

Gastronomy

Subjects: Others

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Sustainable gastronomy is an established concept that principally means a cuisine which acquires and treats ingredients sustainably. Furthermore, sustainable gastronomy is no longer solely about how gastronomy itself can be made more sustainable, as the issue is now expanded to encompass how a sustainable society can be developed via gastronomic means. Gastronomes are a small group of the population, which was selected to be studied in order to highlight their particular manner of communicating inner perspectives on sustainability. Practical participation in culturally influenced meals makes gastronomy a bridge between individual and societal issues, whereby gastronomic competencies can cultivate sustainable commitment, judgment, and community.

Keywords: meal ; gastronomic competence ; sustainability ; bildung

1. Introduction

Sustainable gastronomy is an established concept that principally means a cuisine which acquires and treats ingredients sustainably ^[1]. Today, food and meals are often topical issues in relation to sustainable development ^[2], and the importance of food's ability to cultivate inner capacities needed for sustainable transformations is emphasized by, e.g., the Conscious Food Systems Alliance (CoFSA) ^[3]. Pereira et al. ^[4] suggested that a transition to more sustainable food systems would demand both sustainable food production and sustainable meal culture, arguing that chefs are changemakers who can bring these perspectives together and convey sustainability in innovative ways. Sustainable gastronomy is no longer solely about how gastronomy itself can be made more sustainable, as the issue is now expanded to encompass how a sustainable society can be developed via gastronomic means. As a social movement, gastronomy can contribute to sustainable development beyond issues that directly concern food and beverages ^[5].

Gastronomes are a small group of the population, which was selected to be studied in order to highlight their particular manner of communicating inner perspectives on sustainability. University-educated gastronomes are used to discussing meals in terms of both theoretical and practical knowledge. For those who do not have an academic background, the concept of such knowledge may appear abstract. Therefore, it was important to sample participants with an academic education.

According to the hospitality researcher Lashley ^[6], the purpose of academic education is not to adapt to the temporary requirements of a changing industry, but rather to create conditions for the development of future industries. That is, it is not intended to educate only for what we know and need today, but rather to educate a skilled preparedness for what we do not know. Many studies on knowledge development in gastronomy focus either on formal education in academe or on experiential learning in the workplace ^[7], but few studies explore the interplay between these two perspectives, e.g., ^{[8][9]} ^[10]. Bildung, an idea of viewing knowledge in the way individuals experience it when impressions settle and become individual sense-making, is an idea that links these two perspectives. There is a lack of scientific studies applying a bildung perspective to how gastronomy alumni continue to develop their knowledge and make sense of their previous academic educations. From this perspective, studies of alumni's ongoing knowledge development and application are a critical part of evaluating academic educations.

2. Sustainability in Gastronomy

Sustainable development has been identified as a significant part of the practical competency that conscious chefs and waiters communicate in their professional practice ^[11]. Practical knowledge of gastronomy can be both about performing material crafts and about interpersonal treatment of and communication with guests ^[12]. A discussion of sustainability in gastronomy can therefore cover a wide range of sustainability competences, in both the craft and the interpersonal.

Meals can be sustainable both functionally, i.e., meals are prepared and served using sustainable ingredients and sustainable techniques, and experientially, i.e., meals are creative and enjoyable experiences of sustainability ^[13]. The

ability to combine knowledge with creativity has been discussed as a central competency in restaurant workers' sustainability work ^[14], describing how restaurants have the potential to develop successful business ideas based on sustainability. Restaurants can be sustainable in a positive and experiential sense to attract guests while communicating the ideal of sustainability ^[13]. Westling, Wennström, and Öström ^[15] discussed, in terms of culinary action, a practical perspective on developing and communicating sustainable meals, which can function as grassroots projects that in the long run create change at the societal level as well. According to Mäkelä and Niva ^[16], the communication of cultural and practical perspectives on sustainability is significant in gastronomy. Restaurant meals can, for example, convey knowledge of ethical aspects of sustainability by using raw materials from local sustainable food production and communicating their sustainability aspects through innovative cooking ^{[4][16]}.

