) in which their professional approach to home cooking is constantly called to mind through professional advice in how to improve the amateur's culinary skills. In the case of Nigella Lawson both [Cesiri \(2018\)](#) and [Johnston et al. \(2014\)](#) show how she is the prototype for the "pin-up persona [who] embeds food and cooking in a lifestyle of leisure, entertainment, and sensual pleasures" (p. 11).

Among the male chefs, Jamie Oliver is defined by [Johnston et al. \(2014, p. 16\)](#) as a "gastrosexual persona", namely the masculine counterpart of the feminine 'pin-up persona'. This persona is defined as "a relatively gender-transgressive, yet masculine persona [who] fully embrace[s] cooking at home [...] a man who rejects some aspects of traditional masculinity by attending grooming and fashion" (p. 16). However, this description does not correspond to the persona showed by Jamie Oliver on his website (cf. [Cesiri, 2018](#)), where he emphasizes his professional training applied to healthy but tasty food, which he cooks at home as well as in his restaurants. James Martin and Rick Stein, on the other hand, fully match the prototype of the 'chef artisan' persona (cf. [Cesiri, 2018](#)), since they "firmly occup[y] the world of professional cooking and fine dining" ([Johnston et al., 2014, p. 13](#)). Paul Hollywood's persona, instead, can be identified as halfway between the 'chef artisan' and the 'self-made man', since he started from his father's local shop to reach the highest levels of professional bakery with his own brand of products (cf. [Cesiri, 2018](#)). Finally, The Hairy Bikers construct a persona that is the prototype of what [Johnston et al. \(2014, p. 15\)](#) call "culinary mavericks [who] present food in a decidedly unique fashion". In fact, as seen in [Cesiri \(2018\)](#), these are bikers who draw inspiration for their recipes from the places they travel to, recipes which they later reproduce for their public.

The introductory paragraphs that anticipate each recipe are used by the chefs to contextualize the recipe itself, providing concise information on its origins, on the best moment or occasion to serve the dish in question, and to communicate more personal information such as why s/he is presenting that particular version of the recipe or some connections to the chef's private or professional life. These introductions are quite short (from a couple of lines to a couple of brief paragraphs), but they are also full of details which help identify the chefs' approach to food preparation and consumption, which is the object of the present study. Ten recipes were chosen for each chef. They were randomly selected so that the sample could be representative of the sub-categories to which the dishes belong (e.g. Main Courses, Meat, Fish, Desserts, etc.).

² The categories of culinary personas described in this Section will not be used to guide the analysis in the present study, but rather to clarify how the chefs have already been classified in other studies, and to contrast how the chefs present their culinary personas to their public according to the medium they choose for communication (i.e., cookbook, website, etc.).

2.2. Method of analysis

The analysis of the paragraphs introducing the recipes was conducted by using a qualitative approach and so as to uncover the celebrity chefs' philosophical ideology. The approach adopted for this analysis lies halfway between Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as proposed by Fairclough (1989, 1993, 1995) and Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) proposed by Martin (2012a, 2012b). A conceptual framework more than a method, CDA was first developed by Norman Fairclough as a kind of discourse analysis which explores practices in the construction of discourse that "arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony" (Fairclough, 1993, p. 135). CDA, then, is an approach that scholars use to critically investigate discourse, offering not only an analysis of human communication in its various forms and contexts of usage, but also a "wider critique of social reality [which] can contribute to political action for change by increasing understanding of existing reality and its problems and possibilities" (Fairclough, 2018, p. 13).

The CDA approach was supposed to help frame the specific ways in which celebrity chefs shape their discourse to appeal to their public, challenging or reinforcing the hegemonic constructions influenced by gender, race, and social status that today affect food-related discourse (cf. Johnston et al., 2014). This approach emphasises the critical aspect of discourse in society, so it could have biased the present analysis towards the identification of exclusively negative features in the texts. Thus, PDA and its less critical stance were also adopted. PDA was first introduced by Martin (2012a, 2012b), who "argues the case for a more interventionist stance in ideologically oriented discourse analysis – one focusing not simply on deconstructing language in the service of power but focusing in addition on analysis of and participation in sites of successful social change" (Martin, 2012b, p. 3).

The combination of the CDA and PDA approaches in this study, then, was meant to explore: the strategies the chefs used to construct discourse; how they are ideologically framed (i.e. whether and to what extent they abide by the rules of some hegemonic stance); and what good practices the chefs follow which make their websites popular. The analysis was carried out qualitatively by means of discourse analysis to position the celebrity chefs according to the prevailing philosophical ideology that shapes their approach to food. The 'Analysis' Section examines the paragraphs preceding the recipes and looks at: the ways in which the chefs describe the quality and nutritional properties of the ingredients and/or of the dish they present in the recipe, the nutritional facts and advice they give to their public, and the suggestions they give on how to best serve or enjoy the dish once ready. Then, the 'Discussion' Section uses the combined CDA and PDA approaches to critically and ideologically assess the discursive choices found in the chefs' websites.

3. Philosophical insights into western food culture

Present-day scholars of Ancient Greek philosophers constantly stress the importance that diet, and dietary habits, paid in the latter's ideology, since the philosophers believed that body and mind are strictly interconnected. Thus, appropriately nourishing the body was supposed to pave the way to the nourishment of the intellectual part. Similarly, present-day western society pays great attention to finding balance in food consumption between excess and moderation to maintain a healthier body. The next two Sections present the different approaches to food consumption that can be found in the websites of the ten British celebrity chefs. The present study does not consider these distinctions with reference to a single parameter: it seeks to position the celebrity chefs' approach to food in a two-dimensional space constructed as a four-part rectangle whose poles are constituted by contrasting approaches, as Fig. 1 illustrates.

On the left-hand side of the space we find the 'indulgent' approach represented by 'Hedonism' and 'Epicureanism', while the 'moderate' approach of healthy eating is represented on the right hand-side by 'Asceticism' and 'Platonism'. The corresponding ideological tenets, and their interpretation for the purposes of this study, are presented in the next Section. The Analysis Section will illustrate how each pole in the figure is present in each chef. The predominant aspects of either pole were considered in order to position the chefs in the most appropriate category that better defines their approach to food.

It is worth recalling that the concepts of 'pleasant' and 'indulging' are subjective, especially when applied to personal taste about food, which can make a recipe unpleasant or unsuitable for some, but delicious and appealing for others. Bearing in mind this

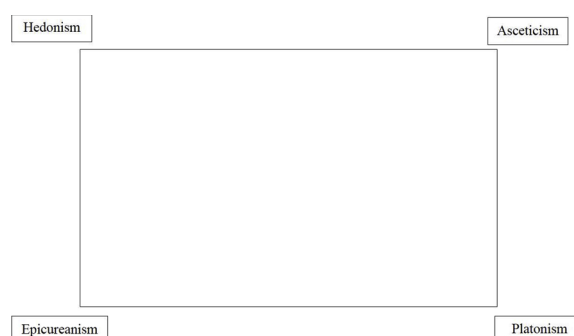


Fig. 1. Graphic representation of the ideological stances in celebrity chefs' websites.

important aspect, the present study considers ‘pleasant’ or ‘indulging’ only the way in which the chefs operate specific lexical choices to describe a recipe rather than the actual ingredients that are used. In fact, the chefs tend to use a vocabulary that appeals to the senses of their public, regardless of their personal dietary habits because they offer alternatives in case of specific dietary requirements (e.g., vegetarianism, veganism, carbohydrate-free diet, allergies/intolerances, etc.), using the same linguistic strategies that make the alternative recipe as appetizing as the original one.

3.1. Hedonism and epicureanism

Hedonism represents one of the ‘pleasure-oriented’ ideologies used in this study. In Fig. 1, it is located on the ‘indulgent’ side of the four-part space in which the celebrity chefs can be positioned. It also represents the most indulgent of the two ideologies present on that side; it is centered around the search for pleasure in life (in Ancient Greek, *hēdonē* means ‘pleasure’). The founder of this ideology is commonly thought to be Aristippus of Cyrene (in present-day Libya). He lived in the IV century BC and founded the Cyrenaic School, whose followers believed in the pursuit of “bodily pleasure, freedom from bodily pain, and peace of mind” (Lampe, 2014, p. 27). In Hedonism, the search for pleasure is not aimed at achieving pleasure for its own sake. It rather aims at the fulfillment of one’s sensual needs and, thus, to the appeasement of the troubles of the mind, since there will be no more needs or pain caused by the lack of sensual gratification (cf. Feldman, 2004; Lampe, 2014).

Epicureanism has often been considered similar to the Cyrenaic School for its attention to the pursuit of bodily pleasures. However, current interpretations see Hedonism only as a starting point for Epicureanism, “so that right and wrong did not come from on high, but proved themselves by the everyday contentment they produced” (Symons, 2007, p. 15). Epicurus’s moral system consisted in the belief that the goal in life is pleasure, which he believed corresponds to a state of tranquility, namely a state in which ‘living blessedly’ is reached not through the fulfilment of bodily pleasures, but thanks to “freedom from bodily want and mental distress” (Woolf, 2009, p. 170). However, in the Epicurean ideology, luxury (including feasting)

is [...] to be welcomed, just so long as its possession does not detract from the maintenance or attainment of a pain and trouble free state; and it need not do this, he holds, so long as one has the right attitude towards luxury: namely, that it is to be enjoyed if present, but not missed if absent (p. 160).

Basically, Hedonism can be considered the ideology that believes in indulging in pleasures, while Epicureanism aims to a balanced fulfilment of desires. These ideologies can be used as reference points for characterizing the celebrity chefs’ outlook on food. Celebrity chefs are positioned near the first pole if they show a predominant approach that sees food as ‘pure pleasure’, i.e. regardless of its nutritional values, while they are placed near the second pole if they show a predominant approach that sees food as a ‘tasty nourishment’, i.e. a pleasure for the senses as well as a healthy nourishment for the body.

3.2. Platonism and asceticism

The ‘moderate’ side of the categories that illustrate the celebrity chefs’ approach to food is represented by the poles here labeled as ‘Platonism’ and ‘Asceticism’. The latter represents the most extreme pole of healthy eating, while the former represents a healthy approach to food with fewer restrictions in terms of sensual gratification than the previous one, but more attentive to healthy eating than the Epicureanism stance.

Plato “recognized the importance of the right nutrition for corporal development” (Skiadas & Lascaratos, 2001, p. 533). From a scrutiny of his dialogues, scholars such as Silvermintz (2014) and Szymanski (2014) believe that what Plato prescribed as the ideal diet is what present-day nutritionists would define as ‘the Mediterranean diet’, based on wholegrain cereals, olive oil, legumes, honey, fruit and vegetables, with only a limited use of meat, dairy products, and confectionery. Even though food consumption must follow the principles of simplicity and moderation, meals are welcomed occasions for conviviality, especially as moments when philosophers could meet and talk about philosophy (cf. Skiadas & Lascaratos, 2001; Szymanski, 2014).

Asceticism, conversely, represents the extreme pole of the ‘moderate’ side. It is mostly known as the way to reach the ideal of spiritual perfection through abstinence from any excess. The name itself derives from the Greek *askēsis*, which indicated this form of strict training (cf. Finn, 2009). Unsurprisingly, Asceticism does not consider food a source of pleasure, but a mere form of physical sustainment, which only ensures the basic functions of the body. One of the main predicaments of Asceticism is abstinence from elaborate food and from drinking, preference for simple food and reduced food intake in general, to the point of fasting for some periods of time (cf. Wimbush & Valantasis, 2002).

The Analysis Section will show that the two ideologies of the ‘moderate’ side, Asceticism especially, must not be taken literally when applied to the celebrity chefs’ approach to food. In neither case, in fact, is food deprivation encouraged nor is food presented for mere nutritional purposes. What will be considered in the analysis, in fact, is the chefs’ specific attention to the choice of ingredients typical of the Mediterranean diet that also play a role in keeping the body healthy (here identified as inspired by Platonism), while the choice of healthier ingredients for dieting or to cleanse the body is here considered, for the sake of conciseness, as Asceticism, even though it should be labeled more appropriately an ‘ascetic-like approach’.

4. Analysis: philosophical tenets in the celebrity chefs’ approach to food

The social role of celebrity chefs is well known in sociological studies (Cusak, 2014; Hansen, 2008; Hyman, 2008). This role goes beyond the mere practical function of food as nourishment for the body; it has more to do with the socializing function that food

consumption has in contemporary western societies. It is for this reason that celebrity chefs carefully construct their culinary personas: this is reflected in their visual representation (look, cooking environments, tools used, etc.) as well as in the way they select and present specific recipes. The culinary choices are, thus, metonymic symbols for the entire chef as a culinary persona and are aimed at a specific typology of public, whose expectations must be met in order to keep the chef's popularity and culinary legitimacy. As Johnston et al. (2014, p. 5) correctly puts it, "today's food celebrities have a prominent role teaching cooking skills, but also showcasing enviable lifestyles". Just like Ancient Greek philosophers indicated the ultimate end in life, the celebrity chefs considered in this study establish for themselves the goal of indicating the correct way of eating as a kind of lifestyle. Indeed, their intentions also meet today's hegemonic ideology around food which sees moderation and healthy choices as preferable over indulgent food intake (cf. Fuller, Briggs, & Dillon-Sumner, 2013; Gregorio-Godeo, 2006).

It is the fulfilment of this complex role that shapes the way in which the chefs present the recipes to their intended public. The analysis of the introductory sections to the recipes shows a very composite picture in terms of discursive choices. For instance, the analysis of the paragraphs preceding her recipes sees Lorraine Pascale as the only one who continues the hegemonic discourse about the ideal of a perfect body achieved through exercise and healthy eating (cf. Cairns & Johnston, 2015). This is why she can be positioned as the most 'ascetic' among all the other chefs. Consider, for instance, the italicized parts – emphases added – in examples (1) and (2), which show how she communicates her approach to nutrition:

- (1) I am following a flexitarian diet. *Like a vegetarian/vegan but a little meat and fish. I don't eat so much meat anyway* so the transition should be straightforward for me (2017_Spinach, Spirulina & Cavolo Nero Soup).
- (2) *It has been said that there is no food or supplement that can rival mushrooms for their direct immune-boosting benefits.* This soup has such a warm, soul-heartening feel to it too: good for the cold winter days, especially when everyone at school/work is sneezing all around you! *The turmeric (along with black pepper, which helps its absorption) is something I am starting to use much more often as it is another immune booster and acts as an anti-inflammatory agent* (2015_ Immune Boosting Super Soup).

In (1), the first part of the introduction to the recipe provides information about her healthy diet with no, or little, space left for the indulgent side of the dish. By adding how fun it will be to cook the dish, Lorraine Pascale reinforces the 'healthy living' ideology that is now hegemonic in current debates around food and that finds its roots in the ideal of moderation proposed by Plato and extremized in the Asceticism ideology. In (2), there is a similar construction of discourse around the nutritional virtues of the ingredients. In this introduction, moreover, she particularly stresses how the pleasure of the dish derives not from its taste or from sensual gratification, but from the beneficial effects of the specific ingredients to the body (italicized).

The exact opposite is represented by Nigella Lawson, who focuses almost exclusively on the sensual gratification that her recipes will bring to the public. Consider, for instance, the expressions italicized in (3), (4), and (5).

- (3) This is one of those salads I love to have around to pick at from the fridge, and it is the very model of virtue. But *because it's got such powerful flavours, and such bite, it feels more filling and substantial than it has the right to be* (2007_Crunchy Salad with Hot and Sour Dressing).
- (4) It is a *wonderfully damp, dense and aromatic* flourless cake: it tastes like *one of those sponges you drench, while cooling, with syrup*, only you don't have to. This is the easiest cake I know (2011_ Clementine Cake).
- (5) There is a *fabulously musky scent* to this gratin, which comes in part from the star anise, in part from the porcini, and also from the culinary alchemy of all the ingredients together. And the thing is, for something *so sweetly comforting*, it is – I cannot explain why – *somehow grand and exquisite*, too (2008_Potato, Parsnip & Porcini Gratin).

These examples show how Nigella Lawson can be truly positioned in the Hedonism pole. Her main focus is on the sensual gratification that the dish gives; in fact, her choice of adjectives exactly gives the idea of the impact that the texture, the taste, the smell of the dish has on each one of the senses. In example (3), for instance, the salad is first presented as a 'model of virtue', but it is soon stressed that the dish is good not because it is healthy or practical, but because of its flavor and texture.

