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# Esthetization of Taste

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## 1.1. Esthetization of taste for and by tourists

### 1.1.1. *The “invention” of tourism, linked to the pleasure of taste*

An article by historian Julia Csergo, entitled “Tourisme et gastronomie” (Csergo 2016c) set out the historical bases of this ancient phenomenon, but its structure is much more recent, dating from the early 21st century. The intention here is not to rehash the article, but to illuminate the changes in the field in the decade since it was published.

#### 1.1.1.1. *The 19th century: the fundamentals of tourist practices linked to gastronomy*

In the early 19th century, the first gastronomists began taking an interest in the pleasure of taste. Under France’s ancien régime, the highly selective circle of tasting panels of Grimod de La Reynière foreshadowed these dynamics by bringing together self-proclaimed “experts” who “approved” Parisian restaurants (Pitte 2022). In 1809, the writer Cadet de Gassicourt put forward the first *Carte gastronomique de France* – a map of France highlighting key products and recipes of each region: an invitation to take a trip that was “more artistic than topographic”, to cite Guillaume Nicoud (2019). It inspired Heinrich August Ottokar Reichard, when republishing his successful work *Guide des voyageurs en France* (Travelers’ Guide to France), to add a gastronomic map. In *London Magazine* (1820–1824), for example, British visitors were encouraged to discover the restaurants of Paris. While there were already certain gastronomy-related practices at the start of the 19th century, tourist

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For a color version of all the figures in this chapter, see [www.iste.co.uk/boutain/tourismandgastronomy.zip](http://www.iste.co.uk/boutain/tourismandgastronomy.zip).

mobility options centering the discovery of French gastronomy in all its forms nevertheless intensified during the latter half of the 19th century, with the development of tourism.

Transport has a key role to play in tourism development. In connection with gastronomy, the railways which were developed in the late 19th century were the first to allow travelers to recognize the gastronomic heritage of different places:

The jams of Bar-le-Duc, the nonnettes de Remiremont, the wines of Lessy, the bergamots and foie gras conserves of Nancy, and the strawberries of Woippy are also part of the gastronomic heritage that the railway promised to unveil to travelers (Williot 2023).

Station buffets, also, are “an invitation to travel to experience local restaurants” (Csergo and Lemasson 2008; Williot 2022). However, in France, it was primarily from the 1920s, with the concomitant dawn of tourism and automobiles, that “regional cuisines found meaning in what became a ‘tourist economic’ with a promising future” (Flandrin and Montanari 1996, p. 835). Internationally, the role of automotive technology is just as crucial. The geographer Étienne Faugier showed how the Club automobile du Québec (CAQ – Quebec Automobile Club), founded in 1912 in Quebec, in connection with the Ministry of Roads, also played an educational and publicizing role in terms of promoting Quebec’s gastronomic offering (Faugier 2023). For example, the CAQ supported the practice of picnicking, which was facilitated by the development of automotive technology (Csergo 2001).

Tourists’ interest in “eating well” and “drinking well” was explained and refined with the development of tourist guides and gastronomic guides (Csergo 2016c). The Michelin guide, in particular, contributed to the development of tourism along the major communication axes (Bailly and Hussy 1991; Csergo and Lemasson 2008), at the same time as the gastronomic component because automated (Beaudet 2006). Gastronomic guides thus helped to affirm and distinguish good taste (Csergo 2006, 2016c; Naulin 2017), and the restaurants switched from the regulatable status of tourist curiosities to the essential status of “qualitative certification” (Beaudet 2006, p. 10).

#### *1.1.1.2. The latter half of the 20th century and densification of tourism*

In 1936, the Matignon agreements between the French government and workers led to the recognition of paid holidays (14 days a year) and the establishment of a 40-hour working week. These agreements helped increase the uptake of leisure activities and improve tourist mobility (Équipe MIT 2002), so that in the mid-20th century, the critic Curnonsky, known as the “prince of gastronomes” by his

contemporaries, described this link between gastronomy and tourism as a “Holy Alliance” (Csergo and Lemasson 2008), thus affirming that there are imaginaries of gastronomy (Csergo and Etcheverria 2020) linked to the discovery of an Other and an Elsewhere in a time–space outside of the everyday.

In this context, the structuring of tourist routes has been crucially important. In 1934, in France, the Route des Grand Crus de Bourgogne (Bourgogne Quality Wine Trail) gave structure to tourist activities (Lignon-Darmaillac 2014, p. 33). In 1935, direct sales at the vineyards and visits to vineyards in the Rhenish Palatinate were offered in Germany to halt the economic crisis (Legouy and Boulanger 2015). In the 1950s, the Wine Routes of Alsace and Champagne developed. However, as explained by the geographers François Legouy and Sylvaine Boulanger, “it was only very late in the 20th century that Wine Routes developed all over France. Today, they are real or virtual, simple itineraries or complex networks of proposed visits, recognized by different labels” (Legouy and Boulanger 2015, p. 34). These routes are based on an international model, which arose concomitantly in the Napa Valley in California in the 1970s and the Stellenbosch Valley in South Africa in 1979 (Vitaux 2009). Thus, the phenomenon we are looking at here is a recent one.

Similarly, the gastronomic itineraries, tours and circuits, whether offered by private-sector actors (tour operators, hosting agencies, etc.) or public-sector ones (tourism bureaus, etc.) really began to gain structure in the late 20th century. As Julia Csergo (2016) pointed out, travel in connection with tourists’ interest in foodstuffs is not a recent phenomenon, but the development of an underlying structure for that phenomenon as such dates from the early 2000s. These “new” forms of tourist mobility can be described as “gourmet” (*gourmand*), because at the core of the planned travel is the “pleasure” of taste (Lemasson 2006). Also, the contribution of neuroscience is essential in understanding why the pleasure of food “leads to the notion of alliesthesia, which tells us that a stimulus that is capable of improving the state of the internal environment – i.e. maintaining energy homeostasis – is perceived as pleasant” (Malbert 2015, p. 25). The act of eating, which brings pleasure, becomes a deliberate reason for choosing to travel, in connection with the idea of well-being, and the actors involved have begun to seize on that idea.

Also, internationally, numerous examples show that this structure has only emerged fairly recently. The routes and itineraries help to link together an offer of products connected to gastronomy and, usually, to other goods and services, at a local scale – such as Gingin Monastery in Australia (Alonso and Northcote 2010) – or at regional scale (Hashimoto and Telfer 2006; Broadway 2017). The study by Hashimoto and Telfer shows the collective dynamics that result from the creation of a route – called the *Gourmet Route* – by tourist actors in Quebec (Telfer and

Hashimoto 2003). Even today, in the worlds of winegrowing and malting, the establishment of tourist routes seems to be a necessary step in developing a structure for what is available (Preston-Whyte 2000). The development of tourism linked to gastronomy in the Magaliesberg Mountains in South Africa, for example, shows that tourist routes help to structure tourism in small municipalities and in rural spaces (Rogerson 2007).

#### 1.1.1.3. *Since the beginning of the 21st century: travel for the “pleasure” of taste...*

In France, the mobilization of public actors on the topic of gastronomy as a tool for international spread has intensified following the addition of the “Gastronomic meal of the French” to the UNESCO world heritage list in 2010. As part of the commitments made by the French State in the wake of that event, the Mission française du patrimoine et des cultures alimentaires<sup>1</sup> (MFPCA; French Directorate for Food Heritage and Culture) launched a call for projects to accompany the establishment of “Cités du Vin et de la Gastronomie” (Wine and Gastronomy Cities) – cultural bodies focused on tourism. Five cities were chosen: Bordeaux opened its Cité du Vin on May 31, 2016, while the Paris Rungis, Dijon, Tours and Lyon opened Cités de la Gastronomie in the late 2010s (see Chapter 6). In 2011, the Fête de la gastronomie (Gastronomy Festival) project was launched by the Ministry of the Economy and Finance – a festival that continued until 2020 – with events taking place all over France and internationally, with the exchanges spotlighting hospitality and teaching, taste and the sharing of meals. Finally, the project was funneled into “Goût de France/Good France”, driven by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Alain Ducasse, whose purpose was to “promote France through its cuisine and show the entire world the excellence of its chefs, artisans and food products”<sup>2</sup>. In 2024, the objective of strengthening the attractiveness of France through gastronomy was part of, and must be understood in the context of, the preparations for the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris. The Ministry of Enterprise, Tourism and Consumption announced a three-pronged strategy<sup>3</sup> (though the three prongs were never clearly defined), the main aim of which was to:

– announce a project to set up a center of excellence for French gastronomy and taste-related professions, which would take the form of “a public-interest grouping

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1 In 2010, the MFPCA put forward the application to include the “Gastronomic meal of the French” on the UNESCO representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of humanity.

2 See: <https://fj.ambafrance.org/Gout-de-Good-France-revient-en-2024-pour-une-7e> [Accessed November 27, 2024].

3 National strategy, “Faire rayonner la haute gastronomie française” (Promoting French haute cuisine), Ministry of Enterprise, Tourism and Consumption, press release, April 12, 2024.

(GIP), allowing public-sector and private-sector partners to pool their resources in support of a national goal: promoting French gastronomy, training in it, the professions and supply chains involved in it” (p. 7);

- affirm that France was stepping up its presence at international salons and events (e.g. Madrid Fusión Alimentos de España) and French events such as Goût de France, and presence in professional training;

- support French chefs (essentially through communication) to export their brand (the priority target markets for this program were Saudi Arabia, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong/Macau).

In addition to the role of public-sector actors (elected representatives, tourism technicians, etc.) in the construction of tourist provisions linked to gastronomy, private actors also play a part – notably socio-professional actors: chefs/cooks, as well as producers (livestock farmers, winegrowers, market gardeners, etc.), artisans and tradespeople. Thus, the phenomenon has been taking shape and expanding internationally since the beginning of the 21st century.

#### *1.1.1.4. In the 21st century, scientific research in connection with the establishment of a structure for the resources on offer*

Scientific studies on the connections between tourism and gastronomy are a relatively recent addition to the field: they began at the turn of the 21st century, when the phenomenon started becoming more structured. The early approaches were marked by the human and social sciences (anthropology, sociology, history, geography and economics), in research in the English-speaking sphere (Wolf 2002; Long 2004; Shenoy 2005) and the French-speaking sphere (Etcheverria and Bras 2004; Csergo and Lemasson 2008; Etcheverria 2014; Boutain 2022). At that time, studies focused on the places in which tourism and gastronomy coincided, the actors and practices, the discourse and the imaginaries that existed in connection with the discipline. In her attempt to define a “culinary tourist”, for example, Shenoy looks at strategies for integration and/or expulsion around the question of gastronomic identity: “By participating in gastronomic tourism, tourists explore and reinforce their own identities, and explore the identity of the ‘Other’” (2005, p. 50). The idea behind these texts was to understand how the quest for the pleasure of eating is linked to togetherness with an Other and an Elsewhere, in a time-space that is outside of the day-to-day – these are essential characteristics of tourism (Équipe MIT 2002). Also, the need to take account of the socio-spatial contexts makes it impossible to segment the client base. As Élise Corneau-Gauvin and Julia Csergo (2016) ask in a study on Canada, do “gastronomic tourists” perceive themselves as

such? Similarly, in the human and social science approach, this new topic of study relating to the links between tourism and gastronomy lends itself to cross-analysis of the actors, places and supply chains, viewed through the lenses of “local” development, perceived and studied in terms of its political, social, economic, cultural, symbolic and environmental dimensions (see Chapter 4). Without prefiguring the existence of “gastronomic tourism”, this approach aims to illuminate how gourmet offerings, be they liquid and/or solid, are structured and publicized. However, as the offer gained such a structure, increasing numbers of studies began being carried out, with a view to discerning the audiences who consumed that offer. In this area, *Wine Tourism Around the World: Development, Management and Market* by Hall et al. (2000) and the article “Wine and Food Tourism” by Hall and Mitchell (2000) are significant and are often cited in the academic literature devoted to the topic. This approach, the intent of which is rather to study the establishment of tourism in a sector and/or an agrifood supply chain and profile the types of tourists who engage in it, can be described as “sectorial” (see Chapter 5). On the other hand, French researchers have stuck closely to the human and social sciences, with “taste” continuing to be one of the central axes in their research on “gastronomic tourism”.