3. Gastronomy as Humanism

In the early literature on gastronomy, e.g., by Brillat-Savarin or Hagdahl, humanistic ideals are often evident in discussions of knowledge ^{[17][18]}. The material food and the human individual were often united in the reasonings, with the individual perspective often being given special emphasis. Simmel ^[19] noted that eating a meal is an individual activity that is part of a social context. He thereby argued that meals can mediate between individuals and communities, because they bring impressions from communities to individuals and, conversely, bring individual meaning to social contexts. L'Orange Fürst ^[20] developed Simmel's reasoning by pointing out that food affects people not only as a source of standardized nutrients, but also by means of individual freedom at an emotional level. Overall, meals are rich in individual perspectives on food and beverages, so gastronomic meals are interesting arenas for studying people ^[21].

In our time, a humanistic perspective on gastronomy is prominent in the European Parliament's resolution on Europe's gastronomic heritage of 12 March 2014, P7_TA(2014)0211, which defines gastronomy as "the combination of knowledge, experience, art and craft, which provides a healthy and pleasurable eating experience" ^[22]. This resolution describes gastronomy as a cultural phenomenon that belongs to people's identity. It highlights how gastronomy can affect the value, quality, and excellence of raw materials involved in, e.g., issues of respect for animals and nature.

4. Inner Capacities of Sustainability

Today, sustainable development is often approached in terms of measures or evaluable goals, e.g., UN Sustainable Development Goals, ESG, carbon footprint, food miles, etc. These perspectives assume that sustainability is primarily based on factual knowledge and presuppose that those facts lead to knowledge-based actions. However, according to Wessbo and Uhrqvist ^[23], knowledge of sustainability goes beyond the need for humanity to know more, encompassing the need to do more together. Such a perspective on sustainability drives increasing sustainable actions by developing sustainable judgment. In this way, individuals' own abilities become the departure points for adapting their behaviors ^{[24][25]} ^[26]. Pappas, Pappas, and Sweeney ^[24] argued that global sustainability problems often originate from individual constraints in judgment when important decisions are made. Collective change is therefore largely dependent on inner capacities such as awareness and endeavors cf. ^{[3][27]}. For example, it might be easier to create new eating habits if the new food is gastronomically appealing ^[28], since a kind of understanding is already established between individuals and their food. According to Bruner ^[29], meaning-making is the process by which humans understand and make sense of their experiences and actions. Barrella et al. ^[30] believe that a significant part of individuals' ability to act sustainably comes from understanding the relationship between their real abilities and their ideals. Meaningful change is thus dependent on whether individuals adapt their courses of action to conform to their judgment.

When the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defined sustainable development in the publication Education for Sustainable Development Goals ^[31], it was described as competencies that humans possess which include both theoretical and practical knowledge. Understanding how people strive for sustainable habits in their lives is an important part of developing sustainable meals ^[16]. One of the eight key competences for sustainable development that UNESCO ^[31] identified is self-awareness. Self-awareness, in this context, is the ability to reflect on one's role in the local community and global society, to continually evaluate and justify one's actions, and to address one's feelings and desires regarding sustainability issues ^[31]. According to Jaakkola et al. ^[32], self-awareness should be understood as awareness of oneself in relation to the world rather than of focusing merely on the self. Self-awareness is also an important aspect of critical thinking, for recognizing one's own limitations, gaps in knowledge, prejudices, etc. ^[27]. Öhman and Sund ^[33] explored students' commitment to sustainability based on intellectual, emotional, and practical aspects, and found that the intellectual aspect comprises critical thinking, the emotional aspect comprises dedication, and the practical aspect comprises actions for change. Similarly, Ren, O'Dell, and Budeanu ^[34] reasoned about the need to consider the personal and emotional aspects of sustainability in order to understand sustainable development at a cultural level. The attitude of the individual is thus a factor that can be crucial for sustainability work in many ways.

5. Theoretical Framework

Gadamer ^[35] likened bildung to how a person makes sense of the impressions of a journey after returning home, when the experiences settle and are made individually shaped. “Bildung thus means to start with oneself, then depart and go beyond oneself, and thereafter return to oneself, in a constant movement between the familiar and the foreign” ^[36] (p. 89).

