



Organic Hummus in Israel: Global and Local Ingredients and Images

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Abstract

Hummus is an ancient traditional dish in Middle Eastern Cultures. In Israel it is one of the most common foods, appropriated as an icon of Israeli culture and nationality. Today, hummus is served in Israel in many restaurants, and is even distributed as a commercially packaged spread sold in supermarkets. Organic hummus – a recent version of the dish – is influenced by global trends of ethical and reflexive food consumption. Organic food is conceived as the spearhead opposing the consequences of globalization. It is customary to view it as representing locality, health, ecology and social justice. But it also embodies representations of globalism and westernism, mainly because of its integration in the global industrial system and its origin among the post-materialistic-social elite in western countries. This article deals with the encounter of the global and the local as embodied in organic hummus in Israel. Looking at the production, distribution, and consumption of this dish uncovers social and political layers embedded in it. I will argue that the global socio-economic conditions and ideas embedded in the concept of organic attached to hummus are the ones which allow – paradoxically – the imagined re-localization of the dish. Organic hummus in Israel is a dish steeped in paradoxical aspects, and therefore characterized by culinary-ideological-dissonance. Hummus is a dish that was perceived as representing rootedness, earthiness, and local simplicity, but nowadays, in its organic version, it wears an economic and symbolic framework of global values used by the Israeli westernizing elite to demonstrate a widespread-environmental cosmopolitan identity.

Keywords: *Globalization, Localization, Cosmopolitanism, Organic Food, Hummus, Commodification, Israeli Culture*

Introduction

1.1 On 8 January, 2010, a special event took place in the Arab-Palestinian village Abu-Gosh in Israel: breaking the Guinness record for the biggest plate of hummus in the world. The excitement of the people at this event – residents of the village and guests from all over the country – was big. The master of ceremonies and the honoured speakers proclaimed: *'The plate of hummus is the one that will bring peace' [Between Israelis and Arabs]; 'Breaking the record is of national pride'; 'The Lebanese claim that hummus is their invention, but hummus is ours, the Israelis'*. Hundreds of people gathered around a huge plate holding 4 tons of hummus that was prepared by two industrial food companies. On my way out, at the end of the ceremony, I met Esther, a clinical dietician who argued: *'What does it matter if the hummus is ours or the Lebanese? The hummus here isn't even real hummus. Real hummus is a dish made out of chickpeas without artificial additives and preservatives as in industrial hummus. I love hummus very much but not the industrial kind. The healthiest hummus is made out of organic chickpeas and whole tahini [sesame paste]. And apart from this, what will they do with all this hummus? It will be thrown out. As if our environment isn't polluted enough...'*

1.2 Esther's words faithfully represent a growing group of food consumers in Israel who express their disapproval of industrialized and processed food products. Many of them see organic food as the remedy to what they call 'the destructive effects' of the industrialized food products market. A consumer survey undertaken in 2005 showed that the organic food market represents 0.35% of food consumption in Israel. 0.7% of the population consumes organic food on a regular basis, and another 1% consumes organic food occasionally (Mazori 2005). A survey undertaken in July 2010 shows that the organic food market in Israel is constantly increasing, and is now at 1% of all food consumption in Israel. The increased sales rate of organic food in Israel stands at about 30% a year (Dovrat-Meseritz 2010).

1.3 It is customary to see the increase of supply and demand for 'ecological' and 'fair trade' food products as an empirical expression of ethical consumption culture (Bell & Valentine 1997); the growth of a new moral economy of food (Morgan et al. 2006), to the strengthening of worldwide environmental awareness, and the integration of ethical considerations, related to 'beyond the self', in mundane practices (Goodman 2004; Hopper 2007:170). However, some scholars presented a critical outlook on the social construction of organic food as ethical food and pointed to paradoxes embodied in it. They pointed to the multiple values embodied in organic food and clarified that it is not possible to relate to it as an expression of absolute ethicality (See for example: Goodman et al. 2010; Guthman 2003; Barnett et al. 2005:19; Buller 2010). Others presented a series of paradoxes embodied in the structural dimension of organic food, i.e. in the production processes (Pollan 2007: 134-184; Buck et al. 1997; Guthman 2004; Lockie & Halpin 2005; Fromartz 2006).

