

Cuisine, Customs and Character:
Culinary Tradition and Innovation in Eighteenth Century France

by

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B.A., Queen's University, 2009

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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This thesis explores elite culinary culture over the course of the French Enlightenment. The eighteenth century was a time of great culinary innovation during which the basic structure and import of mealtimes diverged dramatically from the long-standing traditions of the royal court. The culinary elite of the French Enlightenment (located mainly in Paris and Versailles) were deeply fascinated by the evolving issues of cuisine, taste, and diet, as well as how these issues related to central cultural, political and educational institutions. Culinary innovations had widespread impact on many varied aspects of daily life, such as: expressions of social standing, developments in health science, and situating one's personal moral compass. The following work discusses the connection between food and each of these issues, ultimately asking what it meant for the eighteenth century French culinary elite to eat, and what effect their choice of food had on their identities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, who would stop at nothing to help me achieve my dreams. Without their financial and emotional support I could not have gotten where I am today and I might never have finished this project; I am forever grateful for everything you have done for me and my sisters.

Introduction

“Men have for millennia devoted most of their time to procuring food for themselves and to preparing it.” (Giovanni Rebora, *Culture of the Fork*)¹

Preparing and eating food is absolutely necessary to humanity's ongoing survival. Every level of human society, from underfed peasants harvesting others' land to royalty and the highest nobility, spends part of every day engaging with food: desiring it, seeking to obtain it, considering how to prepare it. As societies and cultural traditions have developed, food has historically occupied a central role in the daily habits and cultural imaginations of human civilizations. Whether we recognize it or not, much of our identity, both as individuals and collectively as a society, is determined by the decisions we make about what to eat. Whether based on ethical, nutritional, medical, aesthetic, or a vast myriad of other considerations, much of who we are and what we want to be is reflected in our food choices. Research into the eating habits of historical societies therefore offers historians a significant window into the intimate lives of the people and societies we study.

The culinary perspective is particularly relevant to the Enlightenment period in history, as the *grand monde* of Paris treated questions of culinary preference and special diets with a fervour comparable to, if not still more zealous than, that of modern fitness buffs. As culinary science and moral philosophy expanded their social reach, many of the great and fashionable minds of the period were turning their attention to understanding the role of food in their lives and discussing the components of an ideal

¹ Giovanni Rebora, *The Culture of the Fork: A Brief History of Food in Europe*, trans. Albert Sonnenfeld (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 2.

diet. Developments in the discussion about how humans relate to food were deeply interconnected with developments in medical theory, agricultural technology, and codes of etiquette, history and philosophy, each of which contributed to contemporary understandings of food, nutrition, and cuisine. As discussions of cuisine attracted attention across the disciplines, chefs and gourmets sought to position themselves in relation to the vast influx of information and opinions, developing specific styles of cuisine around philosophic beliefs or economic realities and creating lines of inquiry and debates that were uniquely culinary. In this framework, cookbooks at this time typically included lengthy prefaces describing the economic, medical, and philosophic reasoning for choosing certain ingredients or styles of preparation.

A Revolution in Taste: Historians of French Cuisine

According to Susan Pinkard, a prominent historian of the development of French cuisine, this period saw a veritable upheaval in culinary tradition; her monograph, *A Revolution in Taste*, conveys her impression of the overall significance of developments in French cuisine from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. Drawing heavily on published cookbooks as well as a myriad of other sources, such as medical textbooks and philosophical works, she documents the processes through which “the ancient traditions that still shaped French habits of cooking, eating, and drinking when Louis XIV was a boy disappeared by the time Louis XVI ascended the throne, superseded by ideas and practices that form the basis of the modern food culture we know today.”²

² Susan Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2009), 236.

Pinkard's central narrative in *Revolution in Taste* tracks the major changes in French cuisine during the generations leading up to the Enlightenment. She begins by explaining how medieval-style, hierarchically organized banquets, with hundred of dishes—the most lavishly placed at the head of the table—exemplified the formality of seventeenth century court sociability and the prevailing fashion of visual displays of wealth and power. To further the “spectacular” aspect of the dining experience, aristocrats seated their guests at one side of the table, often so that they might observe a show or presentation of some sort.³ In contrast to the medieval-style banquet, Pinkard also describes the largely overlooked Enlightenment institution of the dinner party: “the dinner party, like the *salon*, was a venue that fostered conviviality and candid discussion among a mixed company of equals.”⁴ The dinner party was acted out on round tables with guests facing each other and often featured fewer courses and dishes, all of which were accessible to all participants. Such a set-up emphasized a congenial and sociable dynamic rather than a public and ceremonial one.

Having described the changes in standard place-settings and seating arrangements that occurred in the seventeenth century, Pinkard goes on to explain how in the eighteenth century the “dynamics [of the new sociable dining set-up] altered the priorities and practices of elite Parisian kitchens.”⁵ For example, “as the quantity in dishes went down, the attention to detail and the use of exacting techniques went up.”⁶ Furthermore, the open and convivial dynamic of the dinner party, and the *grand monde* of Paris as a whole, encouraged elite diners to develop an individual standard of “taste,” and generated

³ Pinkard, 27.

⁴ Pinkard, 87.

⁵ Pinkard, 87.

⁶ Pinkard, 94.

discussions of what it meant to be a “gourmet” and how to practice dietary “refinement.”⁷ Pinkard’s discussion of how this discourse drove developments in taste is highly nuanced; she describes the prized ingredients and practices that were integral to Enlightenment cuisines, showing how each new standard of culinary excellence adopted techniques of older practices, *ancienne cuisine* giving way to *nouvelle cuisine*, and that in turn giving way to *la cuisine bourgeoise* and *haute cuisine*.⁸

Pinkard adds further depth to her narrative by linking the changes she describes with the intellectual musings of Enlightenment *philosophes* and medical literature of the time. She connects the popularity of “le goût naturel,” for example, to a Rousseauian aesthetic of rusticity and rural simplicity uncorrupted by the luxuries of city life.⁹ Medical innovations also play a part in Pinkard’s analysis. She draws attention to a decline in Hippocratic dietetics, which relied heavily on spices to balance the humours,¹⁰ in favour of a more “delicate” cuisine meant to soothe the body and ease digestion.¹¹ In addition to these cultural influences on cuisine, Pinkard also makes a practical argument for success of “le goût naturel,” arguing that the increase in the quality and diversity of ingredients coming into Paris at this time drove chefs to emphasize the natural flavour of the foods they prepared, rather than masking tastes with spices.¹²

As nuanced and descriptive as Pinkard’s account is, she follows a similar narrative to other historians of French cuisine. The shift from the ritualistic, hierarchical

⁷ Pinkard, 67.

⁸ Pinkard, 181.

⁹ Pinkard, 193-199.

¹⁰ Pinkard, 11.

¹¹ Pinkard, 165-7.

¹² Pinkard, 72. (Note: this argument is based on the research of *Annaliste* Braudel, who argues that by this time, well-off Europeans enjoyed an increasingly varied and nutritious diet to previous generations.)

cooking and dining of *ancien régime* courts to the more unofficial and sociable culinary culture that came to its height in eighteenth century Paris has been documented and explored by several other writers, each with their own particular focus. Stephen Mennell's *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*, highlights this period in French history for its rapid culinary development and as the moment when French cuisine began to differentiate itself from English and other European cuisines, setting internal standards of taste and manners that became the foundation for modern *haute cuisine*.¹³ Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson offers another variation on the same theme, exploring the same “*Revolution*” as Pinkard from a more theoretical dimension. For Ferguson, the most important development in the culinary culture of Enlightenment France was the growing number of printed culinary works, which fed off each other through cross-pollination and competition, forming the basis of a sophisticated and enduring “culinary self-consciousness” that remains in place today and is recognized throughout the world.¹⁴

Other historians who have adopted this basic narrative have approached it from the perspective of a single element of the evolving culinary culture. One of the most effective examples of this method is Rebecca Spang's *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture*, which tracks the emergence and growth of restaurants as an institution. Spang's narrative spans from the eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, beginning with detailed descriptions of some of the earliest restaurants—small eating houses that offered privacy, quiet, and soothing restorative

¹³ Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985 and 1996), chapters 1-5.

¹⁴ Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 30.

broths.¹⁵ From this introduction, Spang then discusses the particular political, economic, and social roles of *restaurateurs*’ in eighteenth century Paris¹⁶ and the gradual acceptance of the restaurant as an important fixture of Parisian life.¹⁷ Throughout her narrative she discusses the evolving standards of taste in Enlightenment Paris¹⁸ and, like Pinkard, highlights the philosophic and medical innovations that influenced and were influenced by culinary theory.¹⁹ Similarly, Jennifer J. Davis argues in her recently published article “Masters of Disguise: French Cooks Between Art and Nature, 1651-1789” that the declining court cuisine of Versailles and emerging urban cuisine of Paris were united by a common inclination for “disguise.” While Jennifer Davis’s work offers no radical theoretical positioning, her research highlights the particular role of “disguise” as a culinary technique, a theme Pinkard touches on only briefly.²⁰

Other Relevant Works

Although my own research works within the same basic timeline and framework treated by Pinkard, Mennel, Ferguson, Spang, and Jennifer Davis, I have explored the work of several other historians in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural history, social classes, and industrial processes during the time. I have incorporated references to many of these works into the chapters that follow, and explain

¹⁵ Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 2000), 9.

¹⁶ For example, Spang, 8-10 and 24-33 and 119.

¹⁷ For example, Spang, 172.

¹⁸ For example, Spang, 5 and 150-167.

¹⁹ For example, Spang, 15 and 49-51.

²⁰ Jennifer J. Davis, “Masters of Disguise: French Cooks Between Art and Nature, 1651-1793,” *Gastronomica* Vol. 9, No. 1 (2009), 36-49.

their specific relationship to my own perspective as they come up. The most important of these other secondary studies include the works of Natalie Zemon Davis, Daniel Roche, Sarah Maza, Dena Goodman, Jessica Riskin, and J. B. Shank. Davis, Roche, Goodman, and Maza have each been recognized as authorities on early modern or Enlightenment French culture, and thus have been useful guides to the complex social practices and structures that provide the backdrop for my own narrative. Specifically, I have referred to Davis's work on "the gift" in early modern culture as I explore the dietary etiquette of *ancien régime* courts,²¹ and I have used Roche²² and Goodman's²³ studies of consumer and *salon* cultures to add breadth to my own primary source research on these subjects. Maza's work, on the other hand, has served an essential guide to navigating the intricate structure of social classes that populated the streets of Paris in 1750.²⁴ Finally, I draw on Riskin and Shank's histories of science in my second chapter to introduce my discussion of the relationship between a mechanistic understanding of the human body and the new dietary recommendations and preferences of that era.²⁵

²¹ Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000).

²² See Daniel Roche, *History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600-1800*, trans. Brian Pearce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 and 2000).

²³ Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

²⁴ Sarah Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

²⁵ See Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002) and J. B. Shank, *The Newton Wars and the Beginning of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

My Research: Assumptions, Goals, and Chapters

Throughout my thesis, the main subject of investigation is the “culinary elite,” a term that I have invented to refer to the members of aristocratic and urban society who participated in high culinary culture. This stratum was comprised of the individuals who hosted and prepared aristocratic banquets or attended dinner parties and *salons*: intellectuals; the well-to-do; chefs and other food professionals; owners of restaurants; as well as the growing number of authors and critics immersed in culinary and restaurant culture. One of the major challenges in writing this thesis has been identifying my subject, as this “culinary elite” was not a stable class. The “revolution” in French cuisine between the reign of Louis XIV and the French Revolution involved not only changes in the standards of judging fine food, but also where it was consumed and who had a right to consume and judge it.

The most striking shift in the culinary elite was from the medieval/Renaissance court model—in which kings and wealthy aristocrats, and their hired chefs, determined the standards of good taste and good hospitality—to a more Paris-centred model, in which the intellectual elite, urban aristocrats, wealthy businessmen, and other successful, social urbanites congregated in exclusive *salons*, luxurious dining rooms, and early restaurants to exchange ideas, anecdotes, and news. Another key shift was the acceptance of “bourgeois” families—which here means merchant or trades families that could afford to keep at least one female cook—into the fold, through the development of *la cuisine bourgeoise*, which imitated the tastes, styles, and dining methods of the wealthier elite, but used more economical cuts of meat and methods of preparation (shorter cooking times required less labour cost). From a socio-economic standpoint,

these groups displayed radical differences, however, the developments of these distinct traditions overlapped chronologically throughout the *ancien régime* era in France, as court cooking was slow to die out, even as Paris adopted less rigorously ceremonious standards of taste. Further, the discourses of court and Parisian cuisine were deeply interconnected, and a chef working in eighteenth century Paris would know the recipes and place-settings of court chefs, and recognize them as the inheritors of the same culinary tradition.

My research is not particularly concerned with *why* or *how* this shift occurred, as both Pinkard and Roche have already explored such questions thoroughly. My main concern is to explore how the changing of hands, as it were, changed the widespread perceptions of French cuisine as well as how it affected the perceived role of cuisine in French society. For example, did mealtimes offer individuals a chance to converse and exchange ideas? Or was elite dining a more formalized activity? Overall, readers should understand that, as the period progressed, the number of people who had access to fine cuisine and participated in culinary discourse increased dramatically. Individuals could interact with the world of high cuisine by reading published restaurant critiques, philosophical or medical treatises, or by sharing their own cooking (or that of a trusted servant) by hosting a dinner-party. By the time of the revolution, most middle-class families could afford to dine in restaurants occasionally, where they would eat the same food as the most affluent merchants and highest state-officials.

As I investigate the activities and beliefs of the “culinary elite,” I will adopt a similar method to that of Rebecca Spang and Jennifer Davis, using the timeline and framework of Pinkard as a starting point and focussing on two specific themes for

discussion. My goal for each of these topics (outlined below) is to question some of the assumptions made by Pinkard and others, as well as to provide greater depth of understanding about the role of cuisine and culinary theory in the daily lives and social worlds of the French elite. Although I have borrowed some theoretical argumentation from the social sciences, notably the work of Paul Rozin, my project is primarily historical in nature, and ultimately I will relate any theoretical inquiry directly back to documentary evidence and analysis.

My first chapter, “Spectacular Dining from Court to *Salon*: The Shift from Visual Impact to Conversational Exhibition,” sets up the transition of *haute cuisine* from its medieval-style, aristocratic roots to its urban, Paris-centred evolution. As I trace the geographical shift from Versailles to Paris, I explore the theme of spectacle as it relates to early modern French cuisine. I begin my analysis in the court of Louis XIV; using court memoirs, several cookbooks, and artwork depicting dining scenes I will give a portrait of the etiquette and dining rituals of that time and place. From the courts of the Bourbons and their aristocrats, I move to the alternative social scene of Paris, which became the epicentre of cultural innovation over the course of the French Enlightenment. Using similar sources—memoirs, etiquette manuals, cookbooks, and literary references—I endeavour to show the ways in which the dining experience evolved, fostered by the innovative spirit of Paris society, away from longstanding court traditions. My main purpose is to explore how the tendency toward visual spectacle was not completely as abandoned as the traditional narrative suggests (notably including Pinkard’s account), but rather re-designed to suit urban tastes and social concerns. Whereas seventeenth century court meals were often encoded with hierarchic power relations, dinners in the private

salons of Parisian hostesses, which became popular in the seventeenth century and rose to their height in the eighteenth century, were opportunities to show off one's social prowess. In this new social scene, spectacle was no longer the sole responsibility of the host, as guests were increasingly expected to entertain the host and other guests, and would lose the privilege of invitation unless they met expectations. As this is a culinary history, this chapter highlights how food itself was affected by and reflected this social change. Notably, I discuss how food actually received less attention in culinary literature (cookbooks, memoirs, etiquette manuals, etc.) as well as how chefs began to move away from spectacular visual effects and astringent, distinctively spiced tastes toward more subtle techniques and flavours that required their guests to have a "cultured" palate to appreciate.

My second chapter discusses specific culinary trends in greater depth, as I focus on the role of "purity" in fashionable diets and unpack what exactly that term meant for eighteenth century diners. Deeply embroiled in discussions of food and diet, purity is another important, and understudied, theme within Enlightenment culture and cuisine. As the tastemakers of French culinary tradition sought a self-described refinement, cookbooks and medical literature began to reflect the search for the ideal diet. Overwhelmingly, chefs, physicians, philosophers, gardeners, and others associated with cuisine featured "purity" as the most important factor in choosing one's diet. Interestingly, however, not everyone agreed on exactly what "purity" meant, or why it was important. Proponents of *la cuisine moderne* argued that purity meant food was easily digestible and free from clogging particles and fats, and that it was essential because proper digestion determined one's entire disposition. On the other hand, the

more philosophically-inclined sentimentalists argued that culinary purity meant a rural diet, hand-grown fruits and vegetables served with minimal preparation, meant to inspire virtue in those who partook. Traditional interpretations tend to highlight the differences between these approaches, rather than exploring their similarities or the fact that they ultimately merged in nineteenth century restaurant culture. I acknowledge that there were significant differences between the two main culinary philosophies in language and perceived goals. However, I also endeavour to demonstrate that these “camps” arose out of a common scientific tradition and intellectual community, and necessarily shared some essential assumptions about the role of food in human life. This chapter will complement the first by discussing how food was considered to affect one’s emotions and personal identity, just as the manners and social customs discussed in Chapter One formed the basis of one’s social character and reputation.

In both chapters I discuss how the transition from a court-centred social structure to urban Enlightenment values and lifestyles affected the role of food in elite lives, my narrative beginning with a discussion of the external manners and etiquette in my first chapter and moving on to discuss the transformative power of wholesome food as understood in a mechanistic worldview. My goal throughout the work in its entirety is to re-visit the existing narrative of the early days of France’s sophisticated culinary culture, to question some of the assumptions made by other historians, and to highlight these two significant themes. Through both discussions I explore the different ways in which food was seen to be associated with one’s personality and identity. The history of food and culinary culture is a complicated one, as culinary practices will always be deeply embroiled in social, economic, scientific, and cultural contexts. I began this introduction

with Giovanni Rebora's dictum that "men have for millennia devoted most of their time to procuring food for themselves and to preparing it."²⁶ The culinary elite of eighteenth century France was no different; its members shaped their social hierarchies and daily activities around mealtimes and incorporated their fundamental scientific and spiritual beliefs into each and every bite. My research will explore just a few ways in which food intersected with other aspects of daily life and will contribute to ongoing discussions of the role of food and cultural practices in historic societies, as well as to historians' understanding of the people themselves by providing a small window into their beliefs, anxieties, and identities.

²⁶ Rebora, 2.

Chapter 1 – Spectacular Dining from Court to *Salon*: The Shift from Visual Impact to Conversation Exhibition

“Paris is a gulf, where the rest and contemplation of the soul is lost, without which life is an unwelcome tumult. I do not live. My focus is carried away from me in eddies. I go, I come, I sup across town and dine the next day at another’s. From a partnership of three or four intimate friends, we must fly at the Opera, the Comedy, see the sights like a foreigner, kiss a hundred people in one day, make and receive a hundred protests, without a moment to oneself, without the time to write, think, or sleep.” (Voltaire, 1739)²⁷

In the Court of Louis XIV: Splendour and Spectacle as Signs of Power

Within the court of Louis XIV, food and dining played a central role in the formal ritual of court life. The court memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon famously describe Louis XIV’s daily activities, including his meals. Although these memoirs are written satirically by a courtier biased against his King, they nevertheless represent an important window into the daily business in early modern Versailles. According to these memoirs, the King would pass his midday meal in his own chamber. Although this meal was officially “*au petit couvert*,” which means that the King ate alone, this does not mean that his dinners were private affairs. After his place was set with a sumptuous meal consisting of many dishes and at least four courses, “the courtiers entered; then all who were known; and the gentlemen of the chamber on duty informed the king.” Other than perhaps to offer the King some information or scant conversation over the course of the meal, the

²⁷ Voltaire, “letter from Voltaire to Anne Antoinette Françoise de Champbonin, c. Monday, 28 September 1739,” *Electronic Enlightenment – letters & lives online*: <http://www.e-enlightenment.com> (accessed 31 August 2011). Original French: “Paris est un gouffre, où se perdent le repos & le recueillement de l’âme, sans qui la vie n’est qu’un tumulte importun. Je ne vis point. Je suis porté, entraîné loin de moi dans des tourbillons. Je vais, je viens; je soupe au bout de la ville, pour souper le lendemain à l’autre. D’une société de trois ou quatre intimes amis, il faut voler à l’Opéra, à la Comédie, voir des curiosités comme un étranger, embrasser cent personnes en un jour, faire & recevoir cent protestations, pas un instant à soi, pas le temps d’écrire, de penser ni dormir.”

chief function of these observers was simply to watch the King eat. Sometimes someone present would be of high enough rank or close enough in relation to the King, such as the King's brother or sons, to stand at the side of the King while he dined and offer him a napkin at the end of his meal. Only occasionally, however, did this result in the courtiers' sharing the King's meal, which they would only do at the direct request of the King. On top of this formality of service, there was also an official separation of the sexes at this meal; unless there was a much grander dinner to celebrate a special occasion, "ladies scarcely ever were seen at these little dinners."²⁸

After a busy day of conducting royal business in his cabinet, as well as hunting, feeding his dogs, and entertaining himself at Marly, the King ate his supper at ten-o'clock every evening.²⁹ At this meal the King sat in the middle of the grand table, accompanied by the royal family, including his sons and daughters and brother's family, each seated according to their official rank. These meals were even more lavish and abundant than the comparatively modest royal dinner, for many of the men of the royal family were "great eaters," able to routinely put away "four platefuls of different soups, a whole pheasant, a partridge, a plateful of salad, mutton hashed with garlic, two good-sized slices of ham, a dish of pastry, and afterwards fruit and sweetmeats."³⁰

In addition to the privileged diners, the King was also attended by a "large number of courtiers and ladies, sitting or standing" who were permitted to watch the meal

²⁸ Duc de Saint-Simon, *The Memoirs of Louis XIV, His Court and The Regency, Complete* (Project Gutenberg e-Book, 2006, Original French publication: 1788), Volume 11, Chapter LXXVIII.

²⁹ Saint-Simon, Volume 11, Chapter LXXVIII.

³⁰ Elizabeth-Charlotte of Bavaria, Princess Palatine and Duchesse d'Orléans, *Memoirs of the Court of Louis the XIV and of the Regency: Being the Secret Memoirs of the Mother of the Regent, Complete* (Project Gutenberg e-Book, 2006, original French publication: 1789), Part I, Section II- "Louis XIV".

and converse with those present.³¹ According to the memoirs of Louis XIV's sister-in-law the Princess Palatine, nobles and courtiers who were rich enough would pay exorbitant sums in order to have the honour of waiting on the royal family. She writes that "formerly all the King's officers, such as the butler, the cupbearer, etc., etc., were persons of rank; but afterwards, the nobility becoming poor could not afford to buy the high offices." When nobles could no longer afford these offices, they fell into the hands of wealthy merchants and government officials. Again there was a distinction between the men and women at table, as only the male members of the Royal family were to be served by the increasingly rare noble servers, and "when the Princesses of the blood or any other ladies were received at the King's table, we were waited on, not by noblemen, but by other officers of the King's household."³²

These regular meals shaped the fabric of daily life at court, not only for the King and the royal family, but also for the myriad of individuals who served and observed his repasts. On top of these small-scale daily ceremonies, life at court was regularly punctuated by a stream of grand balls and feasts that marked the passage of holidays, war victories, weddings, and funerals.³³ At such feasts the tables would be set up with places organized hierarchically along one side of the table, so that the diners could enjoy whatever entertainment the host hired –dancers, musicians, preachers, et cetera—whilst they enjoyed the lavish food they were served.³⁴ Upon the marriage of the Duc de Bourgogne to the Princesse of Savoy, Saint-Simon writes that the King announced that

³¹ Saint-Simon, Volume 11, Chapter LXXVIII.

³² Elizabeth-Charlotte of Bavaria, *Memoirs*, Part I, Section II- "Louis XIV."

³³ E.g. Saint-Simon, Volume 2, Chapter XI.

³⁴ Susan Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2009), 78-80.

he should be glad to see a magnificent Court; and he himself, who for a long time had worn only the most simple habits, ordered the most superb. This was enough; no one thought of consulting his purse or his state; everyone tried to surpass his neighbour in richness and invention. Gold and silver scarcely sufficed: the shops of the dealers were emptied in a few days; in a word luxury the most unbridled reigned over Court and city, for the fête had a huge crowd of spectators.

Courtiers were eager to out-do others' finery and workmen grew scarce. According to Saint-Simon, these desperate times inspired new levels of creativity to prepare the appropriate dresses, and in some cases led to petty militancy: "Madame la Duchess actually sent her people to take some [workmen] by force who were working at the Duc de Rohan's!"³⁵



Figure 1: Abraham Bosse "The Banquet of the Chevaliers de Saint-Esprit," 1633. From Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste*, 80.

³⁵ Saint-Simon, Volume 2, Chapter XI. Original French (of long quotation): "Il s'était expliqué qu'il seroit bien aise que la cour y fût magnifique, et lui-même, qui depuis longtemps ne portoit plus que les habits fort simple, en voulut des plus superbes. C'en fut assez pour qu'il ne fût plus question de consulter sa bourse ni son état. Ce fut à qui se surpasseroit en richesse et en invention. L'or et l'argent suffirent à peine. Les boutiques des marchands se vidèrent en très-peu de jours; en un mot, le luxe le plus effréné domina la cour et la ville, car la fête eut une grande foule de spectateurs." From Saint-Simon, Louis de Rouvroy, *Mémoires complet et authentiques du duc de Saint-Simon sur le siècle de Louis XIV et la Régence* (Paris: Imprimerie du Sénat et de la Cour de Cassation, 1856), Tome II, Chapitre III, page 58.

The Art of Hosting Well

Although royal meals represent the height of early modern French opulence, this style of eating was not limited to the king and his courtiers. Opulent feasts with extravagant roast centre-pieces were in fashion for chefs and hosts throughout France. Bonnefons includes two sample menus at the back of his cookbook in the *Jardinier François*, one for a *repas en gras* for ten to twelve people and another for a *repas en maigre* for a similar sized dinner-party. Bonnefons' was not a court cook. His main audience was the rural and urban elite not ordinarily associated with the court. Further, the author himself argues that his cooking was intended to simplify court cuisine and inspire the French cook to use fresh garden produce, rather than rococo opulence, as his inspiration. However, the proportions that Bonnefons recommends for both food and style seemed as gargantuan as the King's. For the *repas en gras*, Bonnefons recommends a four-course meal with an unbelievable twenty-nine different dishes, not including the "Fruit" course of various fruit preserves, compotes, and pastries, the number and flavours of which he leaves up to the discerning host depending on the season and personal taste.³⁶ Even the smaller meal *en maigre*, to be enjoyed with less robust guests and potentially on fast days, features two potages, one large entrée, eight smaller entrées/entremets, two large roasts, and six small roasts, all apparently to be enjoyed by a mere dozen guests.³⁷

³⁶ Nicolas de Bonnefons, *Le Jardinier françois* (Brussels: Jean Leonard Librairie-Imprimeur, 1712, original French publication: 1651), 243-8.

³⁷ Bonnefons, *Le Jardinier françois*, 248-250.

La Varenne advises his readers on how to prepare similarly hearty and spectacular fare in *Le Cuisinier françois*, *Le Pastissier françois*, and *Le Confiturier françois*. Typical recipes *à la* La Varenne include a whole roasted deer fawn, its head wrapped in buttered paper while cooking, and served with a Pepper Sauce.³⁸ On top of the visual impact that a whole roast fawn sitting on the table might have, La Varenne makes a point to recommend “trimming your platters with flowers, depending on the season and their availability.”³⁹ If readers perhaps think the flowers on their own are slightly tame compared to the grandeur of royal and aristocratic tables they only have to turn to La Varenne’s the last chapter of *Le Confiturier françois*, entitled “How to Fold all Sorts of Table Linen and to make all sorts of shapes with it.” This handy little appendix advises wannabe culinary masters on how to pleat, ruffle, and fold table napkins in all manners of ways. Beginning his guide with simple preparations such as a “Folded in a Band” and “Plain Sea-Shell,” La Varenne quickly moves on to more interesting table-sculptures, such as “The Dog with a Collar,” a “The Hedgehog,” the “Cross of Lorraine,” a “Brooding Hen in a Bush,” and the highly inventive “Two Chickens in a Pie.”⁴⁰ This particular guide to linen-folding is actually quite restrained according to the tastes of the day.

Historian Jennifer J. Davis highlights the importance of showmanship in early modern French cookery in her article “Masters of Disguise: French Cooks Between Art and Nature, 1651-1793.” For Davis, culinary skill during the time of Louis XIV was

³⁸ François Pierre, Sieur de la Varenne, *The French Cook* (original French publication: 1651), in *La Varenne’s Cookery – The French Cook; The French Pastry Chef; The French Confectioner*, ed. Terence Scully (Blackawton, Totnes: Prospect Books, 2006), 192.

³⁹ La Varenne, *The French Cook*, 185.

⁴⁰ La Varenne, *The French Cook*, 532-539.

determined by a chef's ability to "disguise" a dish. She points out how L.S.R., author of *L'art de bien traiter*, or *The Art of Hosting Well*, summarizes the purpose of his text as to "show the true science of preparing, disguising, and serving properly all sorts of meats and fish, large and small soups, entrées, ragouts, pastries and vegetables, according to a method which has not yet been taught."⁴¹ The key word here for Davis is "déguiser," which in modern French translates to "disguise," and certainly came to hold a negative connotation in eighteenth century France, but which at the time merely meant to "dress" or "prepare" food. She writes that

The *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* published in 1694 made clear that the terms *guise* and *déguiser* had culinary connotations beyond the kitchen. *En guise* meant "in the manner of" and suggests a substitution or element of artifice. By way of example the dictionary note the practice of "frying frogs *en guise de* chicken." Similarly, *disguise* included any actions to create a dish considered more appetizing and more refined than its raw counterpart.⁴²

While Davis acknowledges the limitations of such a linguistic connection, she nevertheless asserts that since "cooks and diners alike embraced the term *disguise* to refer to a wide range of culinary preparations,"⁴³ there is an essential connection between cuisine and disguise.

⁴¹ L.S.R., *L'art de bien traiter*, in Lauredon, Gilles and Laurence (eds.), *L'Art de la Cuisine Française au XVIIe Siècle* (Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 1995, original French publication: 1674), 19; and Jennifer J. Davis, "Masters of Disguise: French Cooks Between Art and Nature, 1651-1793," *Gastronomica*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2009), 37. Original French: "montre la véritable science d'apprêter, déguiser et server proprement toutes sortes de viands et de poissons, grands et petit potages, entrées, ragouts, pâtisseries et légumes avec une méthode qui n'a point encore été enseignée."

⁴² Davis, 37.

⁴³ Davis, 37.

Davis's argument is compelling, and the association between early modern French cuisine and disguise is acknowledged by Pinkard and Ferguson.⁴⁴ However, it is important to note that during this time (around 1670) the “disguise” L.S.R. is referring to, and which reigned in the kitchens of the elite, was one that focussed on presentation and spectacular visual effects associated with masquerades, costumes, showmanship and visual display, rather than with the subtle flavour nuances and gastronomic chemistry of French cuisine a century later. Davis further proves this particular linkage by showing that the theatrical term “farce” has its roots in the verb *farcir*, “to stuff,” which was an important culinary technique in an age of roasts and elaborately stuffed pastries.⁴⁵ There was a tradition in medieval and Renaissance Europe to mash up vegetables or fish and shape them into meat or sausages to eat during Lent or fast-days, however, by the early Enlightenment chefs were more concerned with simple flavours and recipes that highlighted quality produce and meats.⁴⁶ There was no drive to trick or genuinely mislead diners—rather, the real challenge for a chef during this era was to entertain and impress guests before they even took a bite. Although the culinary tradition had moved away from such feats of trickery by the seventeenth century, and chefs more often chose to simplify flavours and eliminate extra spices or confusing flavours, there was nevertheless an enduring desire to impress diners with food, to prepare and present food in such a way that it put on a show. Pinkard summarizes this trend for over-the-top artistry and sumptuous display neatly with the example of a dish that appeared in the anonymous *Traité historique et pratique de la cuisine* that consisted of “a ragout of

⁴⁴ See Pinkard, 91-2 and Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 133.

⁴⁵ Davis, 38.

⁴⁶ Pinkard, 91-2.

songbirds that was presented in a case of forcemeat molded to look like a galley (a ship propelled by both oars and sail) with a “deck” made of veal scallops and a “mast” (an inedible skewer) festooned with “sails” of cockscombs, bacon, and foie gras.”⁴⁷

On and Off-Stage

In contrast to the ceremony, spectacle, and artistry of court ceremonies and banquets, the memoirs of Saint-Simon make reference to various intimate meals enjoyed by members of the French court. These had a very different place in the lives of those he writes about than the spectacular, performative ceremonies. He recalls a meeting with his own wife at the end of a journey: “I reached Chartres, where Madame de Saint-Simon was to meet me, dine, and sleep, so that we might have the pleasure of opening our hearts to each other, and of finding ourselves together again in solitude and in liberty, greater than could be looked for in Paris during the first few days of my return.”⁴⁸

Even the King himself was able to occasionally enjoy the pleasure of an unscripted meal. Saint-Simon describes how the King would organize private parties at his mini-château of Marly. Although access to these parties was strictly regulated by the King, and ladies who wished to attend were obliged to formally present themselves to obtain an invitation,⁴⁹ the King’s behaviour at Marly was jovial and indulgent, rather than that of an absolute monarch performing for his subjects. Saint-Simon relates an amusing story of his first trip to Marly, in which “The King at dinner, setting aside his usual

⁴⁷ Pinkard, 181.

⁴⁸ Saint-Simon, Volume 14, Chapter CXII.

⁴⁹ Saint-Simon, Volume 11, Chapter LXXVIII.

gravity, laughed and joked very much with Madame la Duchess,... causing her to drink more than usual.”⁵⁰

The picture Saint-Simon paints here is very different than historians generally find about the royal court of Versailles or the behaviour of the famed Sun-King. However, as in the previous account Saint-Simon’s private tête-à-têtes with his wife, these meals were held outside the public eye, and thus followed different rules than meals performed for his court. With the exception of such festivities, almost every aspect of the King’s monarchical life and that of his surrounding court was a carefully constructed spectacle and served to reaffirm traditional hierarchies and the absolute sovereignty of the King. The food at these feasts and public-viewings of the King’s appetite thus catered specifically to this purpose, thereby pushing the culinary fashion of the whole French elite towards awe-inspiring culinary feats and table-settings.

Whether the King ate alone or hosted a public banquet or feast, the food was first and foremost visually striking, whether in the form of elaborate and inedible mountains of fruit, or pies that released live blackbirds when cut open. When others dined with the King, their access to the spectacular fare was restricted by their rank and relationship to the King; the most illustrious had their pick of the finest wines and most sensational foods and were seated with maximum public visibility in mind (hence the frenetic scramble to bankrupt oneself for the most visually appealing outfit). With this privilege came the responsibility to dress and act the part, as evidenced in the rush to order the most extravagant dresses in the court for any royal event. The lower ranking attendees would still enjoy the show, but had limited access to the fancy food and were less

⁵⁰ Saint-Simon, Volume 2, Chapter IX.

conspicuously placed on the table. Daniel Roche sees this relationship to food as connected to the economic reality of the time. Nobles and monarchs held banquets in times of necessity to display their wealth and plenty and to strengthen the public's dependence on their leadership and largesse.⁵¹ This theory is echoed in Natalie Zemon Davis's *The Gift in Sixteenth Century France*, which identifies a link in early modern France between extravagant expressions of hospitality and social prestige⁵²—in a time of food scarcity and uncertainty, people took notice of someone with the power and money to bake live blackbirds into a giant pie. As the Enlightenment progressed, however, the nature of culinary display changed and methods of preparing and serving cuisine became more complicated, as chefs and hosts sought to serve dishes characterized by subtlety and “pure” flavours.

The Vortex of Paris: The New Centre of the French Social Universe

As France passed into the eighteenth century and the urban culture of Paris competed with court life for cultural prominence, the function of display in social relations also shifted. The court at Versailles, presided over by Louis XIV and then Louis XV, continued to serve up elaborate and visually stunning banquets.⁵³ However, as Parisian hosts and *restauranteurs* offered alternative ways of enjoying fine dining, this

⁵¹ See Daniel Roche, *History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600-1800*, trans. Brian Pearce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 and 2000), 244.

⁵² Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 34-40.

⁵³ See Jean-François Marmontel, *The Memoirs of Marmontel, Written by Himself: Containing His Literary and Political Life, and Anecdotes of the Principal Characters of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Hunt and Clarke, 1827, original French publication: 1804), Google e-book, 212-3 and Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste*, 79.

mode of culinary display enjoyed less of a monopoly over subjects' standards of taste, and the arbitration of fashion and taste passed from the hands of the lavish courtiers of Versailles to the urban elite of Paris.

The star institution of the French Enlightenment was the *salon*, recognized by feminists, sociologists, and historians alike as a synecdoche for the ethos of sociability and conversational sophistication for which the Enlightenment as a cultural movement stood. Dena Goodman, a notable scholar of Enlightenment sociability, described the Enlightenment as giving birth to a new "Republic of Letters," in which Parisian *salons*, run by prominent women, sat in the centre of the cultural and social revolution.⁵⁴ According to Goodman, the power dynamic of France had moved to the public sphere, as men of the middling ranks, distinguished through their art, scholarship, or business acumen, set out to determine the future of the country by exchanging ideas and forging new social connections within a few select *salons* and other gathering places. In these *salons*, cultural luminaries would congregate in a space that encouraged egalitarian discussion and harmonious discourse, and showcase their wit through sophisticated conversation and the quality of their ideas, rather than through their place in the great hierarchy or the opulence of their estate.⁵⁵ Throughout it all, the *salonnière* reigned supreme, crafting the guest list according to her favourite acquaintances and connections, choosing appropriate subjects for discussion or cutting off potentially contentious subjects, and actively cultivating a discursive, but polite, mood amongst her guests.⁵⁶

Pinkard shares a similar view of Enlightenment sociability, highlighting the fashion for

⁵⁴ Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 24.

⁵⁵ Goodman, 34-38.

⁵⁶ Goodman, 91-99.

intimate dinner parties governed by dynamic conversation and genteel manners, within this new social milieu.⁵⁷

Taking a different perspective, Jonathan Israel has contended that the true spirit of Enlightenment discourse and sociability was much more radical, and more masculine, than could be found in the delicate and guarded conversations of women's drawing rooms. Israel highlights the sometimes underappreciated ideas of Spinoza, Bayle, Diderot and other radical male intellectuals, whose philosophies, he argues, shaped the social change that Europe underwent in the eighteenth century. Together these men contested existing power structures; questioned and redefined Christianity; discussed far away civilizations and the existence of natural law; debated the place of science in modern life; and set out to record their efforts for contemporaries and posterity in such depositories as Diderot's great *Encyclopédie*. For Israel, the *salon* is merely one of many new institutions that served to spread the seeds of modern thinking, along with newspapers, magazines, coffee-shops, and the *Encyclopédie* itself. Although Israel's study of the Enlightenment is pan-European and gives great weight to the Dutch Enlightenment and the philosophical heirs of Spinoza, his interpretation is also an urban one, with Paris playing an important role in the realization and dissemination of the new world of ideas.⁵⁸

Despite the divergent examples and interpretations of eighteenth century *salon* culture, the sociability of elite Parisians around 1750 was evidently much different than that of the courts of Louis XIV and XV. While court life remained lavish and

⁵⁷ Pinkard, 127.

⁵⁸ Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

ostentatious up to the French Revolution, Paris became, as Pinkard writes, “the dynamic centre” of the new elite French culture, “where the elite classes were engaged in working out a new vision of what it meant to lead a noble way of life.”⁵⁹ This new “noble way of life” was much less visually scripted than that at Versailles and consisted of a constant flurry of dinner-parties, *salons*, and trips to the opera or local playhouse, what *philosophe* Marmontel describes as “the vortex of Paris.”⁶⁰ While dining remained an important aspect of social gatherings, the social function of dining evolved within and around this new social ethos, and this changed how Parisians related to their food. Parisian tastemakers—such as wealthy merchants and the intellectual elite—began to compete with and gradually reject the hierarchical, spectacle-centred dining style of Versailles. However, throughout this evolution, social intercourse maintained its centrality and importance to everyday experiences of cuisine, as did the inherent desire to display one’s place in society—what really changed were the codes and practices used to interpret social rank and identity, and how these codes were communicated.

The Art of Being a Good Guest

Within the *salon* culture of Enlightenment Paris, the rules governing the art of hosting were radically different than those spelled out textually by court chefs and in practice by King Louis XIV. Spectacular displays of food and extravagant entertainment never disappeared, but there was overall a major scaling-down of Old Regime

⁵⁹ Pinkard, 83.

⁶⁰ E.g. Marmontel, 125-6 and Voltaire, “letter from Voltaire to Nicolas Claude Thieriot, Sunday, June 12, 1735,” *Electronic Enlightenment – letters & lives online*: <http://www.e-enlightenment.com> (accessed 31 August 2011).

sumptuousness, especially in the circles of the urban elite. Even L.S.R. (*L'art de bien traïter*, 1674), whose cuisine shared a similar style and presentation to that of La Varenne and Massailot, nevertheless advised his readers in the second half of the seventeenth century to scale down from the “prodigious abundance” of his fellow chefs and recommended a mere five dishes per course to feed twenty people, so that a four course meal would include only twenty dishes overall.⁶¹ According to Flandrin, the emerging fashion for table decorations was “toward reduction, certainly at least in the number of roast dishes.” In contrast to the creaking tables of Bonnefons’ “*Service en gras*” with ten elaborate roasts for ten to twelve persons,⁶² or Massailot’s dinner for eight featuring three large roasts, six medium sized dishes and eight entremets,⁶³ a guest at a typical fashionable dinner party in eighteenth century Paris could expect to see but one.⁶⁴ This trend is evident in the menus offered in the new generation of French culinary literature. For example, in Vincent La Chapelle’s *Le Cuisinier moderne*, La Chapelle offers a *plan de table* for sixteen people that includes merely one central roast, four large pots of soups and ragouts, and ten smaller dishes of entremets and other vegetable recipes.⁶⁵ La Chapelle’s table setting for a royal meal seating 60 guests includes only three large roasts spread out over the entire table.⁶⁶

⁶¹ L.S.R. from Pinkard, 126.

⁶² Bonnefons, *Le Jardinier franois*, 243-8.

⁶³ Franois Massailot, *Court and Country Cook: Giving new and plain direction how to order all manner of entertainments, ... Together with new instructions for confectioners: ... How to prepare several sorts of liquors*, trans. J.K. (London: W. Onley, 1702, original French publication 1698) Eighteenth Century Collections Online Print Editions, unmarked appendix 7 pages before page 1.

⁶⁴ Jean-Louis Flandrin, *Arranging the Meal: A History of Table Service in France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 72-77.

⁶⁵ Vincent La Chapelle, *Le Cuisinier Moderne* in Beatrice Fink (ed.), *Les Liaisons Savoureuses : réflexions et pratiques culinaires au XVIIIe siècle* (Sainte-Etienne: Université de Sainte-Etienne, 1995, original French publication: 1735), 90.

⁶⁶ La Chapelle in Fink, 36.



**Figure 2: Vincent La Chapelle, "Table royale à 60 couverts," *Le Cuisinier Moderne*, 1735.
From Fink, 36.**

This particular image is especially interesting because it shows the old fashioned style of table, with guests all sitting on one side facing toward a central point (likely where entertainers would stand), but also demonstrates that even royal meals followed the trend away from many large roasts and towards many smaller, more differentiated dishes.⁶⁷

This image, and indeed La Chapelle's cooking in general, is an excellent example of the coexistence of the courtly tradition with emerging Parisian standards of refinement and subtlety. La Chapelle considered himself a modern, Parisian chef and, as I will demonstrate, his dishes reflected the trend towards simpler, less acidic and spicy flavours and a more minimalist presentation. However, he was not opposed to linking his talents to the splendour of the royal court, evidently understanding the continuing cultural capital of having his name attached to the King's kitchen.

⁶⁷ La Chapelle in Fink, 36.

This movement away from large and impressive roast dishes did not mean lower quality food. With less attention focussed on the center-piece *rôtis*, the preparation of which was usually as simple as dressing the meat in butter and its own juices before putting it to the flames,⁶⁸ the other courses of the meal (the entrées, the entremets, and the concluding confectionary) took on a more important role in the meal. These dishes, often traditionally prepared with leftover or visually unimpressive meats to round out the meal, became important in their own right and required greater culinary skill to produce and greater delicacy of taste to appreciate. La Varenne's *Le Cuisinier François* serves as an example of the earlier treatment of side-dishes and ragouts. His chapter on "Meat-Day Pottages," for example, features almost entirely poultry- or field rodent-based stews. When he does include larger fowl in soups, it is of a select butcher's cut not intended for roasts or of pieces one would not want to roast—for example a single leg of beef, a knuckle of veal, or lamb offal. La Varenne kept the preparation of such extras simple, beginning by blanching the meat, boiling it in water or bouillon and dressing it with fresh herbs and a slice of bread.⁶⁹ Similarly, many of his other entrées—such as "Delicacies of Stag," "Lamb Offal in Ragout," "White Pudding" and "Saveloy"—utilized the leftover entrails from the roast course, which he would stuff with smaller animal meats, some milk and raw eggs, and form puddings or sausages.⁷⁰

While lesser cuts still played a role in cuisine throughout the eighteenth century, especially in *la cuisine bourgeoise* (as noted above, an adaptation of popular cuisine suited to the budgets of one servant households), the best chefs and restaurants would

⁶⁸ E.g. La Varenne, *The French Cook*, 184-186.

⁶⁹ La Varenne, *The French Cook*, 145-147.

⁷⁰ La Varenne, *The French Cook*, 159-160, 200-5.

highlight quality ingredients, including the more coveted cuts of butcher's meat, in their stews, ragouts and soups. In stark contrast to the sixteenth- and seventeenth century version of entrées, ragouts, and entremets, La Chapelle requires his readers to spend the better part of a day to produce a single dish of mutton pâté, and he touts both its delicacy and the impression that it will make on discriminating and cultured diners.⁷¹ Many of La Chapelle's dishes in fact require a significant amount of pre-made ingredients, particularly bouillons, that needed to be made even to begin preparing the final dish itself. He begins his *Le cuisinier moderne* with an extensive list of bouillons to enjoy on their own or, more likely, to use as bases for ragouts and potages and as basting liquid for roasts. This chapter includes 41 separate bouillon and restaurant recipes, some of which are meant to address specific physical ailments (e.g. "broth to purify the blood," "bitter broth for addressing stomach ailments and vomiting," etc.), some to highlight particular cuts of meat (e.g. "soup of chicken breast"), and others that offered a more specialized, refined taste (e.g. "bouillon of escargots and frogs"). Each one of these "simple" broths involves boiling large amounts of meats and/or vegetables, carefully sliced and seasoned, for several hours, in order to extract all possible flavour and nutrition from the ingredients.⁷² Susan Pinkard highlights one recipe, "*pigeons à la lune*," also found *Le cuisinier moderne* that highlights the care given to ragout dishes at this time. The making of this dish requires no less than seven separate bouillons and other basic sauces and coulis, as well as prime slices of veal, ham, and bacon, all baked together into a pastry and served modestly, not as a centrepiece, but as a component part of the whole meal.⁷³

⁷¹ La Chapelle in Fink, 76.

⁷² La Chapelle in Fink, 46-64.

⁷³ Pinkard, 150-1.

So what did this shift mean to the overall experience of dining? According to the chefs and other advocates of these culinary innovations, there was a natural progression in the art of cooking, a movement towards greater delicacy and subtlety of tastes, without excessive use of vinegars or spices.⁷⁴ Roche makes a similar claim, arguing that the energy and attention earlier focussed on spectacle was re-directed from external manifestations of wealth and power—for example, a large pie filled with live blackbirds—to more *qualitative* indicators. Roche argues that in times of relative plenty, hosts no longer had to prove to themselves and others that they could afford to throw food away, but rather they wished to demonstrate their civility through choosiness, by showing that they had the time and skill and good taste to serve the very best French cuisine had to offer.⁷⁵ This was often achieved through greater subtlety of flavour in which chefs used exacting techniques to draw out the natural flavours of the ingredients, rather than layering spices and zests to the palette, or by the perceived quality of social exchange that took place over the course of the meal. Of course, this demonstration of civility was not entirely the responsibility of the host, as the more intimate nature of dinner parties required guests to similarly adapt their behaviour and knowledge. It was no longer the sole duty of the host to put on the show.

The pressure that eighteenth century Parisians felt to put themselves on display for their hosts and fellow guests is evident throughout the secondary and primary literature on Enlightenment entertainment. Goodman, for example, dedicates an entire

⁷⁴ E.g. Bromoy and Bougeant in Marin, *Les Dons de Comus*, “Avertissement,” and “Lettre d’un Pâtissier Anglois,” in Stephen Mennel (ed.), *Lettre D’un Pâtissier Anglois: et Autres Contributions à une Polémique Gastronomique du XVIIIème Siecle* (Exeter: University of Exeter: 1981, original French publication: 1739), 1-24.

⁷⁵ Roche, 174 and 241.

chapter to complaints that *philosophes* (the intellectual elite of eighteenth century France) and other attendees directed towards the strict standards to which *salonnières* held their guests.⁷⁶ Even Mlle. Lespinasse, a former *salonnière* herself, complained in a private letter that the “delicious dinners in Paris” had lost their charm by becoming showcases for private conceit and nonsense, where “discussions of economic policies” and academic opinions impinged on any genuine conversation or real enjoyment.⁷⁷

Jean-François Marmontel is another example of an elite Parisian socialite who expressed distaste for the social acrobatics required by his hosts. When he arrived on the Parisian literary scene, under the protection of Voltaire, he felt as though he had been “borne away in the vortex of Paris,” in which it was the “fashion to invite and show the author of a new piece.”⁷⁸ He complains frequently in his personal memoirs of the stresses of being a good show-piece, of the necessity to perform for the host and other guests. Referring to the *salon* of Mme. de Tencin, Marmontel writes that

There was too much wit there for me; and indeed, I soon perceived that each guest arrived ready to play his part, and that the desire of exhibiting did not always leave conversation the liberty of following its facile and natural course. It was, who should most quickly seize the moment as it flew to place his epigram, his story, his anecdote, his maxim, or his light and pointed satire, and to make or find this opportunity the circuit they took was often unnatural.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Goodman, Chapter 6: “Masculine Self-Governance and the End of Salon Culture.”

⁷⁷ Julie de Lespinasse, *Lettres inédites de mademoiselle de Lespinasse à Condorcet, à d’Alembert, à Guibert, au Comte de Crillon* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1887), Google e-Book, 6 and 152.

⁷⁸ Jean-François Marmontel, *The Memoirs of Marmontel, Written by Himself: Containing His Literary and Political Life, and Anecdotes of the Principal Characters of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Hunt and Clark, 1827; original French publication in 1804), 125-6.

⁷⁹ Marmontel, 157. Original French: “il y avoit là trop d’esprit pour moi; et, en effet, je m’aperçus bientôt qu’on y arrivoit préparé à jouer son rôle, et que l’envie d’entrer en scène n’y laissoit pas toujours à la conversation la liberté de suivre son cours facile et naturel. C’étoit à qui saisiroit le plus vite, et comme à la volée, le moment de placer son mot, son conte, son anecdote, sa maxime ou son trait léger et piquant; et pour amener l’à-propos, on le tiroit quelquefois d’un peu loin.” in Jean-François Marmontel, *Mémoires de Marmontel (Tome 1), Mémoires d’un Père pour servir à l’Instruction de ses enfans* (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1891), Project Gutenberg Edition, Livre IV.

Marmontel quickly found that when he failed to rise to the conversational standards of his company, he was not invited back to that particular host or hostess's parties.

While such grievances could be interpreted simply as Marmontel lashing out against a company that made him feel intellectually inferior, he becomes more open and less personally wounded about the duties of a good guest as his career advances, and he accordingly grants readers more trustworthy testimony about the stressors and expectations. When he later lives with Mme. de Geoffrin, one of the most renowned *salonnières* of the time, he acknowledges that her friendship for him was based almost entirely on his "usefulness" during dinner parties. He notes that he "was not one of the first in her favour; yet she was pleased with me, for animating in my turn, and tolerably often too, our dinners and conversations, either by little stories, or by traits of pleasantry that I accommodated to her taste."⁸⁰ At such little suppers he was a valued guest and "played [his] part tolerably well,"⁸¹ seeking "all the means I might have of being amusing and agreeable. The new tales that I was then writing, and of which these ladies had the first offerings, formed, before or after supper, entertaining readings."⁸²

In certain cases the duties of a guest to please could, astonishingly enough, actually lead one into personal peril. At one point in his life Marmontel was goaded by his hosts and fellow-guests to recite a satire on the Duc d'Aumont which they had heard about but which had been largely suppressed from the public. Marmontel had edited the piece for the true author, and was aware of the dangers of sharing the contentious content

⁸⁰ Marmontel, 265.

⁸¹ Marmontel, 205.

⁸² Marmontel, 269.

with others, even in the seemingly safe space of a dinner party amongst friends and acquaintances. However, he also knew that it would be a huge offense to his host not to do so. Soon after this forced performance the satire was known throughout Paris and traced directly to Marmontel, who found himself imprisoned in the Bastille by a *lettre de caché* signed by the Duc.⁸³

Marmontel was not the sole individual who noticed this trend. For example, when Mme. de Roland was growing up in Paris, she and her mother attended a few fashionable receptions in which the guests were encouraged to perform short poems and prose scenes in turn, after which everyone else was obliged to compliment the wittiness and intelligence of the performer. The young Madame de Roland was disgusted and embarrassed by the spectacle of licentious women and effeminate men “gushing over bad verse and slight talents,” and she resolved from then on to avoid invitations to polite society, for fear she would have to contribute to the perfunctory performances and empty praise next time she was invited.⁸⁴ Although the young lady did not put herself into personal peril to meet her peers’ social expectations, she nevertheless felt and resented the pressure for personal performance at social gatherings.

Not all “performers” were as opposed to the pressures of being a good guest as Marmontel—Voltaire for example would regularly and happily perform his writing both as a guest and a host.⁸⁵ The ideal social gathering in his day had featured a mode of performance that differed greatly from that of the courts of the Bourbon kings, one that

⁸³ Marmontel, 280-3.

⁸⁴ Marie-Jeanne de Roland, *The Memoires of Madame de Roland*, trans. and ed. Evelyn Shuckburgh, (London: Barrie & Jenkins Ltd., 1989; original French publication: 1795), 195-6.

⁸⁵ E.g. Marmontel, 327.

required less visual spectacle in favour of greater intellectual and conversational exhibition. Marmontel describes a close acquaintance, Alexandre Le Riche de la Poupelinière, whose parties were renowned throughout Europe, who lived like a prince and regularly invited foreign dignitaries and royalty into his home. “He had in his pay,” Marmontel writes,

the best concert of music that was known at that time. The performers lived at his house, and rehearsed together in a morning, with marvellous accord, the symphonies they were to play in the evening... At his theatre, for he had one, they played comedies of his own writing only, and the performers were chosen from his own society. These comedies, though indifferent, were at least so well written, and showed so much taste, that it did not require any excessive complaisance to applaud them. Their success was the more infallible as the play was followed by a splendid supper, to which the most select spectators, the ambassadors from the different courts of Europe, the first nobility, and the most beautiful women in Paris were invited.⁸⁶

Yet despite the best efforts of La Poupelinière, despite his propriety and manners towards his guests, his spectacular dinner parties did not bring him the respect and power he desired. Although he heard only “congratulation and praise” from his guests in his presence, “away from his home, those who came to enjoy his luxury and expense did not fail to ridicule the life he led.”⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Marmontel, 164. Original French: “Il avoit à ses gages le meilleur concert de musique qui fût connu dans ce temps-là. Les joueurs d’instrument logeaient chez lui, et préparaient ensemble le matin, avec un accord merveilleux, les symphonies qu’ils devoient exécuter le soir... À son theater, car il en avoit un, on ne jouoit que des comedies de sa façon, et dont les acteurs étoient pris dans sa société. Ces comedies, quoique mediocre, étoient d’assez bon gout, et assez bien écrites pour qu’il ny eût pas une complaisance excessive à les applaudir. Le success en étoit d’autant plus assure qui le spectacle étoit suivi d’un splendide souper auquel l’élite des spectateurs, les ambassadeurs de l’Europe, la plus haute noblesse et les plus jolies femmes de Paris étoient invites.” in Jean-François Marmontel, *Mémoires de Marmontel (Tome 1), Mémoires d’un Père pour servir à l’Instruction de ses enfans* (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1891), Project Gutenberg Edition, Livre IV.

⁸⁷ Marmontel, 165.

The memoirs of Mme. de Stael provide another window into the social lives of the eighteenth century Parisian elite, albeit with a slightly less critical perspective. After Napoleon exiled her from France, she travelled around Europe and Russia and recorded the social customs and habits of foreign societies, comparing them to those she grew up with in *ancien régime* France. Her memoirs, *Ten Years Exile*, therefore serve as a valuable description and commentary on French manners. For Stael, the eighteenth century model of French sociability, of strenuous discourse and people-pleasing, created the best citizens in the civilized world. She criticizes the elite classes of Russia, who “express themselves with so much elegance and propriety, that one frequently deceives one’s self at the outset about the degree of wit and acquirements of those with whom you are conversing.”⁸⁸ She directly links this culture-wide mental deficiency to the style of hospitality offered by the great hosts and hostesses. She describes one of the rich noblemen of Russian society:

his house was open every day during his life, and whoever had once been presented might return when they chose; he never invited one to dinner or supper on a particular day; it was understood that once admitted, you were always welcome; he frequently knew not half the persons who dined at his table: but this luxurious hospitality pleased him like any other kind of magnificence. The same practice prevails in many other houses at Petersburg; it is natural to conclude from that, that what we call in France the pleasure of conversation cannot be there met with: the company is too numerous to allow a conversation of any interest even to be kept up in it.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Baronne Germaine de Staël-Holstein, *Ten Years’ Exile; or Memoirs of that Interesting Period of the Life of the Baronness de Staël-Holstein* (London: Treuttel and Würtz, Treuttel Jun. and Richter, 1821, original French publication: 1818), 375.

⁸⁹ de Stael, *Ten Years’ Exile*, 374. Original French: “Sa maison était ouverte tous les jours, pendant sa vie, et quiconque y avait été présente pourrait y revenir; il n’invitait jamais personne à dîner ou à souper pour tel jour: il était convenu qu’une fois admis l’on était toujours bien reçu; souvent il ne connaissait pas la moitié des personnes qui dinaient chez lui; mais ce luxe d’hospitalité lui plaisait comme tout autre genre de magnificence. Beaucoup de maisons, à Pétersbourg, ont à peu près la même coutume; il est aisé d’en conclure que ce que nous entendons, en France, par les plaisirs de la conversation, ne saurait s’y rencontrer: la société est beaucoup trop nombreuse pour qu’un entretien d’une certaine force puisse jamais s’y établir.” in Germaine de Stael-Holstein, *Mémoires de Mme de Stael (Dix années d’exile), ouvrage posthume publié en 1818* (Paris: Imp. Simon Raçon et Comp., 1861), 440.

Such fêtes would often require a troupe of servants to carry in massive platters of fruits, vegetables, and meats; and they would be accompanied by music and dancing from throughout the provinces of Russia and the Ukraine.⁹⁰ Despite the sumptuousness and generosity of such gatherings, the inability to try one's ideas and exchange information with fellow guests limited the usefulness of such intercourse: "no information is acquired in it, no faculties are developed in it." Whether Mme. de Stael's hypothesis is correct—that Parisians' characters were superior because they had been "entirely formed by the lively or serious conversation to which the intercourse between the nobility and men of letters gave birth"⁹¹—it is clear from her writing that the spell of spectacle and visual luxury had faded in France over the past few generations. People such as La Pouperlinière who subscribed to outdated models of hospitality and sociability had—at least in her view—no place in the future of French society.

