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FOOD AND SOCIO-CULTURAL IDENTITY

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Abstract. Food is an extremely important social interaction and an awareness of its culture-specific features is a must for „beyond language" studies. Indeed, food and meals symbolize many aspects of everyday culture as a means of nurturing social relations, and the interpretation of its choice is a function of discourse analysis as an example of presupposition. Moreover, the description of certain iconic dishes, which may be traced back to their real or imaginary origin, serve as a means of ethnic differentiation, often with an implication of one's geographic uniqueness, national pride and a sense of worth. Food is also a vehicle of signifying.

Keywords: intercultural communication, food discourse, foodways, food as social interaction, food and identity, signifying

As an extremely important social interaction food is not about eating only. Food should be viewed as discourse, because in many ways, just as the use of language, it is socially determined and pre-conditioned. Awareness of the conceptual significance of food as social practice is important for teaching and learning languages because the familiar or unfamiliar foodways and food patterns are an integral part of one's socio-cultural identity. This is why food description and food-related practices are always included in course books on intercultural and cross-cultural communication and in culture studies curricula (Damen, 1987; Byram, 1989; Levine, 1992; Valdes, 1988).

In this paper I will focus on food as a means of demonstrating a sense of one's worth as an individual or even more frequently, as that of an entire community. Regardless of their origin, different people tend to claim that their country's cuisine is the best, and that their grandmother's soup or an aunt's stew can never be imitated outside their own kitchens.

History and memory, real or imaginary, are undoubtedly incorporated into food as integral components of identity as a sense of its esteem and self worth. This statement is beautifully illustrated by the following poetic description of what Salman Rushdie calls *chutnification of history*, a means to not just to preserve but also to jog the nation's memory.

> …at Braganza Pickles, I supervise the production of Mary's legendary recipes; but there are also my special blends, in which thanks to the powers of my drained nasal passages, I am able to include memories, dreams, ideas, so that once they enter mass production all who consume them will know what pepperpots achieved in Pakistan, or how it felt to be in

> the Sundarbans … believe don't believe but it's true. Thirty jars stand upon a shelf waiting to be unleashed on the amnesiac nation" (Rushdie, 1989: 643)

Travelling down memory lane is more frequent than many other travel modes. In fact, memories may survive states and nationhood: on the Russian 1st TV channel (ORT) a 2008 commercial urged Russians living in Germany to buy Riga sprats as a celebration of the Russian cuisine! For quite some time Riga has been the capital of independent Latvia. However, Riga sprats were very popular in the former USSR, and remain a bitter-sweet memory, especially for former Soviet people of a certain generation, a clear-cut case of denying othering and otherness and contesting the other's self-worth and autonomy.

Indeed, in many cases food loyalty and food allegiance lasts longer than common statehood. Georgian *hinkali*, Ukrainian *varenniki* filled with potatoes, cottage cheese or cherries; Siberian *pelmenies*, Borzhomi mineral water and Georgian wines, which are sold in Russian shops the world over, are frequently labeled as Soviet food and regarded as culinary heritage by the post-Soviet diaspora. Thus, the non-existent state has been spreading its culinary tentacles to its post-Soviet heirs as a way of reinforcing common identity through memory and nostalgia.

A feeling of pride in the **authentic heritage recipes** and a fear of their loss or adulteration has become a primary concern in all European countries ranging from France to Bulgaria. Even relatively recent departures are often retrieved, brushed up and dished up as a classic.

Furthermore, in real life and fiction alike, the description of certain dishes serves **as a means of ethnic differentiation**, often with an implication of one's geographic uniqueness and a sense of worth. Extract a) below, for example, published in a woman's magazine in Canada, illustrates a perceived quintessential difference between British Canadians and French Canadians with regard to their heritage foods while stressing the existing ties of Anglo-Canadians with the old country.

