

Eating Identity:
Challenging Narratives of Canadianness Through Culinary Identity Building

by
Natalie Ramtahal,
BA Hons. Women's Studies, Equity Studies and Caribbean Studies
Toronto, Ontario, 2003

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Abstract

This MRP will examine how food can be used as a tool for challenging traditional nation stories and growing notions of what it means to be Canadian. There is an opportunity to write and shape a Canadian narrative that is inclusive of its evolving demography while simultaneously reconciling its violent history by developing a Canadian culinary identity. Food is political, social and cultural. Food can bring people together and can provide a platform to have compelling discussions about what it means to be Canadian; who is included in the definition of Canadian; and, how we can develop a sense of Canadianness that speaks to an evolving population.

Historically and at present, Canada's story has often excluded or minimized the cultural, political and social contributions of Indigenous peoples and racialized immigrants. There remains a prevailing sense of Canadian identity being tethered to whiteness despite over a century of global immigration. However, the very idea of what defines Canadianness is relatively tenuous one. There are few traits, markers, or qualities that are seen as characteristically Canadian. This is even more true for Canada's culinary identity. What exactly is Canadian food? Canada, as a nation, is a relatively new country without a clear culinary identity. Further, Canada is an expansive land mass covering different time zones, geographic regions, and climates. To further complicate matters, it is place for people from all over the world to immigrate.

Nowhere is the impact of immigration and the diversity of people more evident than in Toronto. How the city has changed demographically is reflected in the diversification of its culinary landscape. The wide range of available foods reveals and affirms how the appetites and

desires of those that live here have also changed. International foods, restaurants and markets are not only ubiquitous, but a defining characteristic of the city. Where, what and how people eat can provide insight into how historical systems of inequality and colonial narratives persist. Growing and developing Canadian culinary identity is a way of challenging the idea of whiteness as a prerequisite for being Canadian. It is a potential way to acknowledge and include immigrant contributions.

Food is wrapped up in politics of inequality and injustice, just as much as it is in pleasure and desire. Mapping how food is used as a tool that furthers colonization and racist dogma is key for shifting food to a tool for education and understanding. Food has the power to open up conversation and reshape understandings of Canadian identity through developing and defining a distinct Canadian culinary position. If an understanding about Canadian culinary identity is inclusive of its complex and divergent cultural and political history, then perhaps there is an opportunity to rethink Canadian identity as a whole. The goal of this MRP is to establish that food can be used as an ideological intervention that examines, challenges and reimagines Canadian identity.

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Dedication

“Food is everything we are. It's an extension of nationalist feeling, ethnic feeling, your personal history, your province, your region, your tribe, your grandma. It's inseparable from those from the get-go.”

— Anthony Bourdain

He was a teacher and source of inspiration, I dedicate this paper to the late Anthony Bourdain. I would never have started learning, writing, and thinking about food as a force of change if it were not for him all those years ago.

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Introduction

Defining Canadian food is an often complex and convoluted exercise. The axiom of dominant Canadian culture is white, European, Christian, settler, which directly implicates what we think, or do not think about Canadian food. The dominant culture refers to “the side of cultural power to decide what belongs and what does not.” (Szeman & Kaposy, 2011, p. 79), Looking at the current demographic makeup of Canada, immigrants come from over 200 countries with the majority racialized populations based in urban centres, like Toronto (Statistics Canada, 2011). Who is considered Canadian demands rethinking and challenging the attributes, characteristics and features that are deemed tantamount to being Canadian. Challenging dated notions of who and what is Canadian is a complex undertaking. At play are numerous factors such as settler colonialism, immigration and neoliberal markets that have been instrumental in shaping Canada into the country that it is today. In order to have these conversations, the history of exploitation of racialized people, their bodies and their food cultures must be looked at critically. However, one way to engage and encourage conversation is by using food as an aperture for examining and challenging discourse around Canadian identity politics. My research examines Canadian identity through the lens of food as a means of challenging and growing ideas of what it means to be Canadian. Developing a culinary identity is a progressive undertaking that allows Canadian identity to be developed with reflections on its history while acknowledging and grappling with its ever changing demography and culture.

The simplest definition of identity refers to “who we think we are, but also who others think we are” (Sloan, 2013, p. 20). Canadian identity is deeply preoccupied with the notion of

multiculturalism. The *Multiculturalism Act, 1985*, underpins what is deemed a fundamental Canadian value. The concepts of Canadian identity and Canadian food are impacted by the dogma of multiculturalism. But, multiculturalism as a neoliberal principle is not without complications. Even though Canada has taken a formal stance, committing to equality and diversity, it does not and has not stopped or erased the practice of racial discrimination (Maynard, 2017). The idea of multicultural foods is similarly dogged by legacies of colonial thinking (Walcott, 2016). However, dialogue over and about food can encourage discussions that move well beyond the realm of eating to topics that range from prosaic to enlightening. Using food as a tool for critical and ambitious conversations about national identity, race, multiculturalism and cultural appropriation is innovative (Brayton & Millington, 2011, p. 185). Much like Canadian identity is an enigmatic matter, what is classified as Canadian food remains just as undecided and ambiguous. The ethnic, cultural and linguistic composition of Canada has transformed and will continue to do so as long as immigration is the primary source of growth. Therefore, reimagining Canadian identity and food means opening up and confronting deeply held beliefs about what it is to be Canadian.

Immigration is at the heart of Canadian identity and politics. The movement of a person from one part of the world to another can profoundly impact their sense of self and identity. In moving to a new country people “take with them only part of the total culture” (Hall & du Gay, 1996, p. 54). The connections to old lands while in a new country also creates a tension between old and new identities (Sloan, 2013). The reality is that our “identities are never unified. In late modern times, they have become increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across difference, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices

and positions” (Hall & du Gay, p. 4). The experiences of Canadian immigrants are often bound up in this complex and chaotic reality. The context of location, where they come from and where they are now, shapes immigrant existence and experiences. Assumptions and stereotypes also inform how Canadian society sees and interacts with new immigrants. For Canadians, new and old, who straddle various cultural, ethnic and/or religious worlds, their identities are constantly negotiated and renegotiated (Hall & du Gay, 1996; Sloan, 2013). History, geography, economics, socialization and political realities can have a profound impact on one’s feelings of being Canadian, or not. Identity is not stagnant; identities shift, develop, change and/or transform over time (Nash, 2009; Hall & du Gay, 1996). Defining Canadian identity is a messy business.

Nowhere is this chaos more evident than when international foods are recreated in Canada. Foods from various regions can act as a portal into understanding other humans by revealing facets of their culture; providing insight into a country or region’s history; and, even providing information about its geographic location (Filson & Adekunle, 2017). At its best, eating foods outside of the dominant culture is more than simply acquiring sustenance, it is a form of pleasure, entertainment and conviviality (Ashley, Hollows, Jones & Taylor, 2004). Positive eating experiences can turn into opportunities for learning, understanding, engagement, discussion and building empathy (Abarca, 2004). At its worst, food can be a battleground for politics, challenges to tradition, cultural appropriation, culinary tourism and reinforcing stereotypes (Chez, 2011). “Meals unite and divide. They connect those who share them, confirm their identities as individuals and as a collectivity, and reinforce their mutual bonds” (Parasecoli, 2008, p. 128). Conversations around food have shifted as food culture has evolved as a result of immigration, multiculturalism, media and travel (Ashley, et al., 2004; Parasecoli, 2008; Filson &

Adekunle, 2017). All of these factors have impacted the ever-evolving availability of multicultural foods in Toronto.

Toronto is a hub for international foods. The growth of a particular ethnic group's restaurants and food shops is usually indicative of significant migration of those people to a particular region (Agarwal & Dahm, 2013). International cuisines served up in small grocers and independent restaurants add to Toronto's diversity. According to the Toronto Star, 51.5% of Torontonians identify as a visible minority (Ballingall, 2017). The food establishments in the city reflect this reality. Food, and in particular international cuisines, can act as a medium for communicating and storytelling the narratives of the people who have immigrated to Toronto and now call it home (Mossberg & Eide, 2017). The foods that are created and served in Toronto speak to the city's diversity and multiculturalism. Conceptually, multiculturalism is deeply tied to Canadian identity. However, according to Madison, Fairfield and Harris (2000) it is a concept that is still debated as it fails to look at anything other than census numbers. In Canada, the word multiculturalism is used to define Canadian identity and speak to its politics of inclusion both nationally and globally (Thobani, 2007; Wolcott, 2016). Yet, Canada still clings to tired notions of what Canadian society and Canadians citizens should look like. And, ultimately, what Canadian foods should or should not be.

