

Edible identities: Food as Cultural heritage.

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Edible Identities is an excellent book. For those who have an interest in food, heritage and tourism (separately and combined) it is a valuable academic text; for everyone else it is still valuable. We all eat and should take responsibility for what we put in our mouths. As Brillat-Savarin (2011 [1825], p. 10) maintained, “*The destiny of nations depends on the manner in which they feed themselves.*” *Edible Identities* will help readers start to explore some of the major issues and rich nuances of food, drink, and this thing that we call heritage, which is in effect what the editors and contributors set out to do.

The book comprises an introduction by the authors and then 14 case studies from different parts of the world; one from Asia, two from South America, three from North America and seven from Europe as well as a chapter looking at the work of UNESCO. There is therefore a European bias to the text which could be considered a weakness. What I really liked about the book was the passion and insight exhibited within each of the chapters. Food and drink are particularly sensual aspects of human existence and it did leave me wanting to go to places to taste, relax, meet people and lose myself. There is also a wide range of ideas and contexts within the chapters each offering something different. Of particular interest were the discussions of power that inevitably (?) should come from an examination that seeks to see how food “*is used to create identity claims of ‘cultural heritage’ on local, regional, national, and international scales.*” Food and drink are symbols that evoke and cultivate pride and prestige and as such have economic power not only as ‘commodities’ for sale in local and global marketplaces, but as emblems of regions and nations that draw visitors. As such there are many references to inventing, re-inventing and revitalization. It is good to read a text that is aware and candid with regard to these processes in their many forms.

There were some aspects that I would have liked to have seen discussed further. As always such suggestions are subjective, particularly in an area where boundaries are difficult to define, if indeed we want to define them at all. As already mentioned the geographical focus of the book and examples from a more diverse range of culture would have been useful. I would also have liked to have heard more about the culture of the everyday, the mundane, as a counterpoint to 'high(er) culture'. What do 'ordinary' people think? It is discussed, but I was keen to hear more. There is always a need to balance the engagement with theory and the need for rich meaningful description, but some areas of theory could have been engaged with further. The debate with regard to ideas of heritage and tradition are still worthy of reflection, I do not consider the two interchangeable and have been particularly interested in Baggini's recent discussion in his book *The Virtues of the Table* (Baggini 2014). The authors are focusing on 'cultural heritage' and there are some engaging examples of this, though I think that more direct discussion of ideas relating to assimilation, multiculturalism, and interculturalism for example would have been useful. Finally for those with a specific interest in tourism that is not the focus of the book, however, all that is covered in the book will be of interest to tourism academics; this is an important point and illustrates why this book is valuable above and beyond what the title might suggest. Food and drink are central to our lives. No matter how much we might try to forget that, ultimately we cannot escape it. There is a 'place' between the individual and 'society' where ideas such as heritage and culture are forged. *Edible Identities* shines a light in this place and on some of its dynamics. It is a worthy place to spend some time.

Baggini, J., 2014. *The Virtues of the Table. How to eat and think*. London: Granata Books.

Brillat-Savarin, J.A., 2011. *The Physiology of Taste: Or Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*. Translated by M.F.K. Fisher. New York: Vintage Classics. (Originally published 1825).