Nigella Lawson is also an example of how her way of talking about food reinforces the hegemonic gendered discourse, whereby cooking for women is depicted as "rewarding emotionally [...] by providing decadence in 'multilayered wonders' of flavor" (Matwick, 2017, p. 541). This kind of hegemonic discourse is particularly reinforced in cookbooks (cf. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003), which tend to reproduce "a discourse that continues traditional gender roles of women being predisposed to care, cook, and serve others" (Matwick, 2017, p. 1). The 'traditional' feminine function goes back to the ancient (and now outdated) role division in labor that assigned women to the "domestic domain of the household" (Swinbank, 2002, p. 465). This is also present in Nigella Lawson's website, where food is a means for seduction and achievement of sexual pleasure, since "the contrasting of food, colors, tastes, and temperatures suggests the dichotomous (and steamy) relationship between partners" (p. 11).

If seduction through cooking is stereotypically attributed to women, Paul Hollywood challenges this gendered ideology, as exemplified in (6), (7), and (8), in which the dishes are described by emphasizing the sensations they give to the senses, as in the italicized expression (emphases added).

- (6) Packed with flavor, these are real hot cross buns. [...] The addition of apples to the dough *enhances the taste and lends a lovely, moist texture* (2012_ Hot Cross Buns).
- (7) These little hot chocolate puddings really do remind me of volcanoes *as they release their soft, silky river of chocolate*. Achieving the molten center is all about their timing (2014_ Chocolate Volcanoes).

- (8) Three different alliums give this *creamy tart a lovely range of savoury flavours*, while the *grainy mustard adds a note of sweetness* (2014_Shallot, Onion & Chive Tart).

Paul Hollywood can be positioned in the Hedonism pole together with Nigella Lawson, since he presents his recipes with very similar linguistic choices, evident in the employment of adjectives which describe the texture of the dish in a way that seductively appeals to the senses of the readers. Paul Hollywood's seductive language challenges the hegemonic ideology around traditional masculinity often expressed in terms of physical or technical power (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). More recent studies (such as Gregorio-Godeo, 2006) have, however, found out that today masculinity is represented by a man who "is characterized by a more egalitarian treatment of women, is more in touch with his emotions, and fashion" (Matwick, 2017, p. 533). This new ideal of man is expressed by Paul Hollywood also in his description of food (in terms of seduction) as well as in his constant reference to his family (wife and father), a feature that is usually attributed to women in cookbooks (Matwick, 2017) or in feminine food-related discourse in general (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003).

The least extreme pole in the indulgent side is occupied by Ching He Huang, who shows an approach to food that is indulgent but, at the same time, is only served on specific social occasions. So, in her description of the recipes, tasty food is a means to spend quality time with friends, as the italicized expressions in (9) and (10) show (emphases added):

- (9) Then serve with a delicious soy dipping sauce or would be good with sweet chilli sauce too. *This makes a great appetizer for entertaining* (2017_Japanese Tofu with Soy Dipping Sauce).
 (10) This is a delicious indulgent starter so quick and easy to make and *perfect for entertaining with friends* (2017_Sesame Prawn Toast).

Four of the chefs, namely Mary Berry, Delia Smith, Rick Stein, and James Martin show the most composite approach to food. They all present their recipes with an Epicurean approach with indulgent food as a means to have a good time with family and/or friends. At the same time, though, each one gives slightly more emphasis to one aspect of food consumption that makes it difficult to position them in one univocal, specific pole in the space of philosophical stances. For instance, Mary Berry gives more emphasis to the sensual gratification given by the dish, as the expressions italicized in (11) and (12) illustrate:

- (11) *A striking canapé*, this is smoked salmon pâté alongside *a good slice of smoked salmon*. *Soft dough baguettes* are very thin half-cooked sticks and *they are perfect* for this recipe (2011_Double Salmon Canapés with Horseradish);
 (12) *A wonderful substantial soup*, a *meal in itself* with pesto and garlic bread (2014_Smoked Haddock & Bouillabaisse)

As we can see in these two examples, moderate emphasis is put on the sensations that the dish might give to the senses, while more prominence is given to the texture and the quantity of the portions. These balanced descriptions motivate her positioning halfway between Hedonism and Epicureanism. Delia Smith's descriptions, on the other hand, show striking contrasts that make it possible to position her between Hedonism and Asceticism.

- (13) Our humble, modest tinned version makes a mean old hash and, what's more, at an amazing price. A great meal made with incredible ease (2015_Corned Beef Hash).
 (14) Canada is where this profoundly unique syrup made from the sap of ample trees is made [...]; delightfully easy but tasting so light and fluffy (2009_Canada Buttermilk Pancakes with Maple Syrup).

As we can see from the emphases added in examples (13) and (14), the Hedonist approach is represented in the importance given to the final result that is tasty and rich, while the essence of the Ascetic approach lies in the attention it gives to the easiness or cheapness of the preparation, with no reference to the sensation the dish gives to the senses.

The two male chefs, Rick Stein and James Martin, can be positioned halfway between Epicureanism and Platonism, in that they present their recipes with a balanced mixture of indulgence and moderation. As exemplified in the italicized expressions in (15) and (16), Rick Stein tends more towards Epicureanism for the greater attention he pays to the choice of sustainable ingredients for greater sensual gratification (15), or his attention to the importance that a dish might have for a socializing moment (16):

- (15) Hake is a great fish to use as it is very sustainable, the dish is a perfect light starter to accompany a hearty winter meal (2016_Braised Hake),
 (16) The perfect addition to a buffet, or an impressive starter to a dinner party (2016_Gravlax (Dill-CuredSalmon)).

On the other hand, as the italicized expressions in (17) and (18) illustrate, James Martin shows a preference for gratification achieved through simplicity and moderation:

- (17) It's *really simple*, but the crumble *adds a nice crunchy texture* (2017_Peach and Crème Fraîche Crumble Cake).
 (18) This is a wonderfully easy dessert to make, especially if you use good-quality bought fillo pastry (2017_Spiced Apple Strudel).

The Hairy Bikers are perhaps the most difficult to position among all the chefs. The introductions to their recipes always provide indication on how to choose the lighter ingredients, how to lower the calorie intake of the original recipe (as the italicized expressions

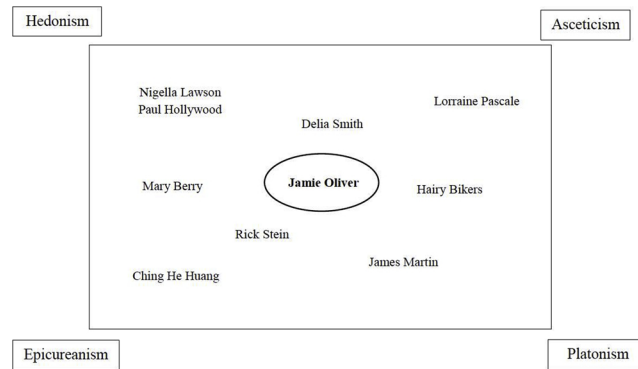


Fig. 2. Positions of celebrity chefs according to their prevailing philosophical stance.

in 19 show), or how to make a dish simpler with a preference for simplicity and moderation (as in 20):

- (19) The great thing about these *little beauties* is they are *richer in nutrients—particularly vitamin C* – than white potatoes and lower in starch. *They count towards your five a day too*, while regular potatoes don't (2017_ Sweet Potato Saag Aloo).
- (20) Everyone loves a good minestrone and this is nothing like the stuff you buy in cans. It looks like quite a lot of ingredients we know, but you don't have to include them all and there's nothing difficult to do (2015_ Minestrone).

This is why the Hairy Bikers duo can be positioned between the Asceticism and the Platonism approaches. However, the overall style of the duo is very lively and engaging so they do not show the same 'ascetic-like' approach to healthy eating that, for instance, is evident in Lorraine Pascale's descriptions. For this reason, they can be included in the previous group of 'composite' approaches that have a basic tendency towards Epicureanism with a more marked preference for moderation and simplicity.

Jamie Oliver can be positioned exactly halfway between all the four philosophical poles. In Fig. 2 below, his name is also emphasized in bold type because of his peculiar approach to food. In fact, he shows a balanced combination of all the four approaches to food with no evident prevalence for one or the other: he is Hedonistic, since he demonstrates to consider food an indulgent pleasure for its own sake (as in the italicized expression in 21):

- (21) I'm swapping out the traditional slow-cooked tomato ragù for a *sauce that is creamy, comforting and perfect for a weekend treat* (2018_Veal Ragù Cannelloni).

However, he also appears to be Epicurean, since he shows how sensual gratification is achieved through the use of simple ingredients to impress guests, as in (22):

- (22) As *delicious* as that is, I want to show you *how versatile salmon is*, and *what an incredible showstopper it can be* (2018_Roast Salmon & Artichokes).

