

Globalization in Los Angeles

The blossoming city of Los Angeles is the epitome of how globalization can connect and unite communities. Besides being known for its commercial and entertainment industries, Los Angeles is recognized for its ethnic diversity. Inhabited by roughly four million people, many of whom came from very different cultural backgrounds, the sprawling city is the setting of a diverse food scene. Globalization is a creative force that yields an abundance of culinary choices. From authentic foreign cuisines originating from various regions of the world to the formulation of fusion foods that blend different culinary traditions, Los Angeles' multicultural cuisine attracts and astounds tourists and natives alike.

The food people eat is an essential component of their cultural customs. Traditional cuisine passes down in families for generations, gradually developing the distinct characteristics of their cultural identity. The act of cooking and serving ones' traditional foods is a source of pride in one's heritage. While some traditional recipes remain largely unchanged, unique tastes can be creatively altered by cooks. When an immigrant moves to a new country, certain ingredients native to their home may be difficult to find. Therefore, the cook will have to make do with what they have to recreate the dish. These alterations of the end product still retains the cultural significance of the traditional meal. Furthermore, the finished product remains an accurate representation of that culture's heritage and lifestyle. As globalization enables cultures to become more interconnected, cuisines are also no longer physically tied down to their places

of origin. One negative outcome of food being recreated outside of its homeland is that people tend to overlook the history and cultural significance of exotic dishes outside of their original regional contexts. For example, the expanding popularity of sushi in recent years led to an increase in Japanese sushi restaurants that are owned and operated by non-Japanese bosses and workers. The dishes offered by these disingenuous restaurants often overlook the historical value of sushi. Thus, new variations of Japanese dishes have been created, such as the Americanized California Roll . The humble origins of westernized sushi is due to the lack of popularity of seaweed in North America. To cater to western palettes, sushi chefs wrapped rice outside of the seaweed to conceal it. Furthermore, the California Roll is packed with customarily popular ingredients such as avocado, cucumber, and imitation crab. Instead of rolling and selling traditional sushi, North American restaurants choose to cater to the local population's appetite. In the case of the California Rolls, significant characteristics of traditional food are omitted to turn a profit. One way to prevent the cultural disintegration of these authentic foods is for both producers and consumers to reflect on and celebrate the heritage of an ethnic dish instead of focusing on potential ways to modernize it. By appreciating the flavors and acknowledging the origins of foreign cuisine, the cultural values of that dish are saved, providing a platform for multiple cultures at once. However, the combination of different heritages on one plate may cause culinary customs to be lost. While certain dishes may reflect only a portion of their origins, food remains a tangible connection to their roots.

Authentic international restaurants can be found everywhere in Los Angeles reflecting the importance of preserving traditional tastes in cultural dishes. The city of Angels boasts being home to people from all over the world. Most of these people have introduced their cuisines to

the city. By placing different cultures and backgrounds in close proximity to each other, one outcome is that Los Angeles became divided into ethnic enclaves, each serving the delicacies of its inhabitants' culture. For example, Thai Town, a six block area in East Hollywood, is packed with Thai food shops and restaurants. Within Thai Town, certain shops sell authentic and traditional Thai food. One such shop is Bhan Kanom Thai, a Thai dessert store. A traditional Thai dessert, Luk Chup, is mung bean cake shaped into various miniature fruits and vegetables, often eggplants, mangos and corn, and painted with food coloring, dipped in gelatin. Originally served only to exalted members of Thai society, Luk Chup quickly became dessert for ordinary people. The movement of Thai culture to Los Angeles has caused the accumulation of Thai markets, restaurants, and communities in Thai Town. As a result, the presence of Luk Chup in Los Angeles has been facilitated by the immigration of Thais. The act of spreading a traditional cuisine across the globe can be viewed as an act of solidarity with one's own cultural identity. Moreover, immigrants' inclination to confer dishes from their origins to their new homes helps them to maintain their culture. When facing the struggles of assimilating into a new society, immigrants reminisce about the world they left behind and find comfort by surrounding themselves with reminders of their native culture. Food stimulates nostalgia of one's home country and serves as a tangible representation of ethnic identity. The presence of traditional food in Los Angeles conveys the importance of preserving one's culinary history and upbringing in a foreign place.