Gastro-tourism and the Romanticism of the Table

So in this nouveau model of entertaining and socializing, where did cuisine fit in? Mme. de Stael obviously prized conversation as a civilizing and educational tool. However, one particular anecdote in her memoirs highlights the importance she places on conversation over food. Before leaving France, she spent some time with friends just outside Paris. She acknowledges the delicious food they partook of in their semi-rural setting; however, the real highlight of her meals was always the conversations. Apparently the intimate and intellectual discourse enabled by mealtimes was so

⁹⁰ de Stael, *Ten Years' Exile*, 389-393.

⁹¹ de Stael, *Ten Years' Exile*, 376.

engrossing that they decided to take food completely out of the equation, so that “after dinner, we had imagined the idea of sitting ourselves round a green table and writing letters to each other, instead of conversing. These varied and multiplied têtes-à-tête amused us so much, that we were impatient to get up from table, where we were talking in order to go and write one another.”⁹² It is important to note that although Mme. de Stael obviously prized conversation above gastronomic indulgence, conversation is still linked to the table in this anecdote. The discourse which continued in playful written form had begun, and might not have started at all without, the dinner table as a medium for discussion.

Marmontel is oddly silent on the actual quality of food at the endless stream of suppers he attended. We know from cookbooks and restaurant menus at the time that Paris supported a growing and talented culinary elite, and that high quality food was expected at any social gathering. Furthermore, this is out-of-character for a writer who is not opposed to taking up whole pages to describe a single meal, who writes eloquently and specifically about the food that had been served during holidays at his childhood home, the meals served at inns while he was travelling, or even the quality of food during his imprisonment in the Bastille—which was apparently very generous and not at all disagreeable.⁹³ Was Marmontel perhaps too caught up in the stresses of performance, figuring out which anecdote to share and how to respond to conversational duties, to appreciate the food on offer?

⁹² de Stael, *Ten Years Exile*, 168-9. Original French: “Après diner, nous avons imaginé de nous placer autour d’une table verte, et de nous écrire au lieu de causer ensemble. Ces tête-à-tête variés et multipliés nous amusaient tellement, que nous étions impatients de sortir de table, où nous nous parlions, pour venir nous écrire” in Germaine de Stael-Holstein, *Mémoires de Mme de Stael (Dix années d’exile), ouvrage posthume publié en 1818* (Paris: Imp. Simon Raçon et Comp., 1861), 310.

⁹³ Marmontel, 31, 95 and 285-7.

As in Marmontel, there is a similar paucity of culinary description in the published letters of Julie de Lespinasse, a prominent *salonnière* in eighteenth century Paris. Despite re-telling numerous accounts of social outings and private dinners with her correspondents, many of which she had planned and hosted herself, Mlle. De Lespinasse seldom even mentions the culinary offerings. Of the very few references to actual food in her correspondence, one incident in particular, in reference to an after-dinner coffee at Mme. de Geoffrin's, supports the theory that the quantity, or even the physical quality, of food at dinner parties had become less interesting in comparison to the conversation it could inspire. Apparently, one of the guests at the dinner, an abbé, was unhappy with the cream served with the coffee. When he pointed out the inferior quality of the cream, Mme. de Geoffrin proceeded to acknowledge the low quality and to explain to her guests her reasons for serving it.

Evidently one day the country maid who sold her milk and cream arrived at her home in tears with significantly less milk than usual. The maid told Mme. de Geoffrin that in the future, she would no longer be able to serve her, as her cow had died. Mme. de Geoffrin learned that the girl's mother had abused her and that her husband was confined to bed with sickness. If she could not raise money, her aged father would die of starvation. Moved by the girl's plight, her sorrowful beauty and her softness of expression, Madame offered to buy the girl two new cows, to make recompense for her two days of suffering. The girl was so grateful, "she clasped her hands with animation, her eyes, her face painted with so much pleasure that it pieced my soul." In the end, Mme. de Geoffrin felt so emotionally attached to the milk-maid, having learned of her lifelong sorrows and consoled her for the death of her cow, she "did not have the courage

to leave her,” or even to upset her, so she regularly accepted substandard cream from her as an act of emotional charity. At the end of the story, according to Mlle. Lespinasse, “there was a general acclamation: everyone praised the charity, the kindness of Madame Geoffrin,” and the inferior quality of her cream was completely forgotten.⁹⁴

On its own this story is a slightly curious incident, the attempt of an etiquette-conscious hostess to justify a minor hospitality faux-pas. However, combined with the written experiences of Martmontel, Lespinasse, and Mmes. Roland and de Stael, as well as Goodman’s and Spang’s commentary on elite Enlightenment culture, this story helps historians better understand the role of food in this culture. Mme. Geoffrin’s smooth exposition completely deflected any negative attention, and was successful precisely because it highlighted two qualities that individuals within the *grand monde* would have valued highly: her generosity of spirit, and her ability to tell a compelling story. Her guests’ appreciation of the cream she served, and her dinner party as a whole, was not based on outward display and spectacular feats of culinary engineering. Rather, Mme. Geoffrin attached a story to her food, offering her guests an imaginary spectacle of people and places that could capture the imagination and inspire conversation, the very same qualities required of great guests.

There is a similar tendency to attach foreign places and stories to food in many of the contemporary cookbooks. Earlier chefs such as La Varenne would occasionally link dishes with a particular country or region, for example, “Portuguese Eggs” or “Spanish Cardoons”⁹⁵. Other popular additions at the time also included —à la Princesse, —à la

⁹⁴ Julie de Lespinasse, *Lettres inédites*, 249-57.

⁹⁵ La Varenne, *The French Cook*, 217-9.

Reine, or —*Royale*.⁹⁶ The propensity for such titles actually gives credence to culinary associations with hierarchy and spectacle—by linking one’s cooking with a princess or royal court, the chef can elevate his status simply by association with the opulent tastes of royalty. For the most part, however, most of the dishes at this time were titled descriptively, rather than suggestively. Some particularly descriptive examples include La Varenne’s “Sausage of Partridge White-Meat,”⁹⁷ “Large Sausages,”⁹⁸ “Fried Mutton Tongue in Ragout with Fritters,”⁹⁹ “Deer-Liver Omelet,”¹⁰⁰ “Herb Pottage without Butter,”¹⁰¹ and “Pottage of Broken Asparagus Stalks.”¹⁰² These straightforwardly named dishes fit right into a culinary tradition that featured bold, visually striking table settings and centre-pieces, and a multitude of large imposing roasts.

The generation of chefs that presided over Enlightenment cooking moved away from such stark, straightforward recipe-titles and favoured more evocative, imaginative descriptions. *Le Cuisinier gascon*, an anonymously published addition to *la cuisine moderne*, offers myriad recipes *à la Genoise, à la Provençale, à l’Italienne, à l’Espagnole, à la Suisse, à l’Anglaise, à la Vénitienne*, and most exotic of all, *à la Turque*.¹⁰³ This propensity to name-drop different cities, regions, and countries could be

⁹⁶ For example, “Queen’s Pottage” and “Princess Pottage,” La Varenne, *The French Cook*, 139-140; “Biscuit Royal,” Bonnefons, *Le Jardinier françois*, 16; and “Potage à la Royale,” Pierre de Lune, *Le Cuisinère*, in Laundon, Gilles and Laurence (eds.), *L’Art de la Cuisine Française au XVIIe Siècle* (Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 1995), 257.

⁹⁷ La Varenne, *The French Cook*, 159.

⁹⁸ La Varenne, *The French Cook*, 160.

⁹⁹ La Varenne, *The French Cook*, 174.

¹⁰⁰ La Varenne, *The French Cook*, 203.

¹⁰¹ La Varenne, *The French Cook*, 249.

¹⁰² La Varenne, *The French Cook*, 254.

¹⁰³ *Le Cuisinier Gascon* (anonymous) in Beatrice Fink (ed.), *Les Liaisons Savoureuses: réflexions et pratiques culinaires au XVIIIe siècle* (Sainte-Etienne: Université de Sainte-Etienne, 1995; original French publication: 1740), 98-167.

interpreted as denoting the author's individual style, or as representing increased development and differentiation of national cuisines and a commensurate desire for French chefs to borrow from other cultures. However, less specifically geographical allusions in this work—for example, “Sauce of the poor man,” “Chicken of the mound,” and “Sauce of the czarina,” as well as similar allusions in the work of Menon, demonstrate a definite shift towards a narrative style in cooking. When a host serves their guests *lapins à la bourgeoise* or “bourgeois-style rabbit,”¹⁰⁴ they are not merely serving a rabbit-based stew, but rather taking pride in one's bourgeois station and sharing that pride with those who share their table, celebrating in their lifestyle and their own cuisine. Similarly, the act of eating “Cod Provençale”¹⁰⁵ or “Red herring of the holy Saint Menehould” could inspire a vicarious journey to a region or lifestyle in France that an individual might never get the chance to visit themselves. These recipes represent a culinary venture into the emerging culture of cosmopolitanism, intellectualism, and romanticism.

Rebecca Spang also explores how the dining experience in late eighteenth century Paris became increasingly cosmopolitan and emotionally-evocative, through the institution of the restaurant. She describes how food became a venue through which the intellectual and merchant elite in Paris could explore and become “involved in general social, cultural, and political life.”¹⁰⁶ One of the earliest successful restaurants offered

¹⁰⁴ Menon, *La Cuisinière Bourgeoise: Suivie de L'office, a L'usage De Tous Ceux Que se Mêlent De La Dépense Des Maisons: Contenant La Manière De Disséquer, Connoître Et Servir Toutes Sortes De Viandes* (Bruxelles: Chez François Foppens, Imprimeur-Libraire, 1764; published in facsimile by Nabu Public Domain Reprints, La Vergne TN, USA, October 2010, original French publication: 1746), 176.

¹⁰⁵ Menon, 188.

¹⁰⁶ Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 2000), 15.

patrons a selection of foods that were considered healthy and refined at the time, such as “Breton porridge, orange-flower-flavored rice creams, semolina, fresh eggs... fruit in season, preserves from the most famous manufacturers, fresh butter and cream cheeses.”¹⁰⁷ According to Spang, however, the most appealing aspect of this particular establishment, that of *restauranteur* Jean François Vacossin, was that the food was “more idyllic than therapeutic: foods of the countryside picnic, they evoked the lush green plants from which the berries had been plucked; the contented hen from whom the egg had been taken.”¹⁰⁸ Visitors could partake of a lifestyle beyond their own, most likely one beyond any geographic reality, simply by ordering cheese from Brie or broth prepared according to the “Italian style.”

One of Spang’s most discerning connections in the book is to link the early Parisian menu—the *carte*—to a specifically geographical map, or *carte*, only in the case of restaurants, the terrain to which patrons gained access was more imaginative than physical.¹⁰⁹ As restaurants became more popular and developed their own cosmopolitan culture, the most popular establishments served cheeses and wines from throughout France and the rest of Europe, offered seafood and oysters from faraway coasts, and self-consciously served dishes entitled “Spanish-style,” “German style,” and “Provençal style.”¹¹⁰ Such savvy *restauranteurs* appealed to Parisians’ desire to explore and engage in different cultures, within the safety of their own city, to imagine other ways of life and mentally transport themselves beyond their geographical and even temporal limitations.

¹⁰⁷ Vacossin from Spang, 53.

¹⁰⁸ Spang, 53-4.

¹⁰⁹ Spang, 167-9, 192-3.

¹¹⁰ Spang, 189-90.

“The cosmopolitan menu,” Spang writes, “made it possible to visualize the world beyond the restaurant, to accept fondue, cod provençal, and ‘plumpuding’ [sic] as parts of the world one properly inhabited.”¹¹¹

Spang goes on to argue that the institution of restaurant itself began to take on some of the mystique and character of the food it served and of the lifestyles to which it catered. She shows that “restaurants figured prominently in novels; they often provided the setting for popular plays; they were the premise for guidebooks and gastronomic manuals that instructed the unwary and the fearful on proper restaurant conduct.”¹¹²

Restaurants had become a subject of entertainment in their own right, so much so that in many of the descriptions and scenes set in restaurants of the day, novelists and

playwrights often “neglected to mention any food whatsoever, as if a restaurant’s nutritive, restorative, and caloric functions were among its least significant attributes.”¹¹³

This gap in restaurant-inspired literature, strikingly similar to the gap in the writings of Marmontel, Mme. Roland, Mlle. Lespinasse, points to a cultural fascination with culinary tourism. The display and quality of the food itself, while important, gets less attention because the writers and readers are much more interested in the experience of the meal.

The banquets and elite dinner-parties of a generation earlier allowed hosts to impress guests with spectacular amounts of food and eye-catching decoration, the shared meal offering the opportunity to demonstrate and solidify power-relations. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the distinction between host and guest had begun to blur; guests could have almost as many obligations as the host and, when restaurants came to

¹¹¹ Spang, 190.

¹¹² Spang, 177.

¹¹³ Spang, 177.

prominence, the host disappeared almost entirely under the guise of the institution.¹¹⁴

Furthermore, the culinary elite were more concerned about consuming interesting anecdotes and the emotional experience of the meal, than about the bodily, sensual experience. This connection of recipes, dishes, and the restaurants themselves with stories, famous people, and faraway places demonstrates that people were increasingly concerned about engaging in sociability and worldliness, about learning a new anecdote to increase their cultural capital and gain them entry into new circles and the approval of new acquaintances.

Eating, Incorporation and Identity

The revolution in spectacle that took place over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France runs concomitantly with a widely recognized (by historians) shift in social structure and individual identity. Paul Rozin's 2005 article "The Meaning of Food in Our Lives: A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Eating and Well-Being," represents the cumulative research and observations of decades of scholarship, both his own and that of other social scientists. Rozin's article explores several cultures and dietary theories, and comes to the conclusion that incorporation, the act of ingesting and digesting food, has a powerful emotional and mental affect on humans. Based on thousands of years of foraging, he argues, humans are genetically inclined to consider very carefully any food that we choose to incorporate into our bodies through

¹¹⁴ See Spang, 59-62, 102, 105, 115. Spang explores how the dynamic of the meal changed when dining in a restaurant and the responsibility of "hosting" disappeared. One of the chief concerns was who was responsible for footing the bill, however, who had responsibility over the flow of conversation also became of issue. Of particular interest, she describes an incident in Vacossin's restaurant in which Rousseau dined with some acquaintances and someone brought up his illegitimate children, which he believed to be the height of impropriety and caused largely by the candidness caused by a lack of host.

ingestion.¹¹⁵ Humans have therefore developed a special, intimate relationship with food.

As Rozin wrote in an earlier paper:

eating is an act laden with affect. It involves an extremely intimate exchange between the environment and the self, two entities that are ordinarily quite separate (except in the act of breathing, as well as eating). The insulated, safe, self, protected by skin from the rest of the world, experiences a material breach of this boundary a few times every day in the act of eating. The world enters the self.¹¹⁶

Rozin also argues that human beings' unique physiology further complicates this intimate relationship. The mouth, he argues, originally evolved as an eating and breathing organ,

but, with the advent of linguistic abilities, the mouth assumes a new function: as the output organ for speech. The teeth and tongue, evolved under selection pressures having to do with optimal processing of food, become essential players in the articulation of speech: teeth and tongue were 'preadapted for language.'¹¹⁷

Such an intersection of food with communication, with how we present ourselves to the rest of the world, combined with the intimacy and risk of every food incorporation experience, make eating and dining an essential point of individual identity.

There is evidence in Enlightenment philosophic and medical writings that intellectuals recognized the importance of dietary choice as a means of shaping and communicating one's identity. For example, in his *Treatise on the Sensations* (1755), Condillac shows how an individual's capacity to experience either joy or suffering are entirely limited to his sensations, without which there is no meaningful understanding of

¹¹⁵ Paul Rozin, "The Meaning of Food in Our Lives: A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Eating and Well-Being," *Journal of Nutrition Education & Behaviour*, Supplement 2, Vol. 37 (Nov. 2005), S107-S108.

¹¹⁶ Paul Rozin, "Food is Fundamental, Fun, Frightening, and Far-reaching," *Social Research*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (Spring 1999), 13-14.

¹¹⁷ Rozin, "Food is Fundamental,," 21-22.

the outside world, and nothing against which to define oneself.¹¹⁸ For Condillac, taste was the most powerful of all the sensations, because the joy or suffering connected to the experience of taste is made more immediate and fundamental based on the intrinsic biological need.¹¹⁹ On a more medical note, the well-known and widely recognized physician Hecquet argued that there was an intimate connection between what an individual puts in his mouth and his disposition. What one ate affected how well one's internal plumbing functioned, and that functioning determined one's mood and ultimately, over time, one's personality.¹²⁰ Through such writings, eighteenth century Parisians became conscious of the physical and emotional implications of their food choices.

Rozin's universal human inclination to place immense meaning on the foods one incorporates is manifested at this time not only in *what* one eats, but also in *how* one eats, and in the effect that the presentation and environment of one's food can have on an individual's identity. The importance placed on the experience of dining as a character-defining act is evident in the manner in which food was discussed in personal writings and published literature, from Saint-Simon to Marmontel and Spang. The decorations at a royal banquet or one's performance at a dinner-party might not affect one's physiology, but it had a profound impact on one's intimate relationships, one's public reputation and one's perception of self-worth. This is what attracted novelists and playwrights to the

¹¹⁸ Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Treatise on the Sensations*, trans. Geraldine Carr (Los Angeles: University of Southern California School of Philosophy, 1930, original French publication: 1755), 4.

¹¹⁹ Condillac, 55.

¹²⁰ Philippe Hecquet, *Traité des dispenses du Carême: dans lequel on découvre la fausseté des pretexts qu'on apporte pour les obtenir, en faisant voir par la mécanique du corps, les rapports naturels des alimens maigres, avec la nature de l'homme: et par l'histoire, par l'analyse et par l'observation, leur convenance avec la santé* (Paris: Fourneir, 1709), Google e-Book, 15-16, 169.

dinner-party and the restaurant as ideal settings. Identities were made and relationships formed at the table, as people set off on a collective culinary journey.

Over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the social order and traditional power structures shifted, as Parisian intellectuals and *salon*-based tastemakers rose in cultural capital. As this happened, the onus of performance and self-definition fell increasingly on an individual's conversational abilities rather than on the ability of the monarch or aristocrat to host a fantastic ball, banquet or feast; food was at the centre of this revolution. Despite these changes, spectacle was no less important and the dining experience was no less political or scripted. However, shared mealtimes took on a more intimate, emotional tone that had less of a place in traditional court dining. What one ate and how one ate it defined a person. In the courts of Louis the XIV and XV, identities were based on hierarchical systems that were strictly enforced during mealtimes. In *salons* and the hidden booths at restaurants, identities were based on conversation, on demonstrations of intelligence, worldliness and sensibility, all of which were nevertheless still connected to the food served, if only anecdotally.

Chapter 2 – The Importance of Being Purer: Delicacy, Deism and Diet

“Will he be an ancient or a modern? For they must be one or the other.” (Lettre d’un Pâtissiere Anglois, 1739)¹²¹

In my first chapter I discussed cuisine as a social practice in seventeenth and eighteenth century France, specifically how specific rules of etiquette and social discourse changed over the course of the Enlightenment. These changes in dining behaviour demonstrate the evolving role that food played in the social life of courtiers and the Parisian elite, as well as how these elite diners perceived their shared meals. As I indicated, there was a strong tradition within French culture at this time to link social display—whether visual, intellectual or emotional—within the formation and communication of one’s character and one’s proper role in society. As French social ideals evolved, so too did culinary tastes and fashions, so that the increasingly conversational, learned, and sociable culture of elite Parisians embraced a subtle and unctuous cuisine that allowed guests to focus their attention on contributing to the socially-defining dinner conversation. This link between elite eating practices and the formation of character, both private and public, is recognized both by philosophers and gourmands of the time, as well as by select later culinary and social historians. However, the dynamics and processes of incorporation, as defined by anthropologist Paul Rozin, are among the most powerful natural impulses for humans, and go much deeper than the

¹²¹ Roland Puchot, “Lettre d’un Pâtissier Anglois au Nouveau Cuisinier François,” in Stephen Mennel (ed.) *Lettre d’un Pâtissier Anglois, et autres contributions à une polémique gastronomique du XVIIIème siècle* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1981, original French publication: 1739), 19. Original French: “Sera-ce un ancien, ou un moderne? Car il faut être l’un ou l’autre.”

mere external rituals of eating—each meal involves a potentially dangerous or pleasurable experience to humans (as well as other omnivores), and represents the incorporation of a foreign substance into our very being. As my previous chapter hinted, this is not something to which the Enlightenment illuminati were insensible. In fact, although “incorporation” as an anthropological or psychological theory is a product of the twentieth century, the intellectual and social developments of the Enlightenment provided an excellent milieu for discussing the function of food for humans, and many of the great minds of the time contributed to an ongoing debate about the physical, mental, and emotional effects of diet on humans. This chapter, therefore, complements my earlier discussion of the connections between culinary innovation and character formation. In what follows, I explore the profound effects culinary choice can have in shaping not only one’s character and one’s body, but one’s soul as well.

