

RESEARCH NOTE

The Reinvention and Performance of Traditional Newfoundland Foodways in Culinary Tourism in the Bonne Bay Region

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INTRODUCTION

THE STUDY OF FOOD has received considerable attention from scholars of many academic traditions, including anthropology, sociology, history, folklore, and geography. Food is a lens through which to explore changing patterns in economies, social relations, and cultural development. More recently, the term “foodways” has sprung into popular use among social scientists to describe socio-cultural patterns of food use. “Foodways” refers to overall patterns of food use, including ways of procuring, preparing, presenting, and eating food.¹ The term refers to both tangible (material) and intangible (attitudes, rituals, customs, traditions) aspects of food.² At the core of the study of foodways is the specific relationship between places, people, and their food practices.³ Cultures, families, and the identity of individuals are shaped by the foods they select and the ways they are prepared, while the foods se-

lected often are determined by where they live.⁴ As Long explains, foodways can serve as a conceptual model by systematizing the exploration of how food is woven into everyday life and personal histories.⁵ Traditionally, anthropologists and folklorists studied foodways as part of the broader cultural system. However, as the recent interdisciplinary fields of food studies and food history have begun to popularize the study of foodways, a trend has emerged to conceptualize foodways less as reflections of pre-existing cultures and more as a means through which contemporary cultural identities of peoples and places are invented and performed.⁶ I follow this recent line of inquiry by looking at how traditional Newfoundland foodways are being reinvented and performed in the culinary tourism sector in the Bonne Bay region on Newfoundland's west coast.

Experiencing the foods of a place one is visiting has become an important part of tourism advertising.⁷ Indicative of this trend, many tourism operators in the Bonne Bay region have started to focus on cuisine and are increasingly featuring traditional foods as part of their tourism efforts. This paper begins with an overview of traditional Newfoundland foodways in which I describe a seasonal, resource-based round of food production closely tied to land and sea activities. I confine my discussion to the island of Newfoundland, recognizing that foodways in Labrador are shaped by a different set of influences. This overview sets the stage for looking at how traditional Newfoundland foodways are understood and enacted today in the culinary tourism sector in the Bonne Bay area. I look closely at seafood as an example of the use of traditional foodways in culinary tourism. While focusing on culinary tourism, I also look at some ways in which the performance of traditional foodways in culinary tourism intersects and diverges with the performance of traditional foodways among people living in the region. Generally speaking, a focus on performance emphasizes the non-representational in practices that cannot be adequately captured by words or, as Nash says, on "forms of experience and movement that are not only or never cognitive."⁸ In this paper I follow the lead of some recent cultural geographers to understand performance as forms of experience that become known in many ways, which includes their representation through images and text.⁹

The Bonne Bay region is a significant place for investigating these themes related to culinary tourism. The region consists of six communities located within Gros Morne National Park with a relatively small year-round population of nearly 3,000 people. The area receives a large number of tourists each year: a total of 183,000 visitors in the 2010-11 tourism season.¹⁰ The numbers of visitors to the park are growing, with a 20 per cent rise between 2006 and 2011.¹¹ As tourism in the region continues to grow, so does employment in the tourism industry. Approximately 16 per cent of workers in the region were employed in retail and food and beverage services in 2005, an increase of approximately 35 per cent since the year 2000.¹² The Bonne Bay region may be especially well positioned to benefit from culinary tourism. A report done for the Canadian Tourism Commission indicates

that the typical culinary tourist is highly educated and earns upwards of \$80,000 annually.¹³ This demographic is very similar to the average tourist who comes to Gros Morne National Park. Nearly 50 per cent of visitors in 2009 had an annual household income of over \$90,000 and nearly 60 per cent of visitors had a university degree or higher.¹⁴

My discussion of traditional foodways and culinary tourism is based on original research I undertook in the Bonne Bay area as part of my doctoral studies. My research is focused mainly on understanding the food-provisioning practices of households in this region, with particular consideration for the role of fisheries in the local food system. More recently, I started looking at culinary tourism and the relationship between the tourism and fisheries sectors in the region. I first visited the area in the spring of 2009 and have made frequent trips back since that time, completing most of my fieldwork between April and October 2011. In this paper, I draw on key findings from participant observation and interviews with tourism operators; a survey of households in the region to gather information about trends in seafood consumption; and qualitative interviews with households about their food-provisioning practices.