Moreover, he shows a Platonic approach when he prefers a simple dish over a more complex one, as exemplified in (23):

- (23) A *deliciously perfumed budget-friendly* fish curry with *fluffy rice* and loads of veggies, heroing *versatile frozen fish* (2013_ Fantastic Fish Tikka Curry).

Finally, he also shows an 'ascetic-like' stance – similar to Lorraine Pascale's – in preferring simple ingredients that are chosen for their nutritional value rather than their taste, as in the example below:

- (24) Humble little peas are a source of nine different micronutrients, and are especially high in thiamin, a B vitamin that helps our heart to function properly (2015_Skinny Carbonara).

The analysis conducted in this Section has shown that all the chefs seem to adopt the hegemonic discourse about healthy food and that most of them tend to find a balance between indulgent and moderate choices. In order to better understand how the chefs were positioned according to their predominant philosophical stance, Fig. 2 is provided. It uses the diagram already described in Fig. 1 and helps to visualize in a bidimensional space, rather than along a unidimensional continuum, the complex situation just presented in the analysis.

5. Discussion

The present study positions the approach to food of ten famous celebrity chefs according to four 'ideologies' which correspond to

four philosophical stances in Ancient Greek philosophy. The analysis has shown that all the celebrity chefs have an underlying propensity to Epicureanism, but each one of them also shows individual preferences to food consumption that helped their positioning in either of the three remaining approaches. This helps them to shape specific culinary personas that might be taken as lifestyle models by their public.

The previous analysis, if approached critically, shows that only two of the chefs either reinforce or challenge the gendered construction of food-related discourse: Nigella Lawson reinforces the hegemonic view of femininity in the kitchen oriented towards cooking for the family and to seduce a partner, while Paul Hollywood challenges the hegemonic model of masculinity in the kitchen, since he talks about recipes that he cooks for his wife, he shares memories from his father, and talks about the emotions that a particular dish gives him, at the same time constructing a seductive discourse that appeals to sensual gratification. This approach has been stereotypically attributed to women in homecooking (Andrews, 2003; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Matwick, 2017).

A dichotomy in terms of aspirational examples is found in the two 'extremes' represented by Delia Smith and Mary Berry on the one hand, and Lorraine Pascale and Ching He Huang, on the other. The former couple represents traditional models of domestic cooking, oriented towards cooking for the family on specific occasions and festivities; the latter represents modern figures of independent women, who cook for themselves or to entertain their friends and present themselves as experts in nutrition as well as expert cooks.

All the chefs show particular attention to the quality of the ingredients to be used in their recipes. This attention follows the current trend in the dietary habits of western societies where junk food is economically and culturally more accessible than healthier options, thus favoring obesity and metabolic disorders (Brownell & Battle Horgen, 2004; Dixon, Scully, Wakefield, White, & Crawford, 2007; Yaniv, Rosin, & Yossef, 2009). On the contrary, mass media are permeated with cultural models of hegemonic masculinity and femininity (Counihan & Kaplan, 1998; Parsons, 2017) that show ideal representations of 'perfect' bodies that are hard to achieve in reality, also because of the use of specific software that modify the original pictures, eliminating defects as well as making the represented person unrealistically thinner. These models are, then, taken as aesthetic goals especially by teenagers, leading to the dangerous spread of eating disorders in both girls and boys (Mabe, Forney, & Keel, 2014; Wilksch & Wade, 2015).

Moreover, a PDA approach to the introductory texts before the recipes reveals that, the chefs challenge the stereotypical categories around which they shape their culinary personas (cf. above; and Johnston et al., 2014). At the same time, the chefs create positive models for their public. For instance, Paul Hollywood and Jamie Oliver challenge the stereotype of the male chef oriented towards professional cooking, showing themselves in domestic kitchens and presenting a choice of ingredients that the public can afford. Similarly, The Hairy Bikers duo challenges the stereotype of the manly, chubby bikers by presenting recipes that are healthy and with a low intake of calories. The chefs' attention to balancing the use of healthy food, cooked to become tasty, but with a look at affordable options, involves the chefs in "the participation in sites of successful social change" (Martin, 2012b, p. 3) that lead to the creation of a collective model for healthy eating, keeping a healthy body, while keeping the pleasure of eating tasty food in socially pleasant occasions.