Purity Contested

The Enlightenment is recognized by historians as opening up to much wider circles debates on economics, society, religion, and various other topics formerly reserved for rulers and experts;¹²² diet and cuisine were no exception to this trend. From Jesuit priests, intellectual socialites and obscure scientists to some of the most renowned and well-read *philosophes* of the era, it seemed as if everyone wished to help determine which direction culinary culture would take. The legacy left by seventeenth and eighteenth century chefs such as Massailot, La Varenne, and Bonnefons was one of

¹²² E.g. Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 16-20.

innovation. Each of these chefs sought to redefine French cuisine against earlier, pan-European Medieval/Renaissance cookery. Some of the innovations they made in the national cuisine have had enduring influence in French cuisine to this day—for example, Bonnefons, who was both a skilled chef and an acclaimed gardener, believed that the roots of great cuisine were in the raw materials; he stressed the importance of using fresh, high quality ingredients.¹²³ Similarly, La Varenne, another of the seventeenth century chefs, organized his cookbooks seasonally,¹²⁴ so that readers could adapt their cooking to suit the flavours of their natural environment as it progressed through its yearly cycles. Their cooking, self-described as *la nouvelle cuisine*, reflected this stress. Overall, culinary taste moved away from the compounded, highly astringent flavours of Renaissance cookery¹²⁵ to instead draw diners' attention to the meat and vegetables themselves, to highlight the natural flavours of the ingredients with creamy flour and butter-based sauces.¹²⁶ However, as time passed, these ground-breaking innovators became outdated themselves, and the next generation of gourmets criticized these master-chefs for not completely ridding their cuisine of the occasional holdover from the earlier tradition—an example was La Varenne's "Roast Mutton Tongues," which was flavoured with generous amounts of nutmeg, pepper, lemon juice and verjuice, which made it both

¹²³ Nicolas de Bonnefons, *Le Jardinier françois* (Brussels: Jean Leonard Librairie-Imprimeur, 1712; original French publication: 1651), 2, 65.

¹²⁴ François Pierre, Sieur de la Varenne (La Varenne), *La Varenne's Cookery – The French Cook; The French Pastry Chef; The French Confectioner*, ed. Terence Scully (Blackawton, Totnes: Prospect Books, 2006; *The French Cook* or *Le cuisinier François*, originally published in 1751, *The French Pastry Chef* or *Le pastissier françois*, originally published in 1753, and *The French Confectioner* or *Le confiturier françois*, originally published in 1760).

¹²⁵ By "multifaceted," I mean dishes that compounded sweet influences (such as fruit, cinnamon, and nutmeg) with savory and astringent flavours (such as meat and vinegar or sour grape juice). Such combinations were extremely common in Renaissance European cooking. Modern day analogues to such dishes include Moroccan tagine or Indian curries, both of which share common culinary influences with Medieval/Renaissance Europe. See Susan Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2009), 13-28.

¹²⁶E.g. Pinkard, 64.

highly spiced and very astringent according to evolving eighteenth century standards. These master-chefs were also criticised for the rich and “clogging” sauces they favoured, which were accused of smothering, rather than highlighting, natural flavours, and thus were seen as only somewhat of an improvement over elaborate Baroque sauces and potages.¹²⁷ Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 1, their culinary style, in both physiological taste and presentation, favoured out-dated court fashions of visual effect and mass quantity over subtlety and simplicity of the sensual experience, and the growing need for culinary innovation pushed the next generation of culinary luminaries to further refine and define French cuisine.

As the eighteenth century progressed, the innovations of Bonnefons (publications range from 1650 to 1670), Massailot (publications range from 1690 to 1705) and their contemporaries opened the way for greater changes and debates within the French culinary world. As a result, a fresh set of cookbooks were published by a new generation of culinary trendsetters, such as La Chapelle (1730s), Menon (1740s) and Marin (1740s), each author claiming to be the heir to the previous generation’s genius and the architect of the ideal French cuisine. These professional voices were joined by a growing multitude of culinary-inclined intellectuals, doctors, scientists, and moralists, all of whom sought to continue the innovation of earlier decades and determine the ideal culinary practice.

One of the major concerns for this growing multitude of professional and amateur foodies was purity. Just as Massailot, et al. had sought to simplify flavours and accentuate the natural goodness of foods, eighteenth century followers of their tradition

¹²⁷ Pinkard, 101.

sought to continue their work, further freeing food from what was perceived as unnecessary spiciness, acidity, and the complicated, allegedly confusing flavours of the past, towards tastes that soothed the mind, body, and soul. However, with so many and such varying groups contributing to the dialogue at this time, it became much harder for everyone to agree on the correct articulation of *la nouvelle cuisine*. Although most thinkers agreed that “purity” and “simplicity” were characteristics of the ideal diet, there were several interpretations of exactly what “purity” and “simplicity” meant, and what exactly humankind stood to benefit from such methods. One of the two main offshoots of culinary innovation came from a new generation of master-chefs, such as La Chapelle, Menon and Marin, all of whom embraced the development and refinement of techniques and increasingly scientific methods for cooking to produce the most sophisticated and “pure” finished product; these chefs came to call their particular brand of cooking *la cuisine moderne*. In direct opposition to their vision of urban sophistication was the Rousseau-inspired ideal of rural simplicity, which completely eschewed the intricate preparations of *la cuisine moderne* for “wholesome,” “honest” food that required minimal preparation.

For an issue that was so hotly and widely debated at the time, the question of “purity” in the development of French cuisine has received a disproportionately small amount of coverage in the historiography. In much of the existing work on French cuisine the purity question has been associated with the famous long-running controversy debate between the Moderns and the Ancients, which in the late Enlightenment saw one side embracing scientific advancement for the betterment of the human experience, including food (e.g. Marin, Menon), and the other yearning for a past untouched by the

corruption of modern learning and politics (e.g. Rousseau).¹²⁸ Pinkard, for example, acknowledges this broader debate and briefly summarizes the conflicting ideologies, pitting the science and medicine-influenced Moderns against the nostalgic, sentimentalist, Rousseau-inspired Ancients –or more accurately, Rousseau-inspired primitivists.¹²⁹ Despite this insight, Pinkard and other historians who share her interpretation fail to engage with the debate beyond noting that it did exist; they do not attempt to reconcile the apparently polemical camps in any fundamental way. Spang in particular neatly addresses the problem by demonstrating that the two sides were mutually co-opted into the new institution of the restaurant, old divisions forgotten in the face of new customs and a new generation of chefs and gourmets.¹³⁰ This conclusion, however, does not explain why the issue was so important to Enlightenment gourmets, nor why it was, according to Spang, so polemical.

Although I agree that these divisions seemed very real to Enlightenment proponents of the two sides, I argue that their irreconcilability has been taken for granted and exaggerated by historians. There was undoubtedly a heated debate at the time, each side interpreting its desire for purity radically differently. However, despite these surface differences, I contend that the quest for purity in food was actually much more unified than even contemporaries of the debate may have realized. By exploring the scientific, moral, and philosophic literature of the time, I endeavour to prove that despite some

¹²⁸ Versions of this debate occur throughout history, occurring in Ancient Rome, Medieval Europe, Renaissance Europe, early modern France, Restoration England, and Enlightenment France. Although conflated with the longstanding debate of Ancients vs. Moderns, Rousseau's philosophy was actually more particularly a case for returning to a primitivist society such as might have existed even before the "Ancients." In contrast, "Ancients" in France at this time sought to restore the customs and legal systems of Ancient Rome and Greece.

¹²⁹ Pinkard, 156-65.

¹³⁰ Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 2000), 52-63.

seemingly irreconcilable ideological differences, both camps were informed by the unique cultural and intellectual environment of the time, and specifically by a development within the natural sciences towards emphasizing sensibility and emotion.

La Cuisine Moderne: Culinary Science

Picking up where Massailot, La Varenne, and Bonnefons left off, the professional chefs of eighteenth century France sought to further develop French cuisine. These chefs catered to a social milieu that was much more concerned with seeking subtle, restrained flavours meant to educate and refine their palates. In order to meet the demands of this generation, culinary thinkers utilized developments in science and medicine to create the most pure and nutritious combination of ingredients and flavours. Inspired by the work of scientists, proponents of *la cuisine moderne* set out to discover the purest essences of ingredients and combine them to create a perfect medley of flavours and nutrients. This style of cuisine boasted simple flavours, freed from all unnecessary starches and obstructions, but required highly complex and time-consuming methods of preparation. For example, the well-known proponent of *la cuisine moderne* Vincent La Chapelle includes a recipe for a *Restaurant* (a simple, soothing broth soup) in his cookbook *Le cuisinier moderne* that calls for a leg of mutton, a piece of veal, a partridge, borage, chervil, burnet, cloves, salt, and approximately two hundred sparrows, as well as additional herbs and seasoning. The process of extracting the *Restaurant* took upwards of forty hours of boiling, straining, reducing, and cooling and the finished product was

still only considered a simple restorative beverage or a base for other mixtures and recipes.¹³¹

Although there were several eighteenth century chefs who self-consciously described their cuisine as *la cuisine moderne* or as a continuation of *la nouvelle cuisine*,¹³² the philosophy of *la cuisine moderne* is best articulated in the introduction of Marin's *Les Dons de Comus* (1739). According to Susan Pinkard, this introduction or "Avertissement" is widely recognized to be not the work of Marin himself, but rather that of Jesuit priests Pierre Bromoy and Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant, who brought their historical knowledge and humanist educational outlook to the forum of culinary debate.¹³³ They begin their manifesto by broadly describing the diets of the frugal Ancient Greeks and Spartans. They go on to describe more gastronomically inclined Romans such as the famous gourmand Lucullus whose opulence and taste, they claim, continued to influence and inspire the modern palate. The "Avertissement" then argues that the newest innovations in French cuisine, namely "*la cuisine ancienne*" of Bonnefons and Massailot, may have led to delicious dishes that pleased the taste-buds, but that such dishes have negatively affected the health of those who enjoy good food. The "Avertissement" goes on to recommend *Les Dons de Comus* as not merely a cookbook, but rather an attempt to reconcile the tastes of sensual eaters and the medical advice of doctors. Bromoy and Bougeant invoke a famous medical text of the time, most

¹³¹ Vincent La Chapelle, *Le Cuisinier Moderne* in Beatrice Fink (ed.), *Les Liaisons Savoureuses : réflexions et pratiques culinaires au XVIIIe siècle* (Sainte-Etienne: Université de Sainte-Etienne, 1995, original French publication: 1735), 49.

¹³² See La Chapelle; and Menon, *La Cuisinière Bourgeoise: Suivie de L'office, a L'usage De Tous Ceux Que se Mêlent De La Dépense Des Maisons: Contenant La Manière De Disséquer, Connoître Et Servir Toutes Sortes De Viandes* (Bruxelles: Chez François Foppens, Imprimeur-Libraire, 1764, published in facsimile by Nabu Public Domain Reprints, La Vergne TN, USA, October 2010, original French publication: 1746).

¹³³ Pinkard, 158-9.

likely the “Traité de la Digestion” by Philippe Hecquet, which claims that “most diseases come from the vices of digestion.”¹³⁴ They therefore redefine cuisine so that a chef’s skill is no longer solely determined by the richness or palatability of their creations, but must also be able to aid digestion (and hence health) by preparing and cooking foods to ease the burden placed on the stomach and other digestive organs. Under this definition, good cooking is “une espèce de Chymie,” and

the modern science of cuisine consists of decomposing, of digesting and uncovering the quintessence [the purest, most concentrated essence] of meat juices, drawing from them nourishment and light, to mix and entangle them together so that nothing overpowers the dish and so all is sensed; finally, as the Painter mixes colours, the chef creates one pure flavour than can only be fine and piquant, and if I dare say, a harmony of flavours gathered together.¹³⁵

Only once all impurities and unnecessary matter was removed could food meet these exacting new standards.

Passionate as the message in the “Avertissement” is, a manifesto’s effectiveness can really only be determined by the size and reactions of its readership. Responses to Marin’s (or Bromoy and Bougeant’s) philosophy were mixed, ranging from disgust and mockery to passionate agreement and seemingly unthinking adoption. One of the most polemical responses to the “Avertissement” was the anonymously penned “Lettre d’un

¹³⁴ Bromoy and Bougeant, “Avertissement de *Les Dons de Comus*,” in Stephen Mennel (ed.) *Lettre d’un Pâtissier Anglois, et autres contributions à une polémique gastronomique du XVIIIème siècle* (Exeter : University of Exeter, 1981, original French publication: 1739), 7. Original French: “la plupart des maladies proviennent des vices de la digestion.” This connection to Hecquet’s research is based on the research of Susan Pinkard; Hecquet’s writings focus on the effect of digestion on the functioning of the entire body. See Pinkard, 162 and 166.

¹³⁵ Bromoy and Bougeant, “Avertissement de *Les Dons de Comus*,” 6. Original French: “la science de Cuisinier consiste aujourd’hui à décomposer, à faire digerer et à quintessencier des viandes, à tirer des sucus nourrissans et legers, à les mêler et les confondre ensemble, de façon que rien ne domine et que toute se fasse sentir; enfin à leur donner cette union que les Peintres donnent aux couleurs, et à les rendre si homogenes, que de leurs différentes saveurs il ne resulte qu’un goût fin et piquant, et si je l’ose dire, une harmonie de tous les goûts réunis ensemble.”

Pâtissier Anglois au Nouveau Cuisinier François.” (1739)¹³⁶ In this letter, the character of the Pâtissier complains that *la nouvelle cuisine* in France fails to live up to the ridiculous promises in *Les Dons de Comus*, and rather than purifying the body of impurities and rejuvenating the spirit, the typical ragout à *la nouvelle cuisine* was “a geometrically flat compound, made of nothing but the bare essence, completely and precisely freed from any earthiness.”¹³⁷ Such fare was utterly devoid of flavour and similarly sucked the life out of all its proponents. “The great art of *la nouvelle cuisine*,” the Pâtissier argues, “is to make fish taste like meat, and meat taste like fish, and to leave no taste whatsoever in vegetables,” ultimately making all food uninteresting and utterly indistinguishable.¹³⁸ As members of the grand monde gather to dine on *la cuisine moderne*, true sociability is lost as individuals forsake genuine heart-felt friendship for mere civility and compliments and give up rich meaningful conversation for mindless jabber about the metaphysical components of each dish and the favoured styles of hair and dress.¹³⁹ As a result, the monotony and uniformity of the cuisine—which consists of little more than various sauces and soups composed of bouillon, lemon, and oil adorned with different names—is reflected in the company, whose recycled conversation and personalities gives each social gathering an insipidity that matched the fare.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ According to Susan Pinkard, the letter was most likely penned by Roland Puchot, count des Alleurs. See Pinkard, 162.

¹³⁷ Puchot, “Lettre d’un Pâtissier Anglois” (in Mennell, original French publication: 1739), 13. Original French: “quel ragoût pour les personnes délicatement voluptueuses, qu’un plat géométriquement chimique, où il n’entre que des quintessences raisonnées, & dégagées, avec précision, de toute terrestréité.”

¹³⁸ Puchot, 16. Original French: “Le grand art de la nouvelle Cuisine, c’est de donner au poisson le goût de la viande, et à la viande le goût du poisson, et de ne laisser aux légumes absolument aucun goût.”

¹³⁹ Puchot, 17.

¹⁴⁰ Puchot, 18.

The heated challenge presented to modern French cuisine by the *Lettre d'un Pâtissier Anglois* was met by an equally passionate rejoinder in a pamphlet entitled *Apologie des Modernes ou Réponse du Cuisinier François Auteur des Dons de Comus, à une Pâtissier Anglois* (1740). Despite the title, this work was written not by Marin, but by yet another anonymous essayist, since identified as the editor-in-chief of the weekly paper *Gazette de France*, Ann-Gabriel Meusnier.¹⁴¹ In this pamphlet Meusnier makes a claim for the benefits of modernity, arguing that advances in science, medicine and agriculture have allowed the French to re-examine their lifestyles and diets with more accurate and comprehensive information.¹⁴² In addition to such politically-charged declarations, there is evidence that many Parisians were unquestioningly loyal to *la cuisine moderne*, and appreciated the complement it offered to their urban way of life. For example, Louis-Sebastien Mercier, the well-known writer and social commentator, noted their preference for *la cuisine moderne* in his *Tableau de Paris*, which describes the manners and habits of his fellow Parisians.

In some ways, Mercier seems to agree with the writer of the *Lettre d'un Pâtissier Anglois*, in that he thinks modern Parisians place too much emphasis on physical delicacy; it is difficult to ignore the implied critique when he writes that “to be ill in Paris is an avocation. Women choose it by preference, as being the most interesting.”¹⁴³ He certainly does not seem particularly enamoured of the hordes of “Parisian women [who] are thin, and [whom] at thirty years of age possess no bosom; they despair if they become

¹⁴¹ Pinkard, 164.

¹⁴² Ann-Gabriel Meusnier, “Apologie des Modernes,” in Stephen Mennel (ed.) *Lettre d'un Pâtissier Anglois, et autres contributions à une polémique gastronomique du XVIIIème siècle* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1981, original French publication: 1741), 25-42.

¹⁴³ Mercier, 30.

fat and drink vinegar to preserve their figures.”¹⁴⁴ Yet, despite these reservations, and Mercier’s claims that the true soul of French cuisine lay in individual hands-on experimentation and practice, rather than the written word,¹⁴⁵ it is evident that he had read and agreed with the “Avertissement.” He all but quotes it in his discussion of good cuisine, even going so far as to plagiarize Bromoy and Bougeant’s examples of Spartan black broth and the greediness of the Roman Lucullus.¹⁴⁶

Mercier identifies the popular trend in Paris to highlight one’s physical and spiritual delicacy. His passage on cuisine also closely accords with the views of the “Avertissement” on the special capacity of cuisine to shape one’s manners and personality, as well as to engender delicacy and refinement amongst all who partake.¹⁴⁷ He writes that the chefs of his day have worked, combining aesthetic genius and science, to develop the best possible cuisine for this purpose: “A cook is a chemist who works metamorphoses, he changes and corrects nature, softens what is too piquant, and lends a flavour to the insipid.”¹⁴⁸

When properly applied, such methods ease the rigour of digestion, and an individual can garner pure nourishment from their food, which will contribute to a healthy body and consequently a healthy, enlightened spirit.

¹⁴⁴ Mercier, 30.

¹⁴⁵ Mercier, 181.

¹⁴⁶ Mercier, 182.

¹⁴⁷ Mercier, 182.

¹⁴⁸ Mercier, 183.

Newtonian Cuisine and Deistic Dining

La cuisine moderne was by no means the first culinary camp to closely relate food and diet to medicine and health. According to Susan Pinkard, Europeans had been choosing their daily nourishment based on popular understanding of medicine since the time of Hippocrates in Ancient Greece.¹⁴⁹ However, science and knowledge of the human body had changed dramatically in Europe since the time of Hippocrates, and European intellectuals gradually discarded theories of humours and bodily balance in favour of a mechanistic view of the body and human health. It is this view that Bromoy and Bougeant co-opted to promote and defend what they considered to be the ultimate diet, the culmination of years of culinary refinement and medical study. In order to fully understand why they so firmly considered this diet the diet of the future, we need to explore more deeply the origins of this mechanist, materialist world-view, which at the time was considered synonymous with work of Sir Isaac Newton.

Newton was born in Britain over a hundred and fifty years before *Les Dons de Comus* was published, and for much of that time had been relatively unknown and unappreciated in neighbouring France. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, the *philosophes* had begun to explore and disseminate what they considered the Newtonian system. There is no one direct path through which Newton's philosophy entered French thought; the *philosophes* themselves could never quite agree on who first "discovered" Newton's work; D'Alembert, for example, argued that it was the doing of Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis while Condorcet credited Voltaire.¹⁵⁰ However, by the time

¹⁴⁹ Pinkard, 6-13.

¹⁵⁰ J. B. Shank, *The Newton Wars and the Beginning of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 17.

Emilie du Châtelet published the first French translation and commentary on Newton's *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (or the *Principia*), in 1756, both the *Principia* and *Optiks* had become part of the unofficial Enlightenment canon, and "Enlightenment Newtonianism" was already beginning to flourish.¹⁵¹

Newton's specific contributions to the "Scientific Revolution" were largely limited to his work in gravitational theory, his laws of motion, his predictions of the movements of celestial bodies, and innovations in optical science, and the resulting cult of modern science generally centred in these fields.¹⁵² Further, France had longstanding scientific traditions of its own. René Descartes's theory of mind/body dualism had long been debated and adopted throughout France well before Newton's name was ever heard at the Academy. Descartes explained the world according to a massive "system of fluid vortices in nature that were responsible, he believed, for both the mechanics of planetary motion and the phenomenon of *pesanteur* [weight, precursor to gravity] on earth."¹⁵³ Although untenable once scientific progress had bypassed his assumptions, Descartes's mechanistic explanation of the natural world and the laws of motion, while ultimately thrown out in favour of Newtonian physics, laid the foundation for French philosophers to understand and appreciate more empirically-founded theories of natural law.¹⁵⁴ In his *Preliminary Discourse* to the *Encyclopédie*, the noted *philosophe* Jean le Rond D'Alembert writes that his fellow *philosophes* should "recognize that Descartes, who was

¹⁵¹ Shank, 11. For more information on Newton's scientific innovations, the dissemination of Newtonian science and math in France, and their relationship to other scientific theories (e.g. Cartesian), see the Introduction and Chapter 1 of this volume.

¹⁵² E.g. Shank, "Chapter 1: Newton Without Newtonianism," 49-104.

¹⁵³ Shank, 53.

¹⁵⁴ Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 10, 75-76.

forced to create a completely new physics, could not have created it better; that it was necessary, so to speak, to pass by the way of the vortices in order to arrive at the true system of the world; and that if he was mistaken concerning the laws of movement, he was the first, at least, to see that they must exist.”¹⁵⁵

Most relevant to our discussion here, however, are the Cartesian, Newtonian and Lockean influences over the natural sciences, the eighteenth century’s rule-bounded, systematic approaches to observing and understanding world. Having discovered that the world does indeed operate according to a logical system and natural laws, rather than direct divine intervention, some scientists and inventors turned to a wholly materialistic understanding of natural processes, including animal and human nutrition. For example, this functional, mechanistic understanding of digestion can also be seen in the medical literature, which was itself intimately connected with culinary theory. Although Newton was not a household name until mid-century, medical theory was developing an increasingly mechanical, systematic conception of the human body by the beginning of the 18th century. Doctors such as George Cheyne (Britain) and Philippe Hecquet (France) developed at this time a sub-discipline of medicine called iatromechanics, which drew on the ideas of both Descartes and Newton. This new science of dietetics strove to apply the framework of seventeenth century Newtonian-inspired physics to the human body and to ideas of human health. Cheyne’s works on iatromechanics, first

¹⁵⁵ Jean le Rond D’Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot*, trans. Richard N. Schwab (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963, original French publication: 1751), 78-80. Original French: “Reconnaissons donc que Descartes, a forcé de créer une physique toute nouvelle, n’a pu la créer meilleure; qu’il a fallu, pour ainsi dire, passer par tes tourbillons pour arriver au vrai système du monde, et que, s’il s’est trompé sur les lois du mouvement, il a du moins deviné le premier qu’il devait y en avoir” in D’Alembert, *Discours préliminaire de l’Encyclopédie* (Paris: C. Delagrave, 1893), 104.

published in 1720, were soon after translated into French; they conceived of the human body much like an automaton, as

a machine that operated according to the same laws of physics and mechanics that governed the rest of the universe. Two kinds of matter composed this machine: the ‘solids,’ inherited from one’s father, and the ‘juices’; which came from one’s mother. In a healthy human being, the solids were firm, elastic, and well-toned, and the juices (including blood, but also chyle and other secretion) were thin and free-flowing. Chronic ailments of all sorts, including gout, constipation, stomachache, kidney stones, heart trouble, joint pain, muscle spasms, failing vision, and nervous complaints—were caused by obstructions in the tubes that conveyed the juices around the body. In some cases, this damage was rooted in inherited weaknesses in the tubes themselves. More commonly, however, problems were generated by juices that had become gluey, viscous, or thick or had formed encrustations on the tubes.¹⁵⁶

These imperfections in the juices, which in turn affected the health of the rest of the body, were primarily caused by an imperfect diet. Resulting disorders could be successfully treating with a diet that highlighted vegetables, grains, dairy products, and pure, fresh water.

Pinkard dismisses Hecquet as an iatromechanical physician, claiming that he never attempted to develop a systematic theory of *why* digestion works. However, his work is nevertheless an important part of the medical developments in France. Further, his descriptions of the body as an efficient and highly intricate machine is similar in theme and language to the writings of Cheyne and other theorists of iatromechanics. Hecquet himself connects his work as a medical doctor to recent advances in Physics and Chemistry, as well as to attempt to explain the mechanics and motions in the human body according to Newton’s physically functional world system.¹⁵⁷ For Hecquet, digestion is

¹⁵⁶ George Cheyne from Pinkard, 166-7.

¹⁵⁷ Philippe Hecquet, *La Médecine théologique, ou La Médecine créée: Telle qu'elle se fait voir ici, sortie des mains de Dieu Créateur de la Nature, & régie par ses Loix* (Paris: Guillaume Cavelier, 1733; Google e-Book), 71.

an intricate and painstaking process and mechanism through which food is transformed into blood and energy. This process begins in the mouth, where the first step of incorporation takes place:

[Digestion] begins by crushing the food in the mouth through the meeting of the jaws, which, like two strong millstones rub together to break the Matter, which then continues into the esophagus and enters the stomach from there. Here, the hollow muscle [of the stomach] kneads and dissolves the food with extraordinary force as over a million fibres and the action of the surrounding muscles work to move the organ... this movement of the belly and diaphragm crushes, dissolves, combines, and sieves the food into a fine and delicate cream.¹⁵⁸

From here the digested “cream” passes through the body and the nutrients are absorbed into the other body fluids and nourish the whole system. Like Cheyne, Hecquet argues in his *De la digestion et des maladies de l'estomac* that almost all physical ailments are caused by obstructions in the bodily fluids, especially the blood, and these blockages are in turn caused by consuming an inappropriate diet.¹⁵⁹ Hecquet then dedicates the entire second half of the book to describing in detail many different diseases—such as indigestion, colic, pain—and to explaining the physiological obstructions that cause the disorders.

¹⁵⁸ Philippe Hecquet, *Traité des dispenses du Carême: dans lequel on découvre la fausseté des pretextes qu'on apporte pour les obtenir, en faisant voir par la mécanique du corps, les rapports naturels des alimens maigres, avec la nature de l'homme: et par l'histoire, par l'analyse et par l'observation, leur convenance avec la santé* (Paris: Fourneir, 1709; Google e-Book). 15-16. Original French: “Il commence ce broyement dans bouche par la rencontre des machoires, qui comme deux fortes meules se frottent mutuellement & brisent la matiere qu'on y met; il se continue dans l'ésophage, & s'augmente dans l'estomac. Là, comme dans un muscle creux les aliment sont pétris & dissous, tant par la force extraordinaire & multipliée d'un million de fibres motrices qui agitent & meuvent ce viscere, que par l'action des muscles voisins, sur tout de ceux du bas ventre & du diaphragme, qui tous ensemble comme autant de mains soulent & broyant les alimens: & c'est par cette mécanique & par ces forces redoublées, mais toutes tendantes à la trituration, qu'ils se dissolvent, se fondent, & passent dans une crème fine & délicate.”

¹⁵⁹ Philippe Hecquet, *De la digestion et des maladies de l'estomac: suivant le system de la trituration & du broyement, sans l'aide des levains ou de la fermentation, dont on fait voir l'impossibilité en santé & en maladie* (Paris: Frederic Leonard imprimeur du Roy, 1712), Google e-Book, 215-8.

In order to allow the body to function at its most efficient, Hecquet recommends that his readers stick as close to possible to the most natural human diet, which consists mostly of grains, vegetables, fruit and fish. These foods, in addition to being naturally delicious and easy to eat, break down easily according to digestive mechanisms and are most conducive to creating smooth, unctuous bodily fluids.¹⁶⁰ Foods such as meat and tough vegetables require lengthy cooking and disguises to be enjoyable, and ultimately are filled with large, obstructing particles that slow digestion and block proper flowing of the fluids.¹⁶¹ Ultimately, the key to good digestion for both Cheyne and Hecquet is pure, simple food, free from unhealthy starches and obstructions. This is the basic theory that Bromoy and Bougeant invoke in the “Avertissement” of *Les Dons de Comus*; they adapt the mechanical theory of digestion to emphasize the importance of “pure” foods, which have been prepared to completely eliminate the obstructing particles and to provide pure nourishment for delicate constitutions with minimal physical damage.

The interest in human and animal digestion inherent in iatromechanics remained a theme in Enlightenment philosophy and science, as the next generation of thinkers continued to look to Descartes and Newton for inspiration. In the entry for *Automaton* in Diderot and D’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*, the anonymous author describes how the noted inventor de Vaucanson sought to exhibit the natural process of digestion through constructing an entirely mechanical duck. In this duck

he shows the viscera destined for the functions of drinking, eating, digesting. The interplay of all the parts necessary for these actions is imitated faithfully. The duck stretches its neck to take grain from the hand, it swallows, digests, and excretes in the normal way. All the movements of the duck, which swallows quickly and increases the speed

¹⁶⁰ Hecquet, *Traité des dispenses du Carême*, 15-23.

¹⁶¹ Hecquet, *Traité des dispenses du Carême*, 169.

of the movement of its gullet in order to pass the nutriment down to the stomach, are copied from nature. The nutriment is digested as happens with real animals, by means of dissolution and not by trituration. The matter digested in the stomach is conveyed through tubes similar to the bowels of the real animal, to the anus where a sphincter permits the excretion. The inventor does not pretend that this digestion is perfect, capable of producing blood and nutritional fluids to sustain the animal, and it would be churlish to criticize him for it. He merely claims to be imitating the mechanics of this action in three things: (1) swallowing the grain, (2) macerating or dissolving it, (3) making it reappear substantially changed.¹⁶²

This passage, although about a duck, demonstrates a scientific fascination with daily bodily functions such as digestion. Not only did someone go to the trouble of making an automaton that could “digest” grain, in addition to performing the basic functions of wing-flapping and turning its neck from left to right, but this creation was publicly exhibited in 1741 and deemed important enough to be immortalized in the *Encyclopédie*, the self-appointed compendium of all important and relevant knowledge of the period. Interestingly, the language of the passage uses the system of mechanical tubes and sphincters as a realistic metaphor for the real thing. People were interested in the tubes, fluids, and mechanics hidden by their skin, and wanted to understand how they worked.

¹⁶² Denis Diderot, Jean le Rond D’Alembert, et al., *Encyclopedia, Selections*, trans. and ed. Nelly S. Hoyt and Thomas Cassirer (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1965), 20. Original French: “Un canard, dans lequel il reprsente le mécanisme des viscères destines aux fonctions du boire, du manger, & de la digestion; le jeu de toutes les parties nécessaires à ces actions, y est exactement imité: il allonge son cou pour aller prendre du grain dans la main, il l’avale, le digere, & le rend par les voies ordinaires tout digéré; tous les gestes d’un canard qui avale avec précipitation, & qui redouble de vitesse dans le mouvement de son gosier, pour faire passer son manger jusque dans l’estomac, y sont copiés d’après nature: l’aliment y est digéré comme dans les vrais animaux, par dissolution, & non par trituration; la matiere digérée dans l’estomac est conduite par des tuyaux, comme dans l’animal pas ses boyaux, jusqu’à l’anus, où il y a un sphincter qui en permet la sortie. L’auteur ne donne pas cette digestion pour une digestion parfait, capable de faire du sang & des sucs nourriciers pour l’entretien de l’animal; on auroit mauvaise grâce de lui ce reproche. Il ne prétend qu’imiter la mécanique de cette action en trois chose, qui sont: 1) d’avalier le grain; 2) de le macérer, cuire ou dissoudre; 3) de la faire sortir dans un changement sensible.” From *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers. Tome premier* (Paris: Briasson, 1751-65) 896.

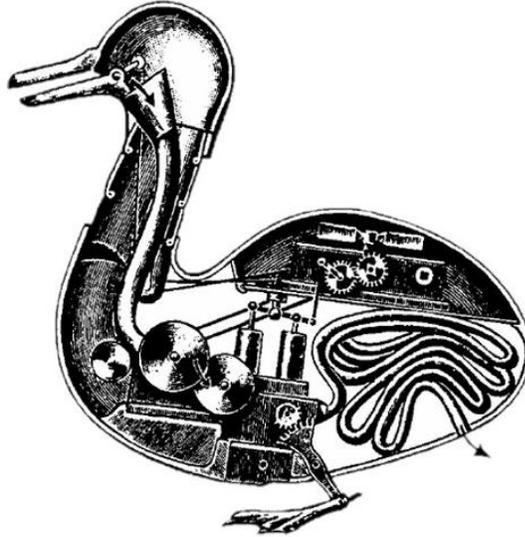


Figure 3: "The *Canard Digérateur* of Jacques de Vaucanson, hailed in 1739 as the first automaton capable of digestion." Webster's Online Dictionary, "Automaton," <http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org/>.

For French intellectuals after 1715, Newton's name, along with that of John Locke, became synonymous with scientific progress, the two scientists representing the culmination of the past two centuries of scientific progress and serving as epitomes of modern thought. In his *Discourse*, D'Alembert lists Newton amongst the greatest minds in the history of European science, as the man who "gave philosophy a form which apparently it is to keep."¹⁶³ D'Alembert argued that Newton's "Theory of the World (for I do not mean his System) is today [1751] so generally accepted that men are beginning to dispute the author's claim to the honor of inventing it (because at the beginning great men are accused of being mistaken, and at the end they are treated as plagiarists)."¹⁶⁴ Overall, according to d'Alembert, one of Newton's most significant influences in

¹⁶³ D'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse*, 80.

¹⁶⁴ D'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse*, 80. Original French: "Sa *Théorie du Monde* (car je ne veux pas dire son *Système*) est aujourd'hui si généralement reçue, qu'on commence à disputer à l'auteur l'honneur de l'invention, parce qu'on accuse d'abord les grands hommes de se tromper, et qu'on finit par les traiter de plagiaires." in D'Alembert, *Discours préliminaire de l'Encyclopédie* (Paris: C. Delagrave, 1893), 106.

eighteenth century French thought was the understanding that the world was inherently knowable, that everything from the celestial bodies to the functioning of a single human body worked according to logical, definable, and understandable natural laws. Unlike Descartes' system of vortices and impressions, Newton's universe existed outside the abstract mathematical plane and could be touched, actively engaged with, and manipulated. Together with Locke, whose *Essay on Human Understanding* was said to have accomplished for metaphysics and studies of human consciousness what Newton did for physics, these two thinkers, according to D'Alembert's narrative, gave form and logic to science and provided a base and inspiration for all disciplines of intellectual inquiry.¹⁶⁵

Not limited to the hard sciences, the mania for the Newtonian theory invaded the upper echelons of the Parisian literati. According to historian Jennifer Riskin, everything from the economics of the physiocrats to the linguistic conventions set out by the Revolutionary Committee of Public Instruction took a Newtonian system-building approach to their project.¹⁶⁶ *Salonnières*, the shepherdesses of the Republic of Letters, shared this enthusiasm, Julie de Lespinasse referencing his scientific achievements in a private love letter,¹⁶⁷ and the lesser known socialite Mlle. Ferrand commissioning a portrait of herself with a large Newtonian volume in the background.¹⁶⁸ Louis-Sebastien Mercier was aware of and admired Newton, and even included a miniature portrait of him in his *Picture of Paris*:

¹⁶⁵ D'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse*, 83.

¹⁶⁶ Riskin, 12-14.

¹⁶⁷ Shank, 4-5.

¹⁶⁸ Shank, 12.

Newton saw an apple drop and after meditating about it envisioned the system of universal gravitation. Another individual, lacking the ability to see the chains that bind the planets to their orbits, would simply have watched the apple fall, grabbed it and eaten it.¹⁶⁹

In France as well as in Britain, Deism, the typically Enlightenment approach to Christianity that characterized God as a clock-maker whose Creation functioned on its own like a well-ordered machine, was closely associated with Newton and his mechanistic understanding of the universe.¹⁷⁰

This new, more mechanical understanding of the animal and human body, and of the universe in general, coincided with existing standards of delicacy and taste, for the appreciation of fine things. Just as a host could ensure the perfect order and presentation of dishes at a dinner party and guests could order their conversation to fit the fashionable standards, an individual having a well-ordered and smooth-functioning digestive system was just another level of delicacy. A perfectly working body, fed with the purest and most finely prepared foods, became as desirable as the external presentation and taste of food. How this came to be is something that I will explore further in this chapter.

La Cuisine Bourgeoise: A Variation on a Theme

As *la cuisine moderne* became associated with fashionable urban life, many prominent intellectuals and *philosophes* began to critique and condemn what they saw as hypocritical and insincere habits. Thinkers questioned why the desire for simple and

¹⁶⁹ Louis-Sebastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, Tome 1 (Paris: Virchaux & Compagnie, 1781, original French publication: 1781), Google e-Book, 237. Original French: “Newton voit une pomme tomber d’un arbre: il médite, & conçoit le système de la gravitation. Une autre sans s’embarrasser du pouvoir qui enchaîne les planètes dans leur orbites, voit tomber la pomme, la ramasse, & la mange.” (Inspiration for including this reference came from Shank, *The Newton Wars*, 4).

¹⁷⁰ Shank, 339.

natural food could require such exacting labour and expensive equipment. One response to this trend was the emergence of a *cuisine bourgeoise*, which sought to imitate the broths and ragouts of Marin and La Chapelle, but without completely breaking the host or hostess's bank. The real architect of this bourgeois cuisine was the prolific cookbook author Menon, who attempted to adapt the ideals of *la cuisine moderne* to fit more modest lifestyles.

The preface of *La cuisinière bourgeoise*, written by the book's publishers, outlines Menon's purpose in adding this work to his bibliography:

Having set out in earlier works practices and techniques that could only barely take places in the kitchens of the great, or in those of individuals who live an opulence beyond their means, the author wanted to make his work useful for readers of a more moderate fortune.¹⁷¹

This preface goes on to admit that Menon's bourgeois dishes will not be as refined or spectacular as those served at court or in the homes of the great, but that they will be nutritious, delicious, and worthy of serving one's guests. For example, his recipe *Poulet à la gibelotte* follows the idea of a ragout in *la cuisine moderne*, but instead of using only an elaborate and expensive bouillon to sauce the chicken, Menon makes do with a small amount of prepared bouillon (many bourgeois women could buy small amounts for such recipes at a local *trottoir*) and cuts it with flour, white wine and some butter, producing something much closer to English-style gravy than a French ragout.¹⁷² Overall, therefore, while the flavours of *la cuisine bourgeoise* were similar to those produced by more intricate and expensive processes, which created the illusion of delicacy and fine taste, it

¹⁷¹ Menon, "Preface," iv. Original French: "Son auteur, pour se rendre utile aux diverse conditions, après avoir donné dans ses premiers traits des préceptes dont la pratique ne peut guère avoir lieu que dans les cuisines des grands, ou ce de ceux qu'une grande opulence met en état de les contrefaire, en a voulu donner qui fussent assortis aux personnes d'une condition, ou d'une fortune médiocre; et c'est ce qu'il fait ici."