> a) Plum pudding is a truly national dish, and refuses to flourish out of England. It can obtain no footing in France. A Frenchman will dress like an Englishman, swear like an Englishman, and get drunk like an Englishman; but if you would offend him forever, compel him to eat plum pudding. (CHJ, Dec. 1915)

In extract b), on the other hand, the very dishes listed represent a clear political statement and suggest an inevitable change – the break-up of the British colonial system:

> b) Certainly, in the gravy soups, turbo, hare, roast saddles, cabinet puddings, boiled eggs at tea-time and bread and butter and meat paste with the, morning tray, one tasted one's own decadence: a tradition had been preserved in order to humiliate. Perhaps it really was time the British limped out of Malaya. (Burgess, 1981: 272)

In example c) tea is intertwined with the national history of the USA.

> c) From the Governor's wife, Simon accepts a cup of tea. He doesn't much like tea, but considers it a social duty to drink it in this country; and to greet all jokes about the Boston Tea Party, of which there have been too many, with an aloof but indulgent smile. (Attwood, 1997: 347)

All the above-mentioned examples seem to suggest that since eating is probably the most important political act, it is not surprising that for better or worse, social or ethnic identity may be imposed on certain foods or withdrawn from them by virtue of political, socio-cultural or simply rhetorical manipulation, because food symbolizes many aspects of everyday culture and is a vehicle for social relations. An interesting illustration is the famous American apple pie, which became a symbol of American values and national pride in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries**.** See the following notable description in a culinary blog on July 4th, the national holiday of the USA:

> Happy birthday America! Today we commemorate our nation's independence, and what better way to celebrate then a big, sweet slice of home-baked pie? Cakes are big on birthdays, cookies are best with milk, and a late-night tub of ice cream can cure almost any bad day. However, it's the "pie" that has woven its way into our American food culture, becoming a symbol of home, tradition, and plenty. Pies are the ultimate home-baked treat; the smell of a freshly baked pie cooling on the windowsill is etched in the memory of many Americans. It's become such a national symbol of our food heritage that a familiar phrase was coined: "As American as apple pie."

The dish was also commemorated in the phrase „for Mom and apple pie" – supposedly the stock answer of American soldiers in World War II, whenever journalists asked why they were going to war**.** An article in the New York Times published in May 1902 declared that „No pie-eating people can be permanently vanquished", because pie is the American symbol of prosperity and its varying contents illustrate the calendar of the changing seasons[1)].

Entire empires have been built around certain food markers, and yet it should be noted that these perceptions of *traditional* culinary glory are in most cases nothing but myths. Stuart Hall has shown that even tea, a signifier of "traditional" English society, bears a mark of colonialism. Tea, which comes from former British colonies, is a culinary paradox, which together with sugar and china has played a central role in re-inventing the national identities of the metropolis and the practices of Englishness in everyday life (Hall, 1991: 27).

Similarly, Richard Wilk (2008) demonstrates that what appears as a „local" or „traditional" Belizean/ Caribbean food is a dietary imaginary – a mix of products of local

subsistence economies, imports and industrial diets brought about by centuries of trade, slavery, colonialism, migration, and more recently, tourism.

Nevertheless, for food natives there is nothing to match „real" English (French, Russian, etc.) food and everybody is expected to agree that it is really the best. Or else.

One of less known British treats is the *Faggot* invented years ago by the thrifty Welsh to use up the offal from the pig. The blood was also used up – to make famous or infamous Black Pudding. In a BBC series after Agatha Christie, the finicky Poirot (played by David Suchard) is served a dish of faggot with mashed potatoes and mushy peas by the very English Inspector Japp. Japp says with pride that after a week of eating Poirot's food (which, of course, he heartily disliked) he wants to treat the Belgian detective to what he called 'real food'. Poirot's face when he heard its name and description defies description. In the best traditions and logic of the character he begged off claiming „liver-phobia"**.**

Proprietary ideas about cooking and food and the ethnocentrism they reflect seem to be a universal reinforcing self esteem and a sense of national worth, while culinary wars provide a source of abiding global rage. See the following interesting quote from a posting by Lusine Musayelyan, a reporter who lives in Stepanakert, the largest city in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, which has been under Armenian control for some 20 years after a war with Azerbaijan:

> Armenia and Azerbaijan do not only have territorial disputes: there is also much argument about music, patterns of carpet weaving – and surely about the origins of dishes as well. Armenians and Azerbaijanis still discuss who of them came up with the song „Sari Gelin" and who invented tolma. As of the „ethnic origins" of shashlik, even Georgians enter the debate. But that is a different story…[2)]

From stuffed vine leaves (known as dolma, tolma, sarmi, or some other appellations in different regions) which are touted as food of Armenians, Azeris, Georgians and Bulgarians alike, to minced meatballs, common (with variations) all over the world, some dishes may be similar or even identical in different countries. Nevertheless, culinary appropriation is regarded as a heinous crime by entire bodies of people**.** It is pointless to try and convince men and women that somebody else's food may be internalized by virtue of repetition**.** By and large, the culinary area is far from peaceful, because in general, people tend to be extremely and sometimes inordinately proud of their food. Disputes over who was the first to cook a certain dish go back to the beginning of the world. There is an ongoing argument, with no end in sight, whether it was the Turks or the Greek Cypriots who invented baklava, or about who was the first in the neighborhood to stir coffee and lots of sugar in a pot of boiling water and serve it up in a demitasse. Accordingly it is called Turkish coffee or Greek coffee.

How traditional is Bulgaria banitsa (layered pastry (phyllo) most frequently filled with a mixture of white cheese and eggs), similar to Turkish burek, Greek boureki, Albanian byrek and Serbian burek, to name but a few, is anybody's guess, or rather,

it is a function of the interpretation of what, in effect, is traditional. It may also be argued, quite reasonably, that banitsa represents a heritage of the Ottoman Empire even though there will be many dissenting and indignant voices. Yet undoubtedly, the feeling of pride in the uniqueness and unparalleled worth of this traditional dish is something all countries with ties to Ottoman Turkey share.

Sometimes the culinary wars may have not just verbal but physical manifestations. In 1999 Ann Muller, owner of a pasty shop in Lizard town in Cornwall burnt an American flag in response to damning indictment of Cornish food in the New York Times (BBC; Economist online). BBC's Jane O'Brien said the Cornish pasty became the centre of an Anglo-American food war.[2] It is not an isolated example by far. Apparently, the situation is getting very aggravated in Armenia because of a UNESCO decision to add *keskek*, a traditional Anatolian stew usually served on the morning of weddings, to its „Intangible Heritage" list.[3]

The rulings on heritage foods or brands often result in bad blood. Rakia (raki, rakija or rachiu), a brandy-like drink similar to Italian grappa, which may be made from grapes, plums, apricots, pears and other fruit, is produced in many Balkan countries under a similar sounding name. Slovenia beat the others to the brand and this fact is often frustrating to the nationals of other Balkan countries which grew up believing that rakia or any of its other linguistic and conceptual variations is *their* national drink.

Similarly, white cheese in brine is produced on the Balkans and in Denmark. According to a 2012 ruling of the European Commission only the Greeks have a title to the name „feta cheese". The Danes are fighting the decision because feta is an important export item for Denmark. One of the reasons given by the Greeks for wanting to protect Feta Cheese is that they believe it should only be made from sheep or goat milk. The Greeks are offended that Denmark and other countries are making it from cow milk. They also feel that their sheep and goats are raised in better conditions in Greece where they can eat all the flowers and grass they desire.

