

À la Lituanienne: In Search of a Lithuanian Gastronomic Identity

Abstract: The nationality of food is related to specific cultural ideas and the relationships between these ideas and nationality concepts. The first mentions of a “national gastronomy” in the region are from the time of the Renaissance and Reformation (16th century). At this time, Lithuanian cuisine is described as more ordinary, less cultured, less sophisticated, more wild, natural, and, at the same time, healthier. The idea of the simplicity of Lithuanian cuisine developed with the focus on ethnographic Lithuanian cuisine of the Romantic period (19th century). Another idea of romantic gastronomic Lithuanianness was the use of natural ingredients in cuisine. Wild plants and hunting cuisine drove this trend. At the end of the 19th century, the idea of gastronomic Lithuanianness, inspired by Romanticism, had waned. The inclusion of “Lithuanian” in the name of a dish indicated exoticism (a brand in a purely technical sense). A narrower, ethnolinguistic narrative of Lithuanian culture emerged at the end of the 19th century. The gastronomic identity of this period marked the transformation of the existing multicultural gastronomic tradition of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) and its layers (mostly French), an adaptation to the intelligentsia’s tastes, and the evolvement of Lithuanian and ethnographic cuisine. After the Second World War, the idea of ethnolinguistic Lithuanianness was transformed by the principles of Soviet ideology, creating a phenomenon that maintained an external (pseudo) national form of culture acceptable to the Soviet system. During the Soviet era, the Lithuanian gastronomic identity was reduced to the dishes of poor peasant ethnographic cuisine (primarily potato-based dishes). The restoration of Lithuania’s independence at the end of the 20th century has created new opportunities for constructing a gastronomic culture and gastronomic identities. On the one hand, Lithuania is experiencing global gastronomic trends. On the other hand, ideas of historical identity are reviewed,

reconstructed, and implemented. Notably, that narrow, ethnolinguistic and post-soviet gastronomic identity of poor peasant cuisine is also popular in contemporary Lithuania.

Keywords: history of Lithuanian gastronomy; gastronomic identity; Renaissance; Romanticism; nationalism; Soviet era

Introduction

Discussions about gastronomic identity, national heritage, and gastronomic nationalism are among the most active and popular in contemporary public discourse (online media and social networks). The increased popularity of the topics has been spurred by the development of the network society in recent decades. Research indicates that the importance of various identities is growing in contemporary society (Castells, 2006; Dijk, 1999). The growing importance of identities in the network society has transformed the relationship with the past for many. The past is no longer perceived as historical information but becomes an element of contemporary life and culture used in various spaces, from branding and creative industries to the criminal world (Laužikas et al., 2018). In this way, heritage is “contemporized” (Smith, 2006), transformed into an element of contemporary culture, which also includes the construction of various kinds of identities.

A relevant research area lies in the relationships between gastronomic culture and different identities. A Google Scholar search for scientific publications in English, using the search string “food AND identity” results in 4,110,000 publications between 1914 and 2021. Using the same search string in the Web of Science Core Collection results in 7,159 publications. After examining the 92 most cited publications from Google Scholar and the Web of Science Core Collection, the most significant contexts of research on gastronomic identity could be defined (the most closely related articles are cited in parentheses): tourism (Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Lin et al., 2011), sustainable development and ecology (Stapleton, 2015), health (Caplan, 1997), gastronomic culture and food anthropology (Ayora-Díaz, 2021; Almerico, 2014; Mintz & Du Bois, 2002; Parasecoli, 2014), identity studies (Atkin et al., 2019; Brulotte & Di Giovine,

2016; Cooks, 2009; Dietler, 2007; Edensor, 2020; Fischler, 1988; Grimaldi et al., 2019; Harrington, 2005; Ichijo & Ranto, 2016; Kelly & Morar, 2018), consumer studies (Guerro et al., 2009), as well as studies on specific identity groups or regions (Palmer, 2002; Krāsteva-Blagoeva, 2008).

In Lithuania, gastronomic culture research is conducted in the context of bioarchaeology (Giedrė Motuzaitė-Matuzevičiūtė Keen, Giedrė Piličiauskienė), history (Neringa Dambrauskaitė, Antanas Astrauskas, Liudas Glemža, Raimonda Ragauskienė, Aivas Ragauskas, Rimvydas Laužikas), and ethnology (Vacys Milius, Nijolė Marcinkevičienė) rather than identity studies. The dominant topics of gastronomic identity are related to gastronomic tourism and its development (Baltrūnaitė & Bezarienė, 2017; Pranevičienė, 2020), regional gastronomic culture (Blumberg & Mincyte, 2019; Šumylė et al., 2018; Mincyte, 2011), research on the identity of Lithuanian emigrants (Čiubrinskas, 2004; Lankauskas, 2002), and historical contexts of identities (Belyj & Astrauskas, 2012; Misevičius, 2020). In the mentioned research, gastronomic identity is perceived as a component of the more general field of Lithuanian identities. However, Lithuanian-specific gastronomic identities, history, structure, and diversity are not discussed in detail.

The object of this article is to explore the historical evolution of the perception and drivers of Lithuanian gastronomic identity. The research aims to identify cases of gastronomic Lithuanianness mentioned in written sources and delineate the essential stages of gastronomic Lithuanianness, describing each stage to connect it with the cultural context of each period. The article applies an interdisciplinary methodology of the humanities and social sciences. The comparative method of critical source analysis was used to study the historical data. To identify and discuss the contemporary trends, two groups of sources and methods were used: (1) the 2020 National Menu questionnaire (10,120 participants answered questions about the most popular “national Lithuanian dishes”) and a hierarchical cluster data analysis (squared Euclidean distance and Ward linkage); and (2) representative texts of the webpages of “Lithuanian” restaurants and qualitative content analysis.

The article’s text is structured in three parts: (1) terms, definitions, and conceptual framework; (2) Lithuanian food in the historical context; and (3) a discussion on contemporary Lithuanian gastronomic identities.

Terms, Definitions, and Conceptual Framework

The key term used for this research is national identity. The concept of national identity is rooted in Schneider's concept of a community as a group "of people with whom we share a particular interest or purpose, as well as a culture and history". The concept divides patriotic and national communities focused on different objects of affiliation (Schneider, 2018): the territorial (country) and the ethnolinguistic (ethnic group). The ethnic dimension comprises "named units of the population with common ancestry myths and historical memories, elements of shared culture, some link with a historical territory and some measure of solidarity, at least among their elites" (Smith, 1995, 57). Moreover, the linguistic element (common language) is one of the most significant markers of ethnic solidarity (Hobsbawm, 1992). In this context, national identity-related communities include both territorial and ethnic dimensions with a particular interest in gastronomy. Gastronomy here acts as an aspect of nationality – a source of imagination in Anderson's (1991) socially constructed "imagined communities" and a "brick of identity" in Castells' (2006) terms.

The conceptual elaboration of the structures and relationships connecting different Lithuanian gastronomy-related identities draws from Geertz's (1973) textuality of culture and Lotman's (2001) semiosphere. Lotman defines the semiosphere as a spatial mechanism that functions to communicate existing information, generate new information, and preserve information. Various structures of sign-like elements fill the semiosphere; they are defined as texts in the broadest sense – neat, communicative sign systems that are distinguishable from other systems. In this way, they act as information structures representing and connecting the different semiospheres (Lotman, 2001; Kull, 2011, 2014).

For this research, "food can be considered 'an ensemble of texts'. Every ingredient, each dish, the meal structure, and all the elements forming a culinary culture are connected" (Parasecoli, 2014, 416). In examining historical gastronomic identity, we focus on the mention of Lithuanianness in the texts. This reference to "Lithuanian" can be in the names of dishes, recipes, descriptions, works of ethnographers, literary works, and representative texts. The mention of Lithuanianness in the text is perceived as a fixing structure that turns a dynamic object (the concept of Lithuanianness in the continuous tradition of gastronomic culture) into a static model (a kind of instant photography). Applying the above

theoretical approach to the research of current gastronomic identity, specific dishes (as heritage objects) and the knowledge of gastronomic culture and tradition act as signs (in a semiotic sense), and specific menus derived from them can be perceived as texts. The role of the code that organises the characters into the text lies in personal interpretation. This interpretation determines the dishes chosen by the people who voted in the National Menu elections. Thus, in both cases (written sources and modern menus), the text can be read in a semiotic sense, to understand the societies that created these texts and their broader cultural contexts.

Lithuanian Food in the Historical Context

The nationality of food is related to specific cultural ideas and the relationships between these ideas and nationality concepts. The first mentions of “national gastronomy” in the region are from the 16th century. At this time, Renaissance authors highlighted similarities between the Lithuanian and Latin languages. Moreover, Protestantism asserted the importance of national languages in religious practice. Another essential cultural context for national gastronomy lies in the Romanticism of the first half of the 19th century. During this period, an increase of the interest in the history and ethnographic culture of different nations is observed. The third cultural idea is the ethnolinguistic concept of nationality, shaped under nationalism in the second half of the 19th century. These three cultural contexts form the framework for the periodization and investigation of Lithuanian identity in gastronomic culture.

Renaissance, Reformation, and Counter-Reformation

The first links between Lithuanianness and cuisine can be traced back to the 16th century. The *History of the Nordic Nations*, published by Olaus Magnus (1555), presents a recipe for the production of honey mead, “called medonem, according to Polish or Lithuanian custom”. Piotr Umiastowski’s (1594) medical treatise contains another Lithuanian recipe called “Making the kvass in Lithuania or by Ruthenians”. The preamble of Umiastowski’s recipe references an idea that has

been vivid in the concept of gastronomic Lithuanianness up until the 21st century. Lithuanian cuisine is described as more ordinary, less cultured, less sophisticated, more wild, natural, and, at the same time, healthier. Umiastowski wrote: “[...] poor people in Lithuania and Rus take better care of their health than people in Poland, because they do not drink raw water directly from the spring, but produce fermented pear or apple kvass”. This idea of the relationship between Lithuanians and “wild but great paganism” is rooted in the Roman origins of Lithuanians, posited by Polish medieval scholar Jan Długosz. To legitimise the marriage of Polish Princess Jadwiga to Jogaila (Jagiełło), the ruler of pagan Lithuania, he genealogically linked Lithuanian pagans to the greatness of pagan Rome (Gudmantas, 2004). Lithuanian–Roman connections became popular during the Renaissance. It is probably best described in the 16th century *Bychowiec Chronicle* and in Matthias Strycovius’s *Chronicle of Poland, Lithuania, Samogitia, and all of Ruthenia*. The binary opposition of “cultured” Poland and “wild” Lithuania became more significant after the union of Lublin in 1569, which created the federal Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (originally named the Republic of Two Nations).

The differences between Lithuanian and Polish gastronomy were emphasised by authors of the 17th century. Symon Syrenius’s (1613) encyclopaedia of plants (*Zielnik Herbarzem z ięzyka Łacinskiego zowią...*) refers to the quality of honey (then more of a forest product) in Lithuania, Samogitia, Russia, and Podol. Elsewhere in the book, he notes that in Lithuania (unlike in other parts of the Republic), beets are fermented together with turnips, garlic, onions, cabbage, and blancaccio (mushrooms) in layers and called *kvashenina*; turnips and beets can be also fermented with all the leaves, and parasol mushrooms can be used. Syrenius also notes that such fermentation is typical in Lithuania, Samogitia, the Rus, and among the Muscovites. In this observation, Syrenius highlights another concept of the Lithuanian gastronomic identity of the 16th and 17th centuries – the mixing of wild (collected from a meadow or forest) and cultivated (domesticated) products in a single dish. This idea is most accurately expressed in Hiacynt Przetocki’s (1653) work *Postny obiad abo zabaweczka*: “[...] indeed a Lithuanian delicacy, cabbage with mushrooms, / In Vilnius, serve it on the table in platters, / But in Poland, the mushroom grows in the oak forest, the cabbage in the garden, / So here they are not cooked in the same pot [...]”.

