UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA

Department of Agronomy, Food,
Natural Resources, Animals and Environment (DAFNAE)

Second Cycle degree (MSc) in
Italian Food and Wine-Alimenti e Vini d'Italia

An exploration of the food semiosphere in Alto Adige

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Academic year 2022/2023

A Mamá, Papá , Dome y Angelita.

A Toni, mi amor.

A Kimo, Rino y Tere.

Por todas las veces que nos hemos sentado a comer juntos, porque esa es mi más linda magdalena de Proust

Agradezco al Professor Matthew Stone por su guía a lo largo de este trabajo, especialmente por su tiempo.

Abstract

This study aims to provide a partial unveiling of the symbolic dimension of food in Italy's Alto Adige (German: *Südtirol*. English: *South Tyrol*), through research conducted within the valleys of Val Badia, Val Marebbe and Val Pusteria. This unveiling occurred through the understanding of the meanings conveyed by selected restaurants and food stores, each of which contained unique local elements. The identification of the signs within the messages is carried out by the author throughout their food experiences in the area. The study was conducted taking as a lens the notion of *semiosphere* proposed by Juri Lotman (1990), combined with the qualitative research approach of *thick description* (Geertz, 1973) applied to the culture's interpretation. The study adapts the step-by-step semiotic methodology proposed by Mingers and Willcocks (2017), which integrates the communication model proposed by Jakobson (1960) and the *life-world* developed by Habermas (1987). These worlds fit within the semiosphere space and building relations of *sociomateirlaity, sociation and embodiment*. The application of such an integrative approach allows to state that part of the food semiosphere in the studied area is rooted in sustainability, cultural hybridization and identity's preservation, which constitute key elements in the development of current food experiences today. Elements that before made part of the context have become part of the text, this last understood as a mechanism which triggers signification (Lotman, 1990). The nucleo of the semiosphere in South Tyrol is characterised by the mountain and Ladin cuisines and their influences. This study demonstrates that the application of the food semiosphere model to the food culture in South Tyrol is particularly insightful due to the geographical, historical, economic, social and cultural processes the region has undergone through time and that have made up its identity. Further research on the semiosphere is suggested for this region and related areas.

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Introduction

> Every object, every idea is to a certain point a symbol…All that we perceive is symbolic since it excites in us the idea of some other thing that we do not perceive…The romantic prefers precise symbols…. He tends to spiritualize material nature…Poetry is only a series of symbols present to the mind in order for it to conceive the invisible. (Jouffroy cited in Peyre, 1980, p. 12)

Talking about symbolism in food is certainly less common and familiar than talking about it in fields such as arts and poetry. "Symbolism occurs when the idea, the object itself, is translated by means of an appearance that is not its immediate copy, but that serves to evoke that object in an oblique way, more often by analogy or by some other mental process", said the art historian Waldemar Déonna (cited in Peyre, 1980, p. 6). It was not just by chance, but it was certainly what Jung would call a significant coincidence that the first place which I would visit in Alto Adige (German: *Südtirol*. English: *South Tyrol*. Henceforth referred to as South Tyrol) after many years, when the idea of a research about the symbolic dimension of food in this region had already come into my mind, was *Tirolo*, which has special meaning in the history of symbolism. This town, in the province of *Merano*, is home to the Castel Brunnenburg (Figure 1), where the polemic and brilliant poet and critic Ezra Pound lived during his last years. His attitude to Symbolism, even if often disparaging, characterized his oeuvre. Since Pound was an Imagist and in one of his letters to the critic René Taupin claimed that "if his 'image' owed something to Symbolism, it was as bread owes something to the winnower" (Schneidau, 1965, p. 234).

The analogy chosen by Pound to belittle his image's (i. e. the way in which he considered his poetry) relation with Symbolism may instead laud it. This is because the winnowing task is not a feature of minimal importance, but rather a significant labour, to remove chaff from grain. Although the analogy of Pound was likely proposed in terms not of the winnowing activity itself but in terms of its role in time. For Pound, hand winnowing as Symbolism, if relevant to bread and to Imagism, belonged to the past because it was perceived as anachronic. In his Vorticist manifesto, Pound states that "The symbolist's symbols have a fixed value, like numbers in arithmetic, like 1,2, and 7, whereas the imagiste's images have a variable significance, like the signs a, b and x in algebra". Herein lies the connection to the study of symbolism in food.

Food can be considered to belong to this last kind of signs (*imagist*) because the meanings assigned to it are dynamic and can change over time, depending on culture and context. Throughout this research food will be conceived as a kind of "imagist sign". While there is no agreement regarding the definition of the symbol concept, a *symbol* can be defined as a "structured set of signs, driven iconic or indicially, characterised by the open and imprecise of their meanings, whose main function is to enable the recognition between the members of a group and the construction of an identity around it" (Gimenez, 2019, p. 50).

Building upon the concepts of symbolism, semiosphere and identity, this exploration will result in the partial unveiling of the symbolic dimension of the South Tyrol food semiosphere. (Note: the term South Tyrol food semiosphere is used rather than the term South Tyrolean food semiosphere). This exploration is considered to be partial because an exploration of the meanings is a boundless continuum, and the universe of the symbolic is in constant transformation. The research will be conducted taking as a lens the notion of semiosphere proposed by Juri Lotman, combined with the Geertz methodology of thick description applied to the interpretation of cultures. This approach will result in understanding some meanings behind food cultural phenomena in Val Badia, Val Marebbe and Val Pusteria (Italy), as the study involves the interpretation of the analysed scenario as a complex food semiosphere. It is worth clarifying that this study will not consider wine but just food.

The application of a semiotic anthropologic approach in this context could help to shed a light on the relevance of introducing these perspectives. It is believed that this research may help to promote awareness about cultural diversity through the exploration of the symbolic. In particular, it seeks to understand:

1. The role of selected restaurants and food stores in shaping the South Tyrol food semiosphere;
2. The messages and context in which selected restaurants and food stores convey meaning in Pusteria Valley and Badia Valley in South Tyrol (Italy); and
3. The implications in tourism

The first chapter involves a literature review on food semiosis. An overview on semiosis and semiotics is provided, followed by connections between these topics and food. Also, a review of food conceived as identity and as language is included. The second chapter explains the semiotic methodology based on the model proposed by Mingers and Willcocks (2017) and taking as a lens the concept of semiosphere proposed by Juri Lotman. Following

this, the findings and discussion are presented in Chapter 3. Finally, Chapter 4 presents conclusions, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Figure 1

Castel Brunnenburg

Note: Since 1974 houses The Agricultural Museum of South Tyrol and today this also hosts the Ezra Pound Memorial and works as cultural exchange centre.

Chapter 1 Literature review

According to Barthes (1964), the way of thinking of the modern world is based on signs, as in the past, for the positive science, it was based on facts. He proposed that "the world is plenty of signs, but not all of these have the beautiful simplicity of the alphabet letters, neither the traffic signals nor the military uniforms; there are other signs that are infinitely more complex and subtle" (Barthes, 1964, p. 224). With this in mind, it is precisely to this last variety of signs that food belongs. As a result of the transition of consumption patterns, from a standardized Fordist model towards a form of non-material production and consumption, signs and images; food is considered as a multidimensional artifact which incorporates several meanings (Featherstone cited in Everett, 2008). Further, consumption objects like food work as symbols having both a personal (individual meaning) and collective value (social meaning) (Ekinci et al., 2013).

An overview of semiotics

Semiotics could be understood as a discipline, a doctrine, or a set of concepts and operations intended to explain how and why a particular phenomenon acquires a certain significance--in the structure of a determined society and at a certain historic moment. It further includes how it is communicated and what are its possibilities of transformation (Magariños de Morentín, 2008). Today, this field of study involves many different theories and methodologies (Chandler, 2022a).

The American philosopher Charles Peirce and the Swiss linguist Ferdinand Saussure are considered the founders of the modern-day scientific study of signs (Danesi, 2004). For Saussure, semiology was "a science which studied the role of signs as part of social life" (Saussure cited in Lotman, 1990a, p. 4). For Peirce, semiotics was the formal doctrine of signs. According to Peirce, the definition of a sign is: "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity" (Chandler, 2022, p.8).

Alternately, Sassure emphasises the internal organization of the sign (the way in which the sign is composed)→signifier (the form) and signified (the notion). The sign for Peirce does not recognize this internal articulation but the reproduction of signs ad infinitum; a sign refers to other signs. According to Peirce, semiosis is given by the interaction between *representantem*, *interpretant*, and *object* (Danesi, 2004).The representantem is the sign. The object is what the sign stands for, and the interpretant is

the effect of the sign. For example, if there are grey clouds which someone can see from their window before going out as a sign of rain, the rain is the object and the interpretant is the act of carrying an umbrella. This interpretant (carrying an umbrella) becomes another sign for other interpreters and so forth. According to Peirce, the sign typologies are iconicity, indexicality and symbolicity, which will be explained within the methodology (Danesi, 2004).

Semiosis, semiotics, and the modeling systems/sign systems

Sebeok (1991), proposed that, while all living organisms (the world of microorganisms, the Superkingdoms and the human world) involve process of semiosis, "semiotics is an exclusively human style of inquiry…consisting of the contemplation of semiosis" (Sebeok 1991 cited in Cobley et al., 2011, p.317). Hence, human semiosis is represented as semiotics thanks to language as a modeling system.

"Modeling systems theory analyzes semiotic phenomena in terms of modeling processes" (Cobley et al., 2011b, p. 332). Considering semiotics as a modeling system theory, semiosis could be defined as "the capacity of a species to produce and comprehend the specific types of models it requires for processing and codifying perceptual input in its own way" (Cobley et al., 2011b, p. 332).

There has been a polemic regarding the concepts of primary and secondary modeling systems. While for Lotman, language was the primary modeling system and culture was the second one (Lotman, 1990b), for Sebeok (1991) calling language a primary modeling system was a mistake deriving from the confusion between language and speech (as language comes before speech). According to Sebeok, the categories of modeling systems could be defined as follows:

1. Primary modeling system: This allows an organism to stimulate something in a species-specific way. It includes prelinguistic and nonverbal ways.
2. Secondary modeling system: This underpins both indicational (nonverbal ways) and extensional (speech) modeling processes. The extensional modeling process is uniquely human as this implies language (in the first primary system) and speech (secondary system). Thus, secondary modeling systems correspond to linguistic modeling systems.
3. Tertiary modeling system: This underpins abstract and symbol-based processes like culture (Sebeok & Danesi, 2000).

Kallevi Kull called Thomas Sebeok "the architect of Biosemiotics" (Cobley et al., 2011b, p. 223). For Sebeok (2000), biosemiotics is the "theoretical biology", a "biological way of thinking" (Cobley et al., 2011b). In biosemiotics, biology and semiotics meet, and this makes the field inspiring for both sides. Signs live (Merrell 1994, 1996), exactly like life signs (Kull, 1998, 2001). Then according to Sebeok, the term umwelt could be defined as a "signification sphere", as the semiotic world of an organism. It includes all the meaningful aspects of the world for that particular organism (Cobley et al., 2011a, p. 71). The set of all interconnected umwelts constitutes the semiosphere (Kull, 1998),which will be addressed in the further paragraphs.

Semiosphere

The semiosphere is a complicated concept. On the background of the contemporary trends of science, "semiosphere is what is being studied in or as culture, and simultaneously it is the means that is used in studying culture" (Torop, 2005, p.164). Torop further explained:

> "The dynamism of culture as a research object requires a search for new description languages, while the new description languages in turn influence the cultural dynamics as they offer new possibilities for self-description. Often, however, from a historical perspective, a new description language does not go beyond methodological translation. Therefore, the term semiosphere comprises several concepts that are related to semiotics of culture and that have obtained protagonism on the background of the culture's developmental dynamics." (Torop, 2005, p.165)

The semiosphere is a construct proposed by the prominent Russian-Estonian culturologist and semiotician, Juri Lotman. His writings on the semiosphere have become instrumental for the study of culture within semiotics. The core idea of the semiosphere is that culture is a system of signs allowing humans to deal with existence in the same way that the biosphere is a system of physical features that allows them to survive physically (Danesi, 2004, p. 327).Lotman extrapolated to the semiosphere in the humanistic field the features attributed by Vladimir Vernadsky to the biosphere (1926). While biosphere makes possible life, semiosphere makes possible social life (Y. M. Lotman et al., 1978)

It has been stated that, as any other area or space, the semiosphere also possesses a topography (Nöth, 2015). Building upon Lotman's concept, Nöth argued that the semiosphere topography has faced a variation from a structuralist to a post-structuralist understanding of culture, even without the author having stated it explicitly (Nöth,

2015).Thus, it is recommended to consider the parts of this topography: the centre, the periphery, and the boundary. The centre is where the most developed and structurally organized languages are born and the natural language of that culture. The periphery refers to the more dynamic area, the marginal area, which allows the existence of a tension with new languages. The boundary is conceived as a space that allows the exchange of information between semiospheres and thus its translation. The aim of the boundary is controlling, filtering, and adapting the external into the internal (Lotman, 1990a). This can be defined as "the outer limit of a first-person" form (Lotman, 1990a, p. 131)

In his *Universe of the Mind*, Lotman re-examined his earlier model of the semiosphere as a windowless closed space, stripping away his claim for its non-metaphorical character. The semiosphere is then referred to as a model, as a mental space, a semiotic environment in which we are immersed when we communicate and from which it derives its codes. Lotman, 1990a), proposed that the energy of semiosphere is the energy of information, of thought(Lotman, 1990a).

Lotman's model of culture as a semiosphere alludes to a poststructuralist perspective. The coded messages structured in binary oppositions, are replaced by 'messages embedded in a fluid semiotic environment from which they draw their meaning' (Schönle & Shine, 2006).In this way, Lotman's conception of the semiosphere acquires a distinctly interdisciplinary character. "It emphasizes shifting boundaries and hierarchies, permutations between the center and the periphery; that is: the periphery can move into the centre and the centre into the periphery, mediations and translations, isomorphic relations between events on the micro and macro levels, and unity through diversity; the semiosphere's topography is discontinuous and heterogenous" (Nöth, 2015, p. 17), and the accent lies on the intersecting spaces created by the boundary.

Although Lotman abandoned his structuralist phase with its tendency towards dualisms, he still considered the semiosphere to be opposed to the biosphere and to a sphere called non-culture, a space of "non-semiotic reality," which consists of objects devoid of "semiotization" (Nöth, 2015): "The outside world, in which a human being is immersed in order to become culturally significant, is subject to "semiotization" i.e. it is divided into the domain of objects which signify, symbolize, indicate something (have meaning), and objects which simply are themselves" (Lotman, 1990a, p. 133). A semiosphere is not only surrounded by non-culture but also by other semiospheres in constant exchange. Any object is always in power of becoming a symbol.

Being surrounded by other semiospheres, the different languages, codes, and traditions between them often hinder the understanding between semiospheres (Nöth,

2015). This is because not everything is translatable and "the semiosphere always leaves gaps, offering up only a portion of what is potentially knowable in the world" (Danesi, 2004, p. 41).

The notion of semiosphere as a living organism (organicist metaphor) restores to discourses a sense of "unceasing life, of the continuous metabolic exchanges these undergo when they are born into the world" (Schönle & Shine, 2006, p. 7).The world of reality comprises a universe of non-semiotic forms that surround us without being seen by us. We are only able to see a semiotic universe made up of non- semiotic forms; from a non-semiotic world, humans have made a semiotic one, from which there is no way to separate (Lotman cited in Nöth, 2015).

Food semiosphere

Beyond its nutritional, cultural, historical, and sensorial characteristics, food has a semiotic dimension (Marrone, 2017). Semiotic systems have been proposed to explain the world (Lotman, 1990a; M. Lotman, 2002).From a semiotic perspective, food is not merely an object for sustenance. It can be considered that, talking about food and talking through food (in the sense that food itself evokes symbols and conveys meanings) create a gastronomic, culinary, anthropological and social imaginary.

Food might be conceived within an interconnected semiosphere system. Each semiosphere triggers dialogue and translation processes with other systems and simultaneously is structured as a translation and dialogue space within itself (Lotman & Clark, 2005). "Through processes of semiosis, the context interacts with living organic "things" (such as plants, animals and fungi) that are transformed into culinary "objects" (such as dishes). In turn these objects interact with the context of the semiosphere into which they are "translated", acquiring meaning and function within that specific cultural system"(Parasecoli, 2011a, p. 651) . Beyond their practical functionality these objects (e.g. dishes and food items) mean something other than themselves. They become signs, sensible entities that evoke intelligible entities (Deleuze, 1972). The sensible entities refer to the physical world or the objective world, while intelligible entities stand for the world of ideas.

Once again, the semiotic forms of cuisine are analogous to those of language. There is a single element (phrase→dish), constituted by "particles" (words→flavours), that makes part of an "atom" (a discourse→a meal). The element in one semiosphere might be conceived

as a single dish, while, in another, might be considered a component and vice versa (Mastrovito, 2018). Then, it seems how within a culture there is a specific food and culinary symbology triggered exclusively by abstraction and extrapolation (Marrone, 2017a). The cuisine is a subject of discussion of diverse social spheres, as other social spheres are subject of discussion to cuisine. Marrone (2017) proposed that there is an overturn of symbols and meanings and their mutual roles in the dynamic, turbulent and frayed system of culture.

The analysis of food as a semiosphere is decisively constructive, given that the semiotic process through things are transformed into edible elements is unavoidably linked to the socio-cultural traditions and other living organisms that surround it. Parasecoli (2011) incorporated the same metaphor from Lotman's *Universe of the Mind*, to explain how the food semiosphere works. By putting together different steaks, is not possible to obtain a veal. However, by dividing a veal, some steaks are obtained. Summing separated semiotic acts does not result in a semiotic universe. Conversely, just the existence of this universe makes real the specific semiotic act (Lotman, 1990a, p. 13; Parasecoli, 2011a, p. 648) . In the introduction to *Universe of the mind*, written by Umberto Eco, Eco reformulates this metaphor, according to him with a "more noble equivalent": replacing the steaks by branches and leaves, and the veal by a forest (Eco cited in Lotman, 1990a, p. 13) . However, to discuss the food semiosphere, it seems more accurate the original Lotman's meat metaphor.

It is precise to consider that food is strongly linked to the human body and environment, that is evidently connected to biosemiotics. Therefore, it is necessary to mention the considerations of Kalevi Kull and Thomas Sebeok regarding semiosphere and food and conjugate them. Kull considered the connection between sign systems and living systems and defined the semiosphere as a space of diversity (Kull, 2001, 2005). Sebeok considered food as a field of nature characterized by the interactions between the physiological dimension of nutrition and the cultural aspect related to signification and communication processes and the social structures of production, distribution, and consumption (cited in Parasecoli, 2011; Sebeok, 2001; cited in Stano, 2016)

Considering the arguments proposed by Kull (2001) and Sebeok (2001), Parasecoli highlighted how the biosemiotic study about food could shed light on sensoriality, encouraging to rethink the body as a whole and open system of processes, as the place of the "embodied experience" (Parasecoli, 2011a). The corporeality represents one of the central nodes of the semiotic analysis of the processes linked to food. As mentioned by Volli (cited in Stano, 2015), beyond materiality, the body is an ambivalent text as it marks at the same time the origins and the end of the processes of signification mediating between subjectivity

and cultural identity (cited in Stano, 2015). From the standpoint of the semiotic research, it is then interesting to analyze the way in which the body participates in food-related experiences, especially sensory evaluation ones (Stano, 2015).

Maran (2007) and Kull (1998) have also pointed out that "a sign makes sense in a context in the same way a living organism makes sense in an ecosystem, allowing the development of the concept of environment as text and the field of ecosemiotics" (cited in Parasecoli, 2011).This comparison is particularly inspiring when dealing with food, because the food signs that are included in the culinary semiosphere are always interacting with their context through other signs. For instance:

> "the flavor of the meat of an animal depends on what it eats. In addition, the texture of an animal depends on whether an animal is terrified when it is butchered. Both these phenomena can take place only because of the animal's capacity of reading its environment. Honey can offer various flavor profiles, hence entering the food semiosphere in different ways, depending on what bees have fed on, and the choices of these insects are often based on signals from flowers and plants in terms of color and shape. In the case of wine, experts claim to be able to recognize the influence that soils and climate exert, through chemical and physiological signals, on the scents and aromas of the final product, and on its capacity to age gracefully". (Parasecoli, 2011a, p. 651)

The location and identity of each signifying element changes depending on the transformation of the entire system and the dynamism of its relations. "For this reason, a specific food cannot be decoded based exclusively on its flavor, visual aspect, texture, or temperature" (Parasecoli, 2011a, p.655); it must be also analysed its interaction and connection with other semiospheres as in the previous examples (Parasecoli, 2011a, p.655). Furthermore, what is external to a specific semiosphere can be internal to another. The novel ingredient that might taste and smell unfamiliar to some, might be highly cultural and charged with social meaning for others. Travel, migration, and globalized hybridization may show how the encounters, intersections, and mergers among different semiospheres create porous, flexible, and shifting peripheral areas (Parasecoli, 2011a, p. 652)

Food semiotics

As stated by Strauss the cuisine of a place is a language through which its structure is unconsciously translated (Di Luca, 2001).

After having defined the concept of semiosphere, which is used as a lens throughout this research, this section connects some studies in the food semiotics field. Based on the semiotics of art, Floch (2000) analysed the logo identity, branding system and cuisine of the recognised French chef Michel Bras, introducing the foundations of the semiotic analysis of food. In 1990, Floch was hired by Bras to supervise the new visual identity of his restaurants and the author focused on relevant aspects of Laguiole, the local town in Aubrac, the southern French region where the restaurant is located, famous for its cows and knives. The author developed a mythic analysis of the dish (Floch, 2000).

Years later, Fontanille (2006) developed the analysis through visual photographic representations of some dishes by Michel Bra answering how a semiotic object that relied on vision could represent and 'show' other sensory modes. Interestingly, this analysis went beyond the visual analysis of the dish. The hypothesis was based on the correspondence between plastic and taste related contrasts. Plastic contrasts translate taste contrasts. For example, the plastic contrast "stretched out/upright" translates into the taste contrast "tender/crunchy" (Fontanille, 2006; Giannitrapani & Marrone, 2013).

According to Marrone, the starting point for food semiotics is to define which kind of modeling system food could be (Barbieri et al., 2019). Building upon Lotman's theories, the author conceived food as a primary modeling concept: silent, nonverbal, no grammatical (Barbieri et al., 2019). When invited to a local house in Morocco, Marrone (2019) analysed the house's spatial distribution and articulation, food habits, and the link between them. The separation between outside and inside was strongly marked, where the border and that which separated them made each part meaningful. Marrone demonstrated how the critical discourse of Lotman could be applied to cuisine and food from a semiotic of culture perspective. Marrone stated that the way in which the food language worked as a cultural modeling system was in terms of text. According to Lotman, Marrone mentioned the relevance of the text when in relation with other texts. Just in that way, new meanings were produced. Focusing on the interconnectedness of texts meant describing the semiosphere dynamic (Barbieri et al., 2019).

A culinary text is anything, event or situation that linked to food and cuisine produces a sense, a meaning. This sense or meaning is subject of circulation and translation generating another senses and meanings. Then, the food aspects linked to nutrition, health, market, and consumption are not culinary texts. In most every language, it is not the substances that are significant, but the forms, the differences and the relationships, the

processes, the transformations, the valuations. The context is what is not relevant to the semiotic construction of the gastronomic sense (Barbieri et al., 2019).

Rules systems are based on the principle of relevance, establishing time by time what is significant and what is not, what is important and what is not. For instance, the organic or even ethical agricultural practices, previously excluded from the culinary sense, are today included. Something that before belonged to the context, now makes part of the text.

Marrone (2011) considered that the existence of the text was comparable to that of a living organism: its life was always and only possible being linked to other beings, within fields of action strongly conflictual, in which daily struggle for survival was at the same time function of the continuous transformation of languages and cultures. Lotman stated that every text arose its aura a context: even if removed from its original context, this generated immediately another, like a crucifix that was moved from a church in a museum lost its sacred value but immediately acquired an aesthetic one. Lotman (1995) insisted through his work on the interconnectedness between texts (*il testo nel testo*) as a kind of essential mechanism of the semiosphere, understood as a unit triggering another semiospheres ad infinitum.

Usme (2014), studied seven cases from a qualitative perspective, helping to understand how the sense, the signification, is generated and articulated in the discourse of food. Understanding the act of eating as a textuality, highlighted by Lotman (1996), the author described how a group of different immigrants (three Colombians, an Australian, an Italian, a Dane and a Pole) improvised with food products trying to replicate the original culinary text, generating a palimpsest-like culinary textuality. The author highlighted how products and preparations are transformed into powerful symbols that evoke the gastronomic culture and eating habits of a given society.

If the contact between two communities with different languages resulted in the emergence of pidgins (a grammatically simplified means of communication that develops between two or more groups of people that do not have a language in common) and the creation of new languages, as the case of the creole language, then it could be also applied to cuisines in contact, which, increasingly occurs by migration (Bankov et al., 2014a).

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Food as language

As Mary Douglas highlights in "Deciphering a meal", "If food is treated as a code, the message it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations," (Douglas, 1972, p. 61) but not only social, but also environmental and cultural relations manifested. In this way, the process in which the raw material is transformed into a consumable product (e.g. cheese, wine, beer, or into an infinite list of other products or dishes), requires the combination of nature and culture, and, in some way or another, this transformation involves an aesthetic and communicative purpose. Hence, food is language. Thus, foodstuff and dishes, whose production and composition are strongly linked to the terroir deserve to be considered as artworks.

The aim of expressing a worldview is encapsulated in food, and it is given as a kind of gift from producers to consumers, from cooks to guests. Only through art we can come out of ourselves, entering into the world of the other and knowing what the other sees about its universe that is not the same for us (Proust cited in Deleuze, 1972) .Under those circumstances, it is necessary to explain the way in which the essence is embodied into the artwork. According to Deleuze (1972), the essence is embodied in malleable materials, that become entirely spiritual. These materials are the "medium" through which the essence, understood as the quality of an original world, is refracted: the colours for the painter, the words for the writer, the sounds for the musician (Deleuze, 1972) and the ingredients for the cook; and in this way all the materials used for the different types of art, which could be an endless list. Deleuze (1972) suggested that perhaps it is a utopian desire, but it is ultimately what humans are in search of the essence (Deleuze, 1972). In this sense, food is a material revealing artifact that involves all senses and that enables the connection with the intangible, with the essence. Food may be considered as a "tangible" means of capturing the specific culture of a certain region (Lin & Mao, 2015). According to Proust (1914) It is when the representation in the outside world resonates with one's representation in their inner world that evocation is born. Perception occurs like an instantaneous capture in a holistic way. In other words, during their perceptual activity, tourists cannot separate the sensory, the utility and the symbolic appraisal regarding objects. Experiences occur at an individual and subjective level and the body is completely involved in a complex matrix (Everett, 2008b)

Food as Identity

Food meaning is built to express social identities with collective memory and heritage, which promote a sense of belonging to a territory (López-Guzmán et al., 2014). The concept of identity differs among regions. In the context of the current research, as South Tyrol belonged in the past to Austria and its identity is clearly marked by this fact, an anecdote from Austria helps to illustrate this. "Was wir jeden Tag essen, womit wir kochen sollen, das ist heute unsere Hauptfrage" [What we eat every day, what to cook, is our main question today], that was the headline of the local newspaper in Innsbruck (Austria) in May 1945, when food rations were reduced and the region again faced a hunger crisis as in World War I (Nussbaumer & Exenberger, 2009) .Conversely, the post-war brought prosperity and a sort of recovery for the South Tyrolean economy, and tourism was one of the major reasons. Additionally, after Austria's accession to the European Union in 1995, European markets were opened for Austrian products and when tourists discovered South Tyrolean food specialities and created a demand for them in foreign markets, then producers took advantage of this. This hunger period after World War II helped to shape their identity as Tyrolean (Blanco, 2006). This context is shared because it relates to the site of the current research.

Continuing with the identity argument, Montanari (2002) attached the identity construction to history more than to geography. In this way, the identity is fruit of a geography but a geography shaped by history. The hunger risk becomes one of abundance when food is transformed into a commodity. The alimentary code is no longer a sign of social distinction but a sign of the territory—a territory whose identity is expressed by its typical food products (Montanari, 2002). Its typicality is acquired when the product leaves the place where it was born; its identity is determined by the movement, by the change of place. The previous statement demonstrates not only a material way but a metaphorical one—leaving the place of origin is intended to signify both a material and intangible travel. This travel culminates with the moment in which the product is incorporated into the imaginary and subsequently into the memories (due to its potent evocation effect) of the tourist who tastes it and elaborates a representation. In this way, tourism may also be understood as an exportation, where the image of a place is "shipped outside" and then there is an in-situ product consumption motivated by an ex-situ intention.

The study of Mangiapane and Puca (2022) emphasised how links between food and place were reciprocal and bidirectional. The authors highlighted how successful geographic and food brands acted in the semiosphere, making possible the mutual dialogue between

place and food identities. This is incorporated into destination image. "Cities, regions and states use cuisine, ingredients and traditional dishes in destination marketing strategies to introduce food identity as a distinctive element in the brand image of a place"(Mangiapane & Puca, 2022, p.137). The research involved different study cases. The first, corresponded to the semiotic analysis and comparison of the GI (geographical indication) regulations of the Traditional Balsamic Vinegar of Modena PDO (protected denomination of origin) (pure) and the Balsamic Vinegar of Modena PGI (protected geographical indication) (hybrid), which allowed to explain how the two vinegars as cultural objects situated in the semiosphere managed to interpret and reflect the syncretism underlying Modena"s food identity (accessible and prestigious).

Following the first example of the semiotic analysis of the Balsamic Vinegar of Modena PGI, the second was the case of the restaurant Noma (Copenhagen). This describes an emblematic case of place identity built through food—how there is a change of perception of frugal, rural and antiquated (induced by Babette's feast) by a new perception of Nordic food culture. The third case considered Michel Bras. Mangiapane and Puca (2022) pointed out how the semiotic analysis allowed an examination of the brand's value proposition and its transversal use in communication materials, gastronomic offer and architecture. The last case presented was Sicily as a touristic destination, which was repositioned thanks to a combination of food heritage, sea and archaeological sites. The semiotic analysis of regional cuisine has revealed how typical dishes can take on wider social meanings (Mangiapane & Puca, 2022).

Stano (2014) developed research on the Peruvian foodsphere. The author stated how this foodsphere has managed to establish its identity in an explicit relationship with otherness and through a peculiar twin process of globalization of the local and localization of the global (Stano, 2014b). In "Con-fusion cuisines: Melting foods and hybrid identities", Stano (2014) discussed two models for the interaction between different cultural elements in the formation of new objects: contamination and fusion. Contamination involves the juxtaposition and combination of different elements, while fusion involves the creation of a new object that replaces the original ones. However, the text argued that the fusion of different culinary traditions can sometimes involve lying mechanisms and the exclusion of otherness, rather than genuine encounter and exchange. Moreover, the sensorial and cultural specificity of the eating experience made it difficult to reduce it to simple structural models. The text raised the question of whether fusion cuisines truly enhance cultural exchange or risk creating confusion and clashes between incompatible food identities

(Bankov et al., 2014b). While fusion cuisines can be considered within the realm of the food semiosphere, a complete analysis of fusion cuisines is outside the scope of the current study.

Chapter 2 Methodology

Introduction to methodology

This exploratory research uses a qualitative methodology following the analysis of texts and conceiving the studied reality as a text. The study involves a literature review on food semiosis and thick description in participant observation analysing the food related messages found while visiting South Tyrol. As an investigation of the food semiosphere, wine is not considered. However, as South Tyrol is at the forefront of DOC (Denominzazione di Origine Controllata) wine labelling in Italy, the consideration of wine would deserve a dedicated research study.

The study will be addressed from a constructivist perspective as it implies an understanding of the world around oneself, the necessity to communicate with, observe, and live through the private and subjective experience. Qualitative research was chosen as it is related with the process of grasping meaning. This type of methodology is ideal to understand perspectives and meanings given to phenomena and to observe a process in depth. This method does not involve formalised and objectified measurement or statistics (Groenland & Dana, 2019), and a qualitative approach is optimal where there is a gap in the literature and the aim is to understand or to develop new theories (Groenland & Dana, 2019). Furthermore, this has a holistic focus, and the observer is integral part of the research (Jacob cited in Groenland & Dana, 2019).

In this case, thick description and a structured semiotic analysis will be performed. As symbolic interaction is one of the philosophical roots of qualitative research, it is based on the premise that "people act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them and these meanings are a product of social interaction in society, modified by interpretation" (Blumer cited in Groenland & Dana, 2019, p. 29)

Using a thick description method helps to study the phenomenon of culture in a network of contexts and to interpret it, possibly ending with a completely unexpected result. The term originated in 1949 with the British philosopher Gilbert Ryle in his work *The Concept of mind*. For Ryle, "thick description involves understanding and absorbing the context of the situation or behaviour" (Ryle cited in Ponterotto, 2006). Later, in 1973 the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz borrowed the term to apply it in ethnography in his *Interpretation of cultures* (Geertz, 1973; Nivón & Rosas, 1991).Geertz's ethnographic adaptation of "thick description" was in turn extended by the Norman K. Denzin, who noted:

> "A thick description … does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard." (Denzin cited in Ponterotto, 2006, p. 540)

The method could be represented by the metaphor of a tree. The roots are the thick description, the trunk stands for the thick interpretation and the branches and leaves allude to the thick meaning obtained through the discussion of the results which merge the reality studied with the researcher's interpretation.

However, this method can also be difficult, since it is practically unlimited, as the interpretations are infinite. This provides an excellent starting point into semiotics. Thick description acts as a sort of mental glasses. Through this optic, the world becomes a multidimensional space. The research turns into a journey through the matrix of signs. All that is required for the observer is to be genuinely inquisitive and as open as possible to any discovery (Groenland & Dana, 2019).

Despite the suitability for use in this study, the limitation of the qualitative research lies on its subjectivity and time-consuming character, also on the funds it could often require. Besides, within conventional, positivist scientific research, there is a clear distinction between data collection, description, and analysis. Semiotics, instead, starts with the idea that the analysis is a description of relations, sets a fundamental continuity, almost coincidence, between the moments of data collection, description and analysis. This feature makes semiotics even more bizarre compared to the current social sciences (Mattozzi, 2019).

Thus, this study is an entry point into a more complete understanding of the topic. As this research is based on the symbolic dimension of food, the study could be complemented and strengthened including the analysis of other categories/dimensions such as taste, performing a sensory analysis to link perception, memory, and food symbolism.

Semiotic methodology

The study will follow the integrative semiotic methodology proposed by Mingers and Willcocks (2017), who developed this methodology with the main purpose of applying it in the information systems field without ruling out its application in other fields. Despite this initial focus, they stated that the guidelines they provided are a key resource for any semiotic study, even outside of information systems. This methodology was selected as it offers a rigorous and structured way to conduct semiotic studies. Here, unlike other literature, semiotics is used not only as an approach but as a defined step by step methodology. This integrative semiotic methodology is designed within a more general framework proposed by Mingers and Brocklesby (1997), which includes four stages: 1) appreciate the current research situation; 2) analyse the structures generating and maintaining it; 3) assess alternatives to the current situation; and 4) act to bring about change.

Mingers and Wilcocks (2017) wrote that "researchers may choose to apply all the concepts in the four-step approach we detail, or [use] discretion over whether to select only those that seem most relevant to investigating the research area and questions posed" (Mingers & Willcocks, 2017, p. 41). According to its nature, this research will be conducted following the first two stages:

1. Appreciate and describe the research, which considering the semiotic methodology implies:
    a. To identify problems and questions in the meaning or set of meanings attributable within the defined situation. *Within this study, it is the definition of the research questions.*
    b. To gather a collection of material relevant to the explanations and undertake an overview using the conceptual semiotic framework. *Within this study, academic research was developed, review of articles, journals, and cookbooks.*
2. Analyse the causal structures that generate and maintain the situation, which considering the semiotic methodology implies:
    a. Collect and analyse the semiotic materials relevant to the research questions, using semiotic concepts, to generate explanations. *Within this study, documentation was carried out through photography as the main resource and a field trip journal.*

The semiotic methodology proposed by the authors is rooted in the concept of "Life-World" developed by the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas (Mingers & Willcocks, 2014), who in turn adapted this concept from Husserl philosophy (Bolton, 2005; Habermas et al., 1987). This life-world is understood as the background within which the communicative action takes place. Habermas conceives society simultaneously as a system and as a life-world. This life-world involves the world of culture, the world of society and the world of personality (Habermas et al., 1987) .

The world of culture is the objective world which in the model of Mingers and Willcocks is called the material world. This refers to the totality of entities on which it is possible to state true statements. The world of society involves the interpersonal relations legitimately regulated. The world of personality is the subjective one, in which each being has its own experiences and therefore a privileged access to them and the way these are manifested.