The way that people apperceive food and relate to foods from different cultures is not incidental. It happens in the wider context of Canadian history and globalization. Canada's history of discord with Indigenous and racialized peoples informs the way that Canadians connect with and eat those foods from those groups. Indigenous people and racialized immigrants in Canada have historically been interrogated, treated with disdain, and left out of

history books (Maynard, 2017; Janer, 2007). Historically, and at present, their value is assessed by what they can do for Canada economically and/or personally (Government of Canada, n.d.; Razack, Smith, Thobani, & Arat-Koç, 2010). As it stands, immigrants need to fulfill a purpose compatible with either or both of these criteria. It is precisely this problematic history and relational thinking that inform interactions and consumption of immigrant foods. If a nation's cuisine is understood to be a form of cultural articulation and an extension of its people, how those people fit into Canada's story is an important point of consideration. If the foods of immigrants are consumed by people who deny their validity and experiences as Canadian, this is effectively racism in practice. Seeing the connection does not require a great mental leap. It does, however, require thinking about food as something beyond sustenance and requires further probing about the implications to eating foods made by non-dominant cultures (Abarca 2004; Chez, 2011; Brayton & Millington, 2011). Eating in restaurants that serve international cuisine can be used as an opportunity to educate, explore and find commonality (Ashley et al., 2004). There is, however, another side of eating foods produced by immigrants and racialized people that bell hooks warns us of, and that is the place where the dominant culture believes that their consumption and superficial participation in acts of eating, traveling and engaging with racialized immigrant people "represents a progressive change in white attitudes" (Scapp & Seitz, 1998). Failing to confront racism and question rhetoric around immigration, immigrants, Indigenous and racialized people, perpetuates discrimination and harms people who are essential to the very existence of Canada (Holland, 2014). Food studies is one way that thinking about culture, identity and politics can be reframed and rethought.

Learning and critically engaging with the cultures whose foods we consume is important (Ashley, et al., 2004; Chez, 2011). Failing to recognize the culture, traditions, labour and environmental contributions that go into producing cuisine is a failure to genuinely respect that culture and the food. For anyone living in Canada knowing and understanding the dominant culture is a necessity, it is expected and it is the norm. Not understanding the norms, rules, customs and laws can have consequences. It can literally be a matter of life and death (Maynard, 2017). But, the dominant culture is not held to the same standard in learning about other cultures. Instead, people, places and foods can be thrilling experiences and can offer mysterious delights for those with money, interest and any inclination to do so (Ashley, et al., 2004). Tourism, with respect to both food and travel is an exercise in privilege and a reality of globalization (Parasecoli, 2008; Padilla, 2008; Razack et al., 2010). “The most sophisticated thing is to be in the new exotica. To be at the leading edge of modern capitalism is to eat fifteen different cuisines in any one week... If you are just getting in from Tokyo, via Harare, you come in loaded, not with ‘how everything was the same’ but how wonderful it is, that everything is different.” (McClintock et al., 1997, p. 181). Being well-versed in foods and cultures that are different from your own can be an indicator of your own cultural competence, enlightenment and worldliness. This quest for exciting new experiences, gratification and entertainment is a feature of the time, place and culture that we live in.

Thinking, consuming and talking about food can all be pleasurable acts. Food needs to be thought of part of a greater neoliberal imperative - the pleasure industry (Padilla, 2008; Scapp & Seitz, 1998). Examining food as a form of pleasure and an inherent part of the pleasure industry is a crucial for assessing the ways in which food, people and places are imagined by the

dominant culture. Padilla (2008) situates pleasure, sexuality and human desires as critical points of examination for both food and sex. Food and sex are both physical and cognitive experiences. Both can be manifestations of white supremacy and neoliberalism working intrinsically and in tandem. Destinations like the Caribbean, parts of Asia and South America are often viewed as cheap and accessible playgrounds for wealthy tourists with unapologetic desires. This is effectively a continuation of colonial narratives (Padilla, 2008; Janer, 2007). The dominant culture and those with the financial means can perpetuate and reinforce historical legacies of racism using and treating racialized bodies and non-Western countries as things to be conquered and used for their pleasure (Razack et al., 2010). These stereotypes and power imbalances continue to exist when people from those places who have been deemed cheap and accessible move to Canada (Ashley, et al., 2004). These perceptions are not without consequence.

There is a need to change the conversation and grow the understanding of what Canadian is. Capitalism, racism, sexism and the patriarchy are systems that provide the framework for Canadian life and experiences. Without question, the dominant culture benefits from these systems of inequality (Janer, 2007; Maynard, 2017; Parasecoli, 2008; Walcott, 2016). Food is one of the most efficient and direct ways that people can access a culture. It can be an entry point for people to engage in meaningful conversations that change how we think of Canadian identity. Because “food is always more than just food. Every act of consumption says something about the universe that we make for ourselves. A whole range of food choices engages fundamental beliefs that connect the individual to a group, a community and a country” (Ferguson, 2014, p. 62). This leads me to believe that food can be a catalyst for engaging deep and critical discussions on the issues of race, immigration and identity politics.

Food can be the opening for understanding and connection. Holland (2012) identifies humans as social beings that build empathy and compassion through relations, “people cannot like or love people what they don’t see or interact with... friendship and love emerge when people share activities, proximity, familiarity and status.” (Holland, 2012, p. 19). Using and developing a culinary identity as an entryway for writing a history that is inclusive and reflexive of Indigenous and racialized immigrant experience is an approach that is worth considering. This idea is an attempt to build understanding and empathy between Canadians. It is important to challenge concepts and legacies of race and racism with new and novel approach that engages not only people of colour in conversations about identity, but all Canadians, including white Canadians. Changing attitudes and perceptions about who is Canadian will not come quickly, but it is important to consider ways of having conversations that invigorate and encourage inquiry of challenging topics in accessible ways. While our own food consumption can be a mirror for our identities, it can potentially be a place for exploration, building connection, awareness and inclusion with others.

Research Methodologies

The goal of this research is to think about food as a tool to build understanding and empathy through conversations that challenge the popular discourse of Canadian identity. It is a critical contemplation on how and why we cling to these vestiges of white, European identity that bear little resemblance to what Canada, and in particular Toronto, look like today.

My research will be guided by the two following questions:

RQ1: Can food be used to build empathy between Canadians through eating and storytelling?

RQ2: By developing a distinct Canadian culinary identity, can the stories and experiences of Indigenous people and racialized immigrants be included in the Canadian narrative?

Theoretical writing in critical race and food studies will serve as the architecture of my research which will build upon the works of Maynard, Thobani, Hall and hooks, to explore and extrapolate how racism operates and continues to shape Canada's relationship with racialized immigrants and Indigenous people. Moreover, I will analyze how racism has served as a tool necessary for creating physical and psychological divisions and hierarchies between Canadians, new and old, white and racialized. Interrogating Canada's relationship with racialized immigrants is important for understanding how the concept of multiculturalism acts as a flimsy veneer of a unified Canada while doing little to change or challenge systems of inequality. Our perceptions of who and what we think of as Canadian is key to confronting these systems that divide us. For example, the foods, of which there are few, are considered Canadian are devoid of any immigrant or Indigenous influence. Rather, the foods that we see tied to any Canadian identity are more localized or regional creations. The most common examples are connected to the pleasure of eating, rather than sustenance.

Padilla's, *Caribbean Pleasure Industry: Tourism, Sexuality and AIDS in the Dominican Republic* (2008) draws important links between enduring European settler colonialism, globalization and racism in the form of human exploitation. The places in the Caribbean that he refers to, count as part of, and an approximation of, other racialized regions of the world that see

the people of these places as pre-modern, primal and unaffected by the movement of time and modernity. Padilla unpacks the ways in which the dominant culture has the ability to exercise freedoms and consummate their desires in a constant and asymmetrical relationship of power. Framing food as a production of labour for someone else's pleasure is an important and necessary comparison to draw. Food and sex are sensory experiences often with pleasure as a direct outcome. Racialized bodies are wrapped in meanings imposed upon by society, and so is food. Food as a cultural production is also subject to stereotypes, expectations, judgment and politics. Moreover, food, like sex, can be seen as congruous to the pleasure industry in that it can be labour for the benefit of the dominant culture.

The works of Ashley, Hollows, Jones & Taylor, Chez, Gunew and Ferguson see food as a place of convergence for discussions on globalization, white supremacy and nationalism. In an examination of Canada, immigration has been the foundation for growth economically and demographically. Various waves of immigration have impacted cities and neighborhoods, one notable change has been in terms of culinary diversity in cities like Toronto. Cultural production in the form of international foods is a defining feature of Toronto. The production, consumption and proliferation of immigrant foods are not without political, social and economic baggage. Food, without question, is political and it has become an increasingly important domain for discussions about identity politics in both personal and national contexts. Understanding that eating is both a bodily and cultural experience is important.

In my discussion, I will look at how food has become a battleground filled with social and political meaning. But, I will suggest that it can also be used as platform for education and discussion.

Literature Review

Racism, Communities and Nationalist Discourse and Why This Matters in Discussions About Food

The creation of the dominant Canadian identity as white, European, Christian, settler, as the ideal also simultaneously created an antagonist and undesirable identity. This oppositional identity was created “by marginalizing, dispossessing, displacing and forgetting other ethnicities” (Hall & du Gay, 1996, p. 448). The foundation of Canadian identity is built on racism based on the exploitation of non-white people. “Deeply rooted in its earliest stages of development, is that the citizenship rights of settlers, nationals, and immigrants remain based in the institution of white supremacy” (Thobani, 2007). Despite Canada’s resistance to anyone outside of the dominant image settling here, Canada needed Indigenous and racialized bodies to build this country. According to Paur (2017), the very act of marking bodies as racialized is a form of denigrating and impairing them. Defining people using racial markers immediately separates and denies them full status. But, it also serves as an important mechanism for justification for treating racialized people differently. In the case of Canada, it absolved the colonizers of any culpability in the exploitation and abuse racialized bodies in the name of Canadian economic and political interests. Racialized people worked in its fields, built industry, laid tracks, took care of their children and did whatever it took to industrialize and monetize this country to fully participate in neoliberal market systems. Canada’s population growth is specifically tied to economic development. Consequently, those labourers who worked to build the country, were subject to racism, discrimination and injustice (Troper, 2017, para. 1). State

sanctioned racism came in the form of exclusionary laws and policies in an attempt to keep the ideal Canada and Canadians white.

Today, Canada's demography has changed since its early colonial and settler beginnings. Racialized Canadians, in urban centres like Toronto have changed the city. Immigration experiences of racialized people "might be characterized as the B-side of historical and contemporary discourses of globalization, diasporic experiences tend to reference and point directly to the ongoing traumas and injustices of the pre-modern, the modern and postmodern worlds" (Walcott, 2016, p. 21). Historical racism, xenophobia and ignorance have fueled assumptions and placed valuations on immigrant groups, and their food cultures in disparate ways. In Canadian history, the stories of non-white immigrants are treated as relatively inconsequential. Racialized immigrants perpetually have to confront and defend their legitimacy as Canadians. This prevents diasporic immigrants and racialized people from the full affordance of a Canadian identity. Inconsistent access to rights and privileges have been maintained by clinging to problematic usage of labels such as immigrants, "newcomers, new Canadians, and visible minorities, even after they acquire de jure status as citizens" (Thobani, 2007, p. 76). One can infer by this logic then, so too are their foods. Here is where we need to think about what Canadian cuisine is and what foods are reflective of Canadian identity.

Historical beliefs about race, identity and ethnicity still influence who and what is included in the definition of Canadian identity and Canadian cuisine. Stereotypes and misinformation about immigrants and nationalist notions persist. These ideas do not just form a basis for judgment, they heavily influence how people are valued and what, which includes cultural productions, including foods. In terms of food and food culture, the dominant culture

still looks to Europe, specifically France, as bastions of culinary sophistication. This is predicated on the idea that Europeans were the preferred races for integration into Canada (Thobani, 2007).

“The subordination of Indigenous and many other culinary knowledges made possible the establishment of the superiority of French cuisine as the culinary expression of Europeans modernity and rationality” (Janer, 2007, p. 391). The legacy of European cuisines, in particular French cuisine, is the established standard of fine dining and culinary sophistication. This relationship is exemplified in the highly regarded and internationally acclaimed resources such as the Michelin Guide and the San Pellegrino’s list of The World's 50 Best Restaurants.

Food is a form of cultural production, much like music, writing and art, and it is intimately tied to identity and nationalism (Anderson, 2006). It is what Ferguson (2014) describes as “culinary nationalism” which:

surfaces in a manifest sense of superiority in recipes, products, attitude, policies that protect French products, and cooking competitions that promote French cuisine. More generally, a sense of manifest destiny enables the French to imagine themselves as a community - and ultimately an entire country (p.28).

In stark contrast, cuisine from places outside of Europe are readily categorized as cheap ethnic foods (Abarca, 2004; Janer 2007; Ray, 2007). However, Janer (2007) reminds us that all cuisines have a living contemporary culture with their own “rules, techniques and epistemology” (p. 393). This is yet another way that non-Europeans are denied their identity and culinary traditions, and their value is undermined.

This, to a large extent, has to do with how immigrants from various regions are appraised and valued, revealing a complex interplay between race, class, gender, location and nationalistic

attitudes (Razack, et al., 2010). It is often impossible to separate people from their markers such as race, gender and ability, and the perceived value attached to these attributes. This raises questions about where and when multicultural foods are recognized or lauded in Toronto and by whom. Being reviewed or written up in newspapers like the Globe and Mail, magazines like Toronto Life and/or online on websites like BlogTO, reveals an acceptance of specific foods and restaurants. When multicultural foods are recognized and publicized in major media outlets it proves that those foods have become desirable, fashionable and accepted by the dominant culture. “What is good to eat, bad to eat, wrong to eat and impossible to eat, are profoundly cultural questions” (Ashley, et al., p.187). In Toronto, people from all over the world come here to live. It is a diverse and cosmopolitan city. In its story of multiculturalism and diversity, commodity culture is fueled by perceived differences between people and ethnicities. “Ethnicity becomes the spice and seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture (Scapp & Seitz, 1998, p. 181). Moreover, multicultural foods act as an exotic pleasure, or a conceptual getaway.

The everyday banality of eating international foods can be a pedestrian form of racism that gets little thought or analysis (Holland, 2012). The concern with the proliferation of international foods in Canada is that it “represents a false notion that it is free from the grip of xenophobia. Gastronomical acceptance while treating ethnic minorities as second class citizens and preventing them from obtaining equal access to social, education and political life” is extremely problematic (Abarca, 2004, pp. 6-7). It is another instance where racism in another seemingly innocuous form persists (Razack et al., 2010; Maynard 2017). Immigrants, and in particular racialized immigrants who eat their native foods, and/or eat them in a specific way,

can reveal a failure to assimilate to the dominant culture (Chez, 2011). However, the opposite is true for white adults who can eat immigrant foods but are perceived as modern, sophisticated, worldly and open to other cultures (Chez, 2011). “The privilege of invisibility of being white throughout history means that white people have the ability to indulge in racially coded commodities and cultural practices without experiencing the burden of being different” (Brayton & Millington, 2011, p. 194). However, this act of eating racialized, international foods cannot be falsely interpreted as being open to people and experience; it can actually be another form of exploitation if we are not careful. “Food tourism is a type of colonialism and consists of a further colonization and appropriation of the subjugated other” (Gunew, 2000, p. 229). Racialized immigrants and Indigenous people do not have the ability to subvert their race, they live and breathe their racial identities (Walcott, 2016).

Ideas about ethnicity and ethnic identity are crucial for how we organize and define “Canadianness,” particularly when we ground our perceptions about ethnicity in difference (Hall & du Gay, 1996). English and French are understood as the roots of Canadian identity and this is further indoctrinated through recognition of English and French as official languages. From the lens food culture there are few foods that are of either English or French heritage that can be considered quintessentially Canadian. If we examine Canada’s British and French roots, there is very little in the way of English or French culinary tradition. Surveying Canada and Canadian food should mean accounting for the influx of global immigration from slavery to the present. Despite Canadian pride and self-congratulations regarding our seemingly progressive policies on immigration, citizenship and refugee policies, the existence and validity of those bodies entering our borders is constantly challenged and fought by nationalist ideals (Thobani, 2007). “Race will

always remain a salient element of Canadian citizenship” (Walcott, 2016, p. 39-40). This connection to race as a marker of belonging, extends to the way that we consider which foods belong and which are excluded from Canadian discourse. Food can be used to either unite people or identify people as outsiders (Filson & Adekunle, 2017).