According to the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) ^[37], bildung offers opportunities to develop learning and teaching in line with UNESCO’s Education for Sustainable Development Goals ^[31]. Wessbo and Uhrqvist ^[23] studied how stories that convey a bildung experience of sustainability can strengthen learning regarding sustainable development. Stories are seen as carriers of bildung, as they create context and answer questions in communication with their audience ^[38]. Bildung makes it possible to handle broad cross-disciplinary perspectives, by creating openness, meaning-making, and commitment to sustainability issues at a human level ^{[23][37]}.

Gadamer ^[35] defines bildung as a human task, essentially practical, which is about handling knowledge in contexts that are broader than the particular knowledge in itself. Similarly, Sörlin ^[39] as well as Östergren and Jonsson ^[12] have discussed how bildung can combine general theoretical knowledge with the specific knowledge and judgment gained from individual practical experiences, the latter being required for people to be able to “know together” and face societal problems together. According to Boström, Lundahl, and Öhman ^[40], theoretical and practical abilities are brought together within the bildung perspective, enabling a unified view of both the general and the specific, the individual and the shared. This is in line with how Gadamer ^[35] discusses the theoretical as interests that prompt a journey, but that these are dependent on the practical experiences from the journey itself before they become truly meaningful for people.

Phronesis, a similar concept of practical judgment manifested in action, was already discussed by Aristotle ^[41], who distinguished it from the practical execution of actions, which was called techne. Nussbaum ^[42] further developed how Aristotelian practical judgment could be cultivated by means of people’s understanding of one another, using the concept of narrative imagination as the ability to understand other people empathetically and interestedly. Such an imagination involves self-awareness in a form that is not solely individual, as Nussbaum ^[42] noted, as this awareness is instead a tool for engaging people to work for the common good. Individual perspectives are seen as enriching and developing the collective, so diverse perspectives are needed to cultivate a good society ^[42]. Cultivation, according to Nussbaum, is a constructive approach to knowledge that is based on all human abilities such as feeling, thinking, and acting. Nussbaum believes that humans, through narrative imagination, can cultivate an understanding of other cultures that goes hand in hand with a critical understanding of their own. By cultivating people’s citizenship in terms of understanding their own role in relation to the foreign, they are made aware of how other people’s views and experiences can enrich their own ^[42].

Later, Nussbaum developed these ideas about cultivating human abilities with a stronger societal application ^[43]. The latter Nussbaum ^[43] considers inner capacities as linked to professional capabilities, and reasons about how these can be used in social governance. This differs from Gadamer’s hermeneutic approach ^[35], which is more general and deals ontologically with what it is to live as a knowledgeable human being.

When bildung is discussed in terms of using oneself for contextualizing knowledge, it is called cultivation-of-the-self ^{[44][45]} ^[46]. Its significance is about creating a personal belief in one’s own ability to change one’s life situation. B. Gustavsson ^[47] describes cultivation-of-the-self as a practical process but emphasizes that individuals can achieve such bildung not only through practical labor but also through practical communication in the form of dialogue and conversation. On the other hand, bildung considered as comprising social development activities is called civic bildung ^{[39][42][48]}. It is about individuals’ joint unfolding of knowledge and judgment, which evokes change based on the common good in, for example, democratic decisions. Cultivation-of-the-self and civic bildung are mutually dependent. For example, when humans must respond to societal issues without obvious solutions, they may develop a cultivated attitude toward addressing the issues. However, if too much emphasis is placed on civic bildung, the practical aspects are lost in favor of an overly abstract and instrumentalized evaluation of the purposes and targets of bildung ^[49]. Conversely, a one-sided emphasis on the cultivation-of-the-self may cause a kind of specialization that fails to serve the common good. A unity between cultivation-of-the-self and civic bildung can be formed when individuals and society cooperate by exploring societal challenges in open conversations ^{[36][49][50]}. Such a dialogical approach will bridge the gap between the individual’s experience-based knowhow and scientific knowledge, creating opportunities to develop both perspectives in open dialogue with each other.

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