The semiotic character of this methodology is explained by Mingers and Willcocks (2014, 2017) in terms of the relation of each of these worlds to semiotics. Semiotics relates to the personal world through the relation and interpretation of signs and messages. It relates to the material world in the sense that every sign must have some form of physical embodiment to be a sign and to be transmitted. Regarding the social world, semiotics associates to it in that the connotative aspects of sign systems are social rather than individual, which means that these systems exist a priori the use individuals make of them (Mingers & Willcocks, 2014). Furthermore, the model involves the relation between these worlds (sociomateriality, sociation and embodiment) which are explained below:

The *sociomateriality* refers to the relation between the material world (the technology) and the social world (Mingers & Willcocks, 2014, 2017). This relation can be understood in three different ways. One in which one side is dominated by the other, one in which there is an equative interaction between the parts, or one in which either the material or the social are intrinsically linked. The author's perspective is focused in the second one, in which the social and the material are independent systems mutually interacting (Mingers & Willcocks, 2014). Taking a sociomaterial approach to food practice, Domaneschi looked to overcome the dualism between the social (values and meanings) and the material (foodstuff and technology). Through ethnographic research during ten years observing the cooking practices and interviewing chefs in different restaurants in Genoa, the author stated how "the sociomaterial attribute of food consumption practices deals with the intimate material connections between 'bodies that eat' and the 'bodies that are eaten'"(Roe cited in Domaneschi, 2019, p. 123). Domaneschi (2019) argued that the issue is centered in "what

practice emerges from the active integration between the particular affordance given by a set of ingredients and a particular set of habituses available in that occasion" (p.127). Applied to the Italian context of Domaneschi's research, what is catalogued as "Italian regional cuisine" from a sociomaterial approach in the study of a cooking practice is the arrangement of the social location by some subjects (chefs) towards a set of foodstuff and technologies (ingredients related to the territory, culinary tools and procedures derived from family tradition).

The *sociation* corresponds to the relation between the social world and the personal world, that is between the structure and the individual. The sociation concept draws on the influence of the social on the personal and of the personal on the social. In the information systems field, Mingers and Willcocks (2017) highlighted as example the study by Scott and Orlikowski's (2009) about TripAdvisor as a social media in which the opinions of the users expressed as ratings and assessments become social facts, and these in turn influence personal decisions. There is a change of meanings along a flow of information. The work of Pierre Bourdieu exemplifies this concept in the food studies field. In his *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Bourdieu, 1984), the author claims that food tastes and preferences are socially rooted, depending on the social classes as a symbol of distinction. It is not just an individual choice, but it is related to the position of the agents (the individual) in the social fields (structure).

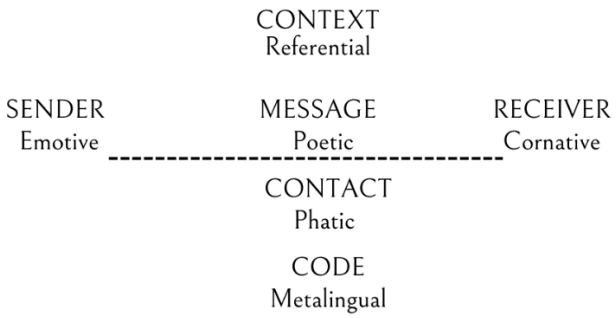
The *embodiment* is given by the relation between the personal world and the material world. As Antonio Damasio noted, "the mind is embodied…not just embrained" (Lehrer, 2012, p. 2).The embodiment concept breaks with the cartesian dualism between body and soul and this is also the core of Walt Whitman poetics, "We do not have a body, we are a body" (Lehrer, 2012, p. 1).Thus, in line with radical embodied cognition, "thoughts, categories, and even abstract concepts are all rooted in – and depend upon – their inherent bodily origins" (Violi, 2012, p. 58). In *Sensing the World: An Anthropology of the Senses* (2017), David Le Breton puts the body and the senses at the centre of the social life: every man wanders in a sensory universe depending upon what his culture and story have made of him, but it is the body which makes possible the act of grabbing the world's substance (Le Breton, 2007).

Through the relations between the personal word, the material world and the social world, are born the concepts of *sociomateriality*, *sociation* and *embodiment*, addressed in the previous paragraphs. These worlds have concordance with the worlds that compose the "life-world" concept of Habermas. Thus, Mingers and Willcocks (2017) developed this semiotic framework including as a reference the communicational model of Jakobson (1960)

(*Figure 2*) which is explained further. The authors considered suitable this model because "it included both a structure for communication and also the possible functions that each element within the system may perform" (Mingers & Willcocks, 2017, p. 10) . Jakobson's model also supported Habermas theory of communicative action and life-world (Mingers & Willcocks, 2014).

Figure 2

Diagram of the communication model and its functions by Jakobson, 1960, adapted by me.



According to Jakobson (1960), there are six constitutive elements in any act of communication: sender, receiver, context, contact, code and message. A sender sends a message to a receiver in a given context, through a contact using a partially shared code. These elements are defined as follows:

The message or text: It is conceived as the material object, the substitute of the mental contents (thoughts, feelings, perceptions) (Volli, 2008) that can only be transmitted in this way unless these could be transferred by telepathy. It is the way in which mental contents become material contents to can be transmitted. That is the reason why often it is stated that the medium is the message (Mcluhan, 1964).

The code or language: It is the filter. A phrase should be pronounced in a certain language. As an example, the voice tone and the gestures work as a kind of filter to express someone personality in different social situations; the code is the system of meanings that allow symbols to represent something and generate sense. Communication implies that the language be shared by the sender and the receiver to some extent (Mingers & Willcocks, 2017) .

The context or content: It is the capacity of the message to refer to elements of the real world. It refers to the actual meaning or information carried in the message within a particular situation.

Medium, contact or channel: It is the necessary element to put in contact the sender and receiver. The medium or capacity to arouse interest in the receiver (Volli, 2008).It could be "audible, visual, tactile, face-to-face or virtual, physical or electronic" (Mingers & Willcocks, 2017, p. 12)

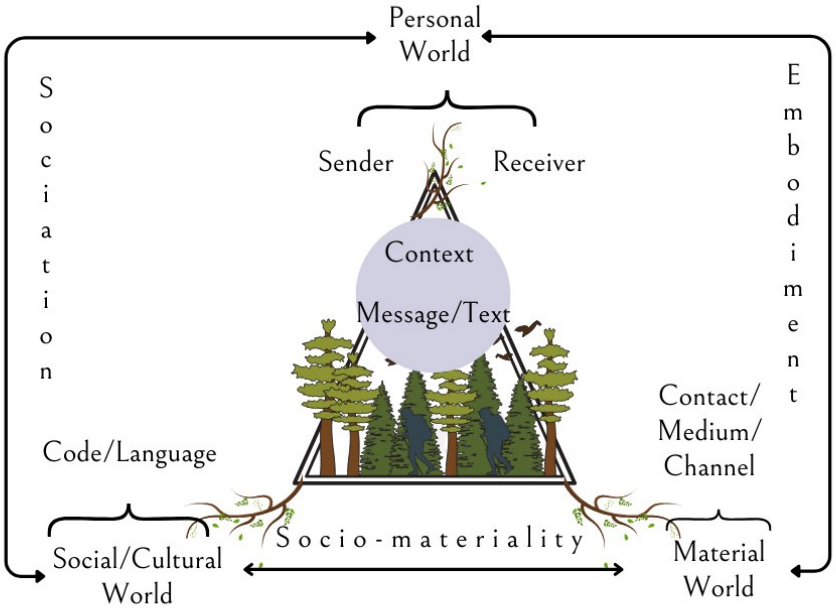
Each of these elements corresponds to a function, which are listed here: the sender has an emotive function; the receiver has a conative function; the context has a referential function; and the contact has a phatic function. The code has a metalingual function. Finally, the message has a poetic function. The emotive function refers to the emotions and attitudes of the sender, conative function is related to the effect of the message in the receiver. The referential function means objective and truthful communication, the phatic function connects the communication channel, the metalingual function identifies the code. The poetic function guides the message itself (Huang & Nemoto, 2022). Jakobson calls this function that way as he considers it dominant in poetry and in the art world, where the message would communicate especially with its form (Volli, 2008).

In addition to this, the investigation is also framed into Lotman's semiosphere, as stated by the author: "A schema consisting of addresser, addressee and the channel linking them together is not yet a working system. For it to work it must be 'immersed' in semiotic space" (Lotman, 1990a, p. 123). This semiotic space is the semiosphere.

The Jakobson model demonstrates that messages and meanings cannot be separated from contextual factors (Chandler & Munday, 2011). Each element of the model suits into one of the three worlds (personal world, social world, and material world). The diagram below (Figure 3) is an adaptation proposed by the author, according to the scope of the present research.

Figure 3

Diagram of the semiotic framework adapted by me from Mingers and Willcocks, 2017.



The core of this research is the symbolic dimension, and the focus is on the message. The complete step by step methodology proposed by Mingers and Willcocks (2017) is exposed and explained as follows:

1. Investigate the personal world: the sender and receiver
2. Investigate the core of the framework: the message and the context
3. Investigate the material world: the medium
4. Investigate the social world: the code
5. Investigate the sociation given by the relation between the personal and the social world; the embodiment given by the relation between personal and material world; and the sociomateriality given by the relation between the social and the material world.

1. Investigate the personal world

- Identify the senders and the intended receivers.
- Identify the purpose and unintended effects of the message.

- Identify the judgments of the receivers.

2. *Investigate the message and context:*

This step depends on the viewer's experience of the sign (Grayson, 1998). Elements include the following:

- Identify the message understood as the sensory representation of the content (visual, sound, smell, taste); it could be a sign or a complex combination of icons, indexes and symbols. This includes the reason for choosing it and the context.
- Identify the signs in the message: As mentioned above, the sign could be an icon, an index, a symbol or a combination of them, depending on the context.
- An index is a sign that directs the attention to its object by blind compulsion. An icon is a sign that resembles its object, and a symbol is a sign in which the signifier has no direct relation to its signified. Its relation is a matter of habit or convention (Chandler, 2022).
- As symbols are arbitrary, the way they develop their meanings is through the relations between signifiers and the relations between signifieds. Thus, here the key concepts are metaphor and metonym, and denotation and connotation.
- Examine the structure of the message, that is performing an analysis of the syntagmatic dimension and the paradigmatic dimension. The syntagmatic relation is related to the positioning and combination of signs, and the paradigmatic dimension regards the selection and difference of the signs (Volli, 2008).
- An example in the food field provided by Jonathan Culler (1985) illustrates the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations:

> "In the food system... one defines on the syntagmatic axis the combinations of courses which can make up meals of various sorts; and each course or slot can be filled by one of a number of dishes which are in paradigmatic contrast with one another (one wouldn't combine roast beef and lamb chops in a single meal; they would be alternatives on any menu). These dishes which are alternative to one another often bear different meanings in that they

connote varying degrees of luxury, elegance, etc." (Culler cited in Chandler, 2019, p.57)

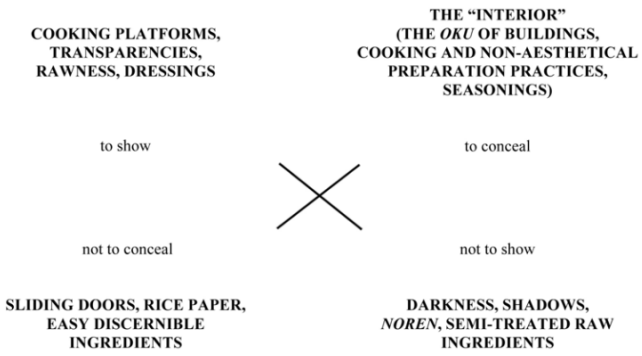
- Applying Greimas' semiotic square (1970) which presents patterns of opposition and contrast between concepts.

  Here it is important to distinguish between oppositions, antonyms and contrasts. Oppositions are contradictions, mutually exclusive, such as, dead/alive, present/absent. One is the negation of the other. Antonyms imply contrariety such as good/bad, hot/cold, or flavourful/insipid. Contrasts refer to the terms that are alternatives to each other but not necessarily opposites such as sweet/salty.

  The levels that build up the sense evolution path have two dimensions: syntactic and semantic. The syntactic is referred to the order and structure of the message. For example, for a phrase to make sense, it should be written in a certain order. The semantic level seeks to describe the text in the most general and abstract way. At this level the first way this description could be done is through an opposition, such as life and death, nature and culture. According to the text that is analysed, the first step is to find an opposition to describe it, that is to establish categories. For example, from the opposition life/death is derived the contradiction no life/no death respectively. To describe situations that do not belong neither to life nor death as it is the case of a state of coma, the semiotic analysis makes use of tools as the semiotic square. By way of illustration, below is displayed an application of this model to *washoku* (the traditional Japanese cuisine and food system) by Simona Stano in her thesis and book *Eating the other: Translation of the culinary code* (Stano, 2014, p. 144):

Figure 4

Semiotic square for the visual analysis of washoku (Stano, 2014)



3. *Investigate the social world*

- "The code is intrinsically social (Wittgenstein, 1958), there cannot be a private language" (Mingers & Willcocks, 2017, p. 13). All forms of social activity, verbal and non-verbal that can be seen to be structured in terms of patterns, of rules, and meanings which can be seen as a code. A message gains its meanings from the code that underpins it (Mingers & Willcocks, 2017, p. 29)
- Morris (1938) proposed a general semiotic framework about the dimensions of semiosis, called the semiotic ladder: This involves the syntactics, referred to the rules of the language or code; the semantics, understood as the meaning of the sign, the correspondence between signified and signified with the object represented; and the pragmatics, related to the use of signs, their intentions and effects in practice (Mingers & Willcocks, 2017).
- Another way of analysing the code is in a hierarchical one, through the concepts of genre, discourse and myth (Mingers & Willcocks, 2017).
- The genre is a particular combination of content and style that develops with respect to a type of message/text, communicational form or even social activity. This gives sense of familiarity to the audience/receiver. It is dynamic and thus can change over time. A

message could belong to multiple genres (Mingers & Willcocks, 2017; Volli, 2008).

- The Myth is a concept deeply developed by Barthes (1972) and represents a much higher-level set of accepted ideas, beliefs that structures and informs lower levels systems of signification. The myth serves to create particular worldviews.
- The discourse is defined by Fairclough (Fairclough, 2022; cited in Mingers & Willcocks, 2017, p. 32) as a "particular way of representing certain aspects of the world," while Foucault (1972) conceives discourse as embodying circuits and relations of power and creating meaning as power and knowledge (Mingers & Willcocks, 2017, p. 32).
- This approach to discourse will be useful to connect the personal, the material and the social world in step 5.

4. *Investigate the material world*

- To establish the medium: It must involve a physical embodiment which makes it accessible to the senses, to perception.

5. *Investigate the interaction between the personal, material, and social worlds*

> The personal and social worlds relate through sociation (the relationship between social structure and action, between structures, practices and conventions and individual understandings and activity).
> The personal and material worlds relate through embodiment (embodied cognition and how the material 'technology' enables and constrains human action and understanding)
> The social and material worlds relate through socio- materiality (through independent but mutually interacting and shaping processes). (Mingers & Willcocks, 2017, p. 51)

Applying semiotics to food

The application of the semiotic method to the study of food-related issues has demonstrated efficacy. Yet, the research in that field is still limited and reduced (Giannitrapani & Marrone, 2013). Therefore, it is relevant to improve the investigation, in particular, on topics only partially addressed as taste perception and the links between food, language and communication, involving the most traditional approaches such as textual structuralism and semiotics to new branches focused on observing social practices and dynamics and other analytical tools(Stano, 2015).

Substances, discourses, and food practices can be interpreted as part of a sense transfer process and therefore used to make hypothesis about who produces them, about the cultures to which they refer, about the environments from which they come (Stano). Moreover, beyond helping to better understand the behaviours linked to the food universe and similar phenomena, semiotics can shed a light on food understood as a network of semiotic process interconnected between them (Giannitrapani & Marrone, 2013; Marrone, 2017a; Parasecoli, 2011a).

Even if there is almost no doubt about the cultural character of food, it is worth exploring the potential of a semiotic approach to culinary systems. Theorists (e.g. Lupton, Montanari, Parasecoli, Marrone, Le Breton) have highlighted the cultural value of food, a highly symbolic universe, subject to discourse and interpretation, and, as Lévi-Strauss (1978) pointed out in his seminal work on cultural anthropology, as exclusive a human behavior as language. Cooking is, with language, a truly universal form of human activity; there is no society which does not cook in some manner at least some of its food, as there is no one without a language (Parasecoli, 2011b).

Food is culture when is produced and consumed as humans transform what they find in nature and choose what to eat considering its economical, nutritional and symbolic value (Montanari, 2004) This symbolic role of food is the core of this research and the sociologist Deborah Lupton could not have defined its aim in a better way: "Food acts simbolically to define boundaries between self and other and construct a cosmology" (Lupton, 1994). Thus, as Montanari states, food is set as an identity element (Montanari, 2004).

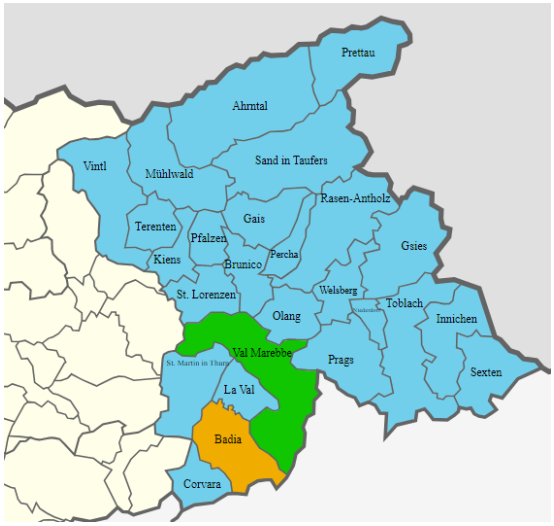
If the perspective of semiotics of culture is considered, as it has been developed by Lotman and the Tartu-Mosca School, also traditions and rituals can be attributed to the idea of food semiosphere, since these take part in the formation and expression of cultural identity (Stano, 2005). In this way, food might be understood as a phrase and meal as a text in which other non-edible elements contributes to the construction of meaning and sense

(Mastrovito, 2018). Furthermore, the semiotic process a meal involves is always collective even when its consumption is individual, since the meal is contextualized and underly a collective statement of socio-cultural traces. (Mastrovito, 2018). If one then considers cultural traditions (the semiotic memory of culture) and the ineluctable factor of the individual way with which this tradition is revealed to a particular member of a collective, then it will be unquestioned that the coincidence of codes between transmitter and transmittee is actually possible only to a very relative extent. (Lotman, 1990).

Research location

Figure 5

The Val Badia, Val Marebbe, and Val Pusteria



Note: Elaborated by the author

The Region Val Badia (Gadertal in German) and Val Pusteria (Pusteral in German/Val de Puster in Ladin) are located in South Tyrol (Italian: *Alto Adige*. German: *Südtirol*.), the autonomous Italian region, in the middle of the Dolomites, a mountain range which is part of the Alps. (Val is synonymous with valley). On the upper part of Pusteria Valley stands Le Tre Cime di Lavaredo from whose slopes is born the Rienza river. Val Badia, entirely crossed by the Gadera river, is surrounded by the Sella Group and the Puez-Odle Group dolomite peaks. Unlike Val Pusteria, Val Badia is a Ladin valley. The rural settlement structures of Val Badia (*viles*), located between 1,200 and 1,700 meters, give a very particular character to the landscape and testify, along with the ancient Ladin language, the remote origins of these populations. Val Pusteria is a more extended and

wider valley. Within both valleys are plenty of poppies, elderberry trees, spruces, swiss pines, and mountain pines.

