

## EFw Day 4 What is cuisine?

### Cuisine: The Short Short Version



- Cuisine is the codification of food and foodways.
- Includes obtaining, preparing and consuming food.
- The origins of cuisine lie in the early use of fire by humans to cook food.
  - Many more foods could be accessed.
  - Caloric intake increased and so did brain size and intelligence.
  - Food could also be savored, as cooking enabled the synthesis of more aromatic compounds.
  - People gathered around the act of preparing and eating food and began accumulating and sharing information.



- Cuisine both enables and constrains the foods that we eat.
  - Lobster, maligned by New Englanders well into the latter part of the 19th century, are now considered a delicacy.
  - Insects are consumed in some cuisines and not by others, such as Europeans and their descendent cultures.
- Cuisine influences flavor, and ultimately the acceptance or rejection of foods, both through culinary information **and** through cultural context influencing perception and memories.
  - Many Americans have a fondness for peanut butter in part because they ate PB & J sandwiches as children.



- The Human “Niche” and Cuisine
  - Ecological term for the interactions that an organism has with its environment.
  - In the context of food, in general, humans have focused their niche onto a very small number of organisms directly or indirectly impacting many other organisms.
  - One strategy for mitigating ecological impacts is through diversification to decrease waste and increase food stability.
    - For example, the focus of fisheries is on only a handful of species, such as salmon and cod.
    - Many fish and other organisms are often caught and destroyed in the process of catching target species.
    - Utilization of these other fish species requires fostering cuisine to integrate them into our foodways.

## Weekly Forage



- Acorn (*Quercus* spp.)
  - Acorns are the fruits of oaks which is a highly diverse group of plants. They are nuts with a very thin shell and a cap covering the end that meets the stem.
  - They can be collected any time of year, but are best to collect in the fall for spring after the snow melts.
  - Oaks grow in many environments and are commonly planted.
  - All acorns are edible but they vary in the amount of processing required. All oaks have some amount of phytochemicals that need to be removed, which can be done by soaking in water.
  - Acorns formed the base of Native American cuisine wherever oaks and people lived in the same place. However, much of that cuisine was lost during the genocide of native people in the Americas.
  - Here's a great article on eating acorns by Hank Shaw of *Hunter Angler Gardener Cook*: <https://honest-food.net/acorn-cake-and-acorns-around-the-world/>
  - Here's a video with similar content by Arthur Haines: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=QitkIGNwUgs>
- Hardwick Vineyard and Winery
  - [www.hardwickwinery.com](http://www.hardwickwinery.com)
  - Uses hybrids of native North American and European grape species.

### Lab: Constructing Flavor

- Flavor pairing is partly constrained culturally
  - For example, North Americans usually consider chocolate a dessert flavor, while

chocolate is a common ingredient in savory dishes in Central America.

- These aspects of flavor are highly variable and require understanding a persons cultural background and experiences.
- However, aspects of taste are more easily generalized, largely involving "balancing" tastes
- Balancing tastes
  - Balancing tastes is combining ingredients that are dominated by different tastes in order to maximize the experience of a food.
  - **Rule of Flavor Balance:** People are generally most interested and satiated when all tastes are experienced.
  - **Complementarity** of tastes usually occurs when combinations of foods leads to more tastes being experienced.
  - Tastes affect each other when combined:
    - Sweet lowers sour
    - Salt lowers bitter
    - Salt raises sweet
    - Savory generally raises other tastes
    - Bitter increases our desire for other flavors but increases satiety after other flavors.
  - Determining the desired proportions requires trial and error tasting.
- **Culinary Scaling**
  - Not all flavors need to be experienced simultaneously
  - Flavor Experience: Bite < Dish < Meal < Diet
  - Flavor can be varied across this scale
  - E.g., classic French



### Babette's Feast Menu

Famous food movie where a French refugee starts a new life in Denmark.

- *Potage à la Tortue* (Turtle Soup)
  - Amontillado Sherry
- *Blinis Demidoff* (Caviar and Sour Cream on Buckwheat Pancakes)
  - Veuve Cliquot Champagne
- *Cailles en Sarcophage* (Truffled Quail and Foie Gras in Pastry) served with
  - Clos de Vougeot Pinot Noir
- Endive Salad

- *Savarin au Rhum avec des Figues et Fruit Glacée* (Rum Soaked Sponge Cake with Candied Fruit)
  - Champagne
- Cheeses and fruits
  - Sauternes
  - Coffee with cognac
- See handouts for more info on food pairing and flavor

## Wines

- Woodbridge Pinot Noir
  - California
  - Ripe fruit tones, bright acidity and lightly mouth-puckering tannins underpin red cherry, clove and blackberry flavors, while the texture is mouth-filling.
  - 13%
  - \$8
- Woodbridge Merlot
  - California
  - This medium-bodied value-priced wine has relatively light herb and veggie accents as well as modest raspberry and plum flavors.
  - 13.5%
  - \$8
- Woodbridge Cabernet Sauvignon
  - California
  - Straightforward black-cherry and black-olive flavors give this medium-bodied wine a solid footing, while a smooth, low-tannin texture makes it easy on the palate.
  - 13.5%
  - \$8
- **Activity:** Pairing Food/Wine You will have three wines, 4 cheeses and three chocolates
  1. Taste each wine, focusing on the taste rather than the aroma
  2. Taste each cheese and each chocolate
  3. Cleanse your palate
  4. Taste each cheese with each wine, cleansing between combos
  5. Make a note of the taste of each combination:
    - Which combinations do you like?
    - Which combinations don't you like?
    - Are the combinations you like occurring via complementarity?
  6. Repeat with the chocolates
- **Bonus:** try the cheeses with the chocolate and see if there are any combinations that you

like!

- In addition to taste and aroma compounds, some compounds in wine and chocolate can also impact flavor. Often tannins in wine can often combine with phytochemicals in chocolate to create unpleasantly astringent flavor, masking other aspects of flavor.

### Handout: Finding Fuller Flavor

#### Readings

- Meadows 165-185: suggestions on how to live in systems.
- Barber 428-447: a trip to Veta las Palmas (Spain) a whole-system fishery.
- Andoh 2-6: Washoku primer on how to construct a meal.
- Baudar 1-6: introduction to foraging for flavor in ecosystems.