Jean-Pierre Lemasson defines “gastronomic tourism”<sup>4</sup> as the pleasure linked to taste(s) on the part of the tourist/diner (2006): we have examined the dimensions linked to “pleasure”, but what about “taste” – the factor which triggers that pleasure? As geographer Olivier Etcheverria points out, the practices of “gastronomic tourists” are “directly associated with taste and/or food luxury” (Etcheverria 2016). Presence in situ, as is the case at the restaurant of chef Michel Bras, reinforces the relationship between organoleptic and the geographic territory (here, Aubrac): “Thus, there are two tastes of Aubrac. The taste of the terroir is defined as the expression of a relationship to the products on offer, while the taste of the land is the manifestation of a relationship to the landscapes” (Etcheverria and Bras 2004).

### **1.1.2. Taste – a socio-spatial and cultural marker**

#### **1.1.2.1. What is “taste”?**

It is useful to outline the definitional boundaries of taste(s). Is taste linked solely to sampling, to “incorporation”, as sociologists Claude Fischler and Jean-Pierre

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4 In this sense, we use the term “food tourism” in the same way as the expression “tourism and gastronomy”: both are umbrella terms, which emphasize the cultural dimension of food and highlight the pleasure linked to taste, in all its forms.

Poulain claim (Fischler 2001; Poulain 2013)? How is it manifested? To begin with, we can cite the remarks of journalist and gastronomist Jean-Marcel Bouguereau<sup>5</sup>:

What is taste? [...] Let's start with the senses. Our sight tells us something about what we are eating: its color, its shape, its presentation, can stimulate our appetites or lead us astray. Hearing is a secondary sense in the perception of food, which gives us certain information, such as the crunch of a Moroccan pastilla or simply the more commonplace sound of crusty bread. As for smell, it is our most primitive sense, but also the most subtle, which reveals thousands of aromas either directly or indirect (Bouguereau 2011, p. 44).

What we commonly refer to as the “taste” of a foodstuff is therefore fairly complex, and continues to be debated, notably in cognitive sciences. To summarize, we can say that it must be understood in terms of a collection of elements: taste is linked to all five senses, to the hedonic sensation (preferences, aversions) and cognitive factors (cultural and gastronomic) that it arouses (Brondel et al. 2013). The report “Une histoire de goût” (A History of Taste) produced by the INRAE addresses this point (see Box 1.1) through a technical approach to taste, whereby it can be understood as a contiguous whole, linked to sensory, hedonic and cognitive dimensions, rather than through a monofunctional, monosensory approach. Herein lies the issue linked to the founding of the Institut du goût (Institute of Taste) by Jacques Puisais, who, even in the 1980s, wondered about the best way to taste wines and to marry them with solid foods (Puisais 1985). Thus, taste is linked to the sound and smell and touch which bring up emotions in us, activate our memory, remind us of places and painful periods to which we are attached. This is the idea behind “Proust’s madeleine”.

#### **A scientific approach to taste**

In a report entitled “Une histoire de goût”, INRAE provides an infograph on the three main stages of taste: flavor, aroma and trigeminal sensations<sup>6</sup>.

Olfaction (driven by the nose) allows us to perceive the smell and the aroma of a foodstuff, while tasting (driven by the tongue) allows us to perceive its flavor (sweet, salty, sour, bitter, umami and fat). Finally, the trigeminal system allows us to determine whether the food is fresh, spicy, sparkling, hot, etc.

#### **Box 1.1. Definition of taste proposed by INRAE (source: INRAE 2022)**

<sup>5</sup> A former food commentator for *La Revue*, Jean-Marcel Bouguereau is also the French representative whom the British magazine *Restaurant* has charged with finding the world’s 50 best restaurants.

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://www.inrae.fr/alimentation-sante-globale/gout> [Accessed January 5, 2025].

According to sociologist Claude Fischler, “to incorporate a foodstuff, on both a real level and an imaginary one, is to incorporate all or part of its properties: we become what we eat. Incorporation leads to identity” (Fischler 2001, p. 66). However, any group needs to use identifying signs in order to form a functioning society. The history of a group is, first and foremost, that of the circumstances in which it manifested its identity: its name, language, religion, family structure, form of government and practices of daily life (ways of living, of dressing, diet, etc.) (Ory 2012). These differences are documented in *Consuming Geographies* (Bell and Valentine 1997), which, using photographs, paints a picture of the typical meals of permanent residents from all corners of the globe.

Thus, two major types of factors influence the geography of tastes: the environment and cultural practices. The environment is what geographer Jean-Robert Pitte describes as the “abiotic and biotic environment”: animal, vegetable and mineral, because the food and drink derive from that environment. As for cultural practices, they often reflect a “memory of heroic times when people had to live in harmony with the whole of the chain of life, both wild and domesticated, in order to ensure the survival of the human species” (1991, p. 489): snails in France, caterpillars in Brazil, grasshoppers in South Korea, snakes in China, etc. Furthermore, Pitte explains that humans acted with ingenuity to defy nature in certain regions of the world: cooling drinks in hot deserts, growing rice in north-east Asia, planting wine grapes in northern Europe, etc. Taste preferences, therefore, are formed by a genetic framework and an individual’s history, on the one hand, and by collective learning, family and belonging cultures, on the other (Padilla et al. 2002). The individual factors include biological and psychological factors, the environment, learning processes, and economic and cognitivist factors, with some of these – such as the psychological – being more important than others (Lenglet 2006). It is therefore certainly true that the context and the atmosphere in which a product is consumed change our perception of it: during tourist practices, in a context removed from the every day, tourist/diners are in a time–space connected to well-being.

From a psychological standpoint, well-being makes it easier to access feelings of pleasure. Notably, this is one of the results found by nutrition sciences doctor Vinh Bao Do in his thesis “Wine in Vietnam: Impact of Cultural Environment on Motivations and Taste Preferences” (Do 2010). He begins with the observation that the annual per capita consumption of sugar and sweet products is greater in the south of the country, and that people there drink more beer (see Figure 1.1). With the development of the wine market in Vietnam<sup>7</sup>, with wine inevitably being sweeter than

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<sup>7</sup> Wine remains a niche product in Vietnam, where beer represents 94% of the country’s total alcohol consumption (Kirin Institute 2021). With extremely high taxes (peaking at 85% in 2005), the country recently opened up the market to wine (taxes sit at 25% in 2024). In

beer, the researcher therefore wonders: “Do these different consumption habits lead to a difference in perception of the intensity and appreciation of the sweet, sour, bitter and salty flavors in general, and in wine in particular?” However, the author concludes that there is no difference in tastes relating to wine between the north (Hanoi) and the south (Ho Chi Minh City) of Vietnam; only the frequency with which they drink wine accounts for the differences in levels of appreciation in the Vietnamese.

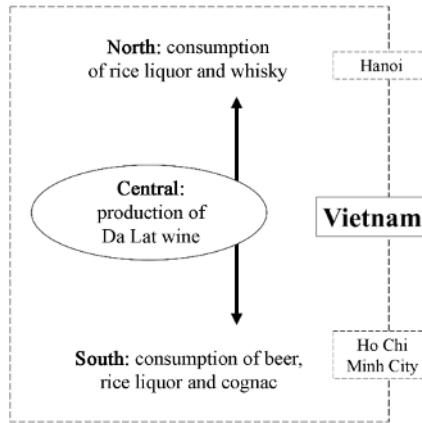


**Figure 1.1.** *Practices of alcohol consumption in Vietnam reproduced from Do (2010))*

It is therefore evident that wine consumption in Vietnam is still contingent upon the choices made by the actors, on the basis of sensory experiences. It is these peculiarities, these preferences which, today, are exploited and channeled into tourism at both local and regional levels. Their appreciation ultimately depends on the spaces in which the wine is tasted: Vinh Bao Do observes, for example, that white wines, which are lighter, have success in Vietnam nightclubs. Is it the same thing to eat a Savoie fondue in your own home after a hard day at work, and to experience the taste in the company of your family or friends in a mountain chalet, in Savoie itself? While the act of *incorporation* is similar from a technical standpoint, the feeling linked to these two experiences is certainly different.

This institutionalization of taste by public authorities is reinforced through the practices, discourse and imaginaries connected to tourism and gastronomy, held by “enlightened amateurs” (Fumey 2019, p. 91). Through tourism, the Greeks have popularized souvlaki, the Portuguese bacalhau and the Turks baklava (Fumey 2019).

Vietnam, according to Do (2010), wine is perceived as a sign of distinction and an object of modernity, conjuring up romantic images and women’s emancipation.

Thus, whether it is wine in Vietnam or chocolate in Switzerland (Fumey 2019), tastes are “created” – i.e. they are co-constructed by actors (including tourists), in the public and/or private sectors, individuals and/or collectives: therefore, it is useful to study the strategies which help to reinforce these gourmet territorial identities.

#### *1.1.2.2. Territorial differentiation strategies using gastronomy*

Beyond the national strategies discussed above, taste can also serve as a tool to set oneself apart on a regional or local scale. The geographer Michael John Broadway focused on the strategy *Place on a Plate*, implemented in the region of West Cork in south-west Ireland (2017). While the 1960s to the 1980s were synonymous with an economic slump, in the early 1990s, the region received funding through the LEADER program to establish a quality approach based on a branding initiative, using the “Fuchsia brand”.

Thus, the Fuchsia brand spotlighted the “status as the ‘culinary capital of Ireland’ (West Cork)” (Broadway 2017, p. 7). The initiative aimed to promote high-quality local gastronomy as a distinguishing factor within Cork’s tourist portfolio. The state-run tourist body in charge of promoting West Cork, Fáilte Ireland, then defined three tourist routes: the first hinges on the central section of Cork City, comprising a self-guided tour of 26 sites in a global approach to quality eating, including restaurants, bakeries, cafés and the city’s English Market. The second circuit is a two-day trip to the town of Youghal, some 50 kilometers east of Cork, and includes stops at artisanal producers, in restaurants and at producers’ markets. Finally, the West Cork Food Trail is the longest of the three routes: it is a self-guided three-day excursion to the west of Cork, along the Atlantic coast, to the town of Schull, on the Mizen Head peninsula, returning to Cork via Bantry and Bandon (see Figure 1.2) (Broadway 2017).