There is an intrinsic and deeply historical connection between the subjugation of racialized bodies and neoliberal economies. Democracies, like Canada operate in a two-fold way, “they are as much about structuring state-sanctioned unfreedoms as they are about structuring and providing reforms in relation to the constant evolution of the market and the population” (Walcott, 2016, p. 105). This economic requirement compounded by the fact that Canada has always been a place intended as a place for white, European expansion resulted in a country with specific ideas about what Canadians look and act like. Diversification of Canada’s population was never a planned outcome. This disruption to Canada’s white European expansion had severe consequences for racialized immigrants. Bradley (2016) connects how the perceptions of immigrant people have in the past, and continue today, to create anxiety and disrupt an ostensibly unified national consciousness. When mass immigration occurs, there is a sense that resources will be stretched far beyond capacity and that the very foundation of society and culture will be eroded. Nationalistic attitudes ensure that the dominant country sees itself in opposition to other countries and identities (Bradley, 2016). This very fable continues in Canada despite the work of Indigenous people and racialized immigrants in shaping and contributing to its economic success.

So What Does This Mean for Canadian Cuisine?

Despite dissenting opinions about immigration over the course of Canadian history, the movement of people to Canada has been critical in shaping the food landscape, and more specifically, Toronto. It is important to note here, that there is no unified Canadian cuisine that can be defined in a systematic way. A strong Canadian culinary tradition does not exist. In order for culinary nationalism to take hold, an identity needs to be established through produce, dishes, imagery and written works (Ferguson, 2014). In the United States, the attitude and style of food make it distinctive, rather than a unique or defined culinary code (Ferguson, 2014). The same argument, however, cannot be made for Canadian food. There are a few foods that are even thought of as Canadian. Although poutine, Montreal smoked meat, butter tarts and Nanaimo bars, are thought of as Canadian staples, those foods are more regional productions, rather than foods representative of Canada more widely. Moreover, these foods fail to take into consideration the contributions of immigrants and Indigenous people while simultaneously reinforcing French culinary traditions as the yardstick in which we measure our culinary contributions (Janer, 2007). If a Canadian culinary identity and tradition develops, it should not only consider the produce that is grown in Canada, but it should also mirror the culinary contributions of those that have immigrated here and those who have always been here.

The influx of immigrant populations has translated into the emergence and convergence of culturally diverse food shops such as grocery stores or restaurants (Filson & Adekunle, 2017; Agarwal & Dahm, 2013). The establishment of immigrant communities necessarily correlates with the emergence of international restaurants growing throughout a city (Agarwal and Dahm, 2015). When immigrants build small businesses such as restaurants, they are able to gain some

control and agency by developing and creating their own cultural foods. The foods that they produce can be for the dominant group, members from the same culture and/or people who have the means and are interested in eating those foods (Gunew, 2000). Cooking, baking and other forms of food production requires knowledge, skills, talent and expertise (Abarca, 2004). Food is a form of culture, knowledge production and storytelling. Culinary identities help create and define a cohesive story through food. “Each community acknowledges certain elements of its culinary tradition, enhancing its identity only when exposed to other communities that produce different kinds of food” (Parasecoli, 2008, p. 139). Eating international cuisine in Toronto means understanding the story of those foods through continuously comparing, contrasting and assessing those cuisines against one another as well as foods produced by the dominant culture.

Immigrant groups have created and recreated their cuisine in Canada. Some of those foods were adopted into mainstream culture, such as pasta, taco kits and bagels. These foods have effectively become invisible and no longer associated with a particular cultural or ethnic group. However, many international foods have not been so easily adopted. Abarca (2004) notes that there are some foods that have remained outsiders despite their long histories in Canada and the ease of access, such as Chinese, Japanese and even Indigenous cuisines. Even from a relatively surface inspection, the foods that have remained on the periphery of Canadian food, are foods from racialized communities. This is not to say that these cuisines are not established or available in cities like Toronto, rather these foods are not readily accepted as part of the spectrum of restaurants or foods that are expressly considered Canadian, or even hyphenated Canadian. These foods are often, despite their histories, tied to notions of tradition, culture and ethnicity that exist on the periphery of what is considered truly Canadian (Abarca, 2004). This

does not mean that these foods are not popular or readily sought. Eating international foods is a relatively affordable privilege and leisure that is available in cities like Toronto.

The appetite for multicultural foods has been propelled by forces other than immigration. Television, social media, the rise of foodie-ism, culinary tourism and celebrity chefs have had a profound effect on shaping our desires for exotic flavours (Ray, 2007; Chez, 2011). The proliferation of international cuisine in Toronto has fueled major changes in the culinary landscape. Conversations about race, authenticity, and cultural appropriation and what this means for small multicultural food businesses have come to the forefront. Despite dissenting opinions of immigration over the course of Canadian history, globalization and immigration have been critical in shaping the food landscape of Canada, and more specifically, Toronto. Sloan (2013) deepens the discussion stating that food can be used “positively or negatively in assertions of identity, both scenarios reflect the powerful relationship food and drink have with ethnicity” (p. 41). Ashley, et al. (2004) optimistically point out that this availability of exotic and international food products fuels learning and culinary enrichment for consumers. Which plays into the multicultural neoliberal story that Canada is open, compassionate and accepting of others (Thobani, 2007). While food can be a gateway for understanding, having food diversity can “empower the consumer and the cosmopolitan food emporium can become an adventure playground for everyone” (Ashley, et al. p. 98). And, establishments that serve food can act as community spaces where community members can come together to socialize and where they can connect with foods that provide a symbolic and cultural connection to their homelands (Abarca, 2004).

Carving out safe spaces for early racialized immigrants to connect with community members would have been a challenge in early Canadian history. Flagrant racism in the form of exclusionist foreign policies ensured that racialized immigrants were made to feel unwelcome and would eventually leave Canada. Racism, according to Stuart Hall (Hall & du Gay, 1996), “operates by constructing impassable boundaries between racially constructed categories, and its typically binary systems of representation constantly masks and attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belongingness and otherness” (p. 446). This very principle is illustrated by Brayton and Millington’s (2011) discussion about the hospitality industry’s past practice of actively lobbying for white-only hiring practices for front-of-the house staff, up until 1938. However, even today, we see bias playing out in the restaurant business through the occupational segregation of spaces. Frequently hidden away from customer view are kitchen staff who are often low-wage, racialized immigrant workers, while front-of-the-house staff are more likely to be white, local and young (Ray, 2007). This is not a trivial matter. Earning potential for front-of-the-house staff is greater, as front-of-the-house staff can earn tips and they are not subject to the same physical demands of the kitchen. It is not enough to simply point out the asymmetry of labour (Thobani, 2007). The very foundations on which these inequities are built need to be challenged. Puar (2017) forces us to think about the ways that certain bodies are exploited and imprisoned by capitalist interests in these very spaces that produce multicultural foods for the dominant culture. Systems that Lugost (2013) defines as, “political and economic interests that are always likely to be entangled in the interaction of food, drink and ethnicity” (Sloan, p. 4). Today, neoliberal interests are continually served through the exploitation of racialized bodies in the dominant discourse.

Multiculturalism, Identity and Food as Cultural Appropriation

Canadian identity is wrapped up in more than just white settler ideals. Canada has undergone significant demographic change. The 1970's marked a substantive change in the rhetoric around Canadian immigration. The Liberal government under the direction of former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, had committed to multiculturalism in 1971 as an indicator of progress and social change (Burnet, 2011). "Multiculturalism a portmanteau term for anything from minority discourse to post-colonial critique" (Hall & du Gay, 1996, p. 55). The idealistic theory behind multiculturalism was to promote intercultural encounters, create exchange in hopes of developing a sense of national unity (Brayton & Millington, 2011). The Canadian concept of multiculturalism has changed and evolved over the course of its history and still remains highly contested. It is, however, a term that is considered a virtue of being Canadian (Walcott, 2016; Brayton & Millington, 2011).

Canada has struggled to recognize racialized people and their various cultures as being included in the idea of Canadian identity. Historically, Canada "fought to constrain the movement of mainly non-white migrants into national spaces, which had formerly been imagined, represented and performed themselves as entirely white" (Walcott, 2016, p. 79). This is a far cry from Canada's current position as a multicultural haven celebrating equality for all, regardless of race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion, as declared in *The Multiculturalism Act, 1985*. Thobani (2007) readily interrogates the adoption of the multicultural narrative. She states, that while it bodes well for Canada on the global stage, it has done nothing to change or challenge continuing discourse of whiteness as a requirement of Canadian identity. More to the point, when we are discussing international foods as part of the Canadian identity,

the fissures in the romantic multicultural fairytale become more apparent. “Food can be a novel way of understanding and explaining some of the pointed paradoxes of multiculturalism and the management of ethnicity” (Brayton & Millington, 2011, p. 185). Food and culinary traditions have the ability to encourage and deepen discussions about immigration, diversity and multiculturalism, and what that means in the Canadian context.