TRADITIONAL NEWFOUNDLAND FOODWAYS

Newfoundland foodways have their origins in the food traditions of the early migratory fishers and settlers who came to Newfoundland to join the cod fishery. The original English, French, Scottish, and Irish settlers, along with the migratory fishers before them, brought their own foodways, which they adapted to the Newfoundland environment. Prior to the early seventeenth century, the Newfoundland fishery was largely seasonal, with few Europeans wintering over. By 1510, Bretons, Normans, Basques, and the English had established seasonal fishing settlements in Newfoundland. From the beginning, cod became a staple in the diet as well as an important export product. The dry salt cure worked particularly well in the temperate climate of the Atlantic, with the first recorded cargo of salt cod leaving Newfoundland in 1502 on the *Gabriel* of Bristol.¹⁵

In the early seventeenth century, the English began establishing a resident fishery. About a century later, significant Irish immigration started along with the extension of settlements in Placentia Bay and Bonavista and Notre Dame Bays to the north. In addition to offshore banks fisheries and the practice of winter-housing, new foods such as salmon and seal and the introduction of the potato were material to increasing the carrying capacity of the island.¹⁶ As settlers continued to come from England and Ireland throughout the eighteenth century they developed a system of occupational pluralism, providing for themselves those necessities they could produce, such as food, and purchasing as little as possible on credit against fish in the merchant store.¹⁷ They had to become hunters, trappers, fishers, and gar-

deners in order to survive.¹⁸ Other staple foods, including flour, salt beef, peas, oil, sugar, molasses, rum, and salt, were imported to the island.¹⁹ Some of these imported foods assumed places of significance in the foodways of Newfoundlanders. Tye shows that molasses remains important to the personal foodways of many Atlantic Canadians.²⁰

I refer to “traditional” Newfoundland foodways as the pattern of food provisioning across many Newfoundland communities as it came into wide practice around the end of the eighteenth century with the establishment of the fishing household unit and as it remained until the 1950s influx of more modern goods, services, and cash in the post-Confederation period.²¹ Across the island, the summer season was the most active time for household food production and fishing. The main organizing activity in most communities was the summer cod trap fishery, timed to take place during the annual inshore cod migration. Both men and women were busy with the summer fishery, men in the catching and initial onshore processing of fish and women in the onshore and in-home processing. Some salt cod was kept for eating in the home in meals such as fish and brewis, a dish consisting of salt cod cooked with hard bread, which originally was developed for sailors at sea. The proper washing and drying of fish was especially critical to making a living in the salt fishery, and women worked hard to produce good-looking, quality fish.²²

In the fall, it was a common practice to get in the “rough food,” understood among Newfoundlanders to be your “your staples, your winter’s diet.”²³ Root vegetables, including potatoes, carrots, and turnips, were stored through the winter. The fall fishery placed more emphasis on fishing for home consumption,²⁴ while hunting for moose, caribou, rabbit, and sea birds was also an important part of getting in the winter’s food supply.²⁵ Berry picking was an important annual activity. The fruit was preserved in jars and offered some protection against vitamin C deficiency.²⁶ Because food was relatively bountiful, fall was the season for “scoffs,” large, cooked meals, which usually took place in the evening and often as part of an impromptu party.²⁷

Traditional foodways were based on a seasonal, resource-based cycle of food production closely tied to sea and land activities. While change and adaptation have been constants in Newfoundland foodways,²⁸ more rapid changes to traditional modes of food provisioning, as noted above, came after Confederation with Canada in 1949.²⁹ Imported foods became more readily available, while the rise of television programming contributed to the spread of new culinary ideas.³⁰ There began a shift in foodways from the harvesting and consumption of local food to the commodification of food resources in a global economy.³¹ In the post-World War II era, women’s home processing of fish moved to employment in fish-processing plants. Also in the 1950s, efforts in gardening declined because of constraints on time related to women’s work in fish plants, as well as a greater cash income to buy food.³² In the Bonne Bay region, an important shift in eating patterns that many residents

identified was the road put through to Deer Lake in 1967. As one resident said, "People came out of the gardens and went to the stores."

Nearer the present, almost all cod fisheries in Newfoundland and Labrador were placed under moratoria because of severe resource declines in the early 1990s. The 1994 moratorium on the Northern Gulf cod in the Bonne Bay area, along with the 1992 moratorium on Atlantic salmon, had a devastating economic impact. It put many fish harvesters, processors, and other local businesses in jeopardy. A multi-generational crisis, it also affected young people who would have entered the fishery and ended some fishing traditions while changing others. Women fishers in particular struggled to qualify for government adjustment programs, while in their family roles women also bore much of the stress of the fishery closures.³³

TRADITIONAL NEWFOUNDLAND FOODWAYS IN CULINARY TOURISM

While traditional foodways continue to undergo change, they are being taken up by the tourism industry as a way of promoting Newfoundland and Labrador as a destination.³⁴ In this province and beyond, food in recent years has been recognized as an important part of the tourism experience. "Culinary tourism" is the name given to this type of tourism based around locally produced foods and food products prepared in both traditional and new ways.³⁵ The Canadian Tourism Commission has begun promoting Canada as a culinary tourism destination, including coming up with a national culinary tourism strategy.³⁶ According to Long, this type of tourism is essentially about food as subject and medium, destination and vehicle for tourism, involving individuals in exploring foods new to them, and using foods to explore new cultures and ways of being.³⁷

Canada comprises many distinct food regions that are important to regional identity and are local because of food product availability.³⁸ For example, Quebec is known for its maple sugar. The Prairies are associated with fields of wheat and Alberta beef. In Newfoundland and Labrador, one of the best-known culinary attractions is seafood. During my fieldwork, I asked tourism operators about what sorts of food they thought tourists wanted to eat. They consistently described seafood as something tourists are looking for. For example, one restaurant operator said, "That's [seafood] what people expect, they're coming to Newfoundland." Another tourism operator, who offers accommodations in the area said, "Seafood's really important, one of the first things people ask when they come in, is there any fresh seafood around?" While seafood is not as directly important to tourism businesses that don't serve food, it nonetheless forms an important part of the context that draws people to the region. Tourists I spoke with affirmed that seafood is something they are looking for when visiting the area. For example, when I spoke with

one woman about what she was going to have for dinner that evening, she promptly replied, “Cod, that’s what we want, it’s unique to you here.” Her remark shows the importance of the perception of “otherness” of foodways that elicits curiosity and encourages exploration of regional foods.³⁹

Despite the collapse of the cod fishery and the 1994 moratorium in the Bonne Bay region, seafood is featured prominently in provincial tourism marketing and is presented as a unique attribute of the province’s foodways that differentiates it from other places. In fact, for the last number of years there has been a small commercial fishery for cod, with an annual total allowable catch in the northern Gulf of St. Lawrence region of 4,000 tonnes for 2010 and 2,000 tonnes for 2011.⁴⁰ Tourism operators I spoke with buy local cod as much as possible, although many did note they are not able to get as consistent a supply of fresh and local seafood (including cod) as they would like. Nonetheless, the opening paragraph on the Food and Dining webpage of the official Newfoundland and Labrador tourism website says, “Known for our seafood and traditional dishes, this place offers an exciting world of dining options”⁴¹ Ties to a long-standing fishing culture are used as a way of setting the province’s seafood apart from other places. The official tourism website proclaims, “In a land that lives by the sea, taste the freshest food the ocean provides....”⁴²

In the Bonne Bay region, many restaurants and other tourism establishments feature seafood as a local culinary attraction. The Ocean View Restaurant in Rocky Harbour is the largest restaurant in the region, serving between 5,000 and 7,000 people each season. They advertise “fresh seafood bought daily from local suppliers ... prepared every day by our team of chefs and local cooks.”⁴³ On the south side of Bonne Bay in the town of Trout River, the Seaside Restaurant encourages visitors to “come and experience the richness of Newfoundland’s maritime flavours.”⁴⁴ Many restaurants are decorated with a nautical theme such as fishing nets, carvings of wooden dories, and seashell artwork. While cod may be “king” among tourists, as one cook said to me, halibut, mackerel, salmon, turbot, scallops, shrimp, crab, lobster, and mussels all appear on local menus.

While seafood plays a central role in culinary tourism, other traditional foods are also served. Blueberries and partridgeberries are featured in desserts, such as the partridgeberry upside-down cake and lemon torte with blueberry sauce at Java Jack’s Restaurant in Rocky Harbour.⁴⁵ Earle’s Restaurant in Rocky Harbour specializes in moose meat dishes, including pies and sandwiches. For lighter fare you can order their “mug-up,” a snack consisting of tea and bread, traditionally taken by sailors at sea.⁴⁶ Pauline Earle, who helps run the family restaurant, explained, “we all believed in sticking with the tradition.”

Tourism establishments are using traditional foods as a way of promoting a culinary experience attached to a particular place. For example, one restaurant operator noted that many tourists haven’t heard of “scrunchions,” a local term for crisp-fried bits of pork fat often used for cooking fish and as a garnish for such dishes as fish and brewis. Servers at this restaurant will bring small dishes of

scrunchions to the table for guests to sample. The restaurant also offers a single cod tongue as a tasting to people interested in trying this local delicacy. Some restaurants even demonstrate how to eat certain foods, such as lobster, by having servers assist customers at tableside. At a bed and breakfast, the guests were delighted in the morning to be served fishcakes and especially enjoyed watching the hostess prepare them the evening before in her kitchen. One tourism operator I spoke with referred directly to using food to tell stories about a place. He said to me, “each product you put on your menu has a story to tell behind it.”

ASSESSING THE TRADITIONALITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND SEAFOOD

Ideas of tradition and place, integral to culinary tourism, are closely connected. In the context of food, van der Meulen says that traditionality is one attribute that contributes to the local associations, or connectedness to place, of a food product.⁴⁷ Van der Meulen suggests there are three main aspects of traditionality: the time that has elapsed since a food first appeared in its place of origin; the connection of the food to local dietary culture; and the extent to which the food still is prepared in the traditional way. I will use van der Meulen’s framework to take a closer look at the traditionality of Newfoundland seafood in culinary tourism. I focus on seafood because it has assumed a prominent role in culinary tourism as a traditional Newfoundland food.

According to van der Meulen, the time that has elapsed since a food first appeared in its place of origin is a key aspect of traditionality. In this regard, Newfoundland seafood dishes show a high degree of traditionality. The first explorers to the island remarked on the abundance of fish they found. For example, English explorer John Mason wrote a letter home to England in 1620 describing “cods so thicke by the shoare that we nearlie have been able to rowe a boate through them.”⁴⁸ This abundance of seafood was enjoyed in the local diet. Roberts’s collection of seventeenth-century Newfoundland recipes indicates that early settler families were eating salt cod with mustard, butter, or vinegar.⁴⁹ Capelin, herring, mackerel, eel, halibut, salmon, and trout were usually stewed, stuffed, or baked and served on “sops,” slices of bread with melted butter poured on top, as the potato had not yet come into general use.⁵⁰ Families also enjoyed shellfish and ate mussels, periwinkles, lobsters, crabs, shrimps, prawns, and barnacles.⁵¹ Until fairly recently, Newfoundland foodways remained organized around the fishery and seafood was an important part of the typical meal plan. Wednesday and Friday typically were “fish days,” with meals consisting of cod served with potatoes. Sunday breakfast was usually fish and brewis, a dish of salt cod cooked with hard bread.⁵² This meal plan was supplemented with other types of seafood. Older residents I interviewed who grew up in the Bonne Bay region described eating capelin, herring, mackerel, salmon, turbot, lobster, scallops, and squid.