¹⁷² Menon, 125-6.

lacked the same perceived physiological benefits of a finely crafted cup of fine *boullion*, or a smooth and creamy fish *ragoût*. For some thinkers, this made *la cuisine bourgeoise* even worse than *la cuisine moderne*, as it sought only to imitate what was grander, and provided yet another barrier between humans and their natural, ideal diet.

Rousseau, Rusticity, and Rural Simplicity

On the other end of the culinary spectrum from *la cuisine moderne* and its lesser cousin *la cuisine bourgeoise*, each with its intricate techniques of boiling and straining and light seasoning, was the rural dietary ideal used and popularized by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Unlike *la cuisine bourgeoise*, this vein of culinary theory was not based on refining or adapting existing techniques or on using scientific methods to produce the most easily digestible food. Rather, Rousseau and like-minded sentimentalists sought a regime that consisted of simple, wholesome, locally-produced fruits vegetables and grains. In fact, many of the great thinkers of the Enlightenment questioned the overwrought fashions of the day, favouring simplicity and naturalness in all aspects of life; Diderot's *Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville*, for example, discusses the simple, natural lifestyle of Tahitian natives and explores the possibility that their mode of living is more conducive to virtue than modern urban living.¹⁷³ However, the true father of French rural sentimentalism was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who saw wholesome home cooking as an essential ingredient in leading a good and virtuous life and who made doing so a cornerstone of his philosophy.

¹⁷³ Denis Diderot, *Diderot: Political Writings*, ed. John Hope Mason (Cambridge University Press, 1992), "Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville," 31-77. (original French publication: 1796).

Rousseau was famous for his doctrine of lost simplicity: man was born free and had been gradually enslaved by the trappings of social organization, social convention and artifice.¹⁷⁴ His most famous political writings include the *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, and *The Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right*. Within these works he established an agrarian republican philosophy, based on Classical republicanism, which had already been co-opted and developed by early modern thinkers such as Machiavelli and Bernard de Mandeville to address current political problems. Even Montesquieu's *On the Spirit of the Laws*, despite its strong endorsement of monarchy as the form of government best suited for a populous state like France, nonetheless drew on classical and Renaissance civic humanism in its commitment to the rule of law and to basic civil liberties.¹⁷⁵ Rousseau builds on this tradition, but develops his own highly original viewpoints. He does not look to the Antiquity of Rome and Greece to find solutions to the problems of his time, namely that the current political system had become corrupted by artifice and false virtue. Rather, he cultivates nostalgia for a way of life that could have existed prior to any organized civilization, in which man is not enslaved by any corrupt customs, laws or hierarchies.¹⁷⁶ More practically, he desired for France a future free of hierarchical social conventions, superficial manners, and commercial greed in which genuine

¹⁷⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right," in *The Essential Rousseau*, trans. Lowell Blair (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 8. (original French publication: 1762).

¹⁷⁵ Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, *On The Spirit of the Laws* (original French publication 1748).

¹⁷⁶ Rousseau, "The Social Contract," *The Essential Rousseau*, 57.

community spirit and patriotism, rather than legal obligation and fear, inspired people to assert their political rights and form the foundation for a virtuous and free nation-state.¹⁷⁷

In addition to his political works, Rousseau also wrote several sentimental, educational works, including the novel *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Heloise* (1761) and *Émile* (1762), a canonical non-fiction guide to raising a good and virtuous citizen. Despite their differences of genre, these works further articulate Rousseau's overall philosophy by outlining what he believed to be the correct behaviour and morals for the citizens of his ideal republic. He believed such behaviour and morals to be the cornerstone of a solid republic—only with a strong foundation of virtuous people could a country truly embody the values of freedom, authenticity and patriotism. What makes these works particularly interesting for a study of culinary history is the importance that Rousseau placed on physiological health and diet in the formation of great citizens.

In *Émile*, Rousseau emphasizes the importance of a good diet in healthy physical and moral development. According to Rousseau, the ideal diet begins at infancy with a prolonged period of breastfeeding, preferably on one's own mother's milk. During this period, a mother's diet also played a crucial role: eating too much meat or highly salted foods at this time, Rousseau argued, made a mother's milk bitter, and accustomed her child to unhealthy foods, so that he/she developed an unhealthy acquired taste for complex seasonings and meat. With a healthy, naturally breastfed childhood, however, children could begin their development with a natural understanding of wholesome foods and innate knowledge of what foods work best with their bodies.¹⁷⁸ As young *Émile*

¹⁷⁷ Rousseau, "The Social Contract," *The Essential Rousseau*, 15.

¹⁷⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile* (London: The Everyman Library, 1993, original French publication: 1762), 27-29.

grows up, his tutor ensures that he is always fed on the most “virtue-inducing” food as opposed to heavily seasoned foods, which corrupted one’s natural enjoyment of simple, wholesome foods and disguised the bad flavours of food that could potentially be unfit for human consumption. Furthermore, elaborate flavours and presentations instilled an unnatural greed in the individual and mutilated one’s naturally simple senses of hunger and satiety into a means of displaying wealth and power.¹⁷⁹ Man’s passion for luxury had turned him away from natural foods to dishes of highly seasoned and elaborately prepared meats.

Rousseau also criticizes the unnatural growing of fruits and vegetables out of season—a relatively new trend at this point in France’s history—which he believed upset the natural order and encouraged greediness of appetite.¹⁸⁰ He was similarly opposed to a carnivorous diet which, by its very nature—that is, the slaughtering of harmless animals simply for the sake of personal enjoyment—instilled coarseness, a lust for dominance, and cruelty in humans.¹⁸¹ He engages in a lurid description of raw meat, claiming that animal flesh is only palatable to humans once processed and removed from the horrors of its origin:

You turn against the dead flesh, it revolts you, it must be transformed by fire, boiled and roasted, seasoned and disguised with drugs; you must have butchers, cooks, turnspits, men who will rid the murder of its horrors, who will dress the dead bodies so that the taste deceived by these disguises will not reject what is strange to it, and will feast on corpses, the very sight of which would sicken you.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Rousseau, *Émile*, 137-143 and 371.

¹⁸⁰ Rousseau, *Émile*, 371-3.

¹⁸¹ Rousseau, *Émile*, 140-143.

¹⁸² Rousseau, *Émile*, 143. Original French: “la chair morte le répugne encore, tes entrailles ne peuvent la supporter; il la faut transformer par le feu, la bouillir, la rôtir, l’assaisonner de drogues qui la déguisent: il te faut des charcutiers, des cuisiniers, des rôtitseurs, des gens pour t’ôter l’horreur du meurtre et t’habiller des corps morts, afin que le sens du goût, trompé par ces déguisements, ne rejette point ce qui lui est étrange, et

This sentiment is repeated in *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*, a letter written by Julie's former lover St. Preux, who criticises the diet of "Englishmen, great meat eaters, [who] have something harsh that smacks of barbarity."¹⁸³ Overall, Rousseau's prescription was simple, relying heavily on fruits, vegetables, hearty breads, eggs and dairy products, all of which should be eaten seasonally and produced locally. The shining example of implementing Rousseau's ideal diet is Julie herself, who, "although she is sensual and likes to eat, ... likes neither meat, nor stews, nor salt, and has never tasted wine straight. Excellent vegetables, eggs, cream, fruit; those are her daily fare, and were it not for fish of which she is very fond, she would be a true Pythagorean."¹⁸⁴ This regime, which eliminated over-prepared and seasoned foods, was perhaps less a cuisine than a calculated rejection of cuisine, or in the words of Susan Pinkard, an anti-cuisine.¹⁸⁵

Underlying Rousseau's recommendation for an anti-cuisine was his disapproval of mankind's efforts to disrupt the natural order of our bodies, and of his discontent with our interactions with each other. He believes that some of the greatest social inequalities and personal failings could be traced to one's diet. For example, as I briefly mentioned before, he thought eating meat instils an animal savagery and murderousness in man that transfers to our treatment of other humans, while a partiality for spices and fancy sauces

savoure avec plaisir des cadavres dont l'œil même eût peine à souffrir l'aspect" in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou de l'Éducation* (Paris: Garnier, 1866), 164.

¹⁸³ Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Héloïse: Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, ed. and trans. Philip Stewart (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997, original French publication: 1761), 372-3.

¹⁸⁴ Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Héloïse*, 373. Original French: "Julie elle-même pourrait me servir d'exemple; car, quoique sensuelle et gourmande dans ses repas, elle n'aime ni la viande, ni les ragouts, ni le sel, et n'a jamais goûté de vin pur; d'excellents légumes, les œufs, la crème, les fruits, voila sa nourriture ordinaire; et, sans le poisson qu'elle aime aussi beaucoup, elle serait une véritable pythagoricienne" in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (Paris: Firmin-Didot Frères, 1843), 415.

¹⁸⁵ Pinkard, 197.

encourages artifice in other aspects of life and corrupts the moral sense—if one cannot resist a fancy ragout or fashionable food, how can we reasonably be expected to make informed and moral decisions concerning the rest of our lives. Conversely, in his opinion eating simple and wholesome foods engenders true friendship and genuine sociability. In a well-known passage of *Émile*, Rousseau’s tutor takes the young man to two dinner parties, a fashionable feast at the home of a banker, which is attended by wealthy urban socialites, and a meal at the home of a fairly well-off farmer in the latter’s country-home. At the fashionable dinner party they are served dishes on “dainty and elegant china,” with delicacies imported from every end of the earth.¹⁸⁶ Conversely, the meal at the farmer’s house lives up to Rousseau’s ideal, agrarian, wholesome fare, all grown and prepared by the farmer and his family and enjoyed amongst friends and “seasoned by hunger, freedom, and delight.”¹⁸⁷ After the two meals, the tutor asks both *Émile* and the readers to consider which of the two dinners was most pleasurable, that at the home of the banker

Where that mountain of silver covered three quarters of the table and those beds of artificial flowers on looking glass were served for dessert, where those smart ladies treated you as a toy and pretended you said what you did not mean; or in that village two leagues away, with those good people who are so pleased to see us and give us such delicious cream?¹⁸⁸

After such a speech, which continues on quite a bit longer, what choice does young *Émile*, or indeed the reader, have but to accept the superiority of simplicity and the incalculable value of locally produced foods?

¹⁸⁶ Rousseau, *Émile*, 183-4.

¹⁸⁷ Rousseau, *Émile*, 184.

¹⁸⁸ Rousseau, *Émile*, 185. Original French: “Où dinerons-nous aujourd’hui? autour de cette montagne d’argent qui couvre les trois quarts de la table, et de ces parterres de fleurs de papier qu’on sert au dessert sur les miroirs, parmi ces femmes en grand panier qui vous traitent en marionnette, et veulent que vous ayez dit ce que vous ne savez pas; ou bien dans ce village à deux lieues d’ici, chez ses bonnes gens qui nous reçoivent si joyeusement et nous donnent de si bonne crème?” in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou de l’Éducation* (Paris: Garnier frères, 1866), 212.

By including such extensive dietary recommendations in *Émile* and *La Nouvelle Heloise*, which focus broadly on moral development, Rousseau betrays a belief in the social importance of food choices in cultivating one's natural goodness and encouraging healthy moral development. Some historians have speculated that Rousseau's culinary scruples may have been rooted in his own poor health—he was a lifelong sufferer of various ailments, including depression, liver malfunction, and stomach complaints.¹⁸⁹ I, however, argue that these culinary recommendations are truly central to his project of social reform. As in our own society, food and eating lay at the heart of social intercourse in Enlightenment Paris, featured at dinner parties, *salons*, meeting halls, and the increasingly popular restaurants. Rousseau recognized how important food is to human life, both physically and spiritually, and he therefore places it at the centre of his developmental philosophy. By eating simple, pure, wholesome food, an individual could improve his moods and mentality, in order to ultimately cultivate his natural virtue. Furthermore, the simplicity of the diet that Rousseau recommends required simplicity of taste and culinary restraint from those who were better off, thereby encouraging adherents to incorporate the rules of moral living into the act of eating, the most basic and fundamental of all human activities.

Scientific Roots in Sentimental Cuisine

Rousseau's morally determined diet seems at first to fundamentally oppose the more trendy urban *cuisine moderne*. Indeed, based on *Émile*'s tutor's disapproval of the

¹⁸⁹ See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions*, ed. Tom Griffith (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1996, original French publication: 1782), 220-221; Pinkard, 192.

fashionable dinner party, Rousseau's dietary recommendations were diametrically opposed to those in the fashionable houses and restaurants of Paris. In fact, Rousseau's "back-to-the-land" approach to diet appears even more critical of Marin and other Modernists than the anti-corruption stance taken in the "Lettre d'une Pâtissier Anglois." However, as Spang argues in *The Invention of the Restaurant*, these two traditions managed to mingle and ultimately merge within the institution of the restaurant, under the broad umbrella of "delicate," "pure," and "refined" eating habits. This similarity goes beyond the fact that both were served in the same restaurants. Restaurants that served *la cuisine moderne* and boasted the healthiest, purest, most refined bouillons and broths would decorate their rooms and store fronts to give them a rustic, rural feel, and to bring to mind a casual repast in the Swiss Alps, a setting closely related to Rousseauian dining. According to Spang, one popular eighteenth century restaurant even had a prominently placed portrait of Rousseau's gravesite in Geneva, paying homage to the father of French sensibility.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, when early restaurant critics wrote about Parisian restaurant fare, they would categorize the "delicacy" of highly processed *restaurants* in the same genre as home-made mountain cheeses, fresh cream, and ripe fruits.¹⁹¹ Both were healthy, both were soothing, and both granted the diner the distinction of having a sensitive and well-tended digestive tract. That being said, there was more to this convergence than the fact that they were both popular at the same time, a mere coincidence of time and place. Although these traditions may have used different philosophical rationales to justify their superiority, they nevertheless had a lot more in

¹⁹⁰ Spang, 59.

¹⁹¹ Spang, 57.

common than is at first apparent, and they were both intimately connected with the particular scientific culture of the time.

To begin with, Rousseau's simple, rustic diet of the countryside actually closely accorded with the recommendations of contemporary physicians whose work informed *la cuisine moderne*, including those of the iatromechanics. One of M. Philippe Hecquet's main purposes throughout *Traité des Dispenses du Carême* was to identify the ideal human diet, which he proposed consisted mostly of "les fruits, les grains & les légumes."¹⁹² Also like Rousseau, Hecquet insists that animal flesh is not the most natural or the most nutritious food for human consumption. Although Hecquet does argue that this is because carnivorous animals have significantly different digestive mechanics than humans, he nevertheless employs some rhetorical flourishes worthy of Rousseau himself. He writes, for instance, that the sight of raw flesh

causes our very nature to revolt, and incites horror to eat raw flesh as it is naturally presented; our natures are not able to stand the flavour or sight until it has been cooked for a long time and disrobed of its inhumane and disgusting nature; often, it is not until after many preparations and strange seasonings that one can render it agreeable and even healthy.¹⁹³

In contrast, other foods—such as fruits, vegetables, and even fish—can either be eaten raw or with minimal preparation and little or no seasonings, all "marks that they are sensible foods that are most natural to man."¹⁹⁴

Hecquet's and Rousseau's surface arguments initially seem quite different. For example, Hecquet catalogues and diagnoses bodily and emotional functions in starkly

¹⁹² Hecquet, *Traité des dispenses du Carême*, 23.

¹⁹³ Hecquet, *Traité des dispenses du Carême*, 169. Original French: "En effet c'est une chose qui soulève la nature, & qui luy fait horreur, que de manger de la viande crue & telle qu'elle se présente naturellement; elle ne dévient supportable au goût & à la vue qu'après une longue cuisson qui dérobe au sens ce qu'elle offert d'abord d'inhumain & de déplaisant; & souvent ce n'est qu'après beaucoup de préparations & d'assaisonnemens étrangers qu'on la rend agréable & utiles à la santé."

¹⁹⁴ Hecquet, *Traité des dispenses du Carême*, 170.

mechanical and medical terms, leaving little about the details of digestion to the reader's imagination. Rousseau's recommendations, conversely, are rooted in family values and lifelong cultivation of morals and restraint. However, it is evident from reading these passages that although Hecquet approached his understanding of the human body from a medical and mechanical perspective, he nevertheless foreshadowed several of Rousseau's assumptions. First, there is an ideal, "natural" human diet that favours plant food over a flesh diet. Second, Hecquet identifies a common "human nature" that corresponds to our bodies' needs and is revolted by unsuitable foods. Most interestingly, Hecquet personifies this "nature" emotionally, describing its disgust for meats and its excitement over naturally sweet and nourishing fruit.¹⁹⁵ This goes beyond the basic, mechanical understanding of animal and human bodies and assumes an intimate connection between the body's internal functioning and one's sensibility, one's ability to feel things and react emotionally to the outside world.

Within the Cartesian and Newtonian materialism of the contemporary scientific community, the connection that Hecquet makes between the mechanical functioning of the body and one's internal emotions was remarkably unique for his time. Only in the subsequent generation of the late Enlightenment did scientific study in France, and indeed in much of Europe, become increasingly "sentimental" over the course of the eighteenth century. Historian Jessica Riskin identifies the deep relationship between scientific studies of the universe, the natural world, and the human body, and sensibility and sentimentalism, making this connection the subject of her book, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: the Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment*. She coins a new

¹⁹⁵ Hecquet, *Traité des dispenses du Carême*, 169.

term, “sentimental empiricism,” to describe this relationship, applying it to the people, theoretical concepts, publications and institutions of the scientific community that studied sensation and sentiment in concert. Riskin writes:

Sentimental empiricism, by tracing emotions to sensory experience, implied that moral sentiments might be subjected to empirical scrutiny and manipulation, which was the founding assumption of the moral sciences. However, by the same logic applied in reverse, sentimental empiricism also infused empirical experience, and therefore natural science, with sentiment and moral import.¹⁹⁶

For Riskin, sentimentalism, defined as the study of emotions and the soul, entered the field of eighteenth century scientific inquiry primarily through the study of the senses. Descartes had made a place for sensation in his theory of mind/body dualism, explaining feelings as the external world impressing itself upon the matter of the eyeball or the other sensory organs. However, since the mind and body were adjacent, rather than connected in this theory, Descartes had emphasized that there is a disconnect between the sensation of pressure on our organs and our soul’s understanding of that sensation; human beings can never truly trust their senses, or the vision of the world they offer.¹⁹⁷ Newton’s take on sensation, that it is necessary to test sensory impulses and map the nervous signals sent from the eye to the brain, explained the process of sensation, but did not answer questions about how our minds (or souls) process this information, or what relationship our sensations bear to the external world.¹⁹⁸ Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, published in 1690 in England, radically affected how French scholars conceptualized human consciousness and sensation. In this essay, Locke contends that all knowledge, all cognitive function including emotion, is dependent on information

¹⁹⁶ Riskin, 5.

¹⁹⁷ Riskin, 27-8.

¹⁹⁸ Riskin, 27.

from the outside world as delivered by our senses. Through the senses, an individual's window into the outside world, the mechanical being of Cartesian and Newtonian thought is animated by sensory experience, inspiring the individual to make connections between different experiences, derive conclusions, and grow a moral conscience.¹⁹⁹ Without the senses, according to Locke, an individual has no understanding of a world outside himself and cannot develop the intellectual or moral tools that define humanity.

French *philosophes* continued Locke's line of inquiry, further developing theories on the role of the senses in human physiology and moral development. The *Encyclopédie* defines the senses as "a faculty of the soul through which it perceives external objects."²⁰⁰ In 1745 the *philosophe* La Mettrie published *Histoire naturelle de l'âme*, wherein he agreed with Locke's contentions that "all ideas come from the senses" and that every single thought process is the "product of bodily sensations."²⁰¹ Three years later in *L'homme machine*, he reiterates his loyalty to Locke by rejecting Descartes's contention of the duality of the mechanistic body and the soul, arguing that emotions and "the soul" are the product of the brain's processing of sensory experience. Referencing Vaucanson's mechanical duck as a less complex version of nature's work and skill in crafting the universe and all encompassed life, La Mettrie makes a case for an entirely mechanical state of being in which "man is the most perfect example." He writes that

The human body is a watch, a large watch constructed with such skill and ingenuity, that if the wheel which marks the second happens to stop, the minute wheel turns and keeps on going its round, and in the same way the quarter-hour wheel, and all the others go on running when the first wheels have stopped or become rusty or, for any reason, out of order. Is it not for a similar reason that the stoppage of a few blood vessels is not enough to

¹⁹⁹ Riskin, 49.

²⁰⁰ Denis Diderot, Jean le Rond D'Alembert, et al., *Encyclopedia, Selections*, 322.

²⁰¹ Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *Histoire naturelle de l'âme* (Paris: Chez J. Neulme, 1745), Chapter 3, 9-13.

destroy or suspend the strength of the movement which is in the heart as in the mainspring of the machine; since, on the contrary, the fluids whose volume is diminished, having a shorter road to travel, cover the ground more quickly, borne on as by a fresh current which the energy of the heart increases in proportion to the resistance it encounters at the ends of the blood-vessels? And is not this the reason why the loss of sight (caused by the compression of the optic nerve and its ceasing to convey the images of objects) no more hinders hearing, than the loss of hearing (caused by the obstruction of the functions of the auditory nerve) implies the loss of sight?²⁰²

Conceiving of man as an extremely complex mechanical animal, La Mettrie accounts for consciousness, intelligence, and emotion as another level of the complexity of nature's workmanship, not to be disentangled from the body but rather to be understood as an essential component of its functioning.

Around the same time that La Mettrie published his *Histoire naturelle de l'âme* and *L'homme machine*, Condillac and Diderot released works that contributed to this sensory-driven materialist school of thought. In his *Treatise on the Sensations* (1755), Condillac places the reader in the position of an inanimate statue who first is aware only of himself, but then gradually gains individual senses through which he experiences the world. This work, rather than exploring the mechanical impulses and processes that stimulate the senses in the human body, deals specifically with the experience of

²⁰² La Mettrie, *L'homme Machine* (digitized by the University of Michigan, Centre for the Study of Complex Systems, 1995, original French publication: 1748), <http://cscs.umich.edu> (accessed 31 August 2011). Original French: "le corps humain est une horloge, mais immense, & construit avec tant d'Artifice & Habilité, que si la roüe qui sert à marquer les secondes, vient à s'arrêter; celle des minutes tourne & va toujours son train; comme la roüe des Quarts continue de se mouvoir: & ainsi des autres, quand les premières, rotillées, ou dérangées par quelque cause que ce soit, ont interrompu leur marche. Car n'est ce pas ainsi que l'Obstruction de quelques Vaisseaux ne suffit pas pour détruire, ou suspendre le fort des mouvemens, qui est dans le Cœur, comme dans la Pièce Ouvrière de la Machine; puis-qu'au contraire les fluides dont le volume est diminué, aiant moins de chemin a faire, le parcourent d'autant plus vite, emportés comme par un nouveau courant, que la force du Cœur s'augmente, en raison de la résistance qu'il trouve à l'extrémité des vaisseaux? Lorsque le nerf optique seul comprimé ne laisse plus passer l'image des Objets, n'est-ce pas ainsi que la Privation de la Vue n'empêche pas plus l'usage de l'Oüie, que la privation de ce sens, lorsque les fonctions de la *Portion Molle* [auditory nerve] sont interdites, se suppose celle de l'autre?" From Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *L'Homme machine* (Paris: Luzac, 1748), 93.

sensation, and the ways in which these experiences shape human thoughts and consciousness. In the beginning, the “statue being limited to the sense of smell its cognitions cannot extend beyond smells. It can no more have ideas of extension, shape or of anything outside itself, or outside its sensations, than it can have ideas of colour, sound or taste.”²⁰³ As the statue smells, his entire being is consumed by the experience of sensation, and “if we give the statue a rose to smell, to us it is a statue smelling a rose, to itself it is smell of rose.”²⁰⁴ Each additional sense creates a similar reaction in the being of the statue, whose awareness and ability to process information increases with the available sensations.

For Condillac, it is only when the statue gains sensation, first smell, then hearing, taste, sight, and touch, that he is able to feel emotion. Only once the statue has something to experience does “it begin to enjoy or suffer. For if the capacity of feeling is confined to a pleasant smell, there is enjoyment; and if it is confined to an unpleasant smell, there is suffering.”²⁰⁵ When the statue realizes that its sensations can change and become mere memories, enjoyment and suffering turn to pain and desire. Following Lockean logic, Condillac’s statue gradually becomes able to compare between different senses, and from there is able to judge a good scent over an unpleasant one—this ability to judge becomes the statue’s foundation for moral choice and virtue. Closely following the ability to judge, the statue gains memories of past sensations and is able to recall them, thus building the foundation for imagination, the creation of new ideas by combining and comparing memories of old sensations. With no more connection to the outside world

²⁰³ Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Treatise on the Sensations*, trans. Geraldine Carr (Los Angeles: University of Southern California School of Philosophy, 1930, original French publication: 1754), 3.

²⁰⁴ Condillac, 3.

²⁰⁵ Condillac, 4.

than its sense of smell, the statue has developed the basic components of human consciousness. However, the statue is still limited, and with only the sense of smell, the emotions of pain, desire, hope, love and hate can only be in reference to itself—without a complete understanding of the outside world, the statue cannot learn to *feel* for it, since its emotions are entirely turned inwards. Thus the poor statue is doomed to solipsism, emotionally and morally stunted.

Diderot echoes this sentiment on the moral implications of limited senses in his essay, “Letter on the Blind, for the use of those who see.” In this essay, Diderot uses an interview with a man blinded from birth, as well as his own interpretations of philosophic and literary tropes of blind men, to argue that an individual born blind can have no understanding of what it is to see, no means of comprehending that particular knowledge of external objects. The blind are not necessarily functionally handicapped by their lack of sight; for example, the blind man of Puisaux (Diderot’s subject) “judges of his nearness to the fire by the degrees of heat; of the fullness of vessels by the sound made by liquids which he pours into them; of the proximity of bodies by the action of the air on his face.”²⁰⁶ However, the emotional repercussions of blindness far outweigh those of practicality; Diderot writes that “to me it has always been very clear that the state of our organs and our senses has a great influence on our metaphysics and our morality, and that those ideas which seem purely intellectual are closely dependent on the conformation of

²⁰⁶Denis Diderot, “Letter on the Blind,” in *Diderot’s Early Philosophical Works*, ed. Margaret Jourdain (North Stratford, NH: Ayer Publishing, 1972, original French publication: 1749). Original French: “L’aveugle du Puisaux estime la proximité du feu aux degrés de la chaleur; la plénitude des vaisseaux, au bruit que font en tombant les liqueurs qu’il transvase; et le voisinage des corps, à l’action de l’air sur son visage” in Denis Diderot, “Lettre sur les Aveugles,” *Œuvres de Denis Diderot. T. 2* (Paris: Deterville, 1800), 175.

our bodies.”²⁰⁷ According to Diderot the blind man cannot understand physical beauty, which becomes “but a word when divorced from utility.”²⁰⁸ Further, where sighted individuals are constantly assailed by sights of the less fortunate, which inspire our pity, natural sympathy and humanity, the blind “are affected only by cries.”²⁰⁹

When it comes to metaphysics, the blind man is at an even greater disadvantage, for how can he imagine the stars, or a sunset, or any natural wonders and truly understand the marvel of creation.²¹⁰ The natural result of this emotional and metaphysical deprivation, Diderot reasons, is that a blind man’s perspective on the external world is fundamentally different than that of the sighted. Without sighted experience of the world, the blind can only think in abstract terms, their entire existence resembles a mathematical field of distances and theoretical concepts. This in turn limits their emotional capacity, and as their awareness turns inwards (without being able to look outwards), they become, as Condillac also hypothesized, emotionally and morally solipsistic.

Now, sight was an important sense for Enlightenment thinkers, and functioned as a metaphor for all sensory experience, as well as for knowledge, understanding, and sympathy. That being said, the *philosophes* were also cognizant of the transformative power of the sense of taste upon the human body and mind. For Condillac’s statue, the

²⁰⁷ Diderot, “Letter on the Blind,” 80. Original French: “Comme je n’ai jamais douté que l’état de nos organes et de nos sens n’ait beaucoup d’influence sur notre métaphysique et sur notre morale, et que nos idées les plus purement intellectuelles, si je puis parler ainsi, ne tiennent de fort près à la conformation de notre corps” in Denis Diderot, “Lettre sur les Aveugles,” *Œuvres de Denis Diderot. T. 2* (Paris: Deterville, 1800), 178.

²⁰⁸ Diderot, “Letter on the Blind,” 71.

²⁰⁹ Diderot, “Letter on the Blind,” 81.

²¹⁰ Diderot, “Letter on the Blind,” 82.

acquisition of taste is just as powerful and eye-opening as the sense of smell. In fact, taste ultimately

contributes more to its happiness or unhappiness than smell for savours commonly affect it more strongly than odours. It contributes even more to its happiness than harmonious sounds, because the need of food makes savours more necessary, and consequently makes it taste with more eagerness. Hunger can make it unhappy, but as soon as it has noticed the sensations which appease it, it will turn its attention the more to them, will desire them with avidity and enjoy them with more delight.²¹¹

According to this passage, the emotive power of the senses is not lessened by direct association with the body's mechanical needs. Rather, the pleasure of sating one's physical hunger becomes linked to the taste of food itself, making the statue's experience of taste more powerful, more emotive, and more sentimental. Further, once the statue understands the process of incorporating one's tastes into the machine of its body, taste gains yet another, more intimate emotional level.

With this wide awareness of the connection between the body, the senses, and the soul, Enlightenment theories about the moralizing effects of food on the body seem less far-fetched. According to La Mettrie, Diderot, and Condillac, the information garnered through sensory perception is the basis for all conscious thought, and subsequently all moral and emotional development. What you eat therefore goes deeper than the body's mechanical function and penetrates an individual's core, it can determine the health of one's very soul. In this mode of thought, only someone with a fully developed palate and

²¹¹ Condillac, 55-56. Original French: "Le goût peut ordinairement contribuer plus que l'odorat, à son bonheur et à son malheur: car les saveurs affectent communément avec plus de force que les odeurs. Il y contribue même encore plus que les harmonieux; parce que le besoin de nourriture lui rend les saveurs plus nécessaires, et par conséquent les lui fait goûter avec plus de vivacité. La faim pourra la rendre malheureuse: mais dès qu'elle aura remarqué les sensations propres à l'appaiser, elle y déterminera davantage son attention, les désirera avec plus de violence, et en jouira avec plus de délice." From Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Œuvres de Condillac : Traité des sensations. Traité des animaux* (Paris: C. Houel, 1798), 136-7.

understanding of the vast flavours nature has to offer could truly be considered a fully developed moral human being, and thus truly claim to possess “delicacy.”

Both the champions of *la cuisine moderne* and proponents of Rousseau’s agrarian diet sought to simplify the flavours the body experienced, and to ease the body’s digestion of food particles. In *la cuisine moderne*, the experience of the senses is directly linked to efficient and healthy ingestion of food. The emotional connection with one’s food grows naturally out of the lack of pain and blockage caused by digestion and out of the sensations, pleasant or unpleasant, on the taste receptors of the tongue. If the flavours were simple, of the purest essence, the individual could experience the external world as free from impurity and corruption as possible, and thus develop their moral character from the inside-out. Rousseau does not address the physiological realities of eating to the same extent as La Chapelle, Menon and Marin. However, he takes the emotional, sentimental effects of food as a proven fact. The sentimental delicacy of his characters, including his beloved *Émile*, requires training from birth to understand good taste, which in turn determines their ability to perceive goodness and turn away from corruption and artifice. While he omits analysis of the experience of the senses, such an investigation was not out of place in the writings of Diderot or Condillac. Without a refined sense of taste, Rousseau’s characters become emotionally stunted and solipsistic.

The fundamental beliefs and values at the centre of both these traditions were to bring an individual closer to truth, closer to the most unadulterated experience of the world, via one’s food. Thus when “delicate” Parisians dined on the most labour-intensive *restaurants* and enjoyed Rousseauan inspired creams and cheeses, they were not necessarily fatuously mixing cuisines for the sake of conspicuous consumption, as Daniel

Roche might argue. Rather, these fine ladies and gentlemen were also participating in a broader cultural understanding of the role of the senses, and of food, in one's life. They were choosing foods that they believed could best inspire sensation, emotion, and humanity in themselves.

Conclusion

“Food, of course, has to do with nutrition, and therefore has a strong biological connotation. That is, eating food is the way we survive, the way we get our energy and nutrients. Yet for humans, nutrition is only a small part of the story.” (Paul Rozin, “Why We Eat What We Eat, and Why We Worry About It”)²¹²

When I set out to write this thesis, I began with the basic question: “What does it mean for human beings to eat?” Looking back, this was perhaps slightly too broad a question for the scope of my project—I have since filtered this question through an historic time and place, through an unfamiliar and foreign historical culture, through a specific class within that culture, and through many assumptions made both by myself and the scholars whose work has provided the essential foundation for my research. However, despite these filters, despite the insurmountable difficulties of ever fully understanding how people in the past really thought and felt, I have never let go of this question.

Paul Rozin writes that “we spend a lot of time eating. If you add to that the time we spend purchasing food, thinking about food, and earning money to buy food, then engaging in activity associated with food is one of the major ways we spend our time—perhaps second only to sleeping.”²¹³ The people that I focused my research on were not farmers; they were not merchants who brokered meat and grain for their living; they were not hunter-gatherers who needed to scan their environment for food everyday in order to survive; many of them were not even chefs. However, they were all deeply preoccupied

²¹² Paul Rozin, “Why We Eat What We Eat, and Why We Worry About It,” *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 50, No. 5 (Mar., 1997), 26.

²¹³ Rozin, “Why We Eat What We Eat, and Why We Worry About It,” 26.

with the tastes, flavours, smells, effects, and preparation of food. They spent their lives in search of the ultimate flavour combinations and the ideal mechanical composition of food in order to ensure moral purity, and they did this because they believed that it mattered; because no matter what your station in life or the cultural assumptions your thoughts and feelings are filtered through, food is a matter of life and death.

Therefore, as I navigated the cultural and social lives of the aristocrats of Versailles and their urban, Parisian neighbours, learning about their tastes and manners and assumptions, I was really looking for clues about what it meant for them to sit down at a table with their friends, acquaintances, peers, or subordinates and share a meal with them. As I conducted this research, I did not unearth groundbreaking details of unknown culinary practices or reveal any secret dietary perversions of famous historical figures. Rather my findings were most often of a mundane, everyday nature: details about how individuals spent their mealtimes and why. However, these details proved to be integral aspects of the broader cultural milieu of this time and place. The eighteenth century was a time of great culinary innovation; within the Parisian cultural and culinary scene, increasingly central to all French culture, the basic structure and import of mealtimes diverged dramatically from the long-standing traditions of the royal court. This period is also arguably the birth place of modern French cuisine; the innovations in culinary institutions (i.e. dinner parties, the restaurant), practices and flavours at this time laid the groundwork for nineteenth century luminaries such as Auguste Escoffier. In addition to hosting this “*Revolution in Taste*” the culinary elite of the French Enlightenment were deeply fascinated by issues of cuisine, taste, and diet, as well as how these issues related to central cultural, political and educational institutions. Culinary innovations had

widespread impact on many varied aspects of daily life, such as: expressions of social standing (e.g. spectacular and hierarchical court dining as described by Saint-Simon versus displays of conversational wit discussed by Marmontel and Mme. de Stael); developments in health science (e.g. Cartesian, Newtonian, and Lockean descriptions of the physical universe); and situating one's personal moral compass (an issue explored by Hecquet, La Mettrie, Condillac, Diderot and Rousseau).

One common theme throughout my research was the discovery of the many ways food choice was connected to how the “culinary elite” of eighteenth century France crafted their own identities. Whether through choice of flavours, popular dining rituals, topics of dinner conversation, or conscious decisions about what ingredients to put into one's body, decisions related to food could define one's social character as well as one's internal moral compass. Through his research into human psychology, Paul Rozin argues that all humans are driven by our omnivorous nature to place an immense importance on the food quest, and that its importance has a tendency to define our relationships, our social lives, and our very identities. Although the study of all humankind may be slightly outside the scope of a Master's thesis, I was able to show that the “culinary elite” of eighteenth century France were no exception to Rozin's rule. More specifically, in my first chapter I explored how dining rituals associated with the royal Bourbon courts and the urban *salon* culture were connected to social structures and relationships, and how one's performance in both of these settings could determine how others viewed one's social worth, monetary value, and intelligence. Similarly, Mme. de Stael, as she looked back on the *ancien régime*, assumed that participating in lively dinner conversation was an essential component in the education of a well-rounded and intelligent eighteenth

century Frenchman. In my second chapter, I complemented these findings by exploring how proponents of different culinary trends believed the cuisine they supported could affect one's physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Such details about the role of food in the everyday lives of the eighteenth century French culinary-elite may be mundane, but it is their mundanity that makes them so essential for understanding how these individuals perceived the world around them. Food is an intimate and everyday aspect of people's lives, essential to their survival and so closely linked with their social and cultural lives. Exploring these linkages has granted me a unique perspective on how the people I studied made sense of their world and on how they made everyday decisions. These priorities do not radically differ from those we have today—concerns such as social standing, character, friendship, physical health, morality. For example, twenty-first century proponents of local, raw, vegan or organic diets continue to invoke ideas of purity, morality, health science, and even religion to promulgate their version of the “ideal diet.” Further, much like the people of our own era, the people of eighteenth century France could get swept up in fad diets that were propagated by famous authors, doctors, or even religious authorities.

If Rozin's claims are accurate, every human society has placed and will place great social and emotional importance on food intake. However, set in the appropriate historical context, these particular concerns also define what it meant to live and eat in France in the eighteenth century. For example, it is unlikely that the average diet book written in the twenty-first century will pay homage to either the Ancient Romans or Newtonian physics. In this sense, my study allows us to gauge and appreciate historical distance. It is the details of how and why each society chooses certain preferences and

understands this importance of food in a certain way that offers historians a powerful means of understanding the beliefs, fears, and way of life of another culture.

As I indicated in the Introduction of this thesis, I have not set out to redefine how the history of eighteenth century French cuisine is studied. I have relied heavily on past research and existing historical narratives to complete this project. Rather, my objective has been to add greater depth to particular issues that shaped culinary developments in this time and place. In doing so, I have aimed to develop further how historians understand the individuals and the society I studied and the food that they consumed. In particular, I have expanded on Rebecca Spang's (*Invention of the Restaurant*) discussion of the narrativization of cuisine in eighteenth century Europe, highlighting how interest in food was conflated with cosmopolitanism and sensibility. I have also filled in some of the blanks left by Pinkard, Spang, Ferguson and Mennell concerning the relationship between proponents of *la cuisine moderne* and Rousseauian anti-cuisine, bringing to light their mutual relationship to developments in science. Also, while I believe it is impossible to ever truly disentangle eighteenth century French views of health and the perceived emotional investment in eating, I hope that the sources I have brought to light that explore the mechanics and sensuality of eating might aid other historians in understanding the interconnectedness of diet, scientific exploration, and morality.

All that being said, I have barely made a dent in the research potential of culinary history, or even in the potential of culinary history in Enlightenment France. I chose to focus my research on the elite because it included the individuals who determined the ideal standards of "taste," wrote cookbooks, opened restaurants, and enjoyed high-profile dinner parties. However, the "culinary elite" were by no means the only individuals who

engaged socially, physically, emotionally, and spiritually with their food. There were other classes and groups whose perspective on food differed radically from those who were the subject of this thesis; for example, farmers, food and livestock merchants, politicians drawing up food policy, policemen enforcing food policy, minor kitchen servants, butchers. Each one of these groups had a different perspective on the role of food in their everyday lives as well as the connections between their diet and contemporary politics or science. Consequently, each group had a unique perspective on the effects of their food choices on their identities. Further, every era in every country around the world has just as many perspectives to explore and stories to tell. I hope that historians continue to contribute to this ongoing discussion of and debate about the history of food and continue to ask that basic question, “What does it mean for human beings to eat,” because I cannot wait to read all those remarkable stories.

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