The proliferation of various global cuisines in Toronto has fueled major changes in the culinary landscape. Food as a form of cultural production can be tied to personal identity, national identity and patriotism (Anderson, 2006). What we put into our bodies and what we do not speaks volumes about how we interact with the world around us. It also reveals how we want people to understand and connect with us. Food is an extension of our habits, identity, politics and socio-economics (Johnston, Rodney & Szabo, 2012). But, in the greater context of Canada, global foods are not truly embraced as part of the Canadian and multicultural narrative. Abarca (2004) warns us that we need to be cautious and critical of the foods that remain “exotic” and “ethnic” outsiders and which ones become “naturalized” and “indigenized” (p. 18). Elaborating on this Sloan (2013), challenges us to think about this battle between insiders and outsiders of Canadian identity. Our identities are both parts who we think we are, and who other people think we are, and our identities are an ongoing performance on individual, national and international levels. “Where and what we eat provides a way of communicating our choices to others” (Nash, 2009). Who gets to participate in conversations of identity are just as important as who is not.

When thinking about Canadian national identity it is impossible to separate out the idea of multiculturalism. The concept that international markets and restaurants are gauges of successful multiculturalism is the most benign form of recognizing cultural difference (Gunew,

2000). Eating international foods allows consumers to perform the act of eating within a multicultural narrative perpetuating the Canadian neoliberal myth that immigrants, newcomers and racialized groups are equally a part of the Canadian story (Thobani, 2007). Canada continues to benefit from immigrant labour and culture. “Emphasizing the labour involved in the reproduction of cultural practices works, on some level, against the politics of assimilation by insisting on a historically grounded sense of cultural specificity and by maintaining an ethnic difference that in turn provides the self with authority to speak” (Gunew, 2000, p. 229). From its immigrants, Canada gets access to global cultural production, such as cuisines, which is what makes Canada “great without actually threatening to transform, or actually change” the country (Chez, 2011, pp. 243-4). This thinking works the other way too. When international cuisine is produced in Toronto, it can be seen monolithic and trapped in time, failing to evolve or vary (Janer, 2007). “There is a lamentable tendency to see globalization as a process lending inexorably to the homogenization of culture, which contributes to a theoretical flatness in the conceptualization of global and lack of attention to local texture and variability” (Padilla, 2008, p. 23). As an example, Indian food is nuanced, regional, and has changed as a result of its immigration to this city. However, nearly every Indian restaurant in Toronto is expected to have butter chicken on the menu, even though butter chicken is specific to Northern Indian cuisine (Pashman, 2017). The history of this dish, where it comes from, the availability of ingredients, the produce, spices, herbs, cooking vessels and vegetables are all instrumental in making the dish. The concept of “eatymology” is raised by Parasecoli (2008), which he describes as:

the information concerning the origin and development of specific products, norms and dishes, as well as their diffusion and hybridization through commerce, cultural expansion,

colonization, migration and tourism. Their interpretation in different cultures. The meanings and practices attached to them. And, even their ideological value in different political and social contexts. (p. 134)

Failing to understand that these are all critical aspects of food, particularly immigrant foods, is a failure to give credit to the way that cultures change and acclimatize to the locations that they are in.

When a food from a particular ethnic group is treated as singular, unsophisticated and unchanging, the dominant culture continues to believe that the people themselves are just that, stereotypes, symbols of otherness and immutable. Moreover, it forces an entire group of people into a single representational entity. There is an assumption that a single category captures and befits the people and the cuisine. They are not given the space to have cultural nuance or difference (Hall, 1996). Chez (2011) suggests that participating in culture through the consumption of its cuisine does not threaten the social order of society or challenge its sense of identity. This falls into the realm of what Brayton and Millington (2011) call “‘coercive mimeticism’ - where the ethnic subject is recognized in dominant discourses insofar as they resemble the stereotype” or plays into the expectations of what is deemed to be acceptable and recognizable versions of their ethnicity, and/or cuisine (p. 194). Non-European foods can be treated as exotica and as a proxy for experiencing different places and people (Parasecoli, 2008). Even through the production of food, racialized immigrants can be held within the trappings of otherness and outsidership, existing only as a multicultural farce.

On the other hand, eating out and eating diverse foods is a form of cultural participation that can be reflective of one’s experience, knowledge and sophistication. Food acts as a form of

communication revealing aspects of our identity and lives (Bradley, 2017; Nash, 2009). One form of our cultural capital is captured in our “foodie expertise” including dining experiences and food choices (Ashley et al., 2004). Eating out is marked by social and class divisions (Ashley et al., 2004; Johnston et al., 2012). Those who cannot participate in dining out and multicultural eating, or who do not have an interest in experiencing global cuisine, or, show an aversion to other cultures, are considered culturally impoverished, unsophisticated and ignorant (Arbaca, 2004; Ashley et al., 2004; Johnston et al., 2012). Moreover, disparate class inequalities are growing both nationally and globally (Razack et al., 2010). There is a “dynamic interplay of meanings around food as a luxury, and food as a necessity” (Ashley et al., 2004). The lack of interest, curiosity and means is a personal defect.

There is a lot to be gained in exploring culture through food including gratification and information. Experience, entertainment and pleasure, are words that capture how we often view dining at restaurants. Experiential eating, that is consuming food in the pursuit of indulgence and enjoyment, is a relatively new phenomenon (Mossberg & Eide, 2017; Ashley, et al. 2004). Restaurants that serve international cuisine for the dominant culture and foodies actively peddle culture for consumption and pleasure. Income, time, autonomy, and age can all play significant factors into whether or not one can eat out at restaurants (Ashley, et al. 2004). Where and what we eat can hold significant cultural capital. However, to buy into the idea of eating out as consumers, we also need to accept the idea that we are getting something not available and/or something better than what is available inside our own kitchens and homes. There are several elements that cannot be easily duplicated including atmosphere, service, beverage list and cachet, just as much as the food (Ashley, et al. 2004). Information about our class “is continually made

through symbolic and material” payment (Johnston, et al., 2012, p. 1093). Our value as humans can be tied to these unique experiences. For example, eating sushi, using chopsticks at a high-end restaurant may be tell-tale signs of someone’s exposure to other cuisines and perhaps, even their level of openness to trying foods that are not typical of the dominant culture, their financial means and their food preferences are also features that can be observed (Ashley et al., 2004). What foods someone chooses to eat may not reveal all aspects of their personality, but it can be a mirror of their values and desires.

Cuisines follows trends and fashion. Incidents of cultural appropriation seem almost inevitable when foods become popular. When white chefs, restaurateurs or business owners culturally co-opt international foods, questions arise around the politics of claiming a cuisine or food outside of their own culture. Celebrity chef Rick Bayless has been heavily criticised for selling Mexican cuisine despite his white, Oklahoman origins. As a white chef, Bayless has been said to have refined Mexican cuisine and made it more palatable and accessible to other white people. Mexican food typically, is seen by the dominant culture as cheap, basic and crude. Bayless, who took the recipes, techniques, ingredients and cooking methods from Mexico and Mexican people, has had immense financial success, received numerous accolades and honours, and achieved celebrity chef status for his food. The issue here is Bayless had the ability to make connections, gain financial backing and create the physical spaces for his restaurants as a result of his privilege, which few new immigrants are capable of doing (The Sporkful, 2016, October 3). He had the opportunity to take the domestic work of cooking and transform it into culinary art (Ray, 2007). Further, Bayless co-opted Mexican cuisine, capitalized off of it and is esteemed as an authority on Mexican food. He does not have the lived experience of being Mexican person in

America, he gets to live his life without having to endure the realities of being racialized in America (Gunew, 2000). He is effectively a cultural outsider who has taken on the task of making the 'exotic familiar' (Arbaca, 2004). This is not to discredit the quality or integrity of the food he is making. It is, however, an opportunity to think about how racialized immigrants are rarely afforded the same opportunities or given the same recognition for making their traditional foods; it is important to consider here how recreated international foods invariably appreciate in value and cost when white chefs make them; and, how and why those foods become more valuable and more highly regarded is important (Agarwal & Dahm, 2013).