Seafood appeared early on as an important food in the region, and shows a strong historic attachment to the local diet. However, in the present day, seafood is weakening in its attachment to local diets. In April 2011 I administered an anonymous mail-out survey to households in the Bonne Bay area that asked a range of questions about seafood consumption, including frequency and types of seafood eaten; ways of cooking seafood; sources of seafood; and satisfaction with availability, affordability, and quality of seafood in the community. Over the course of a month, 307 completed surveys, or 27 per cent, were returned.

The survey results show that households prefer to eat local seafood — defined for the survey as seafood from the province — over seafood not from the province. Households eat local seafood more often than imported seafood, and eat it most frequently in the summer. However, significant to assessing the attachment of seafood to local diets are results that indicate households are eating most types of local seafood less often today than they were five years ago. For a list of 15 different types of local seafood, households were asked to indicate if they are eating them “often,” “now and then,” or “never” for the present day and for five years ago. Households reported eating nearly all types of seafood, including capelin, catfish, cod, crab, halibut, herring, lobster, mackerel, salmon, smelt, squid, trout, and turbot less often today than five years ago. As households eat these types of seafood less often, more reported eating them “now and then” in the present day in comparison to five years ago.⁵³

Various factors may be contributing to this decline in seafood consumption among local households. First, the fish stocks are declining, thus, declining consumption of seafood among local households is linked to a larger context in which the number of commercial fish harvesters is decreasing and retention and recruitment of workers is one of the main challenges facing the industry. Reduced participation and employment in the fishery are weakening the tradition for many, and particularly for younger people, living in coastal communities. The Bonne Bay area saw a 7 per cent decline in the number of fish harvesters between 2000 and 2005.⁵⁴ Households involved in commercial harvesting can access some fish for food from their landings, and as there are fewer commercial fish harvesters fewer families will be able to directly access fish for subsistence. In terms of the recreational fishery, the West Coast/Northern Peninsula region of the island had the lowest rate of participation in the recreational cod fishery in 2007.⁵⁵ Many local residents I spoke with described poor cod stocks and catching only fish of small size in Bonne Bay, factors that doubtless are contributing to this low participation rate.

While changes to commercial and recreational fisheries are taking place, young families I spoke with also described not having the knowledge and skills to prepare and preserve fish. One young father I spoke with said, “A lot of my generation, we don’t have cooking skills ... we don’t know what to do with this stuff [seafood].” Another woman referred to relying on her father to help her with drying and salting fish. She explained, “older generation gonna go out, they [younger people]

won't know how to do it. If anything happen to you father, where am I gonna get my [dry] fish?" There are potentially many factors contributing to the declining frequency of seafood consumption among households in the local area. A decline in seafood consumption, along with the traditional knowledge and skills needed to cook and preserve it, contrasts with the growing importance among tourists of eating seafood as a traditional culinary act.

The final indicator of traditionality that van der Meulen proposes is the extent to which a food still is prepared in the traditional way. In Newfoundland, frying and boiling have long been the most popular ways of preparing fish. In the 1940s, the Jubilee Guilds published a pamphlet on fish recipes in which they urged Newfoundlanders to try baking, steaming, and stewing fish, claiming that "these methods of cooking retain the greatest percentage of nutrients" compared to frying and boiling.⁵⁶ Today, pan-frying remains an extremely popular method of cooking seafood among local people. Ninety-eight per cent of the households surveyed said that pan-frying was their preferred method for cooking seafood. Among restaurants, methods of preparing seafood vary, although many focus on traditional methods in some form. Pan-fried fish garnished with scunchions, accompanied by baked or mashed potato, is a common menu offering. Fish and chips also remain a standard menu item, particularly on lunch menus. Coen has described Newfoundlanders as having "emotional, psychological, cultural, and physical ties ... to fish and chips."⁵⁷ However, some restaurants are blending traditional ways of cooking seafood with new flavours and tastes. One chef I spoke with prepares salmon pan-fried or poached with a citrus ginger or sweet bourbon glaze. Java Jack's Restaurant serves shrimp in a Thai noodle salad with a chili-lime vinaigrette.⁵⁸ Restaurants are diversifying from the traditional root vegetables by offering fish with such vegetables as asparagus or broccoli.