The equation of a healthier approach to food to a 'successful social change' is not to be considered a universally valid tenet but is, at any rate, a fundamental value in today's 'western' society. This is also testified by specialists' current struggle against the increasing number of cases of morbid obesity through the promotion of healthy lifestyles that equate positive practices such as healthy dieting and an active life to good health and a long, full life (Baillot et al., 2015; Galani & Schenider, 2007; Manson, Skerrett, & Greenland, 2004; Zolotarjova, ten Velde, & Vreugdenhil, 2018). These practices are often promoted through the media by aspirational models of celebrities as it is the case of celebrity chefs. For instance, Jamie Oliver has become famous among the general public for his campaigns against childhood obesity among the less privileged social classes in the UK by promoting specifically-designed menus in school meals (Johnston & Goodman, 2015a, 2015b).

However, celebrity chefs are public figures in the entertainment industry, so they must also present the enjoyable side of food, as we have seen in the recipes of most of the chefs here analyzed. This is why, along with healthier alternatives, the chefs present more indulgent recipes, which they describe as occasional or festive treats rather than dishes for regular consumption.

It must be said, though, that these practices and models are made possible only as regards specific communities that share the same values of healthism as those expressed by the chefs. In the Introduction to the present article, Johnston and Goodman (2015a, 2015b) were said to introduce the notion of *foodscape* as the organization of discourse around food. This organization is made possible only when all the members of the community accept and share specific values, norms, and practices concerning food and lifestyle. In this regard, the healthist approach shown by some chefs has been criticized because it reinforces gender and social inequalities. Approaches such as the one promoted by Lorraine Pascale might be open to criticism, since they encourage a specific dietary regime with no medical background on nutrition, but also because they reinforce the hegemonic ideas in patriarchal societies that women must always be in perfect body shape, thus creating body image dissatisfaction (Mulgrew & Tiggemann, 2018) and an increase in cases of eating disorders (Thompson & Heinberg, 1999). Another kind of criticism has been addressed against chefs such as Jamie Oliver, Rick Stein, or James Martin, who are believed to promote certain types of dishes and ingredients that might be expensive or not easily available outside urban centers (Leer & Kjør, 2015), thus favouring social inequalities between those who can afford the healthy ingredients and those who cannot (Piper, 2015).

6. Conclusion

To conclude, the present study has illustrated how contemporary celebrity chefs show many features typical of influential personalities that can be taken as inspiration for positive lifestyles. Their composite approach to food that combines (and balances) sensual gratification and healthy nutrition makes them similar to modern philosophers of food. As influential figures, popular among

the public, they establish through their websites new ways of constructing food-related discourse, thus positioning themselves as positive role models that challenge hegemonic ideologies not only in terms of gendered constructions, but also in terms of lifestyle choices, contrasting unrealistic ideals of perfection that are, instead, portrayed in other media, as pointed out in the Discussion Section. Despite allegations of producing and reinforcing discourses that encourage social inequality (Johnston & Goodman, 2015a, 2015b) for the kind of ingredients and equipment used, which cannot be afforded by everybody, we could say that the example set by the chefs might prove beneficial in encouraging and promoting healthier dietary habits, also because they often indicate cheaper alternatives. So, even though the recipes could not be reproduced exactly as they are presented by the chefs, the chefs can play the role of “cultural intermediaries” (Piper, 2015) between nutrition experts and professional cooking. At the same time they provide some indication on the cooking techniques and on how to balance the different nutrients. Ultimately, they can also increase awareness in how to prepare a meal that fits into a correctly balanced diet even with a limited budget.

The present study has taken into consideration only the verbal component of the paragraphs preceding the recipes. A more thorough analysis of the chefs' approach to food could include a multimodal analysis of the visual component of the same recipes, and of the websites in general, as well as of the videos that occasionally accompany the recipes. Moreover, further research on the verbal component might include a corpus-driven lexico-grammatical analysis of all the sections in the websites (introductory paragraphs, recipes, the 'About' sections introducing the chefs, etc.), which could be accompanied, also in this case, by a multimodal analysis of the visual elements that accompany these sections. Further studies could compare the celebrity chefs' websites to food blogs run by non-celebrity-chefs bloggers to see if the same positive models are established by 'celebrity' and 'non-celebrity' culinary personas, and how the public reacts to either model.

In sum, the celebrity chefs' examined websites are complex products which offer not only the food of their recipes, but also a great amount of food for thought.

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