By the same token, Borscht, an East European staple soup, is equally claimed as an icon by Ashkenazi Jews, Poles, Russians or Ukrainians. An entire area, hundred miles northwest of New York at the foot of the Catskill Mountains is known as the borscht belt because this resort area was populated by East European Jews. Yet, „the borscht of the other" is always suspect. See the following dialogue in the *National Geographic*:

> „This is Russian borscht", she said, setting down a porcelain bowl of „green" or summer borscht with its dill-flecked mosaic of beets, carrots, and potatoes. „No lard with garlic like they put in Ukrainian borscht." Though Galina would protest, borscht, according to Russian food historian V.V.Pokhlebkin, is originally Ukrainian. Though Galina protests, Sevastopol, a city in Crimea, is Ukrainian too. (Newman, 2011: 66)

Borscht may be Ukrainian in origin, but its popularity in Russia as well as many other countries, and the different varieties on offer have turned it into other people's

national dish as well, and the numerous books of Russian (Polish, Jewish, Lithuanian) cuisine always feature a host of borscht recipes. Hence, its origin is no longer relevant for generations of eaters in Eastern Europe. As Barbara Kirschenblatt Gimblett writes in her introduction to *Culinary Tourism* by Lucy Long, such „[…] mixtures (poke, chili, bouillabaisse, chowder), because they combine different elements in different proportions, are subject to almost infinite, if minute, variation, before mutating into something else. Culinary competitions based on mixture dramatize what it takes to make a coalescence hold still as an identifiable dish. They mark - and contest - the point where a dish becomes something else. Synthetic and indeterminate, such mixtures calibrate distance, placement, and relations between generations, communities, locations, and time." (2004: xiii).

As an „edible chronotope" borscht became an integral part of **Soviet** cuisine, which is why Jack Goody mentions it as providing „some thread of living to those passing through the years following the October Revolution." (1982: 152). As we have seen, though, „the correct" borscht is still a matter of debate and self-respect. The journalist's comment in the *National Geographic* above reveals a common connection between culinary and territorial claims. Significantly and far from unusually, several issues are mixed up in the rhetoric: like identity, which is often diachronically uncertain, borscht may be historically speaking Ukrainian, but it has long since turned into a Soviet dish, with multiple varieties even in the Ukraine (as duly noted by V.V. Pokhlebkin himself). *The Book of Tasty and Healthy Food,* which is often regarded as the Soviet culinary Bible, with its impressive print run of 8 million copies between 1952 and 1999, describes 4 varieties of borscht but only **one** of them is labelled **Ukrainian** borscht. Incidentally, this fact should be considered quite an honour because neither chehirtma, nor vorschmak, or chebureki recipes are traced back, rightly or wrongly, to their national origin – whatever that may be.

One of the latest examples is the new status of croissant, a favourite breakfast food in many countries. After protracted legal battles which started as early as 2005 it has now been registered by France as a product with protected geographical designation of origin and will now join the protected geographical indication list together with *prosciutto* and *gorgonzola, camembert* and *feta, Stilton and champagne*. While France claims that „fake" croissants produced elsewhere have nothing in common with the traditional French product and are, indeed a blow to its image, bakers in Belgium, Austria, Hungary, Poland, etc. who have been producing croissants for centuries are crying foul.

Hence, the culinary area often turns into a battlefield where all kinds of myths are generated and proliferated. Yet it is difficult to disagree with Ulf Hannerz who asserts:

> It matters not at all if spaghetti came from China to Italy, or if the pajamas of Linton´s "100% American" originated in India. What matters … are local interpretations, local frameworks of meaning (Hannerz, 2000: 9).

Quite frequently, negotiating national identities may result in contradictory culinary inferences, which are hardly tenable from the historic perspective. A case in point is *pilaf*,

a traditional dish in Turkey and many other Middle Eastern, Central and South Asian countries. This dish may illustrate the East vs. West contest for the souls of Bulgarians. Even after the liberation the cartoonists represented Abdul Hamid, the Turkish sultan, eating pilaf. Yet, during the time of the Bulgarian revival in the late 19th century Bulgarians also served a version of pilaf, which, however, was called *orisato (*Borislavov, 2008). The European sounding name of the dish highlighted the national separation and the Bulgarian autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. Another interesting case is the opposition between *soup and chorba* made famous by Aleko Konstantinov, the creator of Bai Ganyo. Konstantinov's pro-European stance had predetermined his attitude to his hero, who symbolized everything that Konstantinov believed wrong with the oriental Turkish-style approach ingrained in the Bulgarian mentality. However, in his own way, Bai Ganyo was on the way to Europe, which accounts for some of his culinary claims. To his Czech hosts he announced that he liked *soup* more than *chorba*, because „*chorba* is a Turkish dish". He also claimed that Bulgarians in general preferred *soup* to *chorba* intimating that such preference was not just his individual taste but the general tendency (Konstantinov, 2006: 48). However, soup and chorba is the same thing. The change in linguistic terminology shows a matching change in the social and cultural approach - using the Turkish word *chorba* instead of the French-related *supa* was a denial of the European identity that Bulgarians aspired to at the end of the 19th century, when *Bai Ganyo* was written.

In general, food frequently becomes the centrepiece of cultural clashes in a multicultural society. These clashes are often foregrounded by the routine use of material objects, which are othered and marked. In the extract below the leaflets written by the so-called „patriotic English people" living in Brick Lane in Monica Ali's eponymous novel show their perception of the immigrant threat through the food of the Muslims – kebabs or bhajis:

> It's multicultural murder:
>
> „Do you know what they are teaching your children today? In domestic science your daughter will learn how to make a kebab, or fry a bhaji. For his history lesson your son will be studying Africa or India or some other dark and distant land. English people, he will learn, are Wicked Capitalists" (Ali, 2004: 251)

The „patriotic English people" demonstrate a certain superficial knowledge of the food of the other, namely some „dark and distant" people, the minorities in England, which they regard as a danger to their future. Kebabs and bhajis, the food of the other is perceived as a threat to the autonomy and self-esteem of the autochtones.

All told, people of different ethnicities are often stereotyped through their meals. What one eats as a staple food (or is thought to eat) is perceived as disclosing what one is like, whereas beliefs about the food of the other often underlie stereotypes of the national character metonymically labelled through food: cf. *frogs,* (the French) *krauts* (the Germans), *pasta eaters* (the Italians). In this fashion the other is denigrated and transformed into an opposing symbol of one's values. Such stance becomes salient in many famous works

of fiction. Nikolai Gogol's famous character, Sobakevich in the novel *Dead Souls*, for example, is a real gourmet and a glutton – but his gluttony is notably patriotic and bi-polar. Whereas he eats with abandon the traditional Russian dishes (cabbage soup *schi* and *niania,* sheep's stomach stuffed with brains, buckwheat and trotters) he makes a mockery of the French-taught chef of the Governor accusing him of cooking a cat disguised as a hare. As a culinary tradition of the French he repeatedly mentions frogs with great disgust.

Thus, some foods may be perceived as national icons. Hamburgers and hot dogs have become for many an embodiment of America, sauerkraut and frankfurters conjure up the images of Bavaria or Berlin. By the same token, eating *guinea pigs* in the Central Equadorian Andes is a statement of the Indian identity, comments anthropologist Nicole Bourque. This is why, when Indians say that „some mestizos do not like eating guinea pig", they are not referring merely to a like or dislike of the flavour and texture of guinea pig meat but rather the association of ethnic identity that accompanies the act of eating some, …prepared in the Indian way (Bourke, 2001: 95–96).

Eateries serving pizzas and other Italian foods are often called a slice of Italy, not to mention numerous names with the word *Taste* (of Thailand, China, Asia, etc.). Consequently food and meals have always signified and symbolized national identities, politics and collective affiliations (served as personal statements of identity). Suffice it to say, that numerous supermarkets and eateries offering some kind of Italian flavours are called „Welcome to Eataly"!

As a statement of national identity few things may match food in clarity. Even children are aware of the relevance of certain foods as a guide to collective identity. Pupils of a state school visited by Gordon Brown in November 2006 mentioned fish and chips and full English breakfast as traditional British food, a symbol of Britishness.[4)]

In the context of history and politics, food provides many interesting details, which show that its use as a weapon of war or as a peace offering is timeless. Some examples: during World War 1, the persecution of Germans in American society was so pronounced that Germans were forced to abandon their language and customs, at least in public. German books were burned outside numerous libraries, while Beethoven was banned from symphonic repertories. The atmosphere was such that Germans hid the fact they were German and changed their own names - Schmidt to Smith, and so forth. For its part, the public renamed almost every German street and landmark and even altered menus, so that sauerkraut became "liberty cabbage" whereas hamburgers were renamed as „liberty sausage" (Mueller, 2002: 249). Allegedly, the camouflaged names were better suited to American sensibilities. Consequently, the renaming of *French fries* into *Washington fries* because of France's „incorrect stance" on the Iraqi war as punishment for France rings quite a distant bell. It shows either a denial of esteem or signifies recognition of somebody else's worth.

The transformation of food prejudices into identity judgements is still as common as ever. Africans, for example, are caricatured as brand mascots for *fried chicken* and *melons*, and by the same token, *spare rib*s are also stereotyped as quintessen-

tial soul food[5]. A real or imaginary familiarity with certain foods of the other may breed stereotypes not only for the outsiders but also for the „food natives". Hence, the knowledge of the cultural icons and the inherent food symbolism[6] may say a lot about what the people in the conversation below are implying:

> Barbara: What are you going to do Saturday? Will you be over here?
> Researcher: I don't know
>
> Barbara: Well, if you are not going to be doing anything, come by. I am going to cook some chit'lins. Or are you one of those Negroes who don't eat chit'lins
>
> Mary: (interjecting indignantly). That's all I hear lately – soul food, soul food. If you say you don't eat it you get accused of being saditty (affected, considering oneself superior - IP).
> Well, I ate enough black-eyed peas and neck-bones during the depression that I can't get too excited over it. I eat prime rib and T-bone because I like to, not because I am trying to be white. Negroes are constantly trying to find some way to discriminate against each other. If they could once get it into their heads that we are all in this together maybe we could get somewhere in the battle against the man
> (Mary leaves)
> Barbara: Well, I wasn't signifying at her, but like I always say, if the shoe fits, wear it. (Mitchell-Kernan, 2001: 154)

In the metaphor of the black American culture, according to the anthropologist Claudia Mitchell Kernan, Barbara was implying that Mary and/or the researcher (Mitchell-Kernan) is an „assimilationist". The explanation lies in the significance of the soul food „chitlins" which are considered a delicacy by many Afro-Americans (typical soul food). Eating chitlins is often viewed as a traditional dietary habit of the blacks. Changes in such habits are viewed as gratuitous aping of whites and considered to imply derogation of these customs. This is why disliking chitlins is indicative of assimilationist attitudes (Ibid).

Generally speaking, the extract illustrates that in many ways our comments on what other people eat say more about us than about them. Quite frequently, even the smallest deviations from the established routine relating to food and meals are likely to result in branding a person or an entire group as alien or strange, therefore rejecting their sense of self-worth manifested by means of their favourite foods.

In the 21st century with its communicative rule of political correctness stereotyping by food is likely to provide a reason for litigation. In the „cricket survival guide" ad, an Australian fan named Mick asks viewers „Need a tip when you're stuck in an awkward situation?" after being surrounded by cheering West Indies fans. He then shares a bucket of KFC chicken with fans around him to calm the situation. The video caused a huge stir in the US after it was posted on YouTube. It resulted in a heated debate, attracting more

than 200,000 views and 2000 comments. KFC Australia has acknowledged that the ad could be perceived as racist. It said the ad had been „misinterpreted by a segment of people in the US" and was seen by some in the US as a reference to racial stereotype that African Americans eat fried chicken. The KFC response is also revealing: „It is a light-hearted reference to the West Indian cricket team", KFC said. They went on to disprove any allegations of racism: „The ad was reproduced online in the US without KFC's permission, where we are told a culturally-based stereotype exists, leading to the incorrect assertion of racism. We unequivocally condemn discrimination of any type and have a proud history as one of the world's leading employers for diversity".[7)]