South Tyrol has always represented a meeting place for diverse people, due to its location along a route devoted to an inexorable journey for multitudes in search of a future and to its role as part of a multi-ethnic empire (Di Luca, 2001). South Tyrol was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1919, when it was annexed to Italy with the Treaty of Saint-Germain. During the Italian fascist regime, the settlement of Italians coming from Southern Italy to the area was promoted. In 1939 German speaking people were forced by the regime to decide whether staying in South Tyrol upon the condition of integrating themselves to the Italian culture and language under duress or emigrating to the Reich. In 1970 South Tyrol became an autonomous province of Italy.

Food dynamics in South Tyrol have changed over time and have been diverse between towns and small villages due to geography, economic, social and cultural phenomena. Nowadays restaurant owners strive to both preserve tradition and being sustainable (Mompracem, 2022).

The research sites The research analysis is developed starting from San Vigilio di Marebbe located at the foot of the Kronplatz in Val Badia, a side valley of Val Pusteria. What is being studied are not the valleys and the mountains but what takes place within them. I consider what their residents, whether Germans, Italians, or Ladins make of those places and of themselves in terms of their "symbolic relations" with food, represented in what is conveyed in restaurants and food stores.

San Vigilio di Marebbe in Val Marebbe, located at the foot of the Kronplatz in Val Badia, is one of the valleys belonging to the Ladinia (Figure 6). Ladinia is the cultural land encompassing the valleys of Badia and Gardena in South Tyrol; Fassa in Trentino; and Ampezzo and Fodom in Veneto. Ladins, the inhabitants of these valleys, share the culture and the Ladin language with some variations, one of the most ancient of the Alps. For Ladin people, the emphasis on their culture was relevant to build a symbolic ethnic border on which no jurisdiction was set over the political-administrative map of the region (Poppi, 1991). Hence, food is an artifact through this culture which keeps struggling to not becoming absorbed by the Roman and Germanic world and to preserve its identity. Alta Badia is considered to be an absolute must for gourmets (Alta Badia, 2021). Alongside the typical Ladin specialties and numerous gastronomic events, it boasts the largest number of starred restaurants and gourmet restaurants in the Dolomites. What makes especially

attractive San Vigilio di Marebbe is its location between Kronplatz and Val Badia as immersed in the Fanes-Senes-Braies Natural Park.

Several sites in which to conduct research were chosen to incorporate different environments and contexts. While these cannot be considered to be representative of all restaurants or stores in the region, they each feature elements of the local culture that are worth investigating within a semiotic framework. Two of the restaurants involved in the research (Alpinn and Tlo Plazores) were chosen a priori from the field research according to a criterion based on their relevance. The rest of places were visited in a more organic way, given the nature of the study and the special location of San Vigilio di Marebbe. The places selected were:

- Alpinn: Food Space and Restaurant. Located on the top of the Kronplatz.
- Tlo Plazores: Rustic Ladin cuisine. Located at foot of the Kronplatz, in the town of San Vigilio di Marebbe.
- Botanic Wachtler - Bistro, Bar & Shop: Located in the town of San Candido in Pusteria Valley.
- Pescosta Grocery Store: Located in the town of Colfosco in Badia Valley.
- Eder Specialità Tipiche dal 1989: Speciality Food Shop from 1989. Located in the town of San Candido in Pusteria Valley.
- Bar Hotel Comelico: Bar located in the Hotel Comelico in the town of Padola, in the province of Belluno in the Veneto Region. This place was considered pertinent for the analysis in terms of the Lotman's semiosphere, as situated almost at the border between the South Tyrol Region and the Veneto Region.

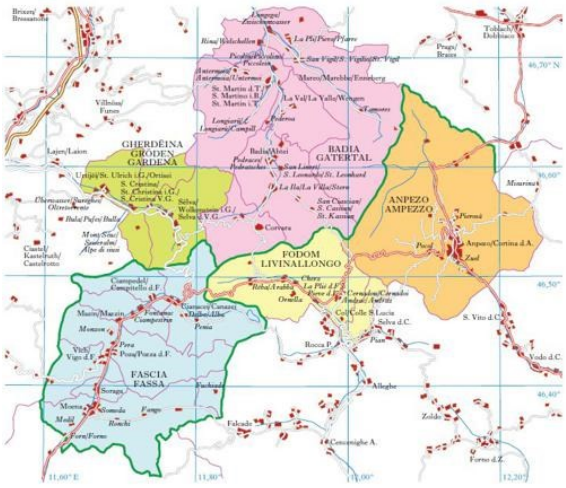
Furthermore, the matter of identity is not only spatial but temporal. "Identity does not exist at the origin but only at the end of the voyage." (Montanari, 2002, p. 32). Because the end of the voyage could be the beginning of another one, identity should be understood as a dynamic concept. In South Tyrol, Mediterranean and Middle European cultures meet and it could be said that the eastern European influences on South Tyrolean food, led it away from a pasta-focused cuisine (Niederkofler cited in Junngbauer, 2018) than other nearby areas, particularly within today's Italy. The South Tyrolean food and beverage universe includes speck (dry cured meat), apples, herbs, honey, Shüttelbrot and the Vinschger Paarl (breads), Vipiteno yogurt, the citrics of Merano and dill oil, just to mention a few (Südtirol, 2023). In their research about the territorial brand promotion in tourism: Lapland vs. Kuusamo and South Tyrol vs. Italy, Jäntti, Tiensuu, and Rusko encouraged

analysis of the territorial identity in the case of South Tyrol which is characterized by its multiculturalism (Jäntti et al., 2013).

The cultural identity of South Tyrol is based on contrasts in languages, foods, and ways of living in the same geographic area. For example, while it is politically a part of Italy, both German and Italian are prominent. It is possible to state that these contrasts are socially constructing the tourism brand of South Tyrol. A set of contrasts that make the Alpine region so charming, especially the way in which a part of the tourism product in South Tyrol associates food with typical scenery of the Alps. An amusing scene that represents this dichotomy is stated by Jäntti et al (2013): "I was in a restaurant in Bolzano/Bozen—the waiter was taking orders in German, speaking to the customers in German—then he accidentally dropped a plate on the floor. 'Mama mia!', he exclaimed" (Guardian cited in Jäntti et al, 2013).

Figure 6

Ladinia map



Note: The Ladinia area comprises the Val Badia and Val Garden in the Alto Adige Region; Fassa in Trentino Region, and Fodom and Ampezzo in Veneto Region.

Summary of the methods

Considering the pertinent steps to contribute to the partial unveiling of the food semiosphere in South Tyrol. This study follows the semiotic methodology proposed by Mingers and Willcocks (2014, 2017), to analyse the messages conveyed by the selected

restaurants and food stores. First, thick description of the food experiences taking place during the field trip is carried out. Second, the identification of the signs is presented through pictures.

Research aim and research questions

Aim

This study aims to provide a partial unveiling of the symbolic dimension of food in South Tyrol

Research questions

- How the selected restaurants and food stores contribute to the shaping of the food semiosphere in South Tyrol (Italy)?
- What are the messages and the context at the centre of the relation between the "personal, social and material worlds" provided by selected restaurants and food stores in South Tyrol (Italy)?

Chapter 3 Findings and Discussion

Using the step-by-step semiotic methodology proposed by Mingers and Willcocks (2017), this section will present the findings which help to answer the research questions regarding the following aspects:

- The messages and the context at the centre of the relation between the "personal, social and material worlds" provided by selected restaurants and food stores in South Tyrol (Italy)
- The way in which the selected food stores and restaurants contribute to the shaping of the food semiosphere in South Tyrol
- The implications in tourism

First, the personal, material, and social worlds will be reviewed. Then, the messages and context will be reviewed, and in-depth analysis will be made, because the core of the analysis is the message or text. This analysis will be performed for the food experiences at the food stores and the restaurants. First, analysis follows the identification of the message and description of its sensory representations. Then, it carries out the identification of signs (icons, indexes and symbols) in the message and its structure.

The *personal world*

The sender: The sender corresponds to the restaurants and the food stores, to the business itself. In a more abstract way, the sender would be the South Tyrolean food culture, which would also involve the inhabitants of the region. The emotive function corresponds to the sender, related to their emotions and attitudes. In this case, the emotive function would refer for example to the intensions of the chefs and their attitudes revealed in the features of their cuisines.

The receiver: The receiver is the customer, the guest, the locals, or any part of an audience that have contact with the messages conveyed by the South Tyrolean food culture in any of its forms. For example, someone who receives a South Tyrolean food speciality souvenir, who reads a book about South Tyrol's cuisine, who watches a South Tyrolean food-related film or documentary, or who visits websites and platforms and accesses South Tyrolean food visual content would be also a receiver. Within this study, the researcher (me) acts as a receiver. The conative function corresponds to the receiver. In this case, it would be the effects caused by the South Tyrolean food related messages in the receiver.

The *material world*

The medium: This is the material form through which the message is conveyed. It corresponds to the food itself (dishes and food-specialities) and its representations in the media. This study conceives "food as language", therefore the medium is considered the food itself (dishes and food-specialities). Instead, if this were a study of the "language about food", the medium would be the books, the films, the blogs, the conversations to mention just a few. However, as Marrone highlighted these two ("food as language" and "language about food") intersect each other (Marrone, 2017b).

The *social world*

In the same way the linguistic code (for example the Italian, German Ladin or any other language) is a set of rules which if shared enables communication, the code in food corresponds to the flavors, textures and culinary techniques shared by a community. This set of flavors, textures and culinary techniques are determined by culture, and, simultaneously, culture is determined by this. However, reprising what stated by Parasecoli (2011), "a specific food cannot be decoded based exclusively on its flavor, visual aspect, texture, or temperature" (p.655). The code must be analysed in relation to other semiospheres. For example, beyond determining what the flavor of a cheese is, what is interesting is to know what the cow's or the goat's diet was to give that flavor to the cheese.

The message and its sensory representations

The core of the analysis is the investigation of the message and context. This section provides a thick description of the food-related experiences in the selected restaurants and food stores of South Tyrol. The text reflects my personal experiences. As such, it is written primarily in the first person.

Food store experiences during an ordinary day

I went to Eurospar grocery store in San Vigilio di Marebbe. Eurospar offered a wide range of products (fruit and vegetables, meat cuts, dairy products, bakery goods) similar to what it might be found in large supermarket chains. But, at the entrance of the business there was a poster introducing their local suppliers (Figure 7). This is a particular feature

not commonly found in large chains. I purchased local golden apples, speck medio (as there were speck dolce, medio and hay flavored), a packaged pretzel, green apple yogurt, strudel-flavored yogurt, hazelnut yogurt, and Stelvio, a semi hard cheese produced with cow's milk.

The flavor of the cheese was intense with strong, buttery, mushroom notes. Historically, it was used to pay tolls on mountain farms (*masi*) (Associazione Formaggi Italiani, 2023). The pretzel with caraway seeds tasted like a combination of anis and fennel also known as meridian fennel or Persian cumin. The Stelvio and the green apple yogurt and strudel-flavored yogurt came from Mila a dairy cooperative, which joins 2,200 farmers, specialized in the collection, processing, and marketing of milk and dairy products in Alto Adige (Mila Südtirol, 2023). The hazelnut yogurt (Figure 8) was produced by Lüch Da Pcëi in Badia. Lüch Da Pcëi is a local dairy farm and bed & breakfast belonging to the Fanes Group of the family Crazzolara which involves hospitality and tourism services (Lüch Da Pcëi, 2023).

Figure 7

Local suppliers Eurospar San Vigilio di Marebbe

Figure 8

Lüch Da Pcëi *hazelnut yogurt*

The Alimentari Pescosta

At the Alimentari (family-owned mini supermarket) Pescosta in Colfosco (Val Badia), there were a variety of food specialities, drinks and spirits, newspapers, and souvenirs. Among the food specialities, there were wild boar polenta, deer polenta, mushroom polenta, polenta and cheese, barley soup with porcini mushrooms; wild boar, deer, roe deer and mouflon salami. There, when I asked for a typical cheese, the suggestion was *Strega delle erbe* (herb's witch), a cheese with 17 diverse alpine herbs, whose legend is particularly interesting. It is said that the witch hides in the forests of the heights and collects herbs and flowers during the summer to then let them dry and give them to the peasants. Happy with the gift, the shepherds use them to spice up the cheese the witch loves. At night, the peasants, after making the cheese, leave a slice at the door to thank the witch, protector of the forests and their cattle.

The Eder store in San Candido

Eder is a family-run delicatessen dedicated from 1989 to the artisan production of typical gastronomical specialities such as syrup, marmalade, honey, herbal teas, sauces and spices, pasta, sweets, grappa (edelweiss aromatized, swiss pine aromatized) the distribution

of cheeses, charcuterie, and wine. According to Eder (2023), its philosophy is based on love and respect for nature. The production area of the Eder food specialities is located in San Lugano di Trodena in Bolzano. The processing of the food specialities is carried out using clean energy. The plant uses solar panels and wood chips from the woods around for hot water and heating.

Tlo Plazores

Location and atmosphere

At the slopes of Kronplatz there is a manor called "The Old Lady" (figure 9). This was mentioned for the first time in a document of 1296. It was restored by the Ties family in 2000 and today the property is part of the historical and cultural heritage of South Tyrol.

The livestock are not there as usual because they have been taken to the high pastures. Chronicles from the Fassa Valley, also a Ladin valley, talk about food-related traditions during transhumance that took place at religious holidays: On June 24, the day of San Giovanni Battista, the herdsmen were brought lunch in the pasture: it was a dish of casciuncìe, ravioli stuffed with wild spinach and seasoned with melted butter. Also on June 29, the feast of San Pietro and Pablo, food was brought to the herdsmen. This time it was fortaes, sweet snail-shaped pancakes (Soraperra de Giulio cited in Bergamini and Zanette, 2012).

Here, everything changes colour all the time. I had never been in such a place where light touched the objects in such a way. "So rare and unearthly the light is, from the mountains, full of strange radiance" said Lawrence in his *Twilight in Italy* (Lawrence, 1924, p.5). In a Ladin house the Stube is a sort of living room built of wood, with a low ceiling, and a large stove. The walls, the floor, the furniture made of pine or larch wood, the candles, the embroidery of the tablecloths and the napkins, the porcelain pipes, very popular in Germany, France, Austria, Denmark and Holland from the second half of 1700 to 1920 (Rapaport, 2017); here, everything seems an ode to the mountain and reminds of the Gnomes house illustrated in the *Secret book of the Gnomes*. This atmosphere is a symbol, an index, an icon of the fairy world the dolomitic valleys have always hosted.

Figure 9

Tlo Plazores: "The Old Lady"

Philosophy and menu

The *"Südtiroler Gasthaus"* or *"Locande Südtirolese"* is a network of inns and restaurants that place the emphasis on regional specialities made from local products. The brand brings together 29 family farms. One of these is the Family Ties with their restaurant Tló Plazores and its rustic cuisine. Jan and André, the sons of the farm and restaurant's owners, express pride in their land and convey this feeling inherited over generations: "We are peasants, agriculture men. We are producers of meats and charcuterie, and we have a philosophy based on working with local products from small artisans. We have all the cheeses from the peasants of town. We are not the restaurant that make all these traditional dishes….", says André, the son of the owners who brings the meal to the table together to his brother Jan and share their mindset and restaurant philosophy (personal communication, June 25, 2023). (Note: personal communications in Italian were translated by the author.)

The menu, which is constantly changing, is based on local products and reveals the richness in the biodiversity of the territory. During June 2023, in addition to the dishes that are presented in the *Meal experience* section in further paragraphs, the menu included the following items (See Appendix for more complete menus).

"Pasta fillo y ciajo fresch"→ Dough packet filled with fresh cheese, salad, lovage and dandelion honey

"Jopa da erbes de pre"→Uli's nine wild herbs creamy soup

"Balotes da fie tla jopa"→Ox liver dumplings in bone marrow broth with root vegetables

"Rijoto da orde Regiokorn"→Barley risotto Regiokorn with ragout of deer, swiss pine and rosehip

"Canci da ciotte"→Ravioli made of potato with fresh chives ricotta, stinging nettle cream and pralines of fresh goat cheese

"Le bo tradizional Tux" →Boiled ox in strips with sauteed potatoes (German: *Gröschtl*) and *sauerkra*ut salad.

"L'Agnel da Plazores" → Lamb shoulder oven braised 80 degrees with alps savory (Italian: *santoreggia di montagna*, a plant similar to thyme), potato cream and peas

"Le porcel da Plazores"→ A pork patty with bun of spelt Regiokorn, salad moustard of red onion and lime mayo

Meal experience

The experience started with *cancì checi con spinat* (figure 10), authentic Ladin fluffy fried ravioli of yeasted potato dough filled with spinach. The taste was almost bland, maybe because as an appetizer, it was not intended to dull the flavours the next course would bring. The protagonist was the spinach, and it was not a coincidence as later Jan would tell as this dish made part of the initiative *Frescaestate/Sommerfrische* or Summer veggie kitchen of the *Südtiroler Gasthaus*, a brand that covers different inns and restaurants and proposes thematic weeks around gastronomy. That week aimed to highlight the innkeeper's favourite vegetable.

Figure 10

Cancì checi con spinat

Two main dishes were selected: Handmade tagliatelle of regiokorn flour (a quality brand assigned to cereals produced in South Tyrol) with the special ragout Tux Plazores (figure 11) and the house's speciality, rolled up topside pork with knödel of wild garlic filling, over a bed of mashed potatoes served with *finferli* or *Galletti* mushrooms (figure 12). *Aglio orsino* or wild garlic, whose name (*orsino* derives from *orso* which means bear in Italian)

comes from the belief that this garlic was the first plant consumed by bears after hibernation (Südtirol Genuss Land, 2023).

The dish just seems a corner of the forest, not any forest but the forest of Plazores surroundings in Val Marebbe "Al Plan de Mareo" (in Ladin) nestling in the Fanes-Sennes-Braies Natural Park. At first the taste was good, but after combining it with the rye bread with a mix of caraway, coriander, and fennel ground seeds (figure 13), it was strong and unique. Most of the supplies and ingredients are produced there (the speck, the pork, the beef, the herbs) or come from suppliers in the area, located within a maximum radius of 99 km from Val Badia (veggies, honey, herbs, organic dairy cow products), Val Pusteria (dairy goat products, grappa and spirits) and Valle Isarco.

The protagonist in both dishes was the meat. All beef, pork and lamb come from local farm production. The Tux is a Tyrolean breed today raised, protected, and preserved by some enthusiasts like the family Ties. In the past, when the divisions of ownership on the alpine pastures were not clearly regulated, farmers often kept a Tux-Zillertal to protect the best pastures from the attacks of other cattle. A clearer division of ownership at the beginning of the 20th century and better feeding of animals made the battles for pastures obsolete and the Tux-Zillertal has gradually disappeared from the Tyrolean Alps. World War II and various diseases almost extinguished it (beef.ch, 2018).

To drink, I had a Südtiroler Gasthaus Beer InsriGs and an Odles 3025. The Südtiroler Gasthaus Beer InsriGs is a local Märzen (lager) beer, produced by the "Batzen Bräu" brewery in Bolzano exclusively for members of the "Südtiroler Gasthaus" group using a proportion of cereals from South Tyrol. The Bavarian law of 1539 stipulated that brewing was permitted only between the feasts of St Michael, 29 September, and St George, 23 April. This Märzen beer as its name suggests was produced in March and kept cold in cellars to be drunk during the autumn, being associated with the change of season. This was served in what then would become the first Oktoberfest: the marriage between the Bavarian King Ludwig I and Maria Theresa (Batzenshop, 2023).

The Odles 3025 was produced by Monpiër de Gherdëina, a Craft Brewery in Val Gardena. Monpiër means "one more beer" in Ladin Language. This brewery produces a variety of beers using selected malts and a wise dosage of hops in combination with the pure high mountain water of the Plan de Cunfin at the foot of the Sassolungo (Monpiër, 2023). This special water is the beer's primary ingredient.

For dessert, I had a *Fortaia ampezzana* or *strauben* with strawberry marmalade (figure 14). This is a typical sweet, a netting shaped fried dough made of wheat, eggs and milk.

Fig. 11. *Rogout Tux Plazores*

Fig. 12. *Specialitu of the house*

Fig 14. *Fortaia ampezzana*

Fig 13. *Rye bread with local spices*

Alpinn restaurant and foodspace

Location and atmosphere

The Alpinn Restaurant (figure 15) and Foodspace is located in Brunico, at Kronplatz or Plan des Corones, at 2.275 meters over the sea level, next to Lumen, the Museum of Mountain Photography.

Reached by walking from Passo Furcia, the mountain pass that connects Val Marebbe with Valdaora, *Alpinn* building stands out in the Kronplatz Mountain. At first sight, the structure evokes *Le Souquet* (figure 16), the Bras family restaurant on the *Aubrac* plateau in France. One could end up thinking these were designed by the same architect. There is not just a resemblance given by the forms of the construction, also by the symbols transmitted and their philosophies. Both *Alpinn* and *Le Souquet* share a philosophy based on the valorisation of the land with an emphasis put on foraging and local producers; both are sustainable projects, one on the top of a mountain, the other on a plateau. Actually, these spaces are oeuvre of different architects. Alpinn was placed in the antique Kronplatz cableway by the architect and designer Martino Gamper, who has developed projects like "100 chairs with London's waste" (Tanzarella, 2020). Alpinn is a kind of modern stube conceived as a space to socialize and share, to heat both body and soul. The furniture is made of larch wood, and the lamps are made of pig's bladder.

Figure 15

Alpinn restaurant

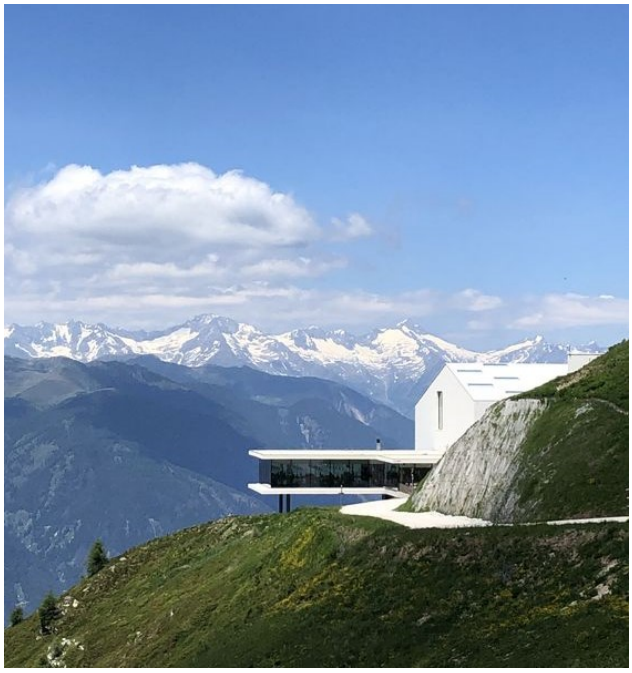


Figure 16

Le Souquet restaurant

Note: Photography by Patrice Thébault. Retrieved from https://www.bras.fr/en/en-le-suquet

Philosophy and menu

The restaurant's philosophy is defined by the chef Norbert Niederkofler as "a unique experience of mountain cuisine, a restaurant that looks and feels like a living room", a space for sharing. According to Niederkofler (2021), each dish represents the mountains, the work

of farmers, and the traditions passed down through generations. They get those "craftsmen of the land", with all their ancestral knowledge, and provide them a space to express their most authentic values (Alpinn, 2021). The dishes are created following CARE's (The ethical Chef Days philosophy) that is based on: seasonal ingredients, sustainable resources and zero waste (Alpinn, 2021). These parameters would correspond to the code through the restaurant conveys its messages. Today, the executive chef of Alpinn is Fabio Curreli, who embraces the "cook the mountain" philosophy. "It is the land which decides the dish, not the chef" stated the chef during the Ein Prosit 2022 gastronomic event (Afragola, 2022).

Norbert Niederkofler says "I am 'Cook the Mountain'," referring to himself as representative of his book and philosophy both called "cook the mountain". Beyond telling a story, the chef, born in the heart of the Dolomites, aims to convey a philosophy. "Cook the mountain" was an idea thought to ascribe a new culinary identity to South Tyrol. Based on a sustainable model and through an attempt to find the real connection between environment, people and tradition, Niederkofler philosophy has plenty of meanings. His book, printed in apple paper produced by the drying and further processing of apple scraps, which also bears the name of his philosophy: *Cook the Mountain* is divided into four chapters, each one of them refers to one season (Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter).

For Niederkofler, the cuisine should be act as a catalyst of natural processes (Niederkofler, 2021). It is worth highlighting the definition Niederkofler gives about the *cornoletame*, a biodynamic preparation, as a symbolic element in *Cook the Mountain*: The *cornoletame* (cow horn manure) is the first element that land needs. The manure is put into the horn of a dead cow that had calved two or three times and it is buried under the earth for the winter period. Then, prior to sowing and planting during spring, the manure is stirred and sprayed towards evening, and it is supposed to be more effective if added after a warm evening rain, supposedly creating a synergy between plant and land. It is in this way that the *cornoletame* is said to release its energetic power.

In addition to the dishes that are outlined in the *Meal experience* section, the menu included the following:

- **Starters**

  Seasonal herb salad with vegetable chips, puffed legumes and kombucha.

  Beef tartar also from "Baumgatner" butchery, bone marrow chips, dill oil and rhubarb granita.

- **First courses**

Graukase risotto, puccia bread and chives. Graukase (in Italian *formaggio grigio*) is one of the rare cheeses produced starting from low fat milk curdled by acidification and not by animal or vegetable rennet, a fresh cheese is obtained with a fat percentage of about 1%.

"Monograno Felicetti" spaghettone with wild garlic and herb oil. The pasta comes from the pasta factory Felicetti located at 1200 meters. This is a pasta produced with water and air of the mountain (Felicetti, 2023) which coincides with the sustainable "Cook the mountain" philosophy (Niederkofler, 2021).

"Monograno Felicetti" fusillone, wild game sauce frozen currants and sorrel acetose.

- **Second courses**

South Tyrolean rib eye steak served with vegetables.

- **Desserts**

Buchteln (sweet dough rolls) with yogurt ice cream.

Mock Egg waffle, with chestnut parfait and sea buckthorn.

"Thousand caramelised Marlene apples", eggnog ice cream and kefir sauce. Thousand apples in Italian is "mile mele" giving a pun that is lost due to translation. *Marlene* is a quality brand for the apples produced in South Tyrol, Europe's largest and most concentrated apple area (Marlene, 2023).

Meal experience

The experience started with *mountain ceviche (*figure 17), a reinterpretation of the dish of the Mexican chef Jorge Vallejo, with fresh char, potato skin chips, wild horseradish, celeriac, apple extract and aniseed powder. Then, the Cheese fondue "GenussBunker" (figure 18), crispy polenta, speck, pickles, horseradish served in a wood tray made from an oak barrel previously used for fermentation or aging of wine. The "GenussBunker" is an old war bunker transformed in a cave for aging a variety of hay milk-based cheeses.

Fig. 17. *Mountain ceviche*

Fig. 18. *Cheese fondue "GenussBunker"*

Two main dishes were selected: pork belly and "Once upon a time there was a trout" (figure 20) presenting the dish as a narrative, as a tale. The pork belly was served in a hay reduction with fermented berries, puffed rind and apricot marmalade and the trout with celeriac sauce and potatoes (figure 19). Everything was provided by local producers: the pork came from Jakob Baumgartner butchery and the trout from Trota Oro fish breeding. From the window it could be seen where the ingredients arrive from (Curreli, personal communication, June 29, 2023).

Fig. 19. Pork belly with fermented red fruits

Fig. 20. Once upon a time there was a trout

For drink I had Hugo (figure 21), the famous classical cocktail of Alto Adige, made of Alto Adige sparkling wine, soda, lemon, mint leaves, and the protagonist ingredient: elderberry syrup made at the restaurant. Elderberry is associated to superstitious beliefs and is planted at the entrance of the home to protect it (Südtiroles Genuss Land, 2023).

Figure 21

Hugo Cocktail

Bistrot & Café Botanic Wachtler

Location and atmosphere

With a view of the Monte Baranci, the Bistrot & Café Botanic Wachtler is located in San Candido, a town in Val Pusteria. This restaurant belongs to the Wachtler, a family of explorers and adventurers. Michael Watchler, nature lover, archaeologist and writer founded the Dolomite Museum. DoloMythos. The space is surrounded by a display depicting "the evolution of the plant world". The atmosphere is built around plants and natural stones.

Philosophy and menu

The restaurant offers a daily set menu of local dishes. The essence of the restaurant is revealed in the furniture and décor of the place, in the herb garden on the rooftop and the petrified wood panels. In addition to the dishes presented in the *Meal experience* section in further paragraphs, other dishes included in the menu have been:

Entenbrustm it Suß-Kartoffelpüree und chinakohl→ duck breast with sweet potato purée

Kartoffelblattl mit Saurkraut→ Flaky pastry filled with potatoes and sauerkraut

Gergillter Tintenfisch mit erbsen-lauchcreme→ Grilled octopus tentacle with peas and leek cream

Hausgemachte tagliatelle mit frischen pfiffelingen→ Tagliatelli with finferli mushrooms

Würstel with chips

Apple strudel

Sacher cake

Buckwheat cake

In the store, located at the entrance of the restaurant are sold diverse artisanal spirits from South Tyrol such as *Z44* distilled dry gin produced by the Roner family, and a variety of distilled from around the world such as *Ron Coloma*, an artisanal rum produced in Colombia.

Meal experience

The turn was for two of the classics of the South Tyrolean culinary tradition: *Schlutzkrapfen*, Ladin *Casunziei* (half moons), a semi-circle shaped pasta filled with ricotta and spinach with *parmigiano* cheese and melted butter; and Canederli, Ladin *balòte* or *bale*, a ball of dough made by stale bread, milk, chopped chives and parsley with speck and spinach with a side of sauerkraut salad. At the chapel of *Hocheppan Castel* in Bolzano, a 13th century Romanesque fresco depicts a woman who seems to eat *canederli (figure 22)*.

Figure 22

"La mangiatrice di Canederli"

Note: Taken from *Storia e storie in cucina. Cucina Longobarda.* The nanny next to the Virgin Mary cooks and tastes what would be *canederli.*

Bar Comelico

Location and atmosphere

The bar of Hotel Comelico (figure 23) located in the town of Padola in the province of Belluno in the Veneto region, just after the border between the South Tyrol and Veneto Regions. Val Comelico does not officially belong to Ladinia, but "from the linguistic perspective this valley belongs to the Ladin area". (Bohmer Helga, 2004, p.12). Even if belonging to another region the visit to this Bar helped to understand the South Tyrol semiosphere as both regions (Alto Adige and Veneto) share the Dolomites.

Philosophy and menu

The Bar Comelico makes part of the Hotel Comelico property of the Tonon family. The service philosophy is focused on the guest. They call the hotel "your home away from home". The restaurant is exclusively open during wintertime. The menu of the Bar incudes classic and innovative beverages and homemade desserts and ice cream. The snacks included mini pizza margherita, sandwiches with speck or prosciutto and cheese (not specified), buckwheat cake, poppy cake, apple cake, diverse flavor brioches and "Ercolino", a typical brioche with local butter from Padola.

Meal experience

Its owner, Petra, offered a reinterpretation of the Hugo cocktail, which includes prosecco wine, soda, elderberry or lemon balm syrup and mint leaves in its traditional recipe (Pellegrino, 2023). Here, she alters the recipe by adding basil leaves and elderberry flowers and by replacing prosecco with a sparkling rosé wine. The *aperitivo* (figure 24), served on a hand painted tablecloth, included a salad of barley, red bell pepper and green beans, also a tuna cream, the same prepared for the *vitello tonnato* (veal meat in a sauce made from anchovies, tuna in oil, lemon, oil and capers), the famous dish from Piedmont. Finally, I had a taste of the poppy cake (figure 25), featuring the poppy, which has been an important flower for the ancient cuisine of Val Badia among other flowers and herbs that grow at high altitude.

Fig. 23 *Bar Hotel Comelico facade*

Fig. 24 *Aperitivo*

Fig. 25 *Poppy cake*

The signs in the message (icons, indexes and symbols) and their structures

From a Peircean analysis of the sign, Philippe Dubois (1999) built up an argumentation to highlight the indexical character of photography. The author specified the meditations about the photographic message made by Andre Bazin and Roland Barthes (1945, 1961), who defined the photography as an index, a trace of reality, as a certificate of presence (Elizalde, 2007). The photography fixes an aspect of reality through an arbitrary way. Among all the qualities of the object, the photography only retains the visual qualities given at the instant and from a unique perspective (García De Molero & Farías De Estany, 2007). Therefore, within this study the photographs are presented as an index of the studied reality.

The message conveyed by the food stores and restaurants is constituted by a set of signs that according to Peirce (cited in Danesi, 2004) could be an icon, an index or a combination of these. This study presents just a few of all the possible signs that could emerge in the South Tyrol food semiosphere according to the subjective perspective and experience of the author.

Food store experiences during an ordinary day: Eurospar, the Alimentari Pescosta and the Eder store in San Candido

Figure 26

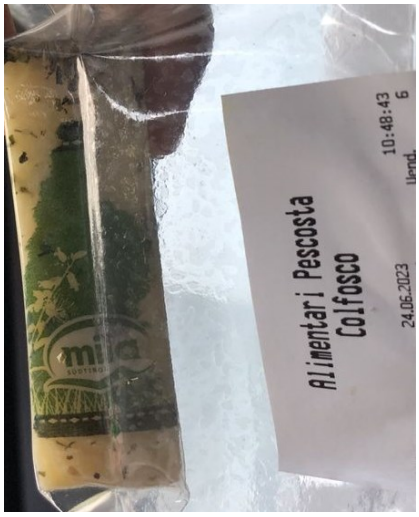
Stelvio cheese

Note: The Stelvio cheese can be considered a symbol of the tolls paying in antique mountain farms, an item with an exchange value.

The poster at the entrance of the Eurospar grocery (figure 7) store with the pictures of the suppliers of Eurospar is an icon of them and a symbol of the of the local valorization

Figure 27

Strea delle erbe cheese



Note: The "Strega delle erbe" cheese can be considered a symbol of the witch that its name evokes and also an index of the herbs found in the Colfosco pastures.

Figure 28

Artisanal sauce with varied *Dolomoti* flavors

Note: The Eder food specialities can be considered a symbol of the Dolomites and a symbol of the artisanal work.

Tlo Plazores

Figure 29

Stube Tlo Plazores

Note: The *stube* atmosphere can be considered a symbol, an index of the fairy world the Dolomitic valleys have always hosted. The *stubes* evokes the Gnomes house (figure 30) illustrated in the *Secret book of the Gnomes.*

Figure 30

The Gnomes house

Note. From *The Secret Book of Gnomes Volume 4*

Figure 31

Pipes representing bucolic scenes

Note: The porcelain pipes can also be considered an index because as antique artifacts constitute an imprint of the passage of time.

Figure 32

Sacred Icons

Note: The images of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Maria and San Pio di Pietrelcina can be considered icons, resembling their referent (object) in a visual way. The combination of these images with the pipes on the walls might be considered a symbol of both sacred and secular character of the South Tyrolean culture.

Alpinn

Figure 33

Alpinn interiors

Note: The arrangement of the furniture in Alpinn can be considered a symbol of sharing and conviviality.

Figure 34

View of mountain following the trail from Passo Furcia to Kronplatz

Note: "Cook the mountain" has become a symbol of the chef Norbert Niederkofler and the chef has become a symbol of "Cook the mountain". The cornoletame highlighted in the

"Cook the mountain" philosophy can be considered a symbol of the biodynamic agriculture, of the connection with the land. All the dishes can be considered symbol of environmental and socio-cultural sustainability.

Figure *35*

Mountain ceviche

Note: The "mountain ceviche" is a symbol of culinary interpretations. The mountain ceviche acts as an oxymoron. The name of the dish and the dish itself evoke an opposition, it might be said a juxtaposed mental image between the sea and the mountain.

The dessert called *Enrosadira*, made of raspberries, wild strawberries, currants and cherries can be considered a symbol of "Enrosadira", "the term used by the Ladins to describe the Dolomites glowing in all shades of red at sunset. In English the term corresponds to *Alpenglow*, derived from the German word *Alpenglühen*, which means "to glow". Alpenglow is the word used to referred to the "rose-colored light on high mountains before dawn or after dusk". The dessert "Mille Mele" can be also considered a symbol of South Tyrol as the largest and most concentrated apple area in Europe. Also, "Once upon a time there was a trout" (figure 20) can be considered symbol of a tale. The dish invites the guest to imagine how was the story of that trout. What was this trout's life experience? Where did the trout live? How did the trout finish on the guest's plate?

Figure 36

Enrosadira

Note: "Enrosadira" dessert by Alpinn. Retrieved from Cook the mountain [Instagram]

Bistrot & Café Botanic Wachtler

The *casciuncìe*, ravioli stuffed with wild spinach and seasoned with melted butter (figure 37) can be considered a symbol of the ancient herdsmen during transhumance, because the relation between the representamen (*casciuncìe*) and the object (the tradition) is arbitrary and product of a social convention. The interpretant might be the act of eating *casciuncìe* to commemorate this tradition. In a hypothetical case, a granny who cooked this dish for her grandchildren, knowing this tradition related to transhumance, would likely tell them the story about the herdsmen eating *casciuncìe* in the high pastures to maintain it as a symbol. Otherwise, their grandchildren (assuming that do not know about this tradition) would associate the dish with their granny generating another kind of symbol. The dish by itself is not able to convey this symbol, but the dish and its story do.

Figure 37

Casunziei

The canederli (figure 38) can be considered a symbol of the *cucina povera* which purpose was to use the leftovers. Milk, water, and eggs were more or less always present, while much rarer were pieces of meat, which were often replaced with turnips. In the South Tyrolean tradition. these were eaten on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. and the addition of speck were only on holidays (La cucina italiana, 2016).

Figure 38

Canederli

Figure 39

Botanic Wachtler menu cover

Note: The small edelweiss on the menu cover of Botanic Wachtler is a symbol of the mountain and an icon of the *stella alpina*, which in turn is symbol of endurance as only growing in harsh mountain conditions.

The manure smell in San Candido, the town where is located Botanic Wachtler is an index of the cattle that have been recently taken to the high pastures, as a signifier that refers to its object by blind compulsion.

Figure 40

Wachtler villa

Note: Villa Wachtler is an icon of the Alpine Art Nouveau, an architectural style which, although significant, is not addressed in detail in this study.

Figure 41

Details in Botanic Wachtler Bistrot

Note: Taken from Botanic Wachtler Bistrot, 2023. The restaurant is decorated with iconic figures of conifers, ferns and horsetails carved on the wall which evoke the discoveries of Michael Wachtler.

Bar Comelico

Figure 42

Lamps Bar Comelico

Note: The lamps of the space which works as dining room for the restaurant during winter have small white flowers that are an icon of the wildflowers of the Dolomites.

Figure 43

Tablecloth detail

Note: The painted flowers on the tablecloth are an icon of the crocus, the first flowers to blossom after winter in the Dolomites. These flowers denote the crocus and at the same time connote the high pasture mountain atmosphere

The structure in the message

"A sign enters into *paradigmatic* relations with all the signs which can also occur in the same context but not at the same time" (Langholz Leymore, 1975, p. 8). Syntagmatic relations are the ways in which elements within the same text or category are related to each other (Chandler, 2022).

At the Alpinn menu there is a clear distinction between starters, first and second courses, and desserts. In the case of Botanic Wachtler there is a menu, a children's menu, and a dessert menu. Conversely, the menus of Tlo Plazores and Botanic Wachtler do not present a clear division between the dishes. In the case of Tlo Plazores all the dishes are catalogued as "Plazore's authentics".

Then, for example there is a paradigmatic relation between the Graukase risotto, the "Monograno Felicetti" spaghettone and the "Monograno Felicetti" fusillone. The choosing of one excludes the others because all the dishes belong to the same category, in this case first courses. Even if every guest is free to choose any dishes and combine them within their meal, the analysis is made according to what makes sense within the Italian structure of a meal. The Italian structure of a meal does not conceive the combination of a rice dish in succession with a pasta dish. Another example is the Hugo cocktail, in which there would be a paradigmatic relation between the elderberry syrup and the lemon balm syrup.

There is instead a syntagmatic relation (a relation of contiguity) between the Graukase risotto and the South Tyrolean rib eye steak or the pork belly. Because the Graukase risotto belongs to the first courses category, while the South Tyrolean rib eye steak and the pork belly belong to the second courses categories.

Discussion

The discussion section will involve an analysis of the South Tyrol food semiosphere and the concepts of sociomateriality, sociation and embodiment which are related to the life-world proposed by Habermas (1987). The discussion will also include the connection of the current study with other previous research in the food semiotics field.

The South Tyrol Semiosphere

Building upon the Lotman, Sebeok, Kull and Nöth concepts, the South Tyrol food semiosphere can be investigated. First considering that this is a partial unveiling and that the boundary of the semiosphere can be defined as the outer "limit of a first-person form" (Kotov & Kull, 2011; Lotman, 1990a, p. 131). As Lotman (1984) stated, "the crossing point of the boundary of a given culture depends upon the position of the observer" (cited in p.72), an idea which according to Marinakis (2012) satisfies the condition of radical subjectivity (Lotman 1999 cited in Marinakis, 2012).

The semiosphere can be analysed and applied in a material way to the geographical space. The South Tyrol semiosphere, involving its real territorial features, would appear in this way:

The Nucleo would be the space that today is called South Tyrol (Alto Adige/ Südtirol).

The Periphery would correspond to the places with which South Tyrol is bordered on: Tyrol (Austria), the Canton of Grigioni (Switzerland), with Veneto (Belluno), with the autonomous province of Trento, with the province of Sondrio (Lombardia Region).

The Boundaries would correlate to Brennero Pass (between Austria and Italy) or Passo Monte Croce (between South Tyrol Region and Veneto Region), depending on the position of the observer.

Food Semisophere in South Tyrol

Conversely, the food semiosphere should be analysed in an abstract way, if considering the semiosphere as a kind of mental or conceptual space:

The Nucleo, in principle, would include the traditional Ladin cuisine and the mountain cuisine. But, due to the dialogue, tensions and hybridization processes given in the boundary, the periphery has moved into the center and nowadays, it might be said that the South Tyrolean center is also pervaded and constituted by the Italian, Austrian and German influences, whose common ingredients are revealed in the different dishes offered within the menus of the studied restaurants. According to what expressed by Lotman (1990), the Italian, German and Austrian cuisines would have acted as texts seeking to approach the centre.

The Ladin cuisine is mainly based on the use of cereals such as oats, rye, wheat, spelt and barley, and on zesty vegetables such as legumes, turnips, potatoes, peas, spinach, beets and cauliflower. In the Ladin cuisine are used the gifts of the woods, such as elderberries, currant, raspberries, blueberries, strawberries and then mushrooms, in particular *porcini* mushrooms and *chanterelles* or *finferli*. It also includes the use of seeds and herbs such as poppy, grapeseed, caraway, fenugreek, fennel elderberry, wild garlic, dill, dandelion, as well as animal-derived foods such as milk, eggs, cheese, butter, speck.

The Italian influence is evident in the use of pasta, rice and vegetables, in dishes like the risotto, the spaghettone with wild garlic, the tagliatelle with mushrooms.

The Austrian and German influence is demonstrated in the use of meat and game meat in dishes like the deer ragout, the pork belly, the rib eye steak, and the würstel. Also, this influence appears in desserts such as the apple strudel and the *sacher torte*.

The Periphery would correspond to other cuisines, not just the Austrian, German and Italian ones, but also even whatever cuisine in the world that came into contact with the traditional Ladin cuisine and the mountain cuisine. An example is the cuisine offered by the Wachtler Bistrot which incorporates some local and traditional dishes but also other international cuisines.

The Boundary would coincide with the different backgrounds and experience acquired by the chefs outside South Tyrol and the techniques incorporated from other places in the world. The boundary is what connects the semiosphere with other semiospheres. The boundary enables the dialogue. As it represents an opportunity to create hybridizations between tradition and innovation, it also represents a risk for the identity triggered by the tensions with the periphery. Still, reprising what stated by Montanari (2002), the identity is

determined by the movement, by the change of place. An example could be the mountain ceviche as a reinterpretation, together with a Mexican chef, of a Peruvian dish. This represents a dialogue between the Latin American and the South Tyrol food semiospheres. Another interesting example is the dialogue between Norbert Niederkofler and Virgilio Martinez representing a synergy between the mountain culture of the Andes and the mountain culture of the Alps and Dolomites.

It is at the boundary where the process of translation occurs between the inside and outside of semiosphere. The task of chefs is a task of transduction, because they seek to translate a territorial reality, a cultural reality, into a dish. It is called transduction and not translation because according to Fabbri (1998), as Greimas has stated: languages transduce reality. Transduction is the translation between different sign systems (Traini, 2018)., for instance, between the language of painting and the verbal language. In this case, the translation is between the language of food and the cultural and territorial reality. It is worth mentioning how the transformation of spaces might be a valuable insight into semiotics analysis. The study also found how there is a change of connotation given by the transformation of spaces and its uses in the South Tyrol semiosphere, becoming part of the text. Alpinn resulted from the transformation of an antique cableway. Another fact that could be catalogued as symbolic is the transformation of "GenussBunker" (from an antique war bunker to an underground cheese cellar). Also, the case of the Atelier Moessmer in Brunico, a proposal recently launched by the chef Norbert Niederkofler. The restaurant is located in Brunico inside of a restructured villa of 1910 which before hosted a wool factory.

From a semiotic of culture perspective, not only the food shapes the South Tyrol food semiosphere, but as would reaffirm Lotman (1990), also the culinary practices, rites and associated traditions. The food stores and restaurants selected within this study in Val Marebbe, Val Badia and Val Pusteria provide a set of signs mainly related to the mountain and their valleys folklore.

The Sociomateriality

The *sociomateriality*, that is the relation between the social and material worlds (Mingers & Willcocks, 2014, 2017), is expressed in the understanding the chefs have of the ingredients and which tools and techniques are used to transform them into culinary objects. This study found that the chefs in Val Badia, Val Marebbe and Val Pusteria tend to be the bricoleur type. According to Marrone (2016) the engineer and the bricoleur are

pragmatic characters. The engineer goes from theory to practice, while the bricoleur goes in the inverse way. However, the matter is the focus for both of them. Applied to gastronomy, there is the engineer chef who makes a recipe certifying the right ingredients and the bricoleur chef, who makes the recipe with the ingredients nature and territory offer to him.

"While I pick the fennel or feel the strawberry's fragrance, it comes to my mind the dish I would like to cook" said Chris Oberhammer, the chef of Tilia restaurant located in Dobbiaco, in the Cucina ad Alta Quota Documentary (Mompracem, 2022), in which five Michelin chefs (Norbert Niederkofler, Anna Matscher, Heinrich Schneider, Nicola Laera, and Chris Oberhammer) have participated. They stress the relevance of the relationship between land and cuisine, through the valorisation of the mountain biodiversity and the selection of ingredients.

"Instead of thinking about what to create, if a mousse or a cake or a gelato, first I choose the ingredients I would like to use (buckwheat, chamomile, elderberry, pollen)" (Kostner, 2022). The pastry chef of the Adler Lodge Alpe is inspired by the traditional Ladin cuisine and the alpine nature. *Il bosco* one of the favorite desserts of the guests is an icon of the forest. The land is represented by a chocolate-based powder and Norway spruce sprouts, which were used as a natural medicine by the inhabitants of the Dolomites. These sprouts, when boiled, are indeed a medicine for cold and sore throat. The flavour of the trees is created from a syrup of Norway spruce sprouts, gathered during spring, and immersed in sugary water for several months. A sour-cream ice cream made from South Tyrolean hay milk is reminiscent of the snow. Blueberries and fresh flowers are added.

In the same way the Tilia's chef and the Alder lodge pastry chef develop their culinary symbols determined by the nature offer, Fabio Curreli in Alpinn and the Ties family in Tlo Plazores also develop their culinary symbols guided by nature and self production. At Alpinn the transformation of the raw materials into culinary objects is marked by the respect to the land and also to the tradition. Also, the location of both Alpinn and Tlo Plazores harbors a symbolism. The former located on top of the Plan de Corones and the other on its slopes. At Alpinn he fermenting, smoking, pickling and drying processes are at the centre of its preservation techniques and culinary practices highlighting the lema from mountain to plate. At Tlo Plazores, even the meat production makes part of the restaurant's rustic concept highlighting the lema from farm to plate.

This approach towards the environment performed by the bricoleur figure of the chefs in South Tyrol have made emerge a culinary culture that often prioritizes nature over

culture and sometimes promote a hybridization between these two. The chefs use the available local ingredients and apply culinary techniques according to a current widespread sustainable approach. Both Alpinn and Tlo Plazores follow a philosophy based on the valorisation of the local. The mountain environment implies a challenge as not all the ingredients are available during every season. Then, the chefs have learned to read these conditions and have developed their culinary approach according to the seasons and the land. This coincides with which stated by Domaneschi (2019) regarding the practice that emerge from the active integration between the particular affordance given by a set of ingredients and a particular set of habituses available in that occasion.

The Sociation

The *sociation*, which is the relation between the personal and social worlds (Mingers & Willcocks, 2014, 2017) is expressed in the way sustainability as a paradigm influences the actions taken in the food systems. This is seen in Tlo Plazores and Alpinn, where the chefs' philosophies and choices are guided by environmental and social sustainability, giving priority to the farmers and to the use of products certified with a quality brand. This, in turn, functions as example for others in the field. It is worth mentioning an element that apart from the food makes part of the food experience and constitute a symbol of sustainability of the analysed text. It is the case of the sustainable brand Patagonia which is used by the Alpinn staff, being in line with its philosophy.

Furthermore, the sustainable practices implemented by Eder food store in its processing plant with the use of solar panels and wood chips from the surrounding woods. Another example is how in despite of being a large supermarket chain, Eurospar promotes the local products and gives visibility to the local farmers. The sociation is also expressed in the existence of umbrella brands or certifications that according to certain parameters host diverse business types.

For instance, the *"Südtiroler Gasthaus"* or *"Locande Südtirolese"* is a network of inns and restaurants that place the emphasis on regional specialities made from local products. It is also the case of the Michelin guide which includes restaurants characterized by five criteria: quality of ingredients, harmony of flavors, mastery of technique, the personality of the chef reflected through his cuisine, the regularity over time and the proposal as a whole (Michelin, 2023). Alpinn is listed in the Michelin guide and Tlo Plazores belongs to the

"Südtiroler Gasthaus". Numerous restaurants strive to be assigned these types of quality seals and simultaneously the guests often are guided by these seals to make their consumption choices. A full analysis of Michelin-starred restaurants, and the relationship between the guide and the food semiosphere, however, it outside the scope of this study.

The Embodiment

The *embodiment*, which is the relation between the personal and material worlds (Mingers & Willcocks, 2014, 2017) is expressed in the embodied experience that specially food experiences offer. Montanari (2014) proposed that, unlike any other sense, the taste is the only sense that allows the incorporation of reality. This coincides with the idea of Le Breton (2007) regarding the body as instrument to grab the substance of reality. Therefore, this study found how there is a bidirectionality regarding the enhancement triggered between the mountain and valleys landscape and the food experience. Starting from the menu, followed by the atmosphere and the artifacts, and the service all these are elements that shape the food experience. Not just the food enhances the way in which the landscape is lived but all the elements that constitute the food experience. In the same way the mountain landscape is inherently inspiring and awakens in who contemplates it the desire to "take a part" of that landscape. The visual abstraction of the landscapes is not enough, and one might say that the food experience is a way to incorporate a piece of that landscape into the body. The food is an index of the landscape and there are dishes which are symbols of the mountain. For instance, the *marlene* apple, as offered in the dessert *Mille mele* in Alpinn, can be considered an index of the landscape. The cake made by the Brigit Patisserie in Dobbiaco is an icon representing the Tre Cime di Lavaredo. Any Alpinn dish could be considered a symbol of the mountain.

It might be said that Alpinn is both a "food space" (Niederkofler, 2018) and foodscape. This place along with Tlo Plazores and Wachtler Botanic Bistrot are great examples of the complexity between embodied gaze and socio-cultural 'sensescapes' guided by discourse and language (Urry, 2012). In Alpinn, the visitors can taste the ingredients provided by nature according to season, to smell the herbs, to feel the air of the mountain, to immerse one's body even in the sturdy material of the mountain.

In Tlo Plazores, the fact of eating in a stube while touching the larch wood of the table and the chairs, the handmade tablecloths, watching the mountains through the small windows and the mixture of sacred and secular elements on the walls such as the saints'

images and the pipes, immerse the body in a travel experience through time, trough fantasy and trough culture.

In Wachtler Botanic Bistrot, the food experience is also enhanced by the plants and precious stones décor which is in consonance with the landscape and territory, evoking the archaeological findings in the Dolomites. These elements enhance the experience beyond the visual attribute motivating the guests to get fully immersed in the landscape.

As said by Lund, "the sense of vision and the mountaineer's gaze cannot be separated from examining the body that moves and touches the ground" (cited in Urry, 2012, p.6). And in this case, it would need to be added the body that smells and tastes the mountain and the valleys on the plate and interiorizes it. This coincides with the idea stated by Everett (2009) regarding the tourism sites conceived as spaces that motivate the full engagement of the body.

Connection with other key studies

In a theoretical analysis of food meaning in anthropology and sociology, Semra & Serkan (2020), highlighted how one of the dimensions of food sociology is associating food with culture. According to Stajcic (2013, p. 5) "the meaning of food is an exploration of culture through food" (cited in Semra & Serkan, 2020). This is in line with the current study which is an exploration of the food semiosphere in a determined region (South Tyrol) unveiling some of the meanings generated by this culture as a text.

The exploration of the South Tyrol food semiosphere demonstrates what pointed by Parasecoli, regarding how it is extremely fruitful to analyze food as semiosphere. Since, the process of semiosis that turns "things" into edible elements cannot be taken separately either from the social and cultural customs that surround it or from the other living organisms that constitute the biosemiotic environment (Parasecoli, 2011, p. 654). The current research comprises an analysis of the meanings conveyed by the selected food stores and restaurants by considering both the biodiversity and cultural diversity of the alpine valleys, expressed through diverse signs.

According to Marrone (2019) food is a primary modeling concept. This appreciation could be considered limited because do not consider food within the cultural context. While food itself could be conceived as a primary modeling system, food transformed into a culinary object could be considered belonging to a tertiary modeling

system, based on what claimed by Sebeok and Danesi (2000) regarding the tertiary modeling systems as those which underpin abstract and symbol-based process like culture.

According to Marrone, based on Lotman concepts, a culinary text is anything, event or situation that linked to food and cuisine produces a sense, a meaning. This sense or meaning is subject of circulation and translation generating another senses and meanings (Barbieri et al., 2019). Marrone mentions that the food aspects linked to nutrition, health, market, and consumption are not culinary texts. Not because these do not produce sense or meaning but because food aspects linked to nutrition, health, market, and consumption are part of another text that could not be classified as strictly culinary. However, the relationship between the culinary text and other types of text results in the triggering of diverse meanings.

According to Marrone (2019), in every language, it is not the substances that are significant, but the forms, the differences and the relationships, the processes, the transformations, the valuations. The context is what is not relevant to the semiotic construction of the gastronomic sense. Rules systems are based on the principle of relevance, establishing time by time what is significant and what is not, what is important and what is not. For instance, the organic or even ethical agricultural practices, previously excluded from the culinary sense, and today included. Something that before belonged to the context, now makes part of the text.

The restaurants and food stores selected in this research are also an example of how what belonged to the context, now belongs to the text. The focus on sustainability and regional flavors in the menus now are vital part in the South Tyrol food semiosphere. The inclusion of these aspects in the culinary text contribute to the sustainable growth of the planet redefining its economic and social development.