The simplicity of Lithuanian cuisine also received attention in the literature of the 17th century, particularly in Matthias Casimirus Sarbievius’s (1625)

Glorification of Monastic Rest. Despite the palinode nature of this work (in connection with Horace's second episode "Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis") and the polemical structure of Sarbievius's text, the meanings encoded and transmitted in it can be interpreted not only as conversations with Horace. In the context of the history of gastronomy, Lucrin's oysters are a clear allusion to Horace, and the following response in the abovementioned text refers to the daily rural life of Lithuania but not an authentic rural life. Food was an idealised manifestation of the simplicity of Lithuanian cuisine. Sarbievius mentions salt, fresh (sour milk) cheese, strawberries, bread, a pigeon, geese, beans, and vegetables.

The ideas of Lithuanian gastronomic identity constructed during the Renaissance, Reformation, and Counter-Reformation were not sufficiently developed. Firstly, the Renaissance did not exist in Lithuania in its pure form; it was mixed with the Middle Ages (Gothic) and the Baroque. Secondly, the Reformation, which emphasised national culture, had lost in Lithuania. With the reestablishment of Catholicism, the attention among Catholic authors to the Lithuanian language and Lithuanianness also disappeared. Thus, the ideas formed in the 16th and 17th centuries were newly highlighted and developed only in the 19th century, during the Romanticism era.

Romanticism

Romanticism engendered another wave of interest in Lithuanianness during the first half of the 19th century. After the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, "...the natural development of its 'haute cuisine' has stopped. This gave birth to the discourse on the 'desirable content' of the local culinary canon. This discourse was closely related to the social and political discourse on the terrain of the former GDL, for the last 180 years..." (Belyj & Astrauskas, 2012). This forms the social background for the romantic cultural framework, which encouraged people to seek an identity detached from antiquity, and in Lithuania, it was a pagan, medieval Lithuanian culture. The emphasis on Lithuanian identity can be found in the works of researchers and amateur historians of that time (e.g., Joachim Lelewel, Theodor Narbut, Simonas Daukantas, Józef Jaroszewicz, and Dionizas Poška) and works of art and literature (e.g., Jan Matejko and Henryk Sienkiewicz). In addition, the Romanticism era

turns to rural culture and the “simple way of life”, borrowing an idealised rural lifestyle and the “noble savage” from the previous Enlightenment era. Kanuty Rusiecki painted his idealised peasant portraits during this same time: “The Reaper” and “Lithuanian Girl with Willows”.

Romantic Lithuanianness

The idea of the simplicity of Lithuanian cuisine developed with in the focus on ethnographic Lithuanian cuisine. The authors of the Romantic period were the first to compile lists of dishes typical of Lithuanians. They were not necessarily wholly authentic, but they reflected the author’s image of Lithuania and their understanding of the country and its people. Lukasz Gołębiowski (1830) wrote that Lithuanians like *kucja* (Lith. *kūčia*, a Christmas Eve dish with grains, honey, and poppy seeds), *tolokno* (Lith. *talakna*, oven-dried crushed oat grains with a bit of salt), pickled beet leaves, *chołodziec* (Lith. *šaltibarščiai*, cold soup with pickled beet leaves, cucumbers, sour cream, boiled eggs, crayfish, veal, capon or turkey pieces and other additions), *wereszczaka* (Lith. *vereščaka*, pork meat and lard stew), *śliziki* (Lith. *šlīžikai*, Christmas Eve baked pastries), *kolduny* (Lith. *koldūnai*, a kind of stuffed dumplings), *boćwinka* (Lith. *batvininė*, beet leaf soup), *półgąski* (Lith. *puszgasiai*, smoked goose halves), *ołatki* and *hrecuszki* (kinds of pancakes), *grzybek* (Lith. *grybukas*, eggs *au gratin*), *kwaszennina* (pickled beets with turnips, garlic, onions, cabbage, and potatoes), scrambled eggs with sausage and mushrooms, water caltrops (Lith. *agaras*), *sielianka* (Lith. *selianka*, a soup with cream, flour, and eggs), wheat buns and bread (Lith. *bandelės*, *ragaišis*), *pirog* (Lith. *pyragas*, sweet wheat bread with eggs and raisins), kwass (Lith. *gira*, a kind of fermented, non-alcoholic beverage), ordinary and linden mead (Lith. *midus*), *wódka* (Lith. *degtinė*, a distilled rye beverage). Liudvikas Adomas Jucevičius (1846) mentioned Lithuanian dishes that were not typical of other European nations and were eaten here by both peasants and “high-class representatives”: *chołodziec*, *boćwinka*, *wereszczaka*, *juszniak* (Lith. *juka*, blood soup), *szupienia* (Lith. *šiupinys*, a kind of stew with peas, beans, meat, lard, mushrooms, and other additions), *kiepszaszas* (Lith. *kepšasas*, baked lamb’s head), *pęczak* or *gruce* (Lith. *grucė*, barley and pea porridge), *kanapinej* (hemp seeds and barley buns). Władysław Syrokomla (1853), in comparing Lithuanians with Rusyns (Belarusians), also distinguished dishes typical of Lithuanians. According to

him, “Lithuanians like fat: pork on his table is necessary *delice*”. He mentions dishes typical of Lithuanians: *wereszczaka*, *szupienia*, mead, beer and *krupnik* (Lith. *krupnikas*, a liqueur made with spices and honey). Leon Potocki (1869) mentioned several Samogitian favourites: *szupienia*, *kiepszasza*, *kiepsniali* (Lith. *kepsneliai*, braised pork pieces with bread and onions), *pierogaj* (Lith. *pyragai*, cakes with curd filling, seasoned with mint or tarragon), *szaltonosy* (Lith. *šaltanosiai*, a kind of stuffed dumplings), *kastinis* (traditional milk dish), beer, *wódka* and *krupnik*.