Conversely, in many cases when food reflects common history it is perceived as a unifying factor. By and large, the food served at Embassy receptions of different countries may be a study in history and sociology. In the recent Bulgarian film *Mission London* directed by Dimitar Mitovski, script written by the London-based writer Alec Popov, the representation of food at Bulgarian Embassy receptions after the collapse of the Zhivkov regime reflects both the socialist past of the country and the chaotic changes taking place in Bulgaria as a vehicle of negotiating a new collective identity through the prism of food politics. This is why the reception food also mirrors Bulgaria's diplomatic ties with some other countries. Banitsa, a typical Bulgarian phyllo pastry, most commonly stuffed with cheese and eggs, featured prominently at an Embassy reception during the visit of the Bulgarian President's wife. Banitsas have always been considered a must for important diplomatic functions at Bulgarian Embassies the world over. Of course, different visitors regarded this treat in different ways but for the Ambassador of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia seeing the banitsa was a welcome sign. Significantly, the affected and pretentious wife of the Bulgarian President suggests oysters and caviar as smart fare for a post-communist reception of the new type. For the Embassy cook this suggestion appears totally unfamiliar and over-ambitious. Another regular buffet offer was numerous small sandwiches or canapés. Traditionally they would contain salami, Bulgarian white cheese and yellow cheese (kashkaval) and would be decorated with bell peppers and olives. The sandwiches looked very socialist, and one of the British public relations experts attending the reception commented: - „You have a long way to go because this country has certain standards sandwich-wise". After the negative comment the Embassy employees looked up a site and found a different variety of sandwiches - the much more sophisticated smoked salmon and caviar ones, which marked a culinary break-through and a transition to a new era.

NOTES

1. The Shiksa Blogtheshiksa.com/2011/07/04/the-history-of-pie-in-america/)
2. http://caucasiancircle.blogspot.com/2011/12/appetites-trump-politics.html **)**
3. http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64639 December 5, 2011)
4. www.telegraph.co.uk/core?Content/displayPrintable.jhtml?xml=/global/2006/

5. According to Psyche Williams-Forson, this stereotype is still alive and is illustrated by numerous postcards and other ephemera picturing African Americans eating melon and fried chicken. See William-Forson, 2008: 343.
6. Signifying through food and an emotional attitude to different dishes and food-related actions is echoed in many linguistic examples. Food has been a source of praise and insult since time immemorial. Undoubtedly everything it implies becomes ingrained as a mental frame in the identity make-up. Food and food-related actions characterise relationships, cf. *You look so beautiful I could eat you. She looks yummy (dishy, a real plum). What a rotten apple*! Also, food is a source of a plethora of linguistic metaphors and numerous sayings, e.g. *hot potato, a piece of cake, to be in a pickle, have egg on one's face, save smb's bacon. to go pear-shaped, to make a meal out of smth, to offer a carrot,* to name but a few. Aesthetically, foods may ring different bells in different cultures. For example, *you are a cabbage* and *he is a real vegetable* is negative in Anglo-Saxon context but *pumpkin* in the UK context is a caress (e.g.. *come on, little pumpkin*), whereas in Bulgaria as well as in Hungary, this versatile vegetable (*тиква, тиквеник)* implies an insult.

7 Source: *The Huffington Post* (online)

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ХРАНА И СОЦИОКУЛТУРНА ИДЕНТИЧНОСТ

Резюме. Храненето представлява много важно социално взаимодействие. Поради тяхната специфичност в различни култури описанието и осъзнаването на особеностите на общите трапези са задължителен компонент в курсовете по интеркултурна комуникация. Без съмнение, храната символизира различни аспекти на съвременната култура, като средство, чрез което се проявяват социалните отношения. При това интерпретацията на избора на определена храна зависи от анализа на този дискурс и следователно от пресупозицията на този избор. Визирането на определени храни-икони, проследени към техния истински или неистински произход, често се използва като средство за етническа диференциация и произлизащите от това чувства за уникалност и национална гордост. Освен това храните имат функцията на сигнификатор.

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