The South Tyrol food semiosphere found how the folklore of the region have pervaded the culinary culture. What is considered the outside world, for example in the Val Badia the figure of the "The Salvan of Passo Gradena", an ancient legend of a man of the forest who lived on the border between Badia Valley and Gardena Valley, has crossed the boundary and now might be considered part of the semiosphere's center. This is reflected in a culinary culture in which still predominate the gathering practices. Mario Alinei referred how the Salvans were considered to be the original inhabitants of the Ladin valleys (Alinei, 1985). Thus, the Salvan figure would have passed from the center of the semiosphere to the periphery, later from the periphery to the center (when catalogued as an outlander) and

finally would have returned again to the center, being a current symbol of the nature protection and the gathering practices.

In the same way Mangiapane and Puca (2022) demonstrated that successful geographic and food brands made possible the mutual dialogue between place and food identities through the analysis of the way in which these brands acted in the semiosphere. The exploration of the South Tyrolean food culture through the semiosphere's lens demonstrates how the meanings conveyed by Alpinn, Tlo Plazores, Botanic Wachtler Bistrot, Eder, Alimentari Pescosta, reflect part of the culinary identity of South Tyrol. In the case of Bar Comelico, even if sharing some values and signs with South Tyrol, the meanings conveyed by this business are perceived as derived from another identity. This, arose from the geographical and social construct built around Padola as belonging to anther region (Veneto).

According to Montanari (2002), the identity is fruit of geography, but a geography shaped by history. The current research found how the geography is shaped by history and how the food culture is shaped by geography. The cultural geography which studies the links between culture and geographical environment introduces the concept of geosymbol to express the fact that the geographical environment itself triggers elements that work as prominent symbols (Gimenez, 2019, p. 53). The Dolomites act as a geosymbol for the South Tyrol Region. This geosymbol works as an inspiration for the chefs to, creating other symbols and triggering new meanings.

> "A poet's symbolic 'alphabet' is not just an individual matter: a poet may draw symbols from the arsenal of epoch; cultural trend or social circle. A symbol is bound to cultural memory, and an entire series of symbolic images runs vertically through the whole course of human history, or large areas of it. An artist's individuality is manifest not only in the creation of new, unique symbols (i.e., in a symbolic reading of the non-symbolic), but also in the actualization of symbolic images which are sometimes extremely archaic. But it is the system of relationships which The Text as a Meaning-generating Mechanism the poet establishes between the fundamental image-symbols which is the crucial thing. Symbols are always polysemic, and only when they form themselves into the crystal grid [kristallicheskaya reshetka] of mutual connections do they create that 'poetic world' which marks the individuality of each artist. (Lotman, 1990a, pp. 86–87)

What stated by Lotman in his *Universe of the mind* can be redeployed to the South Tyrol food semiosphere, as in line with the idea of the text as meaning-generating mechanism. The chef as the poet draws symbols of the social and cultural trends of its time. The chef character is revealed not only in the creation of new, unique symbols but also in the actualization of symbolic images which are sometimes extremely archaic. For example, not only with the creation of new dishes but with the reinterpretation chefs perform about a traditional recipe. The crystal grid of mutual connections the poet' symbols adhere to, seeking to create that 'poetic world' which defines the individuality of each artist, is already within food. In his study about place, tradition and tourism in a Chinese frontier river town (Eating the food of the ancestors), Oakes recognised "food as a direct crystallisation of the physical and symbolic landscape" (Oakes 1999 cited in Everett, 2019, p.7). Once again, the chef's symbols as the poet's symbols adhere to the crystal grid of mutual connections to create a culinary world which marks the character of the South Tyrolean food culture.

These culinary objects are enjoyed through a food experience that could be considered completely intertextual. The culinary text is pervaded by the consumption, the social interaction, the atmosphere and artifacts, the service, the emotional state of the guests, the background each guest have about the place where the food experience is lived and so on.

Chapter 4 Conclusions

This study provides a partial unveiling of the food semiosphere in Italy's Alto Adige region (German: *Südtirol*. English: *South Tyrol*). This builds upon the topic of semiotics and semiosphere initiated by Lotman (1984). While there has been limited research on the food semiosphere (Parasecoli, 2011; Stano, 2014), the current study is important because follows an integrative and interdisciplinary approach, and promotes the analysis of a food reality from a semiotic perspective, motivating further research in this line.

Adapting the research approach by Mingers & Willcocks (2017), this unveiling was accomplished through the thick description of the author's personal food experiences in selected restaurants and food stores in South Tyrol and the identification of signs within the messages conveyed in these experiences. The thick description method (Denzin cited in Ponterotto, 2006) is a qualitative research approach which leads to great detail and context.

The restaurants and food stores selected, even if not representative of all restaurants and stores in the region, incorporate different environments, messages and contexts that are worth investigating within a semiotic framework because each of them incorporates elements of the South Tyrolean food and culture. Two of the restaurants were selected a priori of the field research based on their relevance (Alpinn and Tlo Plazores). The rest of restaurants (Botanic Wachtler Bistrot, Bar Comelico, Eurospar, Eder and Alimentari Pescosta) were visited in a more organic nature, upon the researcher's visit to the region. The selected restaurants and food stores are located within the valleys of Val Badia, Val Marebbe and Val Pusteria in the South Tyrol, with the exception of Bar Comelico, which is situated nearby in the Veneto Region.

Building up on Jakobson' s (1960) concepts, in the process of communication of these messages, analysed in an abstract way, the South Tyrolean food culture acts as a sender. Any part of an audience that have contact with the messages conveyed by the South Tyrolean food culture acts as a receiver. The medium corresponds to the food itself and its representations in the media. The code is the set of flavors, techniques, and culinary practices within the South Tyrol region. The message corresponds to the material and sensory representation of the abstract contents of the South Tyrolean food culture, expressed through visual, sound, smell, and taste related attributes. Within this study, the message or text is conceived at the center of the semiotic analysis. The identification and

analysis of the signs found within these messages is presented through photography, conceiving the photography as an index of reality.

Each of these elements fits within the life-world concept developed by Habermas (1987). Life-world can be understood as the background within which the communicative action takes place. This life-world include the personal (the sender and receiver), the social (the code), and the material worlds (the medium). At the center of these worlds, the message or text is found. This study analyzes the food experiences as a text. The relations that emerge around between the personal, social and material worlds are particularly interesting within the South Tyrol food semiosphere. These relations underly the concepts of sociomateriality, sociation and embodiment. The investigation is framed into Lotman's semiosphere as all communicative act is immersed in a semiotic space (Lotman, 1990). Then the South Tyrolean food culture is conceived as a semiosphere.

The sociomateriality is expressed in the chefs in Val Badia, Val Marebbe and Val Pusteria, who can be classified as the bricoleur type, who make recipes with the ingredients offered by nature and territory. The transformation of the raw materials into culinary objects is marked by the respect to the land. The sociation is expressed in the environmentally and culturally sustainable philosophies of the selected restaurants and food stores and include umbrella quality brands and certifications that cover the typical South Tyrolean food specialities and South Tyrolean food businesses. The embodiment is expressed in the reciprocal relationship between the mountainous landscapes of the Dolomites, the Alps and their valleys and the dining experience. It begins with the menu and extends to the atmosphere, artifacts, and service—all integral components shaping the culinary journey. It is not uniquely the food which enhances the way in which the landscape is lived, but every element that composes the food experience. For example, the artifacts and the atmosphere within the Tlo Plazores stube or the philosophy of "Cook the mountain" behind Alpinn are representative. Similarly, the mountain scenery inherently inspires and ignites a desire in observers to connect with and be a part of that landscape. Mere visual appreciation of landscapes is not enough. It might be said that the food experience is a way to incorporate a piece of that landscape into the body.

This study finds that the application of the food semiosphere model to the food culture in South Tyrol is particularly meaningful due to the geographical, historical, economic, social, and cultural processes the region has undergone through time and that have made up its identity. It can be considered that at the nucleo of the South Tyrol

semiosphere there are both the traditional Ladin (barely soup, *balotes*, *Cancì checi con spinat*, buckwheat cake, poppy cake) and mountain cuisines, characterized by the gathering culture (e.g. mushrooms such as *porcini* and *finferli*, fruits and herbs). The Ladin and mountain cuisines are joined by Italian, Austrian and German influences. These influences are expressed in dishes such as the risotto with *Graukase* cheese, the spaghettone with wild garlic, the deer ragout, the pork belly and the *sacher torte*. The boundary of the South Tyrol food semiosphere enhances the dialogue with others food semiospheres. Particularly interesting the revisitation of a Peruvian dish, product of the synergy between the Alps and Dolomitic food semiosphere and the Andes food semiosphere. This is in consonance with transduction task carried out by the chefs in the region seeking to translate a territorial reality into a dish or a menu.

This study presents evidence of how the selected restaurants contribute to the shaping of the South Tyrol food semiosphere .The food stores and restaurants selected within this study provide a set of signs mainly related to the mountain and their valleys folklore. These signs are the expression (visual, sound, smell, taste) of the abstract content of the South Tyrolean food culture, which include: the stube as a symbol of the Dolomites folklore, the sacred images on the wall, the antique use of the Stelvio cheese to pay mountain farm tolls, the elderberry tree as protector of home, the Enrosadira dessert, the edelweiss, the transhumance, the manure smell, the Salvan, and the *Strega delle erbe* cheese. The figure of the Salvan is a sign related to the valley's folklore, particularly interesting in the analysis of the semiosphere. The Salvan as a mythical figure that moves from the periphery to the center and vice versa, is revealed as a symbol of the nature protection and the gathering practices.

In line with Lotman (1990) regarding the text as a meaning generating mechanism and with the Marrone's arguments (2019) regarding the text and context, the restaurants and food stores selected in this research are also an example of how what belonged to the context, now belongs to the text –generating new meanings. The focus on sustainability and regional flavors in the menus are now a vital part of the South Tyrol food semiosphere. The inclusion of these aspects (which before belonged to the context) in the culinary text contribute to the sustainable growth of the planet redefining its economic and social development. It is also worth mentioning how there is a change of connotation given by the transformation of spaces and their uses in the South Tyrol semiosphere, becoming part of the food text. This is the case of the transformation of a cableway into a restaurant (Alpinn), or the transformation of a war bunker into a cheese cellar (Genuss Bunker).

Through this exploration of the symbolic dimension of food experiences in South Tyrol (Alto Adige/ Südtirol) this paper promotes awareness about the cultural and natural heritage (and protection of the cultural and natural heritage) of the region. The chef's symbols as the poet's symbols adhere to the crystal grid of mutual connections to create a culinary world which contribute to the character of the South Tyrol food semiosphere. These culinary objects are enjoyed through a food experience that could be considered completely intertextual.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study considered the food semiosphere within South Tyrol (Italy). Future research could expand this investigation through interviews with the chefs and surveys to tourists and inhabitants in the area. This may reveal other signs and meanings, as well as perceptions of signs and their meanings among different groups. Furthermore, regarding the material world, the analysis could be enriched conducting a sensory analysis involving representative dishes of the selected restaurants. Additionally, texts, such as the Michelin Guide, or websites (including those of the restaurants, food stores, destination marketing organizations, or other tourism businesses) could be explored.

Because South Tyrol lies on the boundary of areas with related food and cultural history, researchers could develop a comparative study between the food semiosphere of Tyrol (Austria) and the food semiosphere of South Tyrol (Italy) or other Ladin valleys. As well, studies do not need to be limited to the semiosphere of food. A study, such as the current one, but dedicated to wine or the semiotic analysis of the Alto Adige Wine Route could be considered insightful.

There are also unlimited applications of this research method in other areas of the world, in particular those with unique natural, cultural, and food heritages. Additionally, links between tourism sciences and the food semiosphere could be considered. This may include destination image, marketing, satisfaction, perceived authenticity, and numerous other related topics. It is also worth studying the relationship between food memories and travel combining a semiotic approach with neuroscience tools and the visitor experience. Finally, topics related to the food semiosphere could be added to educational programs in Italian universities.

Limitations

There are two main limitations in this research. The first lies in its subjectivity. While it follows recommended approaches to using thick description in qualitative research, the analysis is developed from a personal experience. Besides, semiotics implies almost a coincidence between the moments of data collection, description and analysis. The concepts in which is based (such as sign and semiosphere) are constructs in constant dynamism, which have no agreed definitions. Many of the terms and concepts used in this study may vary depending on the approach of the researcher or philosopher. The second major limitation is that only a few restaurants and food stores were visited. While they each had unique features relating to the South Tyrol food semiosphere, there are hundreds of other locations which could also be considered as part of a research study. Another limitation is the unique season (summer) during which the field trip took place. A deep analysis of the restaurants would be suggested to be carried out throughout all the seasons, as these offer seasonal menus. Further, the geographical features and climate of the region might contribute to a different visitor experience. Finally, this research only includes food, and some may consider wine to be a part of a greater food semiosphere.

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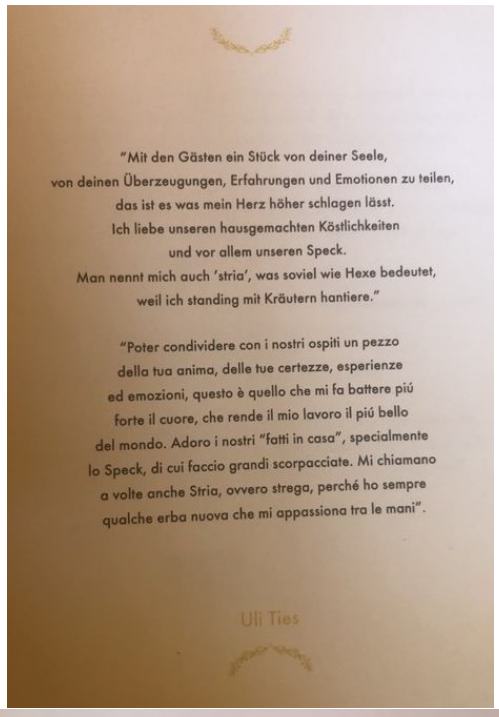
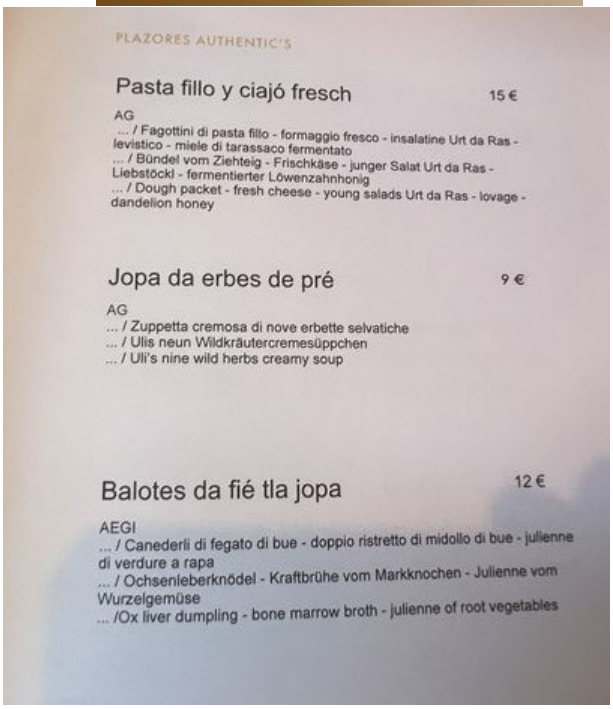
Appendix

Restaurant menus

Tló Plazores menu





PLAZORES AUTHENTIC'S

Pozi con ragú de bó Tux 14€

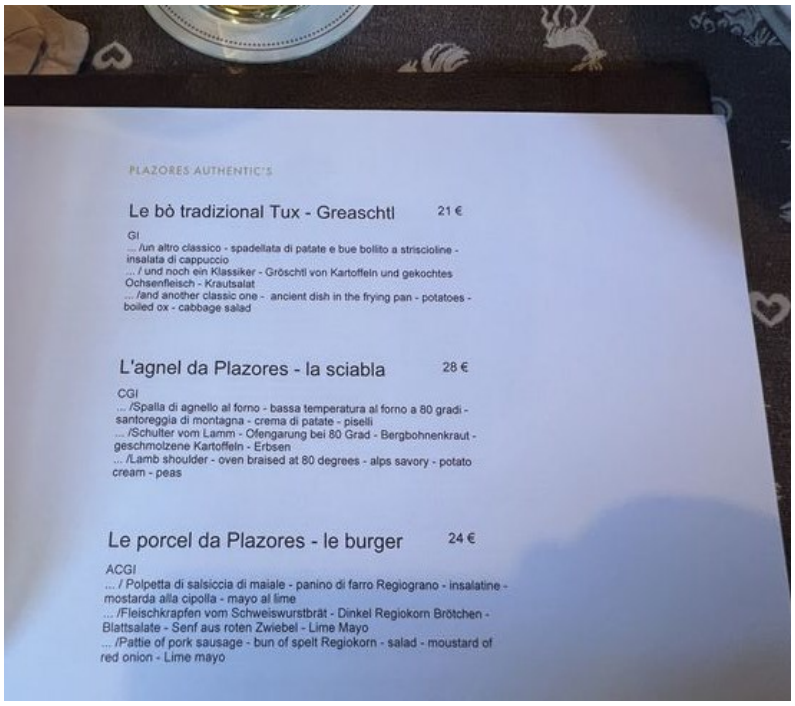
ACI
... /un classico - tagliatelle fatte a mano - farine Regiograno - ragú di bue Tux del Plazores
... / unser Klassiker - hausgemachte Bandnudeln - Regiokorn Mehl - Spezialbolognese vom Plazores Tuxer Ochsen
... / our classic one - handmade Tagliatelle - Regiokorn flour - our special ragout of Tux-ox

Rijoto da orde Regiokorn 16 €

ALJ
... / Orzotto di orzo decorticato Regiograno - cirmolo - ragù di capriolo - rosa canina
... / Gerstenrisotto von der Nacktgerste Regiokorn - Zirbe - Ragourt vom Reh - Hagebutte
... / Barley Risotto Regiokorn - Swiss pine - ragout of deer - rosehip

Cancí da ciotte - scotes - ciajó 16 €

ACG
... /Ravioli di pasta di patate - ricotta fresca all'erba cipollina - crema di ortica - praline di caprino fresco
... /Kartoffelmaultschen - frischer Schnittlauchtopfen - Brennnesselcreme - Pralinen vom Ziegenfrischkäse
... /Potato paste ravioli - fresh chives ricotta - stinging nettle cream - pralines of fresh goat cheese



PLAZORES AUTHENTIC'S

Le bò tradizional Tux - Greaschtl 21 €

GI
... /un altro classico - spadellata di patate e bue bollito a striscioline - insalata di cappuccio
... / und noch ein Klassiker - Gröschtl von Kartoffeln und gekochtes Ochsenfleisch - Krautsalat
... /and another classic one - ancient dish in the frying pan - potatoes - boiled ox - cabbage salad

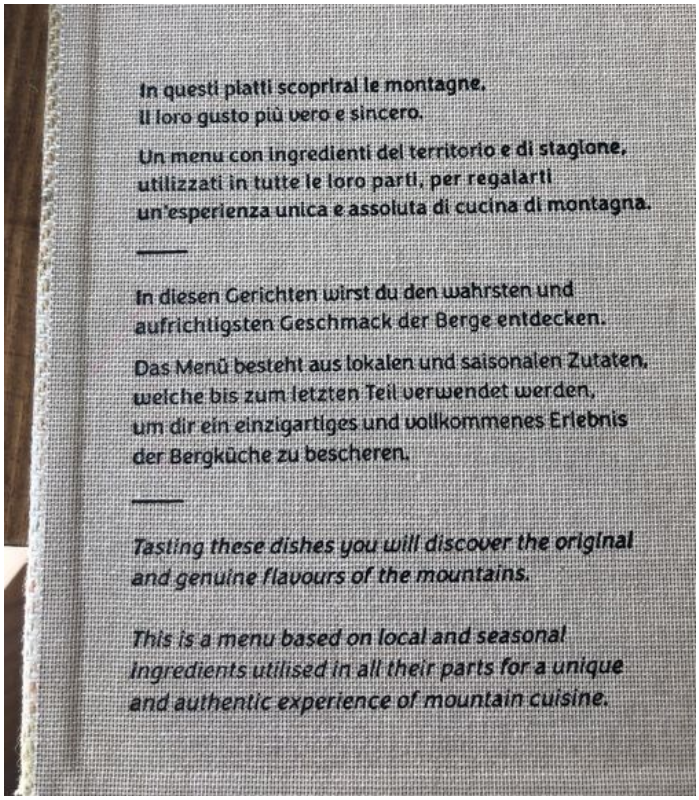
L'agnel da Plazores - la sciabla 28 €

CGI
... /Spalla di agnello al forno - bassa temperatura al forno a 80 gradi - santoreggia di montagna - crema di patate - piselli
... /Schulter vom Lamm - Ofengarung bei 80 Grad - Bergbohnenkraut - geschmolzene Kartoffeln - Erbsen
... /Lamb shoulder - oven braised at 80 degrees - alps savory - potato cream - peas

Le porcel da Plazores - le burger 24 €

ACGI
... / Polpetta di salsiccia di maiale - panino di farro Regiograno - insalatine - mostarda alla cipolla - mayo al lime
... /Fleischkrapfen vom Schweiswurstbrät - Dinkel Regiokorn Brötchen - Blattsalate - Senf aus roten Zwiebel - Lime Mayo
... /Pattie of pork sausage - bun of spelt Regiokorn - salad - moustard of red onion - Lime mayo

Alpinn menu



In questi piatti scoprirai le montagne.
Il loro gusto più vero e sincero.

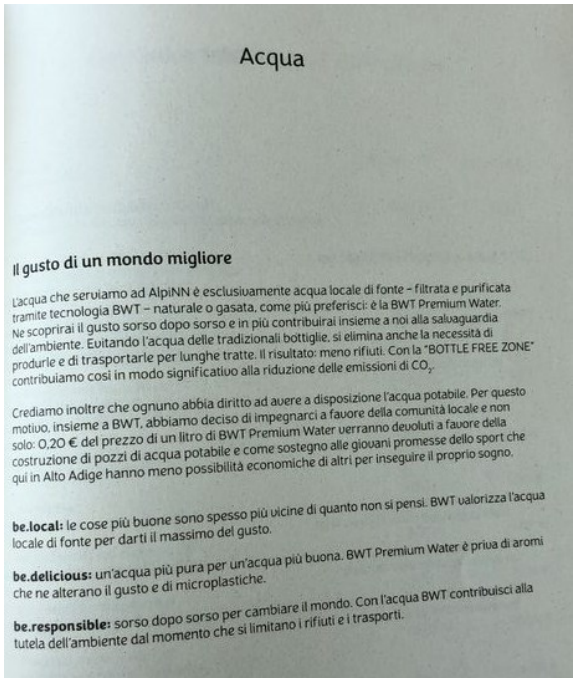
Un menu con ingredienti del territorio e di stagione,
utilizzati in tutte le loro parti, per regalarti
un'esperienza unica e assoluta di cucina di montagna.

In diesen Gerichten wirst du den wahrsten und
aufrichtigsten Geschmack der Berge entdecken.

Das Menü besteht aus lokalen und saisonalen Zutaten,
welche bis zum letzten Teil verwendet werden,
um dir ein einzigartiges und vollkommenes Erlebnis
der Bergküche zu bescheren.

Tasting these dishes you will discover the original and genuine flavours of the mountains.

This is a menu based on local and seasonal ingredients utilised in all their parts for a unique and authentic experience of mountain cuisine.



Acqua

Il gusto di un mondo migliore

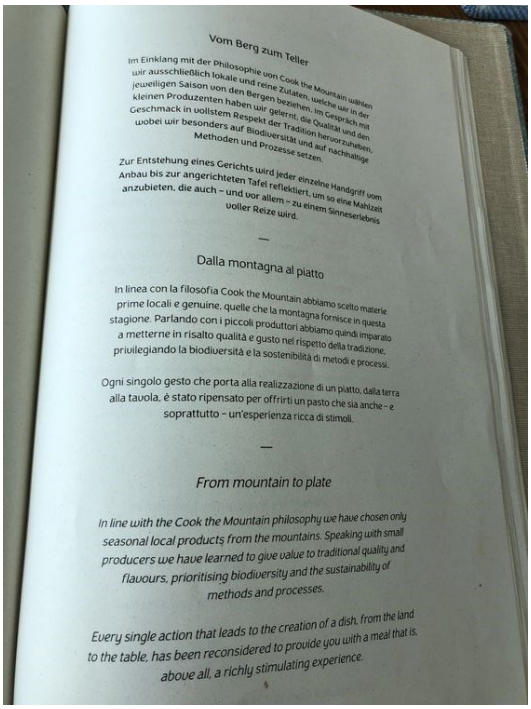
L'acqua che serviamo ad AlpiNN è esclusivamente acqua locale di fonte – filtrata e purificata tramite tecnologia BWT – naturale o gasata, come più preferisci: è la BWT Premium Water. Ne scoprirai il gusto sorso dopo sorso e in più contribuirai insieme a noi alla salvaguardia dell'ambiente. Evitando l'acqua delle tradizionali bottiglie, si elimina anche la necessità di produrle e di trasportarle per lunghe tratte. Il risultato: meno rifiuti. Con la "BOTTLE FREE ZONE" contribuiamo così in modo significativo alla riduzione delle emissioni di CO_2.

Crediamo inoltre che ognuno abbia diritto ad avere a disposizione l'acqua potabile. Per questo motivo, insieme a BWT, abbiamo deciso di impegnarci a favore della comunità locale e non solo: 0,20 € del prezzo di un litro di BWT Premium Water verranno devoluti a favore della costruzione di pozzi di acqua potabile e come sostegno alle giovani promesse dello sport che qui in Alto Adige hanno meno possibilità economiche di altri per inseguire il proprio sogno.

be.local: le cose più buone sono spesso più vicine di quanto non si pensi. BWT valorizza l'acqua locale di fonte per darti il massimo del gusto.

be.delicious: un'acqua più pura per un'acqua più buona. BWT Premium Water è priva di aromi che ne alterano il gusto e di microplastiche.

be.responsible: sorso dopo sorso per cambiare il mondo. Con l'acqua BWT contribuisci alla tutela dell'ambiente dal momento che si limitano i rifiuti e i trasporti.



Vom Berg zum Teller

Im Einklang mit der Philosophie von Cook the Mountain wählen wir ausschließlich lokale und reine Zutaten, welche wir in der jeweiligen Saison von den Bergen beziehen. Im Gespräch mit kleinen Produzenten haben wir gelernt, die Qualität und den Geschmack in vollstem Respekt der Tradition hervorzuheben, wobei wir besonders auf Biodiversität und auf nachhaltige Methoden und Prozesse setzen.

Zur Entstehung eines Gerichts wird jeder einzelne Handgriff vom Anbau bis zur angerichteten Tafel reflektiert, um so eine Mahlzeit anzubieten, die auch – und vor allem – zu einem Sinneserlebnis voller Reize wird.

—

Dalla montagna al piatto

In linea con la filosofia Cook the Mountain abbiamo scelto materie prime locali e genuine, quelle che la montagna fornisce in questa stagione. Parlando con i piccoli produttori abbiamo quindi imparato a metterne in risalto qualità e gusto nel rispetto della tradizione, privilegiando la biodiversità e la sostenibilità di metodi e processi.

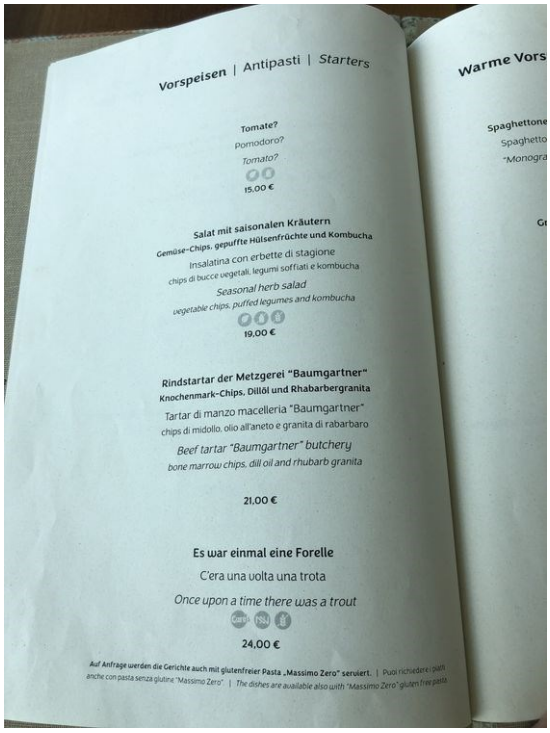
Ogni singolo gesto che porta alla realizzazione di un piatto, dalla terra alla tavola, è stato ripensato per offrirti un pasto che sia anche – e soprattutto – un'esperienza ricca di stimoli.

—

From mountain to plate

In line with the Cook the Mountain philosophy we have chosen only seasonal local products from the mountains. Speaking with small producers we have learned to give value to traditional quality and flavours, prioritising biodiversity and the sustainability of methods and processes.

Every single action that leads to the creation of a dish, from the land to the table, has been reconsidered to provide you with a meal that is, above all, a richly stimulating experience.



Vorspeisen | Antipasti | Starters

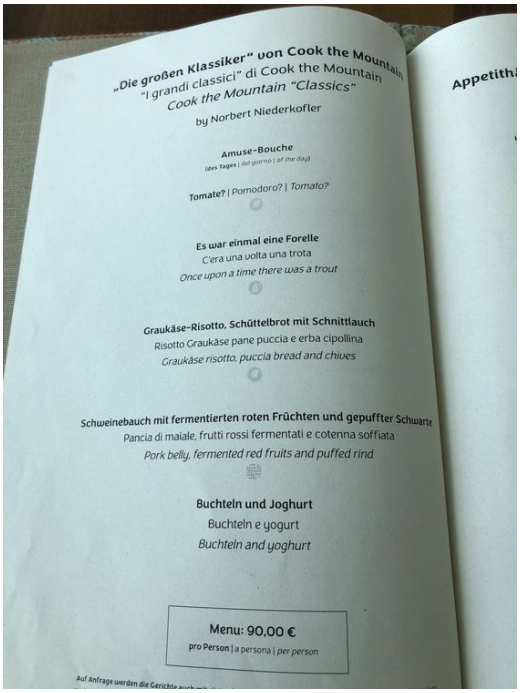
Tomate?
Pomodoro?
Tomato?
15,00 €

Salat mit saisonalen Kräutern
Gemüse-Chips, gepuffte Hülsenfrüchte und Kombucha
Insalatina con erbette di stagione
chips di bucce vegetali, legumi soffiati e kombucha
Seasonal herb salad
vegetable chips, puffed legumes and kombucha
19,00 €

Rindstartar der Metzgerei "Baumgartner"
Knochenmark-Chips, Dillöl und Rhabarbergranita
Tartar di manzo macelleria "Baumgartner"
chips di midollo, olio all'aneto e granita di rabarbaro
Beef tartar "Baumgartner" butchery
bone marrow chips, dill oil and rhubarb granita
21,00 €

Es war einmal eine Forelle
C'era una volta una trota
Once upon a time there was a trout
24,00 €

Auf Anfrage werden die Gerichte auch mit glutenfreier Pasta „Massimo Zero" serviert. | Puoi richiedere i piatti anche con pasta senza glutine "Massimo Zero". | *The dishes are available also with "Massimo Zero" gluten free pasta.*



„Die großen Klassiker" von Cook the Mountain
"I grandi classici" di Cook the Mountain
"Cook the Mountain "Classics"
by Norbert Niederkofler

Amuse-Bouche
(des Tages | del giorno | of the day)

Tomate? | Pomodoro? | *Tomato?*

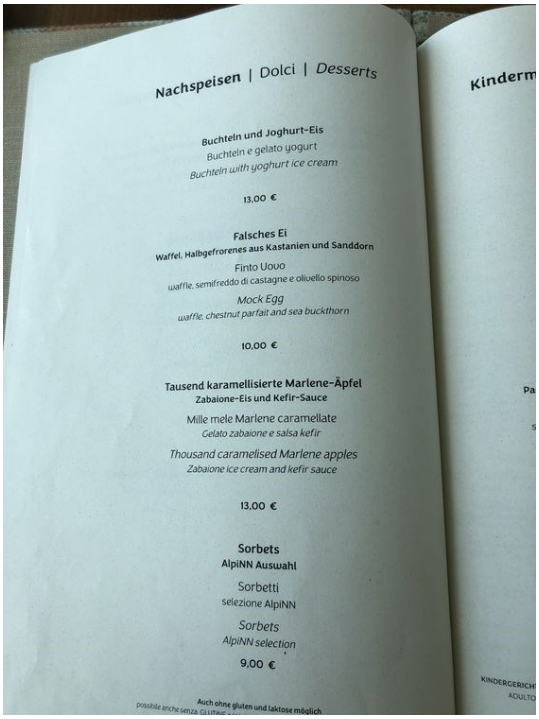
Es war einmal eine Forelle
C'era una volta una trota
Once upon a time there was a trout

Graukäse-Risotto, Schüttelbrot mit Schnittlauch
Risotto Graukäse pane puccia e erba cipollina
Graukäse risotto, puccia bread and chives

Schweinebauch mit fermentierten roten Früchten und gepuffter Schwarte
Pancia di maiale, frutti rossi fermentati e cotenna soffiata
Pork belly, fermented red fruits and puffed rind

Buchteln und Joghurt
Buchteln e yogurt
Buchteln and yoghurt

Menu: 90,00 €
pro Person | a persona | *per person*



Nachspeisen | Dolci | Desserts

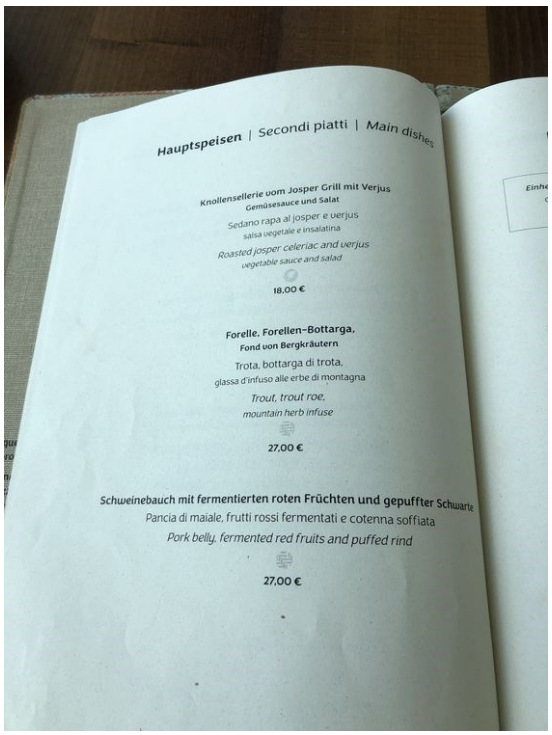
Buchteln und Joghurt-Eis
Buchteln e gelato yogurt
Buchteln with yoghurt ice cream
13,00 €

Falsches Ei
Waffel, Halbgefrorenes aus Kastanien und Sanddorn
Finto Uovo
waffle, semifreddo di castagne e olivello spinoso
Mock Egg
waffle, chestnut parfait and sea buckthorn
10,00 €

Tausend karamellisierte Marlene-Äpfel
Zabaione-Eis und Kefir-Sauce
Mille mele Marlene caramellate
Gelato zabaione e salsa kefir
Thousand caramelised Marlene apples
Zabaione ice cream and kefir sauce
13,00 €

Sorbets
AlpiNN Auswahl
Sorbetti
selezione AlpiNN
Sorbets
AlpiNN selection
9,00 €

Auch ohne gluten und laktose möglich



Hauptspeisen | Secondi piatti | Main dishes

Knollensellerie vom Josper Grill mit Verjus
Gemüsesauce und Salat
Sedano rapa al josper e verjus
salsa vegetale e insalatina
Roasted josper celeriac and verjus
vegetable sauce and salad
18,00 €

Forelle, Forellen-Bottarga,
Fond von Bergkräutern
Trota, bottarga di trota,
glassa d'infuso alle erbe di montagna
Trout, trout roe,
mountain herb infuse
27,00 €

Schweinebauch mit fermentierten roten Früchten und gepuffter Schwarte
Pancia di maiale, frutti rossi fermentati e cotenna soffiata
Pork belly, fermented red fruits and puffed rind
27,00 €

Botanic Wachtler Bistrot

Wachtler Bistro Botanic

Il nostro menù:

- Ravioli tirolesi „Schlutzkrapfen" fatto in casa con parmigiano e burro fuso (1, 3, 7) € 14.00
- Canederli pressati fatto in casa su insalata di crauti (1, 3, 7) € 14.00
- Tagliere solo Speck IGP dell' Alto Adige e pane(7) € 10.80
- Tagliere con Speck IGP dell' Alto Adige, Formaggio locale e pane(7) € 15.00
- Tagliere con Speck IGP dell' Alto Adige, Formaggio locale, Salamee pane (7) € 18.50

Per i piccoli:

- Pasta al pomodoro (1, 3) € 8.00
- Würstel con patate fritte € 10.50

Unsere Speisekarte:

- Hausgemachte „Schlutzkrapfen" mit Parmesan und geschmolzener Butter (1, 3, 7) € 14.00
- Hausgemachte Pressknödel mit Krautsalat (1, 3, 7) € 14.00
- Aufschnitt mit Südtiroler Speck g.g.A. und Brot(7) € 10.80
- Aufschnitt mit Südtiroler Speck g.g.A. , einheimischem Käse und Brot(7) € 15.00
- Aufschnitt mit Südtiroler Speck g.g.A., einheimischem Käse, Salami und Brot (7) € 18.50

Für die Kleinen:

- Pasta mit Tomatensauce (1, 3) € 8.00
- Meranerwurst mit Pommes € 10.50

Cestino Pane | Brotkorb € 2.00