Another idea of gastronomic Lithuanianness was the use of natural ingredients in cuisine. Wild plants and hunting cuisine drove this trend, which was created by the changes in dietetics in the 18th and 19th centuries. During the Enlightenment period in France, humoral medicine and dietetics were questioned. In 1709, a treatise on diets published by Philippe Hecquet introduced a new concept of nutrition (Dumanowski, 2019). This sparked the development of new dietetics, which emphasised an approach to food health or non-health based on scientific knowledge. This concept opens the way for kitchens to use humorously “despicable” but scientifically (possibly) valuable ingredients. Jędrzej Śniadecki (1815), a professor at Vilnius University, was one of the first to promote “new dietetics” in Lithuania. In the gastronomic space, these ideas were realised by famous Vilnius *Küchenmeister* (chef de cuisine) Jan Szyttler. He experimented with simple, rustic, and wild ingredients in his haute cuisine kitchen. Szyttler was the first in the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to write gastronomy books for non-professional audiences. Several of them were dedicated to the description of these gastronomic experiments (Szyttler, 1837) or the hunting kitchen (Szyttler, 1839; 1845).

In the context of Romanticism, Lithuanianness in gastronomy becomes an object of broad interest, popularity, imitation, and emulation. As many as three gastronomy books – by Wincentyna Zawadzka (1858), Anna Ciundziewicka (1848), and Karolina Bielozińska (1889) – with “Lithuanian” in their titles were published. Moreover, Maria Maciszewska (1857) describes herself as a “Lithuanian woman living in Kyiv” in her gastronomy book.

In the Polish, Russian, German, and French recipe books of the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, many dishes have the word “Lithuanian” in the title. Recipes of such dishes were often copied from one gastronomic book author to another. Due to many culinary books in

the 19th century, the following list does not compile a detailed bibliography of the mentions of Lithuanian dishes. Along with the dish, only one of the many references to gastronomic literature is given. Selecting a reference focuses on the books that present the most typical recipe for the mentioned dish. The following most popular dishes were presented as Lithuanian (*à la Lituanienne, po litewsku, po litowski*): *barszcz* (Lith. *barščiai*, borscht, a kind of soup, Marciszewska, 1857), *bigos* (Lith. *bigosas*, cabbage stew, Małecka, 1901), *borowiki* (Lith. *baravykai*, fried boletus, Czarnowska, 1910), *chołodnik* (Zawadzka, 1913), *élan* (Lith. *briediena*, stewed moose medallions, Petit, 1860), *gęś pieczona z jabłkami i podlewa* (Lith. *žąsis kimšta obuoliais su padažu*, goose with apples and sauce, Zawadzka, 1913), *grzybek* (Ochorowicz-Monatowa, 1926), *jabłeczny sér* (Lith. *obuolių sūris*, a dessert made of boiled or cooked apples, Bieloziarska, 1889), *kapuśniak* (Lith. *kopūstienė*, cabbage soup, Praktyczny..., 1886), *kapusta włoska lub biała, nadziewana* (Lith. *kimšti kopūstai*, stuffed cabbage (Zawadzka, 1913), *kasza sypka z grubych krup* (Lith. *perlinių kruopų košė*, pearl porridge, Zawadzka, 1913), *kielbasy* (Lith. *dešros*, different kinds of sausages, Owoczynska, 1914), *kiszki czarne hreczane* (Lith. *kraujiniai vėdarai su grikiais*, blood pudding with buckwheat stuffed in pig intestines, Marciszewska, 1857), *kolduny* (Marciszewska, 1857), *królik pieczony* (Lith. *keptas triušis*, roasted rabbit, Mączynski, 1848) *kwas* (Bielozierska, 1889), *pekelfleisz* (Lith. *pekelfleišas*, pickled beef, Małecka, 1901), *perdreaux* (Lith. *kurapkos*, partridges, Dubois, 1872), *pieczeń cielęca* (Lith. *veršienos kepsnys*, veal steak, Gniewkowska, 1917), *pirog litewski z rybą, kulebiaką zwany* (Lith. *kulebiaka*, a kind of filled cake, Marciszewska, 1857) *półgąski* (Małecka, 1901), *potage* (Lith. *sriuba*, soup, Petit, 1860), *potage d'Abattis d'Oies* (Lith. *žąsų kagalvių sriuba*, goose offal soup, Dubois & Bernard, 1856), *roti d'élan* (Lith. *kepta briediena*, roasted moose medallions, Petit, 1860), *salcesony* (Lith. *salcesonai*, a kind of sausage, Bieloziarska, 1889), *sauce* (Lith. *padažas*, Dubois & Bernard, 1856), *ser osmażany w cieście* (Lith. *tešloje keptas sūris*, batter-fried cheese, Drzewiecki, 1903) *séry* (Lith. *sūriai*, cheeses, Bieloziarska, 1889), *śliziki* (Bogacka, 1896), *solenie wędliny* (Lith. *rūkytos mėsos sūdymas*, salting of smoked meat, Bieloziarska, 1889), *soudac* (Lith. *sterkas*, sander, Petit, 1860), *soufflé* (Lith. *sufle*, souffle, Petit, 1860), *soupe au canard* (Lith. *antienos sriuba*, duck soup, Dubois, 1872), *varenikis* (Lith. *virtiniai*, a kind of dumplings, Petit, 1860), *zrazy zawijane* (Lith. *zrazai*, meat rolls, Zawadzka, 1913), *baba* (Lith. *boba*, sweet braided cake, Петрова, 1877), *borshch iz zeleni seldereja* (Lith.

salierų barščiai, green celery borscht, Петрова, 1877), *višnevaļa naliūka* (Lith. *vyšnių užpiltinė*, cherry liqueur (Стр..., 1907), *grenki* (Lith. *skrebučiai*, toasted bread, Толиверова, 1880), *kapusta* (Lith. *troškinti kopūstai*, stewed sauerkraut, Молоховец, 1901), *kvas do borshcha* (Lith. *rūgštėlė barščiams*, kvass for borscht, Люцина, 1884), *kolbasa dlia pechenija (zapekanka)* (Lith. *kepta dešra*, fried sausages, Федоров, 1912), *mazurki* (Lith. *mozūreliai*, a kind of cake, Петрова, 1877), *okoroka* (Lith. *kumpis*, ham, Практический..., 1901).

In some cases, the label of “Lithuanianness” was assigned to dishes indirectly by including not the word “Lithuania” but the family names of the Grand Duchy of Lithuanian nobility or toponyms of the Lithuanian region. These dishes include the Tyszkiewicz kolduny (Zawadzka, 1913), Sapięha zrazy (Bogacka, 1896), sturgeon à la Radzivil (Auch heute..., 1898), Radzivil garnish (Hellstern, 1888), and Samogitian rusks (Marciszewska, 1857).

Notably, the titles of these books and dishes mention Lithuania not in an ethnolinguistic, but a civic sense. This umbrella concept covered the territory of the former GDL state and its inhabitants (similar to the current British one). However, the abovementioned Lithuanian gastronomy books and the listed dishes with Lithuanian titles are authentic, maintaining geographical and original links with the Lithuanian gastronomic tradition through the 19th century.

Romanticism as a Brand

The late 19th century saw the decline of the idea of gastronomic Lithuanianness as inspired by Romanticism. The changed cultural and political context played a crucial role in this process. The idea of restoring the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had weakened after the unsuccessful uprising against the Russian Empire in 1863. In the last decades of the 19th century, people in the nations of the former Republic (Poles, Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians) turned to ethnolinguistic national revivals to build their nation-states. In this way, the romantic concept of Lithuania as a “savage” part of the Commonwealth became obsolete, leading to a kind of “blooming Romanticism”. The inclusion of “Lithuanian” in the name of a dish indicated its exotic value. A separate study is needed to identify the connections (or lack thereof) of these dishes with the authentic gastronomic tradition of historical Lithuania. However, a connection of this kind was most often absent, and such dishes were Lithuanian in name

only (serving as a brand in a purely technical sense). Examples of these dishes include “La carpe du Rhin à la Lithuanienne”, mentioned in Guillaume Victor Émile Augier’s dramas (Augier, 1896). Many such dishes are found in the menus of events and restaurants of the late 19th century and 20th century. In 1880, at a dinner hosted by New Yorkers in honour of Count Ferdinand de Lesseps, a French diplomat and construction manager of the Suez Canal, the “salmi de becassines” was prepared à la Lituanienne. In 1893, the filet de boeuf à la Radzewil¹ was enjoyed for dinner at the Real Paco Das Necessidades. In 1895, at the 13th Annual Dinner of the Society of Medical Jurisprudence, and in 1897, at the Annual Dinner of the Typothetae of New York, a “filet de boeuf pique à la Lituanienne” was offered. The Radville-style turbante de filet de sole was eaten at a Christmas dinner at the Savoy Hotel in New York City in 1900. In 1910, tartlette Radzivel was served at an honorary dinner hosted by the Sudanese club in Khartoum, which was dedicated to “Honorary Colonel” Theodore Roosevelt (former President of the United States). In 1914, “caviar à la Radzivil” was added to the Pantagriuel students’ dinner menu at the Parker Studio. From 1938 to 1939, potage Radziwill was a favourite at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel for a total of six dinners, such as the Controllers Institute of America Spring Conference (What’s on..., 2020).

A notable example of dish names born of “blooming Romanticism” dates back to the 1960s, when the melon en surprise Prince Radziwill by chef Georges of the Rotisserie de la table du Roy (based in Cite D’Antin 10, Paris) was served (Chef Georges, 1952). At the same time (1964), the dishes zrazy a là Radziwiłł and beef roulade à la Radziwiłł were recorded in the canteens of Soviet-Polish workers (Radziwiłłowie, 2018).

New National Lithuanian Cuisine

A narrower, ethnolinguistic narrative of Lithuanian culture emerged at the end of the 19th century. At this time, Lithuanian national movement leaders constructed the society’s identity through the perception of the Lithuanian nation as a Lithuanian-speaking community of rural (ethnographic) origin with a critical view of Christianity (Bumblauskas, 2009). In this respect, Lithuanianness

1 The family name of the Lithuanian noble house Radziwiłł was used in slightly different forms (e.g., “Radville”, “Radzivel”) to name the dishes mentioned in the written sources.

was identified with the ethnolinguistic Lithuanian nation through the rise of importance of Lithuanian language. During the Lithuanian national revival, people sought to create a higher culture using the Lithuanian language. This aspiration encompassed art, literature, theatre, music, and gastronomy too. The first book of recipes in Lithuanian, published by Liudvika Didžiulienė-Žmona (1893), outlined the contours of the new Lithuanian national cuisine. The cuisine created was non-Polish, non-Russian, non-German, and non-Jewish, not influenced by landlords or urbanites, but “truly Lithuanian”. But in reality it marked the transformation of the existing multicultural GDL gastronomic tradition and its layers (mostly French), an adaptation to the intelligentsia’s tastes, and the evolvement of Lithuanian and ethnographic cuisine.

Modernity and Ethnographic Tradition

The new national Lithuanian cuisine and the associated Lithuanian gastronomic identity developed in the interwar period, after the establishment of an independent state in 1918. At that time, the new national elites of Lithuania undertook a forcible modernization of society, based on the Western model (Belyj & Astrauskas, 2012). The Lithuanian urban culture of the new state was being constructed in the “temporary capital” in Kaunas. Kaunas stood out from other European interwar capitals in that it was not the state’s historical capital. Here, the image of the young nation-state’s principal city emerged as if it were done on a blank canvas.

The most important innovations in the gastronomic culture of the interwar period are the development of a large food industry; the evolvement of restaurant and cafe culture; the spread of modern gastronomic fashions (e.g., vegetarianism); the use of innovative kitchen equipment; the development of new cooking and product-canning technologies; the spread of food and catering advertising; and the growth of gastronomy editorials, household management books, and periodicals.

During the interwar period, eating fresh vegetables became popular in Lithuania, and the variety of vegetables increased. Many potato dishes, as well as herring dishes, took root in kitchens. Many resources were invested in raising the general level of gastronomic culture during the interwar period. Furthermore, the gastronomic culture remained multicultural and acquired new characteristics. Emigrant communities living abroad (mainly in the US) adopted

exotic gastronomic phenomena and different elements of gastronomic culture – technologies, varied dishes, and other eating cultures (Baltrušaitienė, 1919). Many emigrants returned to Lithuania during the interwar period and brought Western gastronomy culture to their country.

In the context of Lithuanian gastronomic identity, the main feature of this interwar process was the contradiction between the city (modern Lithuanian gastronomic identity) and the old ethnographic rural tradition, which was respectable but was considered as old-fashioned and one that must be changed. In this field, new ideas of Lithuanian gastronomy developed through the formation and implementation of a new menu, which favoured the use of Lithuanian local-origin products, and the construction of a narrower gastronomic identity of Lithuanian ethnographic regions.

The inception of a modern Lithuanian daily menu had its effect on breakfast. In 1939, readers of “Moteris” magazine were entreated to change rural eating habits, because “[...] Belgians, Swiss, Danish and Hollandia farmers, who work as hard as we do, take coffee with milk, bread (usually cake) and fruit or vegetable marmalades or confitures for breakfast” (Ūkininkė, 1939). The lunch recommendations aimed to establish a three-course daily meal (soup, main course, and dessert) and a much richer festive menu. Dinner was the third meal of the day. Thus, gradually, even in villages, there was a transition from peasant, ethnographic cuisine to a more pan-European, urban one. The differences decreased between the cuisines of ethnographic regions and national minorities, and a common Lithuanian cuisine emerged.

During the interwar period, the food market was dominated by products grown and produced in Lithuania. As a result of land reform, the strengthened, market-oriented economy and public investment in agriculture made it possible to grow large, high-quality agricultural products. At the same time, as Lithuania sought to defend its market and strengthen its industry, the export of its products, if necessary, was subsidised, and taxes limited the import of products from other countries. To protect the market, advertising promoted buying Lithuanian products made from local ingredients, asserting that local fruits, for example, are as healthy as imported ones.

The origins of the narrowed gastronomic identity of Lithuanian ethnographic regions are linked to the interwar period. Rural food attracted the attention of many researchers and nutritionists of the time. Differences in the diets of

ethnographic regions were recorded and highlighted, along with criticism of the low rural gastronomic culture. The cuisines of different regions are described in detail in the book edited by Elena Repčytė-Starkienė, titled “What Do We Eat?” (Lith. *Ką valgome?*, 1935).

The Republic of Lithuania, which had existed for just over 20 years, was destroyed during the Second World War. As a result, the new tradition of Lithuanian gastronomy and its national identity were crushed. However, some elements were adapted by applying the ideological principles of the Soviet system and communicated after World War II.

Lithuanian Nationality in Soviet Gastronomy

After World War II, the idea of ethnolinguistic Lithuanianness was transformed by the principles of Soviet ideology, creating a phenomenon that maintained an external (pseudo) national form of culture acceptable to the Soviet system (Putinaitė, 2015). Critical attitudes towards Christianity (ridicule of the church, priests, and religion) and an emphasis on the exploited class – peasants and their ethnographic culture (in the construction of the opposition between the “good” peasant and the “bad” landlord) – were intensively communicated. Furthermore, during the Soviet era, gastronomic cultural ties with foreign centres were broken, and the introduction of strict USSR standards of food technology and recipes acted as a strong “canonizing” structure (Misevičius, 2020). Based on this canon, creativity was removed from the gastronomic culture; the training of chefs became similar to the training of other specialists in the “people’s economy”. Moreover, the USSR had a constant food shortage throughout its existence (TSRS aprūpinimo..., 1982). These factors significantly narrowed the diversity of gastronomic culture and reduced Lithuanian gastronomic identity to the dishes of poor peasant ethnographic cuisine (primarily potato dishes). Some of the traditional recipes were dramatically edited, and some recipes of completely unknown origin were added to Lithuanian cuisine as well (Belyj & Astrauskas, 2012). Due to its intensive promotion, this Soviet concept of Lithuanian cuisine took root and was dominant in the late Soviet era (the 1970s–1980s).