The author focuses on the establishment of the West Cork Food Trail, with a view to understanding how “local” is brought to bear in the towns that the trail passes through. In Bandon and Kinsale, the two towns at the eastern end of the route, through a study of the menus of 53 restaurants along the trail, he noted two main occurrences: the terms “Irish” and “West Cork” are most commonly repeated, respectively, in first and second places. The term “West Cork” applies to fish, meat and iconic recipes: West Cork Seafood Chowder, West Cork Ribeye, West Cork Salmon and West Cork Beef Fillet are a few examples. However, through qualitative interviews with permanent residents, he discovers that they themselves do not consider Bandon and Kinsale (the two most easterly towns) to be part of the region of West Cork, and thus of the West Cork Food Trail. The objective of these two towns is clear: to project an identifying image of “Irishness” to tourists – notably international tourists. Hence, “local” is used as an ersatz identification with

“Irishness”, and a territorial marker – particularly in towns where that identity seems to be less pronounced.



**Figure 1.2.** *The Place on a Plate strategy and the West Cork Food Trail (source: Broadway 2017)*

The example of the West Cork Food Trail clearly shows how “local” is used as a tool in a tourist strategy, serving as a territorial marker, here for private-sector actors and those linked to gastronomy (chefs).

Cultural distinction through taste and exploitation of these differences have long been practiced. The phenomena can be seen at a wide variety of geographic scales, from local to national. In the 14th century, the naturalist Pierre Belon du Mans pointed out that the English and the French cut salmon differently; the English would serve it as a steak; the French as a fillet. More recently, the geographer Philippe Baumert reflected on the differentiation in the ways in which the English and the Scots drink wine. Firstly, there are historical explanations for this: since the 14th century, mass exports from Portugal have contributed to the wine trade and the geopolitical significance of wine in England. However, we must also acknowledge

the role played by the public authorities in introducing a taste for port to the English; conversely, the close relationship between the Scots and the French has facilitated the appreciation of claret in Scotland (Baumert 2019, 2021).

Thus, we can better understand why, since 2009, Scotland's cultural policy in the form of the plan Recipe for Success has aimed to strengthen the local anchorage of Scottish products and to define a specific "taste", which *identifies* the Scots and *differentiates* them from the English, while detracting from the image of English food, notably by criticizing English chain restaurants (de Jong and Varley 2017). In this context, a national policy has been established: A Taste of Scotland<sup>8</sup>, and there are ever increasing numbers of brands seeking to define Scottish taste and anchor a product in the territory from which it comes: EatScotland, Provenance on a Plate, At Your Service, Year of Food & Drink 2015, A Taste for Events, etc. The best way of setting yourself apart "territorially", as geographer Jean-Robert Pitte explains, is to identify a production: a product, a dish, a recipe, etc. The promotion of these local taste preferences, including through tourism, seems to be a reaction against the uniformization of the world (Pitte 1991).

## **1.2. The taste of "the wild" and the example of meat and hunting**

### **1.2.1. What can be said about meat consumption in France?**

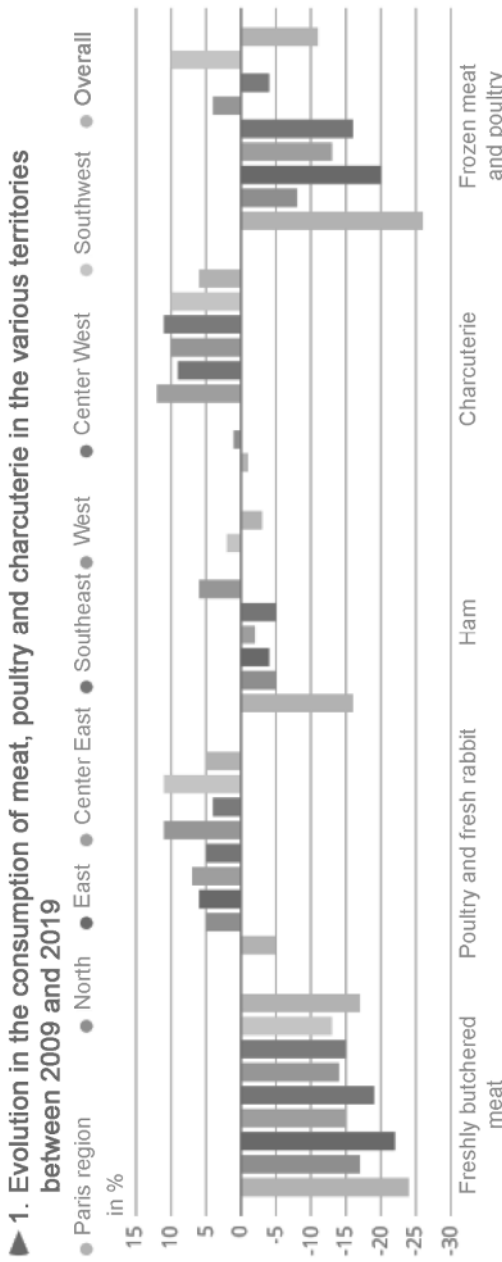
#### **1.2.1.1. Overall meat consumption is falling**

In the Western world, meat has long had pride of place on the plate, both in private circles and in restaurants. Until the early 1990, a dinner menu would invariably include a soup (preferably a consommé), a cold or hot entrée (fish), a roast or spiced dish (a piece of meat or poultry), often followed by foie gras, preceding the cheese course and dessert (Drouard 2016). Thus, it is unsurprising to find that ritual in the "gastronomic meal of the French", listed by UNESCO in 2010. Meat is not only a biological material; it is also a normative concept and a food category (Bruckert 2016).

Overall, meat consumption in France is falling, with the exception of charcuterie, poultry and fresh rabbit, consumption of which is rising slightly across the whole of France, except in the Paris region (see Figure 1.3). In spite of this continuous, and increasingly marked, drop in consumption, meat continues to raise questions, notably because of its cultural aspect: the geographer Jean-Robert Pitte (2022) dedicates part 1 of his *Atlas gastronomique de la France* to meat, while other researchers reflect on the place of meat in private consumption (Laurieux and Horard 2017) or in commercial restaurants (Cardinale 2023).

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<sup>8</sup> See: <https://www.gov.scot/news/a-taste-of-scotland/> [Accessed February 11, 2025].



**Note:** the reference years are triennial means calculated from 2008 to 2010 for the year 2009, and from 2018 to 2020 for the year 2019.

**Reading:** Between 2009 and 2019, the quantities of ham bought per household in the north fell by 5%.

**Coverage:** mainland France, excluding Corsica. **Source:** Kantar Worldpanel, computations by FranceAgriMer.

Figure 1.3. Evolution in the consumption of meat, poultry and charcuterie between 2009 and 2019 in France (source: Kantar Worldpanel and FranceAgriMer 2020)

### 1.2.1.2. *The chef: the promoter of food ethics...*

If we look at commercial restauration, the idea is often put forward that the (starred) chef serves to promote a certain food ethic (Hugol-Gential and Michon 2020): in the view of certain people, it is the responsibility of the starred chef to set an example by driving forward new standards and gastronomic practices (Poulain 2008). In reality, chefs need to lead the way in this transition to a society that is less focused on meat. A report published by MyCO<sub>2</sub>-Carbone 4, according to the Ministry for the Ecological Transition, the High Council for Climate, CITEPA, Agribalyse V3 and INCA 3, reiterates the target of 2 tCO<sub>2</sub> eq/pers carbon emissions by 2050, though in 2019, the average for France was 9.9 tCO<sub>2</sub> eq/pers. Meat, alone, represents nearly 1 tCO<sub>2</sub> eq/pers. It is therefore becoming crucial, according to the major scientific reports, to reduce our meat consumption. In fact, in Western societies, overall, and with the exception of poultry<sup>9</sup>, meat consumption seems to be falling.

In this context, numerous chefs are championing more sustainable gastronomy. At the turn of the millennium, Alain Passard was the first 3-Michelin-starred chef to provide an entirely vegetarian menu at *L'Arpège*. Other chefs, such as Laurent Petit, who staged his “cooking out” in 2019, and in doing so, redefined his culinary identity, are hot on his heels: in Annecy-le-Vieux, at *Le Clos des sens*\*\*\*, Petit offers “lacustrine and plant-based” cuisine (see Chapter 2). In 2023, Alain Ducasse launched the first world summit on sustainable cuisine in Monaco, enjoining his colleagues to “move towards 80% plant-based and 20% animal proteins. There is no other way.”<sup>10</sup> Studies show this reduction in meat-eating in starred restaurants. Some believe that the choices are influenced by five factors (Lamy et al. 2023): the seasonality of produce, use of short and local supply chains, waste and loss management, the means of agricultural production and rearing, and the use of good practices and the chefs’ savoir-faire.

It is worthwhile studying the place of game meat on restaurant menus. In the 1980s, the first anti-speciesist studies conducted by anthropologists such as Edmund Leach examined our choices in relation to which species of animal we do and do not eat. These choices, it is believed, stem from our relations of closeness with certain animals. In that way, pets, domesticated farm animals, game and wild animals should all be precluded from human consumption (Lamy et al. 2022).

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<sup>9</sup> On this subject, see the circumstantial overviews of meat consumption in France provided by FranceAgriMer: <https://agreste.agriculture.gouv.fr>. For Mickaël Bruckert (2016), the success of chicken is due to the fact that there are no taboos attached to chicken in France, it is cheap, easy to prepare and does not have an overpowering taste.

<sup>10</sup> *L'Hôtellerie-restauration*, September 26, 2023.

### 1.2.1.3. ... *but hunted meat is indeed present in commercial restaurants*

However, in the share of meat originating in France that is sold to restaurateurs in France, broken down by type of meat, game tops the list, accounting for 84% of sales.<sup>11</sup> Also, whether it is wild or farmed, game is often attached to the idea of hunting, “so barbarism in the eyes of some, and sporting for others”<sup>12</sup>. While it is a source of conflict, and the target of a great deal of criticism (Charollois 2021), paradoxically, hunting is also a selling point. Among diners, the average consumption is approximately 3–6 kg/pers/year (Figuié and Malivel 2017), compared to 85.2 kg for all meat in 2022. In addition, 63% of French people say they would be willing to buy local/French game meat<sup>13</sup>. However, the starred chef and Chairman of the UMIH<sup>14</sup>, Thierry Marx, says that he is alarmed at “the place of venison in French gastronomy”. He also asks: “Is it doomed to gradually disappear from our dishes?”<sup>15</sup>. Is hunting really disappearing from our plates, or is it only game meat that is disappearing? Eating of game inevitably raises questions about our link to the “wild”. If we want the taste of the wild, must we (among other things) accept hunting? Do diners travel specifically for the taste of products from hunted animals?

## 1.2.2. *Hunting – an identity marker*

### 1.2.2.1. *Hunting associated with the “wild”*

A recent study looked at the spread of the idea of the “taste of the wild” during the latter half of the 19th century in cities of Europe and North America – among sought-after goods were hunting trophies, furs and other skins and feathers. Thus, at that time, “taste” was primarily esthetic and visual: people would collect those trophies and display them at universal exhibitions, attesting to mastery of “still life” through savoir-faire and modern techniques (Valls Plana 2024). The ethnologist Van Troi Tran, for his part, looked at “the living spaces of wild beers in Quebec”, notably studying the identity dimension of the use of wild yeast, which leads us to rethink the definition of the concept of a *terroir* for the malting sector (Troi Tran

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11 On this subject, see: “Part de la viande d’origine France vendue aux restaurants en France en 2022, selon le type de viande”, Statista, 2023.