In summary, van der Meulen's framework of traditionality provides a lens for assessing seafood as a traditional Newfoundland food. Seafood shows some of each of the three aspects of traditionality van der Meulen outlines. It shows a high degree of traditionality in terms of the time since it first appeared as a food in the region. In regard to preparation, many restaurants still feature traditional methods in some form, although this is becoming blended with new flavours. A connection to local dietary culture in the present day is an aspect in which the traditionality of seafood is weakening. Restaurants are increasingly representing seafood as a traditional food, and tourists perceive it as such, while the importance of seafood in the local diet appears to be declining along with the traditional knowledge about how to cook and preserve it. While this divergence raises concern about how seafood is being represented in the tourism sector, it also speaks to Coen's view that whether or not culinary tourists are "really" having an authentic experience is less important than what makes an experience authentic in their own view.⁵⁹

THE REINVENTION OF TRADITIONAL FOODWAYS

This discussion about the traditionality of Newfoundland seafood in culinary tourism raises the question of what constitutes an “authentic” or “traditional” experience.⁶⁰ The issue of authenticity has long been at the heart of tourism research, as tourists frequently are seen as on a quest to discover authenticity in their travel experiences.⁶¹ “Authenticity” is usually understood as deriving from tradition and the past, and thus is often equated with the traditional.⁶² My participant observation and interviews with tourism operators in the Bonne Bay region show that they draw on traditional foodways to try to establish authentic culinary experiences.

However, debate centres on where authenticity, or tradition, is located and who judges it.⁶³ Increasingly, tourism scholarship recognizes tradition and authenticity as emergent, negotiable, and socially constructed concepts.⁶⁴ Coen has written specifically about “emergent tradition” to refer to the process through which cultures are “making themselves up” all the time.⁶⁵ This notion of emergent tradition speaks to the broader phenomenon of the invention and reinvention of tradition.⁶⁶ Increasingly, tourism and cultural studies are focusing on the creativity of tradition and the ways in which tradition is continually being reinvented and reconstructed as a facet of social life.⁶⁷ The reinvention of tradition has been looked at specifically in the context of foodways. Much of this work has focused on the reinvention of traditional foodways in the immigrant experience.⁶⁸ However, the reinvention of traditional foodways now is being looked at in the context of culinary tourism, such as by Molz, who examined how traditional Thai cuisine is being represented to tourists in American Thai restaurants.⁶⁹ In the Bonne Bay area, some specific examples of the reinvention of traditional foodways emerging from interactions and negotiations among tourism operators, tourists, and local residents are worthy of attention.

First, culinary tourism sites such as restaurants are not only venues for tourists, but are also patronized by local people. The patronage of local residents is especially important for restaurants that remain open during the winter season when fewer tourists are around. The seafood survey asked households about eating out at local restaurants. Nearly 50 per cent of the surveyed households said they eat out at a restaurant at least once a month. Further, 70 per cent of households said they will order seafood when eating out at a restaurant. Thus, seafood is important to both tourists and local people when eating out, although not all types of seafood are equally enjoyed by locals and tourists. For example, one restaurant described cod tongues as hugely popular among locals but said the tourists don’t usually eat them. Beyond seafood, there are other examples of differences in eating experiences tourists and locals are looking for. Some households I interviewed said they enjoy going out for a meal of fish and chips or hamburgers and fries as a treat from what they usually eat at home. However, these “fast foods” don’t often hold a place for tourists in what they usually see as traditional foodways.⁷⁰ As well, I was told at a res-

taurant offering moose dishes that locals “don’t want moose” because they can easily get it themselves. Virtually every household I interviewed eats at least some moose, accessing it either directly through hunting or by receiving some from a friend or family member who hunts. However, this restaurant’s moose dishes are especially popular among tourists, who don’t usually eat moose and are eager to try it as part of a traditional culinary experience. Thus, in the performance of traditional Newfoundland foodways, restaurants have to negotiate between the different foods and types of eating experiences that locals and tourists are looking for.

Second, people working in the tourism industry bring their personal set of food traditions to an exploration of Newfoundland foodways in culinary tourism. Many people from the local region manage and are employed in restaurants, and they bring with them their cooking knowledge and practices. One restaurant operator I spoke with described the cooks in the restaurant as preparing food according to “what they ate in their homes.” However, some restaurant operators also referred to food and travel experiences away from the island that influence the cuisine they now serve. For example, one restaurateur travelled quite extensively throughout Italy, and much of the food in the restaurant, including the seafood, now has a distinctly Mediterranean flare. Likewise, another restaurant operator I spoke with explained to me, “I’m not a ‘bona fide’ chef or restaurateur . . . but I know what I’ve enjoyed and what has meant something to me in my trips.” When he took over the management of a local restaurant, he introduced some changes to food preparation, such as experimenting with a greater variety of vegetables, cooking fish less well done, and steaming instead of boiling vegetables. Boiling vegetables has a long history in the Newfoundland diet as part of the traditional boiled meal known as the “Jiggs’ dinner.” The presentation of traditional foods in this restaurant was thus based on a negotiation among the food practices of the cooks, most of whom are women from the local area, and the restaurant operator’s food ideas and experiences from other places.

In other instances, people from the region leave to train as chefs and return to work in the tourism sector with new ideas about dining. This was clearly captured by one woman who went away for culinary training and returned to the region to become head chef at a local restaurant. She explained to me, “We want authentic Newfoundland seafood and we want to cook it the authentic Newfoundland way — with a bit of fine dining.” These new ways of performing traditional foodways in culinary tourism venues may also influence traditional food practices in local homes. This became evident to me in a conversation I had with a woman who is now in her fourth year working as a cook at one of the area’s fine-dining restaurants. Throughout this time, she referred to learning new ways of preparing fish that she now tries out with her family. She will experiment with pan-searing fish and finishing it in the oven, or baking fish with different sauces. She described these methods as a “new spin” on the traditional fried and boiled fish she grew up with.

Lastly, like tourism operators and others working in the industry, tourists themselves bring their own perceptions to the construction of tradition in culinary tourism. Molz has argued that rather than placing the burden of authentic representation completely on the tourism industry, it is more fruitful to consider authenticity as a mutually negotiated concept in which the tourists' perceptions are as much involved in the construction of tradition or authenticity as is the representation by the tourism industry.⁷¹ Molz explains that tourists bring with them their own set of judgements about what constitutes a traditional experience. Often, these judgements are informed by media images of the region. As discussed earlier, provincial food and tourism marketing focuses on seafood as an integral part of the region's cuisine and history. Thus, many tourists arrive expecting to find seafood, already associating it with traditional local culture. When eating out, tourists have other ways of establishing the authenticity of their eating experiences. Several times while eating out in local restaurants, I observed tourists asking questions of servers about the seafood being served, such as where it comes from, how it tastes, and if the server has eaten it. Through these questions tourists are trying to establish not only the territoriality of the seafood — in terms of its connection to the local place — but also shared practices and experiences by relating their dining experience to what the server eats. In these ways, tourists bring to the dining table their own ideas and ways of making judgements about what constitutes a traditional experience.

CONCLUSION

Tourism operators in the Bonne Bay area are using traditional Newfoundland foodways to create authentic food experiences. Sometimes the performance of traditional Newfoundland foodways in culinary tourism may diverge with aspects of traditionality in local food practice. Drawing on van der Meulen's framework of traditionality, we see that eating seafood as a traditional act in culinary tourism is diverging with a declining consumption of seafood among local households and a loss of traditional skills among some younger families related to preparing and preserving seafood. While the loss of traditional modes of food provisioning is a real concern, folklorists have long recognized the dynamic and changing nature of foodways based on a constant interaction between tradition and innovation.⁷² I have argued that tradition is an emergent and negotiated concept and have provided examples of how traditional foodways are being reinvented at the intersection of culinary tourism and local food practices. A reflexive view of tradition is important to promoting relationships among host societies, culinary tourism sites, tourists, and the tourism industry that works towards making tourism beneficial for all.⁷³

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Notes

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