Notably, this narrow, ethnolinguistic gastronomic identity of poor peasant cuisine is also popular in contemporary Lithuania. This cuisine currently thrives in chain restaurants, whose main dishes are *cepelinai* (potato dumplings), potato pancakes, *vedarai* (potato belly), *kugelis* (a kind of potato pudding), *šaltibarščiai*

(cold beet soup), *balandėliai* (cabbage leaves wrapped around a filling), and *gira* (kvass). Based on this identity, to a large extent, the state's gastronomic heritage preservation policy is being implemented, one of the primary documents of which is the "List of National Products" compiled by the Lithuanian Ministry of Agriculture (Dėl tautinio..., 2018). This identity is also essential when recommending Lithuanian dishes to the European Union lists of "Protected Geographical Indications", "Protected Designations of Origin", and "Guaranteed Traditional Product Indications" (eAmbrosia, 2020)

Discussion: The Current Space of Lithuanian Gastronomic Identity

The restoration of Lithuania's independence and active involvement in the international community at the end of the 20th century through the beginning of the 21st century creates new opportunities for the construction of gastronomic culture and gastronomic identities. In this multivocal, multi-interpretation, and multi-identity time, on the one hand, Lithuania is experiencing global gastronomic trends. On the other hand, ideas of historical identity are reviewed, reconstructed, and implemented. In today's world, these ideas can be explored in new contexts. Thus, the interwar idea of cooking from local products is interpreted in a context close to New Nordic Cuisine, and the use of wild plants for food is interpreted through new concepts of vegetarianism, veganism, and organic food.

The development for new Lithuanian gastronomic identities is driven by communities of eaters and the restaurant industry. At the 2019 Lithuanian Gastronomy Forum, Chef Liutauras Čepreckas presented the Manifesto of Lithuanian Modern Cuisine, consisting of five main statements: (1) cuisine is one of the cornerstones of culture; (2) multiculturalism is the foundation of new Lithuanian cuisine; (3) in creating work, we can never forget our historical roots; (4) we must use high-quality Lithuanian ingredients and encourage farmers to produce them; and (5) we must remember our history and use imported products (just as they were used in historical times). These ideas were realised in the new menu of Čepreckas' restaurant "Gastronomika" (Gastronomika, 2021).

Lithuanianness of Eaters

Analyzing the gastronomic identities of modern communities (eaters) delineates several functioning levels of gastronomic heritage and related knowledge. The first relates to the historical experiences of a person or family members and their communication with each other. This level usually involves two to four generations communicating with each other (me, my parents, grandparents, and possibly great-grandparents). At this level, a living tradition exists in the dishes produced in a particular family by several generations and in the memories associated with dishes produced by previous generations but no longer made. The second level involves communication of history knowledge and cultural heritage. It is associated not so much with historical experiences as with the constructed historical reality of a power structure, which is inserted into the current culture through public communication. At this level, the standardised Lithuanian cuisine of the Soviet era is prominent, but there are also other narratives of identity construction and emerging layers of identity.

In 2020, the Lithuanian National Tourism Promotion Agency “Travel in Lithuania” conducted an online survey to select dishes for the Lithuanian National Menu. Survey participants chose up to three favourite dishes in five categories. For this, participants were provided with a list of 50 dishes (five categories of 10 dishes each: soups, snacks, main courses, desserts, and drinks). The list of dishes was compiled by systematizing the information obtained from interviews with gastronomic history and culture experts and public catering professionals. Thus, these dishes are considered gastronomic heritage by experts and offered in Lithuanian restaurants as Lithuanian dishes. A total of 10,120 completed questionnaires were received and used in this study. To distinguish the gastronomic identity groups of eaters and determine the structure of their interdependence, a hierarchical cluster analysis method was used. The analysis was performed using the SPSS statistical analysis package (for more detailed information: Laužikas, 2021).

Although several responses were not clustered, the research method used allowed us to distinguish five clusters of questionnaire responses, resulting in five gastronomic identity groups:

1. A poor variety of dishes is recorded in the choices of Cluster 1. One or two dishes markedly dominate each category according to prevailing

trends. For this group of people, eating is like refuelling; this group does not aim for diversity and focuses on the price of the meal. When choosing dishes, they follow well-established opinions and do not seek new gastronomic experiences. In general, the dishes in this group mirror the trends in the most popular dishes for the National Menu.

2. In Cluster 2, one or two dominant dishes are chosen, but unlike in Cluster 1, the variety of food choices and the distribution of popularity are wider. This group of people views food as fuel; while not seeking diversity, they are curious about alternatives. Their dominant choices are close to those made in Cluster 1. However, the variety of the third, fourth, and fifth choices is much wider and more closely resembles Cluster 5.
3. This group of people is fond of a variety of foods. Of the 50 dishes in the survey, there were no unselected and few distinctly dominant choices. This group of people doubts the existing tradition of Lithuanian cuisine and seeks a new Lithuanian gastronomic identity in different directions – the Lithuanian ethnographic, historical manor, city, maybe even reconstructive, etc., traditions.
4. People in Cluster 4 enjoy the variety of flavours in the dishes on offer. Their choices are more modest and less diverse than those in Cluster 3 (dominated by two to four dishes). This group of people are most influenced by the Lithuanian gastronomic identity formed by the standardised Lithuanian dishes of public catering in the Soviet period. The dishes belonging to this standard dominate the choices of the members of this group. Dishes that do not align with the Soviet-era standard are unpopular in this group.
5. Although people in Cluster 5 embrace all the dishes, their choices are dominated by one to two dishes, which are accompanied by less popular dishes. Thus, in this group of people (and the people in Cluster 4), identity is greatly influenced by the standardised Lithuanian dishes communicated by public catering during the Soviet period. However, Lithuanian ethnographic cuisine (as it is understood today) in a broader sense is also essential for the identity of people in Cluster 5. This relates to the gastronomic experiences of these people in their families (grandparents and parents) and the Soviet-era identity of Lithuanians

as a peasant-based nation. This rural identity encourages many modern people to seek a Lithuanian gastronomic identity in exclusively rural, ethnographic cuisine.