Cultural appropriation of global cuisines has consequences, unintended or not. It forces questions about what eating international foods really means, and reveals how we are all implicated in a complex and highly politicized conversation about food and desire (Chez, 2011; Filson & Adekunle, 2017). Cultural appropriation has to be continuously contested and disputed; the consequences of not doing so perpetuates yet another form of colonization. "The binary system of representation constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belongingness and otherness" (Hall, 1998, p. 446). The boundaries that have been created in the interest of protecting racial categories never blur in favour of racialized people. Racialized people are not granted the same leniency and freedom of expression to become authorities on cultures other than their own. There needs to be ongoing critiques of a system that both expects racialized cultural producers to create in ways that maintain the dominant cultures ideas about who they are and where they fit in. Where, on the other hand, white cultural producers are given room for freedom of expression and creativity without the requirement of paying respect of homage to the other culture (Abarca, 2004). Food is subject to evolution and

change no matter who the creator is, but it is important to think about how eating a simple meal out is often a complex and political act, just as much as it is for entertainment and pleasure.

Bodies, Food, Pleasure and Experience

Food can be a form of enjoyment, gratification and sensuality. Our desires and habits related to the body, such as eating, can reveal important details about us such as our cultural location (Scapp & Seitz, 1998; Sloan, 2013; Filson & Adekunle, 2017). In the Canadian context, multicultural eating can effectively be another form of exploitation. According to Holland (2012), we cannot “uncouple our desire from quotidian racist practice” (p. 42). Racialized bodies in particular, can still be seen as functioning to serve patriarchal and neocapitalist desires and interests when engaged in producing food for the pleasure of the dominant culture (Padilla, 2008; Puar, 2017). Production and consumption habits and practices can reveal facts about a complex system of structural inequalities and realities. However, these relationships need to be critically questioned. There is an undeniable connection between food, body and race politics (Parasecoli, 2008). The production and consumption of food is also experiential, often tied to our desire for gratification.

The pleasures of eating often parallel the pleasures dancing, singing, playing and sex (Ashley et al., 2004). Food can directly correlate to our pleasure principle. Eating is experienced corporeally, both internally and externally and normally involves all of our senses (Sloan, 2013). “‘Experience economy’ - presumes that the consumer seeks amusement, fantasy, arousal, sensory stimulation and enjoyment” (Mossberg & Eide, 2017, p.118). There is a very intimate relationship between food and body. “The multi-sensual nature of human experience, particularly

surrounding food and drink, means we can't ignore the body and physicality in shaping our identities" (Sloan, 2013, p. 22). Various foods have been theorized to have qualities that improve sexual function. Aphrodisiacs have long been connected with food items such as oysters, chocolate and red wine. Language has evolved, and terms like food porn are commonplace. In our daily texting conventions, foods are regularly used as stand-ins for anatomy, for example, eggplants for penises and peaches for posteriors. Seeing the relationship between food and sex, it is not at all difficult.

Foods can also act as both symbols and embodiments of the time, place and people that they come from (Scapp & Seitz, 1998). It is important to think about the ways that food production and consumption can work to perpetuate and sustain stereotypes and negative assumptions held by the dominant culture about racialized immigrants (Parasecoli, 2008); and, how the dominant culture can recreate systems of inequality and exploitation in its pursuit for pleasure and exotica. bell hooks states:

when race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of the dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power over in intimate relation with the other. (Scapp & Seitz, 1998, p. 183)

It is important to consider the way in which food is analogous to sex and desire, but also as a potential form of cultural exploitation.

There is a difference between food as a form of cultural production and food as a form of exploitation. Food production is part of the service economy which "we are impelled into the production of objects of care" not only in the interest of capitalism but in the interest of serving

the dominant culture (Paur, 2017, p. 80). Racialized bodies in the west have historically worked for the benefit and success of the dominant culture. Eating in restaurants offers particular experiences and pleasures. Therefore, this production of multicultural foods to satisfy dominant cultural interests and desires requires a closer examination. We cannot forgo the idea of race when having discussions about food, culture and identity because “there is no ‘raceless’ discourse of desire” explains Holland (2012, p. 42). When those from the dominant culture eat international foods they superficially participate in multiculturalism. There is consumption without having to actually think, question, or genuinely learn about the cuisine they are eating. bell hooks elaborates further by stating, “the commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense and more satisfying” (Scapp & Seitz, 1998, p. 181). It is all of these things because there is no onus or responsibility on the consumer to do anything beyond eating for their own pleasure. The willful blindness of seeing anyone outside of the dominant culture as having variance and nuance is another way that racism manifests.

It is critical to think about the connection between food and sex as racialized pleasure industries (Padilla, 2008). Food is closely linked to bodily pleasure. Symbolically, economically, materially, tourists use, consume and devour the bodies, foods and communities they visit (Parasecoli, 2008, pp. 128-129). Being a tourist indicates a certain level of privilege, economic freedom and curiosity. Padilla looks at the relationship between tourists, who see racialized bodies and foreign countries as primitive. This tendency to cheapen locations like the Caribbean is a legacy of colonization. Tourists treat destinations like the Caribbean as their personal playgrounds. They feel permitted to be more open and sexually free because they imagine that

those places and people are primal and underdeveloped and built for that kind of labour (Padilla, 2008). Cultural foods, much like racialized people can be exploited in ways that may not seem as obvious. When racialized people are working to produce food, they are in turn providing a form of pleasure for consumption to the dominant culture.

Culinary tourism, much like regular tourism is about the pursuit of pleasure. Chez (2011) loosely defines culinary tourism within the context of eating immigrant cuisines, as an opportunity for the dominant culture and those with money to participate in eating the “exotic”. Again, it forces the distinction between what constitutes difference and the fetishization of that difference, and what does not fit within the cultural narratives of Canada. Culinary tourism is the opportunity to treat other places and things as a form of exploration, conquest, or liberation from a boring and mundane existence. The idea of tourism invokes a sense of trying, tasting and experiencing fantasies through unusual and titillating culinary experiences. “Culinary tourism creates a ‘going native’ experience for the consumer” (Chez, 2011, p. 239). There is a valuation attributed to the places and people of these regions and it reinforces “us and them” politics. Chez (2011), also correlates “culinary tourism” with “culinary slumming” a distinctive powerplay of the dominant group over the less powerful. The less powerful cater to the desires of the dominant group. And, the stereotypes and judgments about the cultural producers necessarily carry over into perceptions about their food.

Food and identity politics are deeply intertwined on both a personal and national level. “Eating and ingestion, play a crucial role in the development of these discourses, revealing how food can turn into weapons in power relationships and the political struggles that originate in them” (Parasecoli, 2008, p. 104). The difference with culinary tourism is that you can be in

Toronto and be eating foods from all over the world. The consumer never has to leave their country to revel in the delights of an exotic foreign location, or have an adventure of sorts (Parasecoli, 2008). “Culinary tourism allows us to momentarily ‘travel’. However, it is the attitude towards ‘exotic’ cuisines that raises questions about the relationship with otherness” (Parasecoli, 2008, p. 128). Eating foods that are outside the cultural norm is a form of vicarious experience (Ray, 2007). Concepts such as culinary multiculturalism, which refers to the access to cuisine outside of the dominant culture in centres like Toronto; and, vicarious experience, which is understood as the experience of consuming the food of “the other” - the non-dominant culture - speak to a growing desire for the dominant culture to experience international cuisines in ways that feel safe, yet culturally immersive (Nash, 2009; Brayton & Millington 2011; Ray 2007).

Food, Identity and Storytelling

Food itself is a form of storytelling. The ingredients, where they came from, the place that the cuisine is from, the history of that place, who is cooking the food and even “reproducing a recipe is like retelling a story” (Gunew, p.229). The production of food itself is part of a cultural performance (Ashley, et al., 2004). The importance of storytelling with respect to global cuisine is discussed by Mossberg and Eide (2017) who imagine food as part of an “experience economy.” International cuisine is a storytelling medium and part of a cultural narrative. Dining out is an experience that “presumes that the consumer seeks amusement, fantasy, arousal, sensory stimulation and enjoyment” from their eating experience (Mossberg & Eide, 2017). This is also discussed by Ashley et al. (2004) who sees food as a source of pleasure and leisure. Pleasure can be found in the way that food looks, smells, tastes, feels and even sounds. It can be

found in the activities that surround the act of eating as well. “It is clear that social contact and quality of conversation are as important as sources of pleasure as is the quality of food”. Linked to this is a “sense of occasion, to be enjoyed as a departure from run-of-the-mill, everyday experience” (Ashley, et al., 2004, p. 146). Eating food is deeply connected to how we share experiences with other people whereby an indelible link is made between food, people and pleasure.