12 Caze-Valette 2015 in *L’Alimentation à découvert*.

13 See the IFOP report for the FNC, 2021.

14 The Union des métiers et des industries de l’hôtellerie (UMIH – Hospitality Trades and Industries Union) is a French employers’ organization for the hostelry and restauration sector. It represents approximately 30,000 member companies, which account for more than 70% of unionized businesses, and 50% of employees of businesses belonging to a professional organization in the hotels, restaurants and cafés (HORECA) sector.

15 See: <https://chasseseternelles.com/venaison/>.

2024). Of course, this approach is based on the idea of the “wild” (and its opposite, the “domestic”), largely documented by Philippe Descola (2004). In the Mediterranean world, this idea comes from the dichotomy between rearing animals and hunting: the former, since Ancient Greek times, has referred to “the cooking of the sacrifice [which] brings Men closer to the Gods, whilst at the same time keeping them apart” (p. 33). The latter equates humanity with the political art, bringing them together with wild nature, while differentiating them from the wild by way of the hunt.

However, firstly, our relationship to hunting has changed considerably in recent years. Secondly, for some time, our appetite for the wild seems to go beyond the sense of touch and/or sight (e.g., hunting trophies), and is beginning to be of interest for food. In societies where “for both moral and ecological reasons [...] the question of ethics now permeates the various stages of the food chain, from appropriation/production of the resource to its consumption” (Dalla Bernardina 2016, p. 4), the contrast between domestic and wild becomes crucially important. Dalla Bernardina showed the recent rise in numbers of game animals, from the erstwhile rarity of wild species such as wild boar and pheasants – which in fact, the author points out, are often neither rare nor actually wild. However, there are lovers of products resulting from hunting to be found even in certain Michelin-starred restaurants. Is there a taste of the “wild” in commercial restauration? In what way do products of hunting, in particular, encourage the emergence of new ways of practicing tourism? How is hunting endowed with a dimension of identity and how does it become a selling point, including (or notably) at certain starred restaurants?

#### 1.2.2.2. *The taste of the hunt centered on small game in starred restauration*

Is danger lurking for venison products? To examine this question, it is possible to adopt a lexicometric approach, similar to the study of edible wild plants conducted by a multi-disciplinary and international group of researchers (Marcilhac et al. 2024). The wild is not limited to plants and aromatic herbs, and we may legitimately wonder what place there is for hunted and/or game meat in certain restaurants.

On the basis of the occurrences of hunted products (whether farmed or wild), broken down by foodstuff/category of foodstuff on menus found on the Internet for starred restaurants in Les Corbières and on the coast of Aude, from 2014 to the present day, we do indeed see a significant drop in recipes made with venison products (see Table 1.1<sup>16</sup>).

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16 It could be interesting, for future research projects, to supplement the work by looking at menus published in recipe books.

The observation is plain: venison does indeed seem to be slowly disappearing from dishes, even in starred restaurants, while the presence of poultry, duck, hare and other birds remains high. At *La Table Franck Putelat\*\** (Carcassonne), for example, duck is everywhere: the menu included pressed duck (pressed duck, black garlic gnocchi, green beans and cuttlefish, in September 2024; pressed duck, pippin apple, celery and langoustine, in November 2023; duck foie gras, shellfish, cranquette crabs and saffron pistils, in July 2019; plancha-roast duck breast, endive à l’orange and dauphine potatoes, in April 2015; crested duck from Verne, pan-seared duck breast, braised rump, glazed root vegetables and diablesse jus (fiery sauce), in November 2013). There are plenty of references to other hunting products and game, but we must recognize that references to venison products are rare.

|                  | <i>Auberge du Vieux Puits***</i> | <i>La Table Lionel Giraud**</i> | <i>La Table Franck Putelat**</i> | <i>Le Grand Cap* (since 2016)</i> | <i>La Barbacane (former * 2005–2024)</i> | <i>L’Art de vivre* (green since 2024)</i> | TOTAL |
|------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------|
| <b>Deer/stag</b> | 2                                | 0                               | 1                                | 0                                 | 0                                        | 0                                         | 3     |
| <b>Wild boar</b> | 0                                | 0                               | 0                                | 0                                 | 0                                        | 0                                         | 0     |
| <b>Duck</b>      | 6                                | 1                               | 8                                | 4                                 | 4                                        | 1                                         | 24    |
| <b>Hare</b>      | 5                                | 1                               | 2                                | 0                                 | 2                                        | 2                                         | 12    |
| <b>Birds</b>     | 11                               | 2                               | 6                                | 2                                 | 3                                        | 2                                         | 26    |
| <b>Other</b>     | 3                                | 1                               | 3                                | 0                                 | 1                                        | 1                                         | 7     |

**Table 1.1.** Occurrences of hunting products (farmed/wild) by foodstuff/category of foodstuff on menus found on the Internet (Instagram, Google Restaurants, Guru, Facebook, TripAdvisor) for starred restaurants in Les Corbières and on the Aude coast, between 2014 and the present day (design and implementation: Boutain 2024)

There are three paradoxes which come to light.

The first is that wild boar meat does not appear on the menus at all. However, in most cases, it is the presence of large numbers of wild boar which justify hunting. Wild boar are perceived as a “territorialized environmental conflict [...]. [Hunting] is presented, and used, by local actors as a tool for regulating wild fauna which have

become invasive and destructive” (Mathevet and Bondon 2022; Lacquement and Raynal 2023, p. 17). In 2015, in Aude, under the impetus of the departmental and regional authorities, the first wild boar were slaughtered at the abattoir in Quillan, marking the emergence of a food supply chain which was originally destined only for restaurants in Aude. In 2016, the Fédération régionale des chasseurs (FRC – Regional Hunting Federation) d’Occitanie began a project titled “GIB SUD DE France”, aiming to provide structure to the sector. In a context in which harvesting is increasing, its purpose was to halt the proliferation of wild boar across the region (see Figure 1.4). Despite this structuring of the sector and strict regulation, certain protected species continue to be hunted. For example, in 1989, there are numerous references to supporters of springtime turtledove hunting in Languedoc (Dalla Bernardina 2016). In view of the excess activity, a decree was passed, suspending turtledove hunting in French woods until July 30, 2025. Wild boar, on the other hand, have proliferated, but are not found in restaurant dishes.

The second paradox relates to the disconnect between the discourse and the representations of hunting by hunters and by the general public. For example, with the project that was launched in the early 2020s, Via Fauna<sup>17</sup>, the FRC aimed to improve the consideration of ecological continuity in urban planning projects and documents: game census, inventories of tracks, plantation of hedges, monitoring of road deaths of various species, etc. In addition, according to a study by the FNC, the primary motivating factor for hunters (67%) is contact with, and observation of, nature<sup>18</sup>. However, according to IFOP on behalf of the FNC, only 57% of respondents think that hunters help to maintain the rural way of life, and for 74% of interviewees, hunters ought to communicate better about their actions<sup>19</sup>.

Lastly, the final paradox is that in spite of everything, venison remains an important selling factor: the sector, in partnership with chefs, suggests numerous recipes to the general public. Notably during the festive season, it is common to find, on various communication platforms, recipes signed by chefs using venison, wild boar, roe deer, etc. – i.e. big game (see Figure 1.5). Is it a matter of conditioning practices (and possibly discourse) surrounding big-game hunting, though the meat is not found in starred restaurants? In short, do we need to strike a better balance between supply and demand, outside of the restaurant sector?

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17 Projet Via Fauna, Fédération régionale des chasseurs d’Occitanie, 2024 [Online].

18 Study by the FNC, “La chasse en France – Les motivations pour la pratique de la chasse”, 2023.

19 IFOP report for the FNC, “Le rapport des Français à la chasse et aux chasseurs”, 2021.

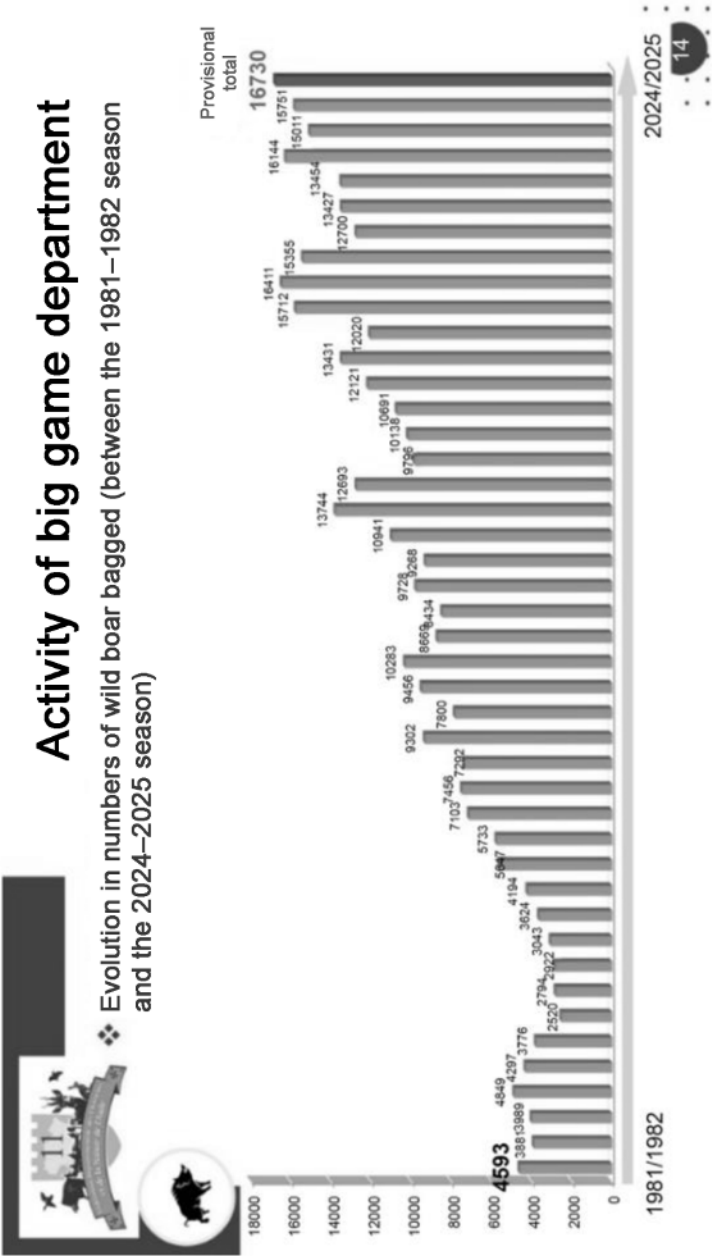


Figure 1.4. Evolution of the number of wild boar hunted – Plan de gestion départemental de la chasse dans l'Aude (source: FNC and FND 11 2024)

Published 23/12/2014 at 12:19

Arnaud Tournié

***Oysters, venison and glazed logs – three specialty Aude products that will make your December meals lighter but just as festive as ever. As a bonus, starred chef Fabien Galibert shares a few recipes.***

Venison steak and roast boarlet are examples of meats available during the Holidays which are very lean, but full of flavor (and less strong than wild boar). And yes, oh, yes, venison is becoming popular once more, and our society is regaining a taste for products of hunting. Decades of marketing by the agri-food industry, it seems, cannot erase centuries of hunting and cookery. In addition, game offers exceptional nutritional value, and for a while, the hunters' menus can abandon big dishes with sauce for more elaborate menus.