In addition to these identity groups, there is a kind of denial of gastronomic Lithuanian identity. Soviet-era cuisine, ignoring a large part of the heritage that is important to many people, severed the emotional ties of many people with the Lithuanian tradition. The standardised Lithuanian cuisine formed in the Soviet era is also unacceptable for various reasons. Moreover, an ethnolinguistic and nationalist interpretation and heritage communication (as a counterweight to the Soviet legacy) are unacceptable for some citizens too. However, in rejecting the Soviet and ethnolinguistic heritage, they find no authentic substitute for it. In this way, at least three groups of society adopt the consumption and communication of other countries with more globally established gastronomic traditions (French, Italian or Chinese). These groups are significantly influenced by the positive experience of foreign travel and gastronomic curiosity. According to Google Trends data, during the last year (2020-04-20 through 2021-04-20), foreign cuisine was dominant in the Internet searches of the Lithuanian population using the search term “recipe”. The most popular searches were related to the following topics (listed as they were in the searches): kefir, crème brulle, pinacolada, colada, ucha, macaroons, Thai cuisine, hot chocolate, pad thai, marshmallow, and sangria.

Lithuanianness of Restaurants

In 2019, a study of the Lithuanian gastronomic space was conducted (its results were presented at the Lithuanian Gastronomic Forum held on October 15–16, 2019). The study was based on the assumption of the interaction in gastronomic culture between supply and demand. The market of restaurants called Lithuanian, the motivation of restaurants, and arguments identifying Lithuanian cuisine (presented on official websites) were analyzed. In this way, notable observations on contemporary Lithuanian gastronomic identities can be drawn:

1. Urban and manor gastronomy. This identity is associated with a broader civic understanding of Lithuanian identity, seeking inspiration in foreign

cuisines (from the point of view of ethnolinguistic Lithuanianness). Consequently, the creators of such restaurants turn to the gastronomic culture of old Lithuanian manors or historical Lithuanian cities.

2. Regional gastronomy. This layer is associated with local regional (as part of the state) identity. In Lithuania, the most popular ethnographic regions (Dzūkija, Aukštaitija, Žemaitija, Mažoji Lietuva, and Suvalkija) are represented by their local dishes (*kastinis*, buckwheat *babka*, *šaltanosiiai*, fish soup, smoked fish, rye bread, and *skilandis*).
3. Gastronomy of national minorities. This layer is formed by rediscovering the cuisines of historical Lithuanian national minorities (Tartar, Karaite, Jewish, and Polish cuisines). In 2020, the gastronomic tradition of Lithuanian Tartars was included in the list of Lithuanian Intangible Cultural Heritage. In the context of historical Lithuanian gastronomic identities, the current Polish gastronomic tradition of the Vilnius region is notable (for more information, see Wołkanowska-Kołodziej, 2016).
4. New Lithuanian (Baltic) gastronomy. This direction is related to the New Nordic culinary philosophy, refined a decade ago (The New Nordic..., 2004), and, in part, to the Slow Food movement (Slow Food, 2021). In identity construction activities, the initiative among restaurant chefs to create modern Lithuanian cuisine is significant.

The food industry has a strong influence on the gastronomic identity space, too. The formation of industrial identity as a tradition is manifested in the production of Lithuanian products and their inclusion in the EU lists of “Protected Geographical Indications”, “Protected Designations of Origin”, and “Guaranteed Traditional Product Indications”. Many of the products on the lists are associated not so much with a geographical area or gastronomic tradition as with specific brands (e.g., Džiugas and Liliputas cheeses, Stakliškęs mead, and Daujėnai bread). In this, Lithuania differs from other European countries. The tourism industry also plays an essential role in the formation of gastronomic Lithuanianness, as exemplified by the National Menu mentioned in this article. Vilnius, Kaunas, and other Lithuanian cities are forming tourist-oriented gastronomic identities.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposed lockdowns have undoubtedly affected and will continue to impact the development of gastronomic

culture in Lithuania. Thus, in this period of change, the most notable, explorable phenomena of gastronomic identity are probably occurring in the present.

Conclusion

The debate on “identity” and “national heritage” is to be seen as gaining prominence in contemporary public discourse. However, most of the ideas discussed in the context of gastronomic identities have sufficient historical roots. For a long time (from the 16th century onward), the essentials of Lithuanianness in gastronomy were associated with the following standards: (1) ordinary, simple, less cultured, less sophisticated dishes, (2) made of natural ingredients, and (3) highlighted by the mixing of wild and cultivated products in a single dish. The main drivers of Lithuanian gastronomic identity were the broader cultural and political ideas like the Renaissance, Romanticism, nationalism, and soviet ideology. The popularity of each of them frames gastronomic identities or a particular time, and the decline of ideas means a change in the frames and identities. The relationship to the dominant cultural and/or political idea is also the primary marker in delineating the stages of Lithuanian gastronomic identity.

However, it is interesting that in the space of gastronomic identities, we can observe peculiar accumulation effects, when even with the change of the cultural environment, the old identities were not rejected. They migrated to another era, acquiring different formats but remaining in the culture and forming another distinctive layer of identities. Therefore, by discussing the contemporary Lithuanian gastronomic identity, we can distinguish not the only conversation between Lithuanian state-based (territorial) and nation-based (ethnolinguistic) identities, but also the identity related to the “wild Lithuanians” of the romanticised pre-Christian era (the Lithuanian state before 1387) or discussions about the use of local ingredients as a particular feature of contemporary Lithuanian gastronomy. The food industry and cultural tourism are also strong drivers for the public perception of contemporary Lithuanian cuisine and the framing of gastronomic identities.

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