Besides the presence of authentic foods in foreign countries, fusion food is a reflection of globalization. The flow of immigrants into Los Angeles has a profound effect on the region's food. The constant interaction between different cultures birthed a fusion food scene in the

sprawling city. The presence of multicultural food in Los Angeles is so prevalent that fusion dishes can be viewed as Los Angeles's own personalized style. Located in downtown Los Angeles, "Uncle John's Cafe" is a classic American diner with an Asian twist. It originated as a diner serving classic American dishes such as cheeseburgers and omelets. Later on, the diner was acquired by Asian proprietors. The new menu of the diner is analogous to the lives of Asian Americans. After buying "Uncle John's Cafe", the new owners set about incorporating Chinese dishes such as fried rice and chow mein onto the menu. "Uncle John's Cafe" presents both American and Asian dishes onto one plate, similar to how Asian Americans live and thrive in American society while simultaneously retaining certain practices and values from their origins. The integration of Asian dishes onto the pre-existing menu turned "Uncle John's Cafe" into an eclectic diner, that features both classic American cuisine and Asian cooking. Besides seeing Asian dishes on the menu, customers also see the bicultural condiments on the table. Apart from ketchup and syrup, sriracha and soy sauce line the edge of each table. "Uncle John's Cafe" is a reflection of the effects of globalization on restaurants in Los Angeles. The menu reflects the rich cultural history of the city, and further sets forth the argument that fusion food effectively represents the cuisine of the vast origins of the inhabitants of Los Angeles. Therefore, the combination of different cultures onto one plate is a justifiable representation of food in Los Angeles.

No cuisine that features only one specific culture is enough to represent Los Angeles's food scene. The vast diversity of food in Los Angeles makes the city special and adds on to its multiethnic population. In a globalized world, where borders are no longer formidable obstacles to the diffusion of cultures, it is easier for newcomers to contribute their cultural cuisines to their

new homes while concurrently adopting certain characteristics of that new region's food. Thus, immigration is a method that strengthens cultural relations. When two or more cultures meet and interact, an exchange of culinary knowledge takes place. In this Southern California city, different sub-societies are constantly exchanging, adopting, and transforming their cuisine. As a result, Los Angeles is a mecca of culinary globalization, which can be observed in Los Angeles' food markets. The commonality of foreign foods can be witnessed at the University of Southern California. On Wednesdays, local vendors come on campus to sell organic and fresh goods to college students. One vendor might sell freshly made guacamole and corn chips originating in Mexico, while another sells sourdough bread from Europe. The eclectic foods sold at the University of Southern California unites the diverse student body by increasing appreciation of trans-cultural goods. Similarly, markets and diners throughout the Los Angeles region reflects the city's diverse population, producing a thriving food scene. Besides marking Los Angeles as the ideal city to seek out international cuisine, one should note that the presence of both authentic and fusion foods is birthed from the city's rich multicultural history and population. The globalized food scene makes this city especially culturally diverse and unique.

Globalization, the process of increased interactions and exchanges between nationalities and cultures is an innovative force in Los Angeles. With a booming and diverse population, Los Angeles is the scene of endless culinary options. Its ethnic neighborhoods and kitchens not only serve conventional cuisine but also offer an alchemy of international meals. The consequence of culinary globalization on this Southern California metropolis is that a vast diversity of food has been unleashed into the city. The people of Los Angeles have better access to new cultures and an increased understanding of foreign values, while simultaneously, cultures have the capability

to communicate and maintain their beliefs and values on an intercontinental scale through their cuisine.