**Figure 1.5.** Example of recipes based on big game meat in the gray literature. The figure shows the post by METRO France with a link to ingredients, recipe and per portion cost (sources: Tournié (2014), and the Facebook page of Métro France)

These paradoxes aside, hunting is undeniably a cultural marker, in particular because of the flavor of the meat. Thus, hunting is a way of talking about rurality: “[Gilles Goujon] is gradually gaining a reputation and is attracting [tourists] who climb the winding country paths across the heaths and vines and villages of the *Pays cathare*” (Etcheverria 2020). Beyond his “signature” dish (see Chapter 2: rotten “Carrus” chicken egg with black truffle – *melanosporum*), chef Gilles Goujon also offers dishes made from hunting products (see Figure 1.6).



**Figure 1.6.** “*La chasse dans l’assiette*” (*Hunting on a Plate*) at *L’Auberge du Vieux Puits*\*\*\*, Fontjoncouse (source: Boutain 2022)

### 1.2.3. Tourism – the savior of hunting?

#### 1.2.3.1. The recovery of hunting through tourism

While hunting helps to manage population numbers of certain animals, beyond this function, the products of hunting are also markers of the territory in the hands of certain chefs, purely from the perspective of taste. Yannick Alléno, at *Pavillon Ledoyen*, in Paris, has made hunting one of the features of his culinary identity. For example, in his establishment, he serves jugged hares and *pâtés en croûte* (pies) (see Figure 1.7). Does the promotion of these products give rise to a certain type of travel by tourists/diners who are specifically interested in these products? Also, are the people who love such products hunters themselves?

The German culinary journalist Jürgen Dollase showed how Olivier Nasti, chef at *La Table d’Olivier Nasti – Le Chambard*\*\* in Kaysersberg in Alsace, for example, strove for “rusticity” in his quest for sensory and taste brilliance, notably working with hunted meat (2023) – meaning smells and textures which tend to be strong, clear and

dominant. With a multisensory approach to hunting at the heart of his business model, the chef has developed tourism in fall, and since 2023, has been running a Hunting Festival (see Figure 1.8) extending over nearly a month, from mid-October to mid-November (Méjanès 2024).



**Figure 1.7.** *The process of making the pâté en croûte from small game and game birds: wood pigeons, hares and mallards (source: W.M.C. 2021)*

Some 20 years ago, Cazes-Valette offered a description of the profile of consumers of game meat (hunted and farmed) in France. They were primarily men, who themselves engaged in hunting, middle class and from rural backgrounds (Cazes-Valette 2004).

However, looking at the most recent data on the profile of hunters in France, we see that no more than a third are laborers or employees, compared to one-third upper management, executives and people in high-level intellectual professions (see Figure 1.9). Are these “new” hunters also the “new” customers of these top-of-the-range restaurants, said to be “gastronomic” (starred or otherwise), which define their culinary identity around hunting products?



**Figure 1.8.** *Flyers and program for the second Hunting Festival in Chambard, Kaysesberg (source: Ilya Kagan; Le Chambard 2024)*

More in-depth studies could be performed on this issue. Let us simply note that at the *Chambard*, the “basic” menu (the “Séjour chasse à la Winstub du *Chambard*” –

Hunting Stay at the Winstub, Chambard) includes an overnight stay, a dinner at the Winstub, a breakfast, an excursion to the mountains and free access to the spa, for a price “from €653”. The higher-end package, which includes the same offers but with the dinner at *La Table d’Olivier Nasti* instead of the Winstub, can be reserved from €1,173<sup>20</sup>. These prices may seem exorbitant, but it must be remembered that this is an exceptional menu. However, we may legitimately wonder whether (big-game) hunting is in the process of becoming an exclusively elitist activity, in that ultimately, it seems to be targeted only at wealthy tourist/diners, wanting to taste a landscape and a place through the “wild”. On the other hand, could the establishment of tourism for hunting not open up the practice to a broader audience – and if so, what are the risks involved?

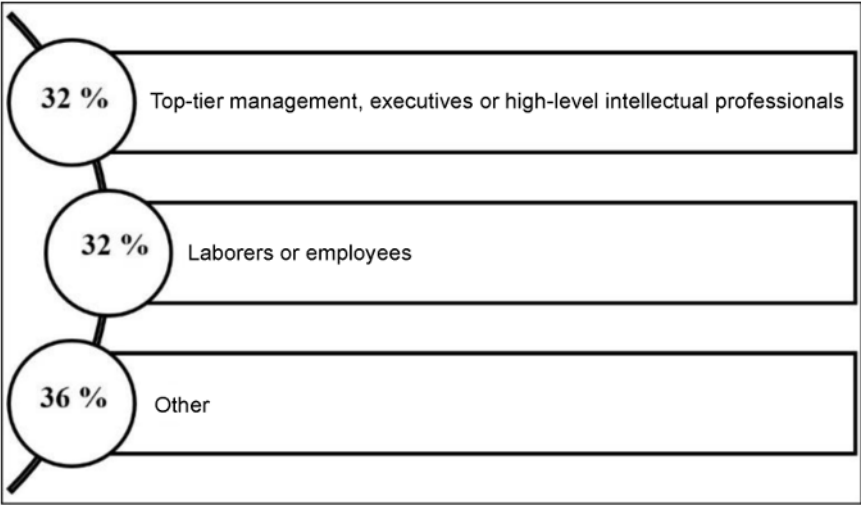


**Figure 1.9.** *The profile of hunters in France, whether actively working or retired (production: Boutain (2025), based on the FNC study, “La chasse en France”, 2023)*

1.2.3.2. *Tasting the fall vacation through hunting*

Might it be possible, in France, to defeat the seasonal nature of tourism for hunting? Could hunting, ultimately, become a new tourist resource – in other words, a tool for diversifying activities, by helping to make tourist activities and attractions less seasonal, which would both restrict and intensify tourism (Knafou 2021)? To

<sup>20</sup> See: <https://www.lechambard.fr/fr/festival-chasse.html> [Accessed September 27, 2024].

maintain revenue without increasing his hosting capacity, Rémy Knafo is proposing to extend the length of the season, which hunting would allow for:

The territory of Valais grasped the point very well: the Swiss work on hunting much better than we do. [...] For all those who have made the effort, and offer products from hunting in the fall, it works all the time. There is the response to a demand<sup>21</sup>.

Such is the case, for example, in Canada, where this activity is widely developed, and where the question relates more to how minorities (notably, women) can join in with hunting practices<sup>22</sup>. Of course, it must be borne in mind that hunting is widely criticized as a dangerous activity<sup>23</sup>, which can obviously stand in the way of the development of related tourist activities, unless they are sufficiently carefully overseen. Indubitably, the questions on the subject must be examined collaboratively, involving all members of civil society, to avoid conflicts of use.

Also, the “gastronomization” of hunting products, though it is linked to various issues (rarefaction of big game on restaurant tables, dissonance between hunters’ discourse and their practices, generally negative perception of hunting on the part of the general public, etc.), is a way of defining taste, as many thinkers have explained. A second example of sublimation and esthetization of taste can be found in the search for the “taste of the mountain”, initiated simultaneously by permanent residents, socio-professional actors, tourism technicians, elected officials, locals, scientists and indeed by tourists themselves.

### 1.3. An iconic taste: the “taste of the mountain”

#### 1.3.1. *Contemplative thought, taste and the definition of a new tourist resource*

##### 1.3.1.1. *18th–19th centuries. Mountain tourism: lakes, health and contemplation*

Numerous studies have been done on the history of Alpine tourism (Debarbieux 1993; Boyer 1995), but we will not re-examine that subject here. Rather, the

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21 Interview with Alexis-Olivier Sbriglio, September 27, 2021.

22 For example, see the dissertation of M. Ramo-Ryffranck at the University of Quebec in Montreal, defended in March 2024 [Online].

23 On this subject, for example, see the report “La chasse et ses dérives” (Hunting and shifts in it), published in *Carnets des espaces naturels* in fall 2024. This report notes that the proliferation of signs relating to hunting (hunting stands, blinds, etc.) in the landscapes constitute “barriers to the development of nature ecotourism” (p. 9).

objective is to summarize these works, in order to show how the prevailing representations of mountain life have changed and contributed to the esthetization both of the mountain and of taste. The example of the Savoie region shows us that the recent emergence of practices linked to tourism and gastronomy needs to be examined through the lens of these representations.

Sociologist Jean-Paul Bozonnet showed how the mountain was a territorial object, created by practices and discourse – a space which is constantly thought of and perceived through a dual prism: “At the very moment when the words are spoken, we find an ideal framework into which to fit that portion of the territory: thus, the mountain will immediately be either central or peripheral, summital or cavernous, Ouranic or Chthonic, divine or infernal” (Bozonnet 1992, p. 59). To explain this spatial logic of images, Bozonnet uses two scenarios: “Promethean” and “contemplative”. In the first scenario, a human attempts to distinguish themselves and pits themselves against the mountain by topping it. They tame it, they ascend it, they scale it, because “ascension is the best way to set yourself apart” (p. 73) (see Box 1.2). In the second scenario, on the other hand, the mountain is perceived as a space to restore serenity; it offers opportunities for recovery and recreation (Équipe MIT 2002).

#### **The Promethean and contemplative scenarios**

In his book *Des monts et des mythes. L'imaginaire social de la montagne* (2013), the sociologist Jean-Paul Bozonnet looks at the place of mountains in anthropology. He explains that the social imaginary, “the metaphoric marking of the space [and] the spatial logic of images [are] part of a story, and the discourse is always structured in a minimal narrative which we can grasp in concrete terms through the scenario” (p. 69). The first scenario, which is embodied by the angelic/superhuman figure of Icarus, refers to liberation, and to the myth of Prometheus: “The taste of power begins to be expressed, firstly, by distinction. And ascension is the best way to set yourself apart, to frame yourself as an elite, by differentiating yourself from common mortal matters. Thus, it could be said that in the ascension scenario, the major goal of Promethean action is domination” (p. 73). The other scenario, which is referred to as “contemplative”, is borrowed from Rousseau, and can also be found in the work of thinkers such as Jouve, Gide, Thoreau and Barthes: “Since the time of Rousseau, the model of the alpestrine hero relates both to mountain dwellers and to tourists: the figure is an urban dweller who comes to the mountain” (p. 79). Such tales, which are “apologues for the traditional way of life [or] spark discussion among residents who have been charged with preserving regenerative values” (p. 96), lend themselves to so-called “contemplative” tourism.

**Box 1.2.** *The Promethean and contemplative scenarios in the social imaginary surrounding the mountain (source: Bozonnet 2013)*

The history of the mountain is connected to these two opposing understandings. Tourism to the mountain began in the late 18th century, “with the popularity of Chamonix, the lakes and the thermal spas” (Laslaz et al. 2015, p. 52). While there were certain excursions to the surrounding mountain passes, it was nevertheless primarily summer tourism, to Aix-les-Bains or Évian-les-Bains (Gauchon 2002), and thus contemplative tourism: people would visit the mountain for the spas, for their bodily well-being.

Therefore, until the late 19th century, driven by medical discourse, “the mountain was [...] considered the most suitable environment for the treatment of illness” (Équipe MIT 2011, p. 51). The representations and practices of mountain life changed as well. Originally revolving around sports and health (“lake-support”), then thermal (“lake-complement”), then spa (“lake-beach” and “lake-summer”) and finally eco-geotouristic and experiential (“lake-hybrid”), travel to the lakes is illustrative of the rise of new tourist practices (Jobert and Duval 2021).

However, there are few hotels available on the lake shores, although some large hotels for spa clients or elites were built in the late 19th century (Coppier 2014). It was in this context of lack of accommodation in the valleys that large hotels began to replace the former hostels, in Chamonix or Zermatt (Gauchon 2002). It was then that these resorts also began affirming their own identities in order to set themselves apart (Bonin 2014), and only a few managed to take advantage of the situation.

#### 1.3.1.2. *The 20th century. A paradigm shift: winter sports and Promethean thinking*

The turn of the 20th century marked a change of paradigm. Winter sports began to develop, which gradually caused the seasonality of tourism to be reversed (Laslaz et al. 2015). Stays in resorts by the aristocracy, on the one hand, and the development of sporting practices by the bourgeoisie, on the other, jointly helped to the development of the leisure practice of skiing (Chevallier 1995; Équipe MIT 2011). Certainly, skiing has been present since the 1920s and 1930s, but it was the thermal spas which became the first winter destinations and which laid the foundations for the development of the skiing resorts (Delorme 2014).

At the end of WWII, public developers in the mountain setting largely drew inspiration from the Promethean scenario in their development policy. In a context marked by the agricultural crisis and its consequences (economic and social crises and demographic crisis for the mountain environment), public and private funding was concentrated on the construction of “integral resorts”, notably in the Tarentaise Valley, while the pastures were gradually abandoned. The discourse about the

mountain accompanied that shift: it was no longer on offer to tourists; it had value in its own right. The discourse of development in post-1968 years contributed to a more austere view of the mountain (Bozonnet 1992), than the Club alpin français (CAF) helped to normalize.

#### *1.3.1.3. The 21st century. Skiing, eating and drinking: the co-existence of the Promethean and contemplative styles of thought*

However, the turn of the 21st century created a nuance in this dominant, post-war paradigm. The earliest “enological trails” were created at the initiative of Bernard Vissoud at Allibert Trekking – one of the main travel agencies for the high mountain region in 1996. This initiative sparked the “return” of contemplative thinking.

Here, as is often the case in tourism, the practices did not replace others, but were added to them (Duhamel 2018). Thus, gastronomy did not replace skiing; it was added on top of it. To the movement of corporalization of the mountain which is present in the Promethean approach – and indeed still present – was added the incorporation of the mountain into gastronomy.

Incorporation is seen as an introjection: by eating products of the mountain, the body (and indirectly, the mind) is imbued with the qualities of the Alps. Specifically, it is because they physically incorporate the territory that diners discover, appropriate and symbolically appreciate everything around them, through the medium of their senses.

In this context, travelers are searching for the most spectacular panoramas and the “disorientation [is] born of the simultaneous juxtaposition of landscapes: pastures in summer, and peaks in winter” (Gauchon 2002, p. 154).

The combination of esthetization of the mountain and the taste of the mountain has a consequence: gastronomy is no longer subordinate to winter sports; it has gained autonomy. While “traditional” cheese fondue, which has gone hand in hand with the development of winter sports, emblematic of popular and peasant cuisine, is indeed part of the mountain identity, notably for tourists, who identify it with the “messages/food products” of the mountain (see Figure 1.10), the construction of a collective gourmet identity now involves other elements, both tangible and intangible.

|                    | Representations                                            |                                                   |                                             | Messages/food products                                                |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Actors in tourism  | OFF-PISTE SKIING<br>HAUTE-<br>GASTRONOMY                   | WELLBEING<br>RELAXATION<br>SPORTING<br>ACTIVITIES | SPA/LAKES<br>"POSTCARD"<br>FOOD<br>PRODUCTS | Gastronomic (starred)<br>restaurants, iconic "postcard"<br>foodstuffs |
| New residents      | "GOURMET" AND<br>"MARKETED"<br>FOOD PRODUCTS               | OPEN-AIR AND<br>GENTLE SPORTING<br>ACTIVITIES     | NATURE<br>POLLUTION                         | "In Tartiflette we trust"                                             |
| Longtime residents | <u>TRADITIONAL</u> AND<br><u>ORIGINAL</u> FOOD<br>PRODUCTS | OPEN-AIR AND<br>GENTLE SPORTING<br>ACTIVITIES     | NATURE<br>POLLUTION                         | Stuffing, rissole and farm<br>visits                                  |
| Tourists           | <u>ICONIC FOOD</u><br>PRODUCTS, TO BE<br><u>DISCOVERED</u> | OPEN-AIR AND<br>GENTLE SPORTING<br>ACTIVITIES     | NATURE<br>POLLUTION                         | Cheeses, cooked dishes, crozets,<br>diots, wine + local discovery     |

Figure 1.10. Tourism and local consumption in Savoie (source: Programme Interreg, 2014–2020, cited in Boutain 2022)

### **1.3.2. Macrosocial scale: the identification of a “common”: the “taste of the mountain”**

#### **1.3.2.1. Identifying a “common” in gastronomy: the issues**

The construction of a “common” taste of the mountain does not stem from the quest for uniformity of taste, but is to be understood as a proposed definition of a common basis, designed around elements of material elements linked to gastronomy (table art and decor), and intangible elements (products, recipes and dishes; preservation techniques, cookery and preparation; banqueting habits, discourse and imaginaries of gastronomy connected to it). This “common” must be understood at a macrosocial scale (Zancanaro 2024): it is possible to find the common variables which uniquely identify gastronomy, in places with shared topological and cultural characteristics.

Historically, Savoie cuisine has been linked to two cuisines: royal cuisine (anecdotal) and peasant and popular (omnipresent). The royal cuisine, which goes back to the time of Amiczo Chiquart, maître queux (i.e. chef) to Duke Amadeus VIII of Savoie, is linked to Chiquart’s desire to “preserve the pomp of the Duke’s table and [to] pass on the repertoire to chefs who came after him” (Rambourg 2017, p. 27). Chiquart did not really write recipes, but presented the dishes made for banquets (Vincent-Cassy 2012). Peasant cookery is more documented, and more widespread, because in Savoie, above all, it remained simple, necessity-based cuisine. It includes products, recipes and savoir-faire linked to the position of the Savoie region as a crossroads between its three subsets: northern Europe with Germanic culture, western and southern Europe with its Latin culture and eastern Europe with its Slavic culture (Sacareau 2003). Savoyards eat simple products, such as potatoes, wheat, milk, cheeses, poultry, pork and, in some cases, fish; in summer, the orchards supplement the offer: “Thus, we often find recipes with the mix of sweet and savory (rabolets, farcement, farçon)”<sup>24</sup> (Lansard 2000). Finally, we can say that the history of Savoie and Haute-Savoie is shot through with a melting pot of products, tastes and smells (Hermann 2000).

It is true that during the latter half of the 20th century, the image of Savoie began to be associated with what certain people, such as chef Emmanuel Renaut, retrospectively described as a “heavy, cheese-based cuisine, with Savoie wines that [wear] holes in your shoes”<sup>25</sup>. The dishes and recipes that attest to non-costly, peasant cuisine (polenta, farçons, etc.), described in Marie-Thérèse Hermann’s book

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<sup>24</sup> I discuss this part at greater length and in greater detail in my thesis in geography (Boutain 2022).

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Emmanuel Renaut, January 3, 2022.

(2000) (see Box 1.3), were progressively supplanted by “invented” products such as raclette and tartiflette, which, in the space of a few decades, became true markers of mountain identity, both for temporary and permanent residents. However, in recent years, “the Savoie region has been marked by a process of construction of a taste of the mountain which, of course, includes cheeses and recipes linked to cheeses, but is not limited to that” (Boutain 2022, p. 102). Tourists play an essential role in the construction of that common.

#### Introduction to the book

“When it was suggested that I write this book, I said to myself: ‘I’m not going to have much to say, apart from talking about beugnêtes and matafans!’ If I had been Tarine, I would maybe have thought of farçons and crozets. With Mauriennaise, I would have thought of côques and farci; with Faucigneranne, rabolets and farcement, etc. But whatever province of Savoie I were from, I would never, never have thought of talking about fondue, though foreigners seem to believe that is our national dish!” (p. 7).

#### Box 1.3. *Traditional Savoie cuisine (source: Hermann 2000)*

As Alexis-Olivier Sbriglio, journalist and culinary consultant, notes, “if I say that I’m going to write a book or a guide featuring only products of the mountain, it will include magnificent and marvellous things, but there will be loads of sequences where it’s missing a huge amount”<sup>26</sup>. Defining a “taste of the mountain” exhaustively would be an impossible task. In her book *La Cuisine paysanne de Savoie* (2000) (see Box 1.3), Marie-Thérèse Hermann rightly notes that Savoie cuisine has, historically, been oral cuisine, which is generally passed down by women. Also, similarly to what happens in Africa (Cusack 2000) and Asia (Nor et al. 2012), numerous skills, savoir-faire, recipes and dishes handed down orally have evaporated at the same time as they were learned, transmitted and inculcated. Thus, the taste of the mountain connected to it is inevitably evolutive.

The “taste of the mountain”, sometimes substituted by the syntagma “taste of the Alps”, is a term that is in the process of being constructed, linked to mainly oral traditions. It attests to a cross-cutting approach to the subject, combining the perspectives of scientists and food professionals, echoed by the festival Toquicimes – Mountain cuisine get-togethers (see Chapter 2). Similarly, in the late 2010s, chef René Meilleur (*La Bouitte*\*\* (formerly \*\*\*), Saint-Martin-de-Belleville) launched

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Alexis-Olivier Sbriglio, September 27, 2021.

the project *Conservatoire de cuisine de montagne*<sup>27</sup>, aiming to halt the loss, due to lack of written texts, of Savoie knowledge and savoir-faire. Thus, recipes were compiled, and the work is updated every year<sup>28</sup>. The recipes collected and compiled spotlight products (diots, polenta, etc.) and recipes (though pared back) based on butter, stuffing, etc., and of course, fondue and raclette, which are now undeniable parts of Savoie's identity. René and Maxime Meilleur also seek to pass on this knowledge and savoir-faire, notably to the tourists who visit them. Thus, in the 2025 edition of *Le Petit Futé*, we see: "At *La Bouitte*, you can sleep, dine... and learn to cook! René and Maxime Meilleur will teach you a wealth of culinary secrets over a four-day course. You can learn to cook foie gras, make terrine, bake it, pan-fry it... and what is truly interesting is that you can taste your own creations on the terrace of *La Bouitte*, accompanied by a nice Savoie wine!"<sup>29</sup> Hence, taste is transmitted not only to permanent residents, but also to tourists, because it lives on through their practices and discourse.

### 1.3.2.2. *An attempt to define the current taste of the mountain*

The foundations of the "taste of the mountain" were laid in the 1970s by illustrious chefs, such as Père Bise and his wife Marguerite, Mike Grandchamp, Michel Rochedy and Jean-Pierre Jacob. While Michel Rochedy speaks of a mountain that he has tamed in his book *Le Chabichou ou la montagne apprivoisée* (2007), Marc Veyrat, for his part, placed more emphasis on the "wild" aspect of his cooking<sup>30</sup>. At a conference on gastronomic territories in Angers (March 24 and 25, 2022), the geographer Vincent Marcilhac cited a jointly authored work on wild plants (Marcilhac et al. 2024) in the esthetization and construction of the culinary identity of three chefs holding two or three stars, two of them originally from Savoie: Marc Veyrat and Jean Sulpice. Up until the early 21st century, mention made of plants tended to be limited to just a few of them, such as tarragon. In 1990,

27 See: <https://www.lefaucigny.fr/2018/11/gastronomie-creation-dun-conservatoire-des-recettes-de-montagne/> [Accessed November 18, 2023].

28 A book titled *Cuisine de montagne*, written by Alexis-Olivier Sbriglio, was published in October 2025 by Glénat. Mercotte, a journalist and panelist on cookery programs, who was born in Aix-les-Bains, also compiled testimonials from producers, vintners, artisans and chefs, which she brought together in a book titled *La Savoie gourmande* (2022).

29 See: <https://www.petitfute.com/v36564-les-belleville-73440/c1171-sports-loisirs/c1254-hobbies-et-autres-loisirs/c315-cours-de-cuisine/703162-la-bouitte.html> [Accessed February 14, 2025].

30 In the final part of this chapter, we will examine the contrast between *domestication* and *wildness* – these are recurrent themes in the construction of taste. The duality between these two terms, which is much more complex than it might seem at first glance (Descola 2004), leads us to look in greater depth and nature and the links between human environments (also known as the *ecumene*) and the natural environment (the *biosphere*) (Berque 1990).

interest in wild plants began to flourish, impelled by Marc Veyrat and his *Herbier gourmand* (1990), and then redoubled in the 2000s–2010s: from that period, we find references to sorrel, thyme, etc. A turning point came in 2014–2015, with the increasingly frequent mention of new plants, such as wild garlic, meadowsweet, wild thyme, sage, etc. The tastes of the wild became more diverse, with the introduction of more edible plants into the kitchen. The use of such plants became particularly prevalent in the mountains, where chefs were able to use these plants freshly picked, often by their own teams of people.

Such is the case, for example, of Clément Bouvier (*Ursus\**, Tignes) who, to quote Luc Dabo, his former front-of-house manager, “had to use everything that was going on around him – i.e. the fields, the mountains and everything that nature has to give”<sup>31</sup>. Trained in Jura with a professional forager, Stéphane Mayer, Clément Bouvier learned to forage edible wild plants, such as yarrow and oxalis, which became territorial markers of his cookery in Tignes. Thanks to this new knowledge, the use of plants and herbs became a crucial part of the establishment’s sales strategy, and it is at the heart of the diners’ experience, not only through taste, but also through the other senses. Thus, the chef takes his guests on a “woodland walk” (see Figure 1.11).



**Figure 1.11.** *The elements of the forest in the dining room at the restaurant Ursus\*, Tignes (source: Boutain 2019)*

However, if we look purely at starred restaurants, certain chefs, such as Laurent Petit, have made the deliberate choice not to use “wild” plants in their cooking. We may therefore wonder why, more broadly, that taste is included as being shared in the field of restauration. The colleagues of Marc Veyrat recognize that he greatly contributed to the construction of this Savoie “common”. One such is Emmanuel

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31 Interview with Luc Dabo, August 4, 2021.

Renaut (*Flocons de sel\*\*\**, Megève), who explains: “He has brought a great deal to French gastronomy and indeed world gastronomy.”<sup>32</sup> However, his culinary identity, hinging on a specific taste which few are able to replicate<sup>33</sup>, cannot provide a foundation for a common identity spanning Savoie and Haute-Savoie, even though the use of these plants is not a goal in itself, but specifically, a way of referring to the mountain (Marcilhac et al. 2024). What, though, are we to do with the “rest” – which does not necessarily fall within the purview of the “wild” – of iconic products and dishes, specific savoir-faire and techniques, smoky taste, etc.?

A former underling of Marc Veyrat’s – and recognizant of the great debt that he owes to Veyrat – it was Emmanuel Renaut who ultimately set out the foundations of the taste of the mountain (Etcheverria 2020), though he himself does not come from the Savoie region, having been born in the suburbs of Paris. Having moved to the mountainous region at a fairly young age, and fallen madly in love with it, he became a hotel and restaurant owner in Megève in 1997. He acknowledges that he has played a “central” role in defining that shared taste: “We sparked the desire, with the chefs of Savoie and Haute-Savoie – of course – to really emphasize [the mountain].”<sup>33</sup> He explains:

Mountain cuisine, as I see it, begins at the shores of the lake. It is not necessarily cuisine from high altitude. We have sourcing from Lake Léman, Lake Bourget [...]. Thus, when I speak of the mountain, I mean from the valley to the peaks; thus, we have a multitude of products, and powerful seasons, seasons of violent weather. Simultaneous violent, and [...] tender. [...] Personally, I like to rewrite things. For mountain cuisine, that means reinterpreting it. Reinterpreting the dishes, and above all, the products.

For Emmanuel Renaut, it is a matter of reinterpreting the mountain and its material aspects by searching the woods and the undergrowth, looking for fungi and wild herbs, as well as reinterpreting popular and traditional dishes from Savoie: from a culinary point of view, that taste is essentially linked to smoke, which stimulates all the senses.

Thus, these various elements form a “common” which constitutes the fundamentals of Savoie cuisine, without being set in stone. It can, of course, be adapted, depending on the site and the environment. In relation to stuffing, for example, chef Anthony Bisquerra (formerly of *La Table de l’Alpaga\*\**, Megève)

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32 Interview with Emmanuel Renaut, January 3, 2022.

33 Due to lack of knowledge, or access to edible wild plants, their use is inevitably elitist, or at least, selective.

states: “There is a recipe in Praz, a recipe in Megève, a recipe in Combloux, a recipe in Saint-Gervais. There are some people who put grapes in their stuffing, and others who don’t.”<sup>34</sup> These remarks are echoed by his colleague Antoine Gras (*Barmes de l’Ours\**, Val-d’Isère), who explains, “the stuffing is sweet in Maurienne, whereas in Haute-Tarentaise, it really is a charcuterie dish, with little stuffing”<sup>35</sup>.

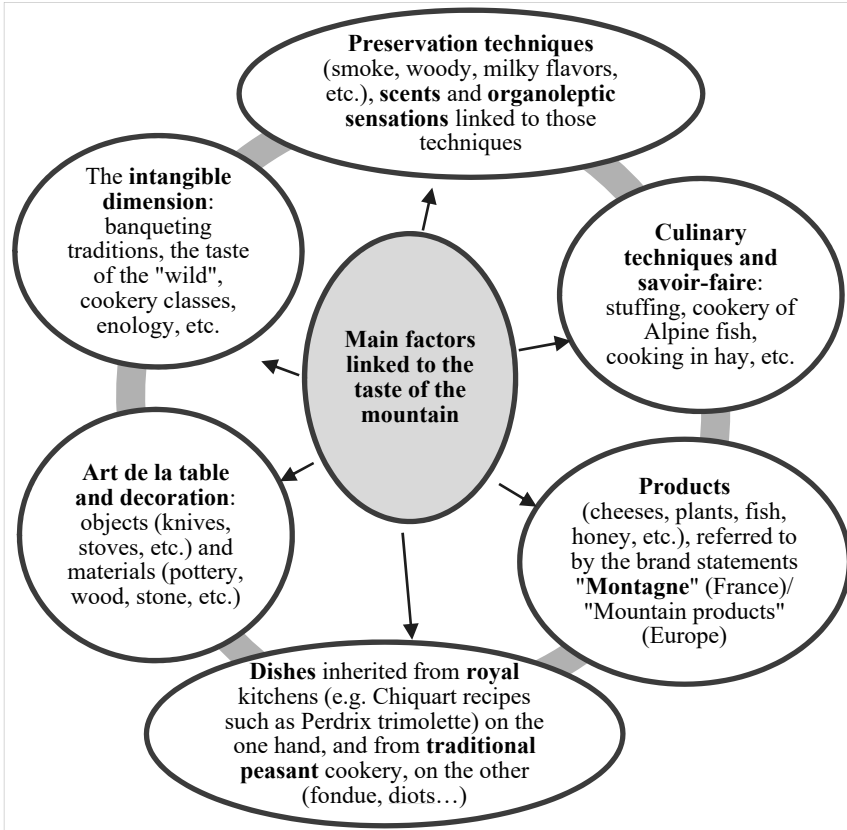


**Figure 1.12.** Identification of a shared taste: the “taste of the mountain” (source: Boutain 2025)

In addition to these local taste preferences, we must take account of other constraints, to which chefs are often attentive. As Alicia Poupene, former front-of-house manager at *L’Auberge du Père Bise\*\**, explains, “we have a plant-based dish

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Anthony Bisquerra, August 15, 2021.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Antoine Gras, May 6, 2021.

[...] which is a perfect evolving portrait of the season”<sup>36</sup>. Obviously, impacted by structural social changes (destruction of meals, strengthening of the connection to local products, seasonal produce, etc.<sup>37</sup>), chefs adapt. Figure 1.12, though, shows the constitutive elements of the present, shared taste of the mountain, which encapsulates both tangible and intangible aspects.

### **1.3.3. Microsocial scale: culinary identities of chefs**

#### **1.3.3.1. René and Maxime Meilleur (\*\*) and “poetic” taste**

Here, culinary identities are perceived and studied as the transition from “gastronomy on the macrosocial scale (the shared variables which render a particular style of gastronomy unique) [to a] microsocial scale (the singular variables of a particular chef’s cuisine within a branch of gastronomy)” (Zancanaro 2024). The first example of these singular variables within the “taste of the mountain” is that of René and Maxime Meilleur, father and son chefs, who set up a restaurant in Saint-Martin-de-Belleville, in the Tarentaise Valley, in Savoie. Originating from Savoie, and self-taught in cookery, at their restaurant *La Bouitte*, they obtained their first star in 2003, their second in 2008 and their third in 2015<sup>38</sup>.

The “taste of the mountain”, which is championed and spotlighted by them in Saint-Martin-de-Belleville, is shared by other chefs in Savoie: the products, the techniques and savoir-faire are relatively similar. What the majority of these chefs have in common is that they are disciples of Escoffier. Put simply, Escoffier abandoned the “vast cooking pot” at Carême’s restaurant to focus on the taste of his ingredients. Thus, game is cooked on a bed of game, fish is cooked with an injected smell, etc. Whether cooking endives, asparagus or milk, Savoie chefs attempt to bring out the profound tastes of the products without denaturing them. However, their individual “culinary identities” differ from one to another. Without seeking to mask the taste of the foodstuffs, Meilleurs’ approach is not to reveal too much. Diners are led to discover Savoie cuisine with gentleness and roundness.

An interesting example is one of the Meilleurs “signature” desserts: “*Le lait dans tous ses états*” (Milk in all its states, or more figuratively, milk all ways) which, as

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36 Interview with Alicia Poupeney, September 30, 2021.

37 On this subject, see *L’Homnivore* (1990, republished 2001) by Claude Fischler. Also see the reports of Gira Conseil on commercial restauration: <https://www.giraconseil.fr/> [Accessed October 7, 2024].

38 They lost their third star in 2023.

its name indicates, is a dessert made (almost) entirely with one product: milk<sup>39</sup>. The dish is a tapestry of different textures, flavors and tastes (see Figure 1.13).

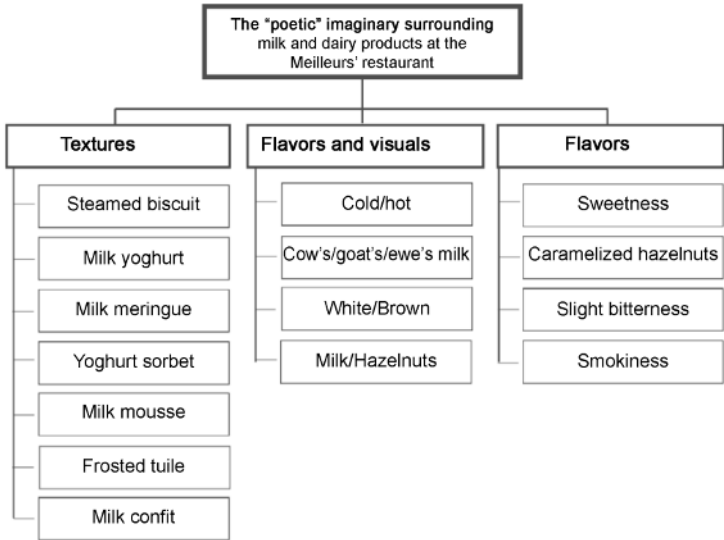


**Figure 1.13.** *The “poetic” taste of milk, from chefs René and Maxime Meilleur (source: Boutain 2025)*

The desired taste here is subtle, refined, delicate; this is what is meant by the expression “poetic taste”. The Meilleurs’ milky dessert speaks to a complex production process and technical skill which is difficult to execute. According to the culinary advisor Yves Bontoux, this is the dish “on which the third star was based”<sup>40</sup>. Evocative of a happy childhood in the mountains, this “signature” dessert is an ode to Savoie, a Proustian madeleine, the individual expression of a taste memory which any child who spent their childhood or vacations in the mountains will remember (see Figure 1.14).

Here, the taste of the mountain is an introjection. The “poetic” imaginary is permeated with different properties (vitality, abundance, etc.) of Savoie milk, from cows, goats or sheep (which differ considerably in terms of taste and flavor from UHT milk), by subtle tricks – visual (textures), sensory (consistency, warmth) and taste. The white color of the dessert obviously echoes the pristine white of the snow-capped mountains.

39 Notably, this dessert is served with a few hazelnuts as an accompaniment.

40 Interview with Yves Bontoux, August 18, 2021.

As culinary journalist Stéphane Durand-Souffland correctly points out in an article in *Le Figaro*, the dessert was created at Christmastime<sup>41</sup>.



Gourmet flaky pastry pie



Raclette bricelet (wafer) made with raw milk, and dehydrated powdered ham



Truffle raviolo in artichoke consommé, curdled oil



Duck fois gras escalope, fresh corn galette, honey, plant-based breadcrumbs, and aged vinegar reduction



Apricot water and bay leaves, served in a beer spirit, with crisp edible paper



Milk all ways: cracker, mousse, frosted tuile, and jam

**Figure 1.14.** A few of the dishes on a menu at La Bouitte\*\*\*, Saint-Martin-de-Belleville (source: Boutain 2022)

41 Durand-Souffland, S. (2020). Le lait de Savoie par René et Maxime Meilleur. *Le Figaro*, June 7 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.lefigaro.fr/gastronomie/le-lait-de-savoie-par-rene-et-maxime-meilleur-20200606> [Accessed March 7, 2025].

Thus, the Meilleurs define the taste of the mountain through the rediscovery and sublimation of simple, everyday products; milk one day; parsnip the next. This is precisely what Stéphane Durand-Soufflant demonstrated in an article on *La Bouitte*, in April 2025, examining the way in which these Savoie chefs have (skillfully) reinvented themselves since losing their third star in 2024<sup>42</sup>. Parsnips, with their flavors of vanilla, are made into a confit, with tarragon and the juices of the peel.

### 1.3.3.2. *Laurent Petit (\*\*\*) and the “telluric” taste*

The second unique variable of a chef’s cuisine in gastronomy is that of Laurent Petit. Born in Haute-Marne, he is also self-taught. He established his own restaurant in Annecy-le-Vieux in 1992. In 2019, he won three stars for his restaurant *Le Clos des sens*. His cuisine, which has been upheld since 2022 by Thomas Lorival and Franck Derouet (respectively, the former executive chef and the former and present sommelier/front-of-house manager of the restaurant), and continues to hold three Michelin stars, can be defined by various unique and characteristic features:

- Cuisine centered around plants and lacustrine products. The chef explains: “My main two pillars are the lake and plants. And as I say, if tomorrow, you were to say to me: ‘Now, you have to choose: you can only have one guiding principle’, that would be no problem: I would choose plants”<sup>43</sup>.

- “Day-to-day” and “ordinary” products (e.g. cabbage, salsify, endives, potatoes, mushrooms, etc.); he works with the whole vegetable, without any indirectness or trickery – thus, here, unlike in the case of the Meilleurs, Petit does not seek to sublimate the taste.

- Behind their apparent simplicity, the dishes are made with a multitude of variations, attesting to perfect mastery of techniques and savoir-faire – in that respect, poetry, or intellectualization of cookery, is indeed present, as it is with the Meilleurs.

It is interesting to note that these chefs (Laurent Petit and the Meilleurs), though they have two and/or three stars, are seeking to spotlight products which do not, a priori, belong to the category of luxury food (Marcilhac 2012), but can be described as ordinary, simple, everyday products. Unlike the Meilleurs, Laurent Petit works with these products with apparent ease; in his cookery, there is no subtlety, but

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42 Durand Soufflant, S. (2025). Savoie : au restaurant étoilé *La Bouitte*, chronique d’une renaissance en altitude. *Le Figaro*, March 14 [Online]. Available at: <https://www.lefigaro.fr/gastronomie/savoie-au-restaurant-etoile-la-bouitte-chronique-d-une-renaissance-en-altitude-20250314> [Accessed April 13, 2025].

43 Interview with Laurent Petit, August 17, 2021.

explosive truth, a direct taste, which reveals itself without any detours. This is what the starred chef himself calls “simplicity”:

At some point, I totally committed to making things which might appear very simple. This is what I call “simplicity”: it is something which is apparently uncomplicated, but speaks to everyone who tastes it. I will do a cauliflower, an artichoke or an endive root; I will cook a fêra, a pike or a crawfish. It’s simple, because the diners are not asking themselves: “What on Earth is this that he wants me to eat?” It’s very easy to understand. However, there is a great deal of thought that goes into the development of the dish, beforehand – after all, this is what we call cuisine. We cook, but we cook with intellectualism.<sup>44</sup>

In the eyes of Laurent Petit, it is not the product on the plate that is important, but the desired taste, which must shine through. The dish must be good, meaning directly pleasant in the mouth, in terms of both its flavors and its texture: “People eating green cabbage or eating lobster, truffle or Paris mushrooms, they don’t care. It just has to be very good,” he says in brief. For Laurent Petit, the quest for a “telluric” taste results in painstaking selection of products, affirmed “locavorism” (see Chapter 3), and the expert utilization of savoir-faire and techniques which he adapts and perfects across the Annecy Basin: smoking and salting; the search for bitterness, working with endives and fennel with their roots, which he pairs with the salinity of the Bex salt mines, and which echo the mildness of the lake fish, soft and light; etc. These tastes are then exploited for and by tourism, including by other actors, such as Facim.

#### ***1.3.4. Spatial dynamics and the establishment of tourism for the taste of the mountain***

The Fondation pour l’action culturelle internationale en montagne (Facim) is an association, set up in 1970 by Gilles de la Rocque, an Alpine hunter, founder of the Ski-Club, and head of the tourist office in Courchevel in 1960. Facim’s purpose is to promote the Savoie region to visitors living close to its borders, initially through culture, art and music. However, in 1992, after the Albertville Winter Olympic Games, the foundation set itself a new target: to promote the Savoie region’s natural heritage and also its intangible cultural heritage. The association began offering trails centered around gastronomy, and that activity intensified in the 2010s, when the lecturer and researcher Olivier Etcheverria was contacted by Martine Buissart,

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44 Interview with Laurent Petit, August 17, 2021.

former Director of Facim, to begin training high mountain tourist guides in the “taste of the mountain”.

Thus, Facim established a number of trails hinging on gastronomy (see Chapter 3), and in 2008, developed *Saveurs d’automne* (Flavors of Fall) – an annual culinary gathering which combines talks, tasting sessions, cookery workshops, etc., in partnership with multiple actors – notably tourist offices (Arêches-Beaufort, Val d’Arly – Mont Blanc, La Léchère, etc.), the *Salon des sites remarquables du goût*, professional colleges, etc.

More recently, in 2024, the foundation sought to drive forward and encourage tourist travel linked to the tastes of the mountain through the project *Paysages du goût* (Landscapes of Taste), billed as a “passport for flavors”, with visitors being invited to “(re)discover Savoie: a Savoie which is gastronomically creative and inventive, which is able to revivify the long tradition of mountain food and share the riches of its pastures, slopes and lakes, as well as make the best of passing on its savoir-faire, in the necessary spirit of respect of the landscapes”<sup>45</sup>. For example, in summer 2024, Facim organized an event called *Let’s Goût*, involving a competition for the best Savoie cake, “bucolic strolls through the gourmet landscape with the wardens of the Vanoise national park”, etc. (see Figure 1.15).



Figure 1.15. *Les Paysages du goût, organized by FACIM – event program for Let’s Goût, June 29, 2024 (source: FACIM 2024)*

45 See: <https://www.fondation-facim.fr/destinations-artistiques/paysages-gout> [Accessed March 6, 2025].

Thus, the “inheritance, transmission and recreation, cultural identity and relationship with the environment, architecture of restaurants, and fitting in with the landscape of the places where the products are made”, are spotlighted. In other words, it is the variety of tastes of the mountain which is preferred – the “poetic” and “telluric”, in a multi-sensory approach. Notably, a roving exhibition notably opened in fall 2025 in the Pays d’art et d’histoire des Hautes vallées de Savoie. The artists will be selected by a panel composed of Caroline Boissou (the olfactory approach), Nicolas Boulard (tasting approaches around cheese) and Mathilde Syre (soundscapes).

#### **1.4. Conclusion**

Thus, the “taste of the mountain” and the “taste of the wild” – obtained through the products of hunting – are singular markers of the territory, from the point of view of taste. These ideas can awaken the curiosity of the diners, and in certain cases, encourage them to travel as tourists to experience these tastes. Chefs’ identification and adoption of a “common” to define a culinary identity thus contributes to the construction of the places, and the organization of a geography of tourist and gastronomic practices. This identification can take place not only at local level (e.g. in restaurants), through a single-point logic, but also at regional level, through a zonal logic.