As social beings, humans eat to celebrate, connect, bond, vicariously travel, communicate as well as nourish. The enjoyment and pleasure of eating is heightened when we speak about our eating experiences (Ferguson, 2014). It is not simply the act of eating that is pleasurable, but our discussions about what we have eaten that enhances our overall enjoyment. Talking about the food that we have consumed is actively sharing the experience of the food without sharing the food itself. Ferguson (2014) connects this to the fact that eating is normally a private matter. Generally, even when we eat publicly, we are enjoying a private meal in a public space. Thus, “food talk completes the culinary circuit, turning the private into the public, embellishing the personal and memorializing the idiosyncratic” (Ferguson, 2014, p. 71). The opportunity to discuss and revel in discussions about food allows us to share our delight with others.

Participating in restaurant culture for pleasure and leisure is not a reality for all people. Being able to eat at restaurants requires financial agency, access to dining establishments, competence in dining convention and etiquette of the chosen restaurant, menu literacy, understanding the appropriate dress and tipping standards (Ashley, et al., 2004). Eating at restaurants, also means that restaurant goers believe that the experience that they are going to have will bring them gratification. Eating at restaurants for entertainment and pleasure is a

relatively new phenomenon. “Eating out is like the ‘exotic other’ of eating at home” (Ashley et al., p. 148). Part of the enjoyment of eating can be in the novelty of choosing where and what type of food to eat. Access to global cuisines increases choices and having the power to choose can also enhance the experience of dining out. “Cultural diversity coupled with curiosity and an adventurous nature of many consumers, has led to the popularity of and increasing demand for ethnic foods” (Filson & Adekunle, 2017). Our values and preferences are reflected in our food choices. And, those who are engaged in eating and food culture, may build their identities around food (Mossberg & Eide, 2017).

Cultural diversity, exposure and curiosity have also made international foods more desirable (Filson & Adekunle, 2017). As a cuisine grows in popularity in the dominant culture, it gains in reputation and in status. It becomes effectively, more desirable (Parasecoli, 2008). bell hooks (1998) raises a fundamentally important point here, when international food is produced for consumer culture, it is a cultural, ethnic and racial creation. It is a product in a commodity culture that participates in consumer culture, where “offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palate - that the Other will be eaten, consumed and forgotten” (Scapp & Seitz, p.200). Food is ephemera; the pleasures of which can be had for a short time before we move onto the next thing.

Moving across the world is much less of a trivial matter. Foods, like the people that move here are altered by the experience. The global cuisines that are recreated in Toronto are not merely reproductions from their home countries. Canadian immigrants come as transplants with only part of their culture intact. The culture that immigrants develop in their new countries is both similar but different from the parent culture (Hall & du Gay, 1996). Negotiating the parts of

one's culture that continue on and the pieces that get left behind are subject to time, place, capacity and opportunity. Nowhere is this more clear than in the culinary traditions of immigrants. Intrinsically, "diaspora is as much about breaching and blurring boundaries as it is about the maintenance of cultural purity" (Gunew, p. 228). Canada's need to straddle acceptance and exclusion of racialized citizens is precarious and straining. People and cultures undoubtedly shift as they move to new lands, but this shift also occurs in the country or city as a result of the new waves of people. The voices and stories become part of the story of that place and should be included. Food can act as a useful tool or framework for discussing multiculturalism and identity particularly in places like Canada and Toronto. "The desire to eat ethnic food is not always tinted with colonist attitudes" (Abarca, 2004, p. 6). Eating at a restaurant that serves global cuisine or visiting an international market is not always a perverse or demeaning exercise. Nor, does it have to be from a gaze of supremacy or dominance. Food is and has been used as a tool for socialization and connection (Filson & Adekunle, 2017). Foods and the environment in which food is eaten can also be used to create experiences that speak to consumer desires and interests. Moreover, food can be used to create experiences that encourage conversation that act as the catalyst for change and understanding.

Discussion

Racialized people are continuously and at times ardently reminded that they are never fully accepted, despite their duration or contributions in Canada. The question of "where are you from?" may not necessarily be intended to challenge one's validity, but for the recipient of the

question, it carries with it the implicit assumption that they could not possibly have originated from here (Hall, 1996). It then acts as a reminder that the archetypal imagination of Canadianness is still white. However, skin colour is not the only factor "disqualifying" racialized immigrants from Canadian identity - ties to home countries, psychological, physical and psychic, their lack of assimilation, their failure to subscribe to Canadian expectations, read: western European standards of behaviour, conduct and decorum are also elements (Walcott, 2016; Holland, 2014). This gets more convoluted by descriptions and labels that trivialize their Canadian identity, such as a newcomer, recent immigrant and visible minorities (Thobani, 2007). If Canada, and more specifically Toronto, describes itself as cosmopolitan, open and multicultural, these realities should be reflected in what is considered Canadian. Perhaps, Canadian identity needs to be understood as changeable, moveable and subject to permutations just as individual identity is and does (Hall, 1996). Perhaps there is room to imagine Canadian identity as unfixed and inclusive despite the historical trappings of its early beginnings as a country.

There is a need to grow the definition of Canadian. Global and racialized identities are an essential fact of Canada and need to be included, recognized and respected as part of Canada's narrative. Dramatic changes in demography have shifted this white, European, settler colony, yet, who and what is seen as quintessentially Canadian has changed very little (Maynard, 2017). In terms of a culinary identity, Canada simply does not have a distinct culinary point of view or culinary heritage. Food is a knowledge and cultural production, and it is an important form of storytelling and identity creation and recreation (Mossberg & Eide, 2017; Johnston et al., 2012). Developing a culinary identity gives a nation something tangible to be connected to, but it also

reverberates to the world who a country is. A single dish or even several dishes can pull together a cohesive picture of what is Canadian. Perhaps thinking about Canadian identity means thinking about food in an entirely new way. Creating a national dish does not mean that it has to be a hybrid, or a cross-section of various dishes, techniques and/or methods. It can be an entirely new creation that rethinks food altogether. Canada is a relatively new nation has room to cultivate a new sense of who it is. It is not trapped by a long and deeply rooted history.

Despite the inability to point out specific Canadian foods, perhaps an inference can be made about what is Canadian by what is not included in the culinary repertoire. I would argue here that this minimal selection of food identified as Canadian can actually be an ideal place to start rethinking Canadian identity through cuisine. It is an opportunity to start nearly from scratch. Places like the Caribbean have a long colonial history that has drastically changed the food culture of the region (Janer 2007). Nations that have a specific national dishes, such as Trinidad's pelau, a mixed rice dish that is cooked with meat and vegetables in one pot is very much a testament to this transformation. Janer (2007) states:

Colonization and the plantation system changed the repertoire of available foods and brought together people with different culinary values and techniques. New World foods arrived in the rest of the world as exotic curiosities and it took a long time to incorporate them into the established culinary and dietary traditions. These dishes pay homage to the produce that is grown in the region and particular flavour profiles and styles and techniques of cooking that capture the essence of the country and its people. (p. 397)

Time, availability of foods, cooking techniques, introduction of new produce and ingredients, migration and economics, all contributed to the evolution of Caribbean culinary identity (Janer 2007). In Canada, these forces have also created a new country and culture. Yet, these changes have not been seen in the same way in shaping a culinary identity in Canada.

Often food is thought of as entertainment, amusement or pleasure, but without it, we would cease to exist. Minds need to turn to how powerful food can actually be as a tool for mobilizing knowledge and as an agent for social, political and cultural change (Abarca, 2004; Ashley, 2004; Brayton & Millington, 2011). Moving people to think about the way that food impacts our lives is essential if there is to be a shift in a national culinary identity, and effectively in Canadian identity. Our identities are readily defined by our consumption practices. Vegans for example, involuntarily or voluntarily take a political and activist positioning by claiming vegan status. Having access to good quality food changes our bodies and our mental well-being. Children perform better at school if they have access to enough nutritious foods. Not having access to food can upheave societies, much like Venezuela's current crisis. On a national level, a culinary identity needs to consider the history in its entirety, its people, the traditions that come with those people and the foods that come from the lands and waters. But, it can also pay homage and help to reconcile with the people who were devastated by Canada's violent beginnings of colonization, disease and war (Maynard, 2017; Razack et al., 2010; Walcott, 2016). Thinking about a national culinary identity has to include the range of voices, people, experiences and of course foods. Perhaps the shift in part has to start with different facets of our culture including foodies, educators, food security workers, grassroots organizations, restaurants owners and workers and markets. Perhaps, this is a good time to consider, who this conversation

resonates with. Which people see the inherent benefits and uses of food as a tool to connect, build, learn and grow.

Here I suggest that people's educational goals and narcissism can be leveraged for building understanding between individuals and groups. Conversations can be used, as suggested by Ferguson (2004), not just to enhance the experience of eating, but to disseminate critical information and to challenge racist thinking and assumptions about food consumption, production and pleasure. Reflecting here on Holland's (2014) idea that knowing people, actually learning about their story builds empathy, and understanding. Pushing this idea one step further, creating room for difference through non-judgment, where differences simply exist seems essential to building better connection between people through the foods that we eat. Food, if the consumer is educated about its journey from ground to table, can be part of building food up as a powerful tool for discussion, education and movement. Knowledge mobilization may be an important piece for developing an understanding of how food can be an influential force in shaping conversations about Canada (Mossberg & Eide, 2017).

Asking for a single dish to capture Canadian identity may be a stretch. Canada is large and covers areas that are vastly different in geography, climate, topography, language and a tremendous range of hybridized identities. Perhaps it is more apt to think about foods in terms of provinces or cities and their specificities and then create an index of dishes that reflect Canadian identities, rather than a singular and limiting one. There is no rule that there can only be one dish. Perhaps a range of foods, dishes, desserts and snacks is more encompassing of a Canadian culinary identity. It truly is up to the imagination of the nation to create, define and broaden notions about itself. Hall (1996) spoke about the construction of identity and its self-referential

nature, as well as its ability to create an immediate opposing identity. If Canada is to actually live up to its vow of multiculturalism. The construction of these dishes to provide a culinary repertoire is not a simple exercise in creating or defining a new identity. It is an occasion to have conversations about what being Canadian looks like, what gets accepted into the fold of things Canadian; and, who and what should be incorporated into this culinary tradition.

The foods that global immigrants have and continue to import, have changed cities and how they eat (Agarwal & Dahm, 2013). The very existence of these food establishments indicates that there is a desire for these foods. The proliferation of global cuisine in Toronto is an indication of how food can be a platform for introducing change, in terms of diversifying palates and introducing new flavours and concepts. Foods from all over the globe have become successful in the form of restaurants and markets. Even though this shift in culinary acceptance is as a result of market and cultural changes, media, travel and immigration, I am reticent to say that this is an entirely meaningless shift, or a shift that does not have the potential to ignite positive changes. I do not entirely share the same pessimism as Chez (2011). Brayton and Millington (2011) suggest that using food as a gateway for engaging in meaningful conversation around multiculturalism, race, ethnicity and immigration is entirely possible. Particularly in terms of gaining an entry point for challenging notions about Canadian identity. Ashley et al. (2004) optimistically see this growth in eating global foods as a “consumers desire to be continually learning and enriching oneself, to pursue ever new values and vocabulary” (p. 98). Food itself can be a tool for education, growing understanding and challenging norms. Creating dining experiences that combine education and dialogue can cultivate opportunities to think about Canadian identity in unique and novel ways (Brayton & Millington, 2011).

Rich, diverse and multicultural food centres like Toronto are living proof that global foods are an integral part of Canadian culture. Perhaps it even indicates an inclination to learn or, in part, understand immigrant cultures. Food can act as a portal to trying and understanding things that are unknown or unfamiliar (Abarca, 2004). For diners, food is a relatively safe way to learn about others. It certainly does not have the same levels of perceived or real risks of traveling to a new place, or require the same investment of time and resources. One can simply enter their establishment of choice and eat (Brayton & Millington, 2011). But in doing so, the politics of eating are inevitably at play. How, why, where and what we choose to eat can have implications. Eating global or Indigenous foods can potentially be a form of objectifying or engaging in cultural tourism (Chez, 2011). What separates the tourists from non-tourists are that non-tourists respect the cuisine, cultures and traditions of the people and places that the food derives from (Chez, 2011). There is no judgment or expectation that the foods need to live up to the diners ideals about its authenticity or conform to their understandings of what that cuisine is. It is a respect for the producers of that food as the knowledge holders and cultural creators of that specific food. Diners need to be accountable for the choices that they make and the foods that they eat.

Global foods in Canada need to be thought about as part of the spectrum of Canadian cuisine and identity. This is by no means an attempt to erase the heritage of those cuisines or homogenize them, rather it is a way to expand the definition of what and who we think of as part of what it is and means to be Canadian. It is an opportunity to acknowledge the various identities and foods that make up the Canadian landscape by casting a wider definition of what it means to be Canadian. In the way that immigrants straddle hyphenated identities, such as

Trinidadian-Canadian or Filipino-Canadian, the foods that are produced here are also very much an adulterated version of the foods that were created in the country of origin. Perhaps ingredients have been substituted, or a particular brand of a product is unavailable, or the cooking method cannot be accurately duplicated. Foods are rarely ever exactly the same, nor are the people who make them (Hall & du Gay, 1996). Moreover, kids, both first and second generation growing up in places like Toronto will likely be exposed to other cultures and other global influences. Those influences can also make their way into food production. Racialized immigrants and Indigenous people and their foods should not be omitted or treated as an afterthought in discussions of what we define as Canadian. The foods, cuisines and culinary productions of the people that live in Toronto, are a defining characteristic of this city. At one point in time, undesirable white, European immigrants, such as Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Greek people were brought into the fold, their whiteness a shield from questions that challenge their belonging. These foods have found space in Toronto, and in many ways have been adopted into the dominant culture. Those cuisines have not been racialized, cheapened, rejected or exoticized. If anything, these foods have become signifiers of Toronto's international flavour and consumer's cultural competence. However, foods from many racialized groups have yet to be adopted in this way, some examples that come to mind in Toronto are Vietnamese, Caribbean and Mexican cuisine.

Food can assist in traversing difficult conversations, or act as a catalyst to start them. People congregate over and around food often with great enthusiasm. Eating is not only about sustaining our bodies, it is deeply and intimately connected to our sense of identity, communities and mental being. When we eat for pleasure and have opportunities to discuss the food and our experiences we have an opportunity to educate and learn. Talking about the food, as Ferguson

(2014) points out enhances our experience. Dialogue necessarily supposes that there is both an opportunity to speak and to listen. “You have to put something in your mouth to get your ears open” (Bourdain, 2013, Episode 6). Understanding the power of food as a connector and tool for opening dialogues is key to opening minds and starting conversations that challenge notions of Canadian identity and defining a culinary one.

Conclusion

Canada, has never fully developed a culinary identity or history. Food has never been a way that Canada has found a distinct place in this world or, created a point of view that speaks to its multiculturalism. The lack of culinary distinctiveness has left space for challenging and growing notions of what is Canadian. This is not as a way to hijack foods from around the globe and claim them as our own. Rather, this is a way to think about how these traditions influence and have changed the food landscape of places like Toronto. It is an opportunity to think about how various waves of immigration have impacted Canada and how food has specifically allowed people to connect with cultures that they may not have otherwise had access to. It is an opportunity to confront the racism that lingers in the pages of Canadian history.

Developing a Canadian culinary point of view is an opportunity to include and recognize the contributions of Indigenous people and racialized immigrants. Even in what appears to be simple act of eating a taco, there is room for critical thinking. There is an opportunity to confronting colonial narratives, questioning racist stereotypes and think about power inequalities that drive neoliberal markets and the systems that fuel it. Producers and consumers have a

responsibility to one another. Often so much of what we do has to do with pursuit of money and pleasure. But, without thinking about the how economics, politics and race work in tandem to shape national identity the power of food as a vehicle for conversation and change is inevitably dampened.

Thinking about what Canadian culinary is is a means of making food outrightly and actively political. To make food central to arguments of body and identity politics means making food central to arguments around race, immigration and politics. Food is never just fuel. It has meaning, history and culture that often get lost in Western consumer culture and neoliberal markets. Food can act as a powerful motivator and great equalizer and can be the catalyst for difficult discussions. Food is powerful and it can bring people together and serve as means to talk, educate and build connection to one another. Serving a meal that requires a query of food sources, farmers, cooks, history and culture means looking at food as part of a complex story. Recipes are food memories tied to a particular culture, history, time and place. Learning about how food captures and reflects identities is key to using it as a tool for having discussions about diverse identities of people who are or have become Canadian. Learning about people on a full stomach and learning about how and why they have immigrated here builds relationships and grows empathy. We need to build understanding between one another in order to bend to the idea that Canada is a place that includes all Canadians.

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