1.4 This article takes a similar stance that sees in organic food a multi-dimensional cultural object saturated in symbolic meanings. I will focus on the symbolic aspect of organic food and will demonstrate how it carries a series of global and local meanings. I will describe how organic food, in its Israeli version, serves as a symbolic representation of a 'virtuous food' (Buller 2010), but in an essential manner is more a means of assimilating 'cultural otherness' and establishing cosmopolitan identity. Thus, organic food provides the Israeli producers and consumers with the 'world on a plate' (Cook & Crang 1996). It is my understanding that this characteristic is embedded in the gap between the production processes of organic food in Israel to the manner in which it is represented and consumed. This gap, which is revealed in the framework of a series of symbolic and structural encounters, manifests itself in the appearance of the glocal culinary artifact - 'organic hummus'.

Hummus, organic hummus and cosmopolitanism in Israel

2.1 Organic hummus is a recent culinary version of the ancient Middle Eastern dish 'hummus be-Tahini'. It is one of the most popular foods among the consumers of organic food in Israel. Thus, for example, at the First International Conference on Food and Sustainability held in 2009 by The Heschel Center for Environmental Learning and Leadership,^[1] the main course of the lunch served to the conference participants was organic hummus with whole wheat pita bread.

2.2 While hummus is perceived as representing rootedness, earthiness, and local simplicity, organic hummus is perceived as an artifact which represents global values. It is possible to define the interweaving of 'organic' into 'hummus' as a hybrid between cosmopolitanism and localism. Ulrich Beck defined the term 'cosmopolitanism' as a state in which the otherness of the other is included in one's own self-identity and self-definition (Beck 2003).

2.3 In light of Beck's definition, the development of an 'ethical eating culture' can be seen in Israel as an expression of the change taking place in the Jewish-Israeli culinary culture, which is characterized by a transfer from ethnocentric-national closure to global-culture openness. This new Israeli culinary culture includes a growing interest in ethnic foods, exotic flavors, local food, seasonal, gourmet, healthy food, ethical food and organic food. Thus, organic food (and the other culinary trends) constitutes a materialistic expression of cosmopolitanism in Israel and the rise of global neo-liberal discourse in Israeli society. Jonathan Friedman explains that it is a discourse ascribed to the new trans-national elite, a discourse based on metaphors of consumption and appropriation, and often combined with a desire for connoisseurship concerning the vast array of world objects that are accessible to them (Friedman 2000: 143). The Israeli version of this discourse is associated with 'yuppie post-Zionist' culture, promoting familiarity with global customs and culinary manners (Almog 2004:36; Regev 2000; 2007).

2.4 A number of researchers point to cosmopolitanism as a promise for a positive future: the formation of a global citizenship and creation of a worldwide community of human beings (Nussbaum 1996); the development of a global civil society and the creation of trans-national social spaces (Beck 2000). Anthropologist Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni (2003) emphasizes the cosmopolitan perspective as an existence that includes the 'other' in cultural mundane practices and widens the knowledge of the 'other'. John Tomlinson (1999:198) is of the opinion that ideal cosmopolitanism expresses a worldwide moral concept integrated in everyday life. Within the context of the world climate crisis and the post-modern environmental discourse, the concept of 'sustainability' relates to cosmopolitan culture and represents 'globalization with a human face' (Morgan 2010).

2.5 In this article I will examine the unique characteristics of a cosmopolitan identity in Israeli society as it manifests itself in the context of the use of everyday goods – namely, food. My main claim is that cosmopolitan identity in Israel serves only as a symbolic cover, under which a worldwide ethical concept or connection to the 'other' is basically absent and whose origin is caring for the self.

2.6 The attitude to hummus as a representative of an encounter of cultures does not arise for the first time in the framework of global culture in Israel. Previous studies have already pointed to hummus as a cultural object that reflects assimilation of otherness and culinary appropriation. Before the establishment of the state of Israel, hummus was considered clearly an Arab food (Litani & Ariedi 2000). Later, after the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, and because of the frequent visits of Israeli-Jews to Eastern Jerusalem and the West Bank, the prevalence of hummus flowered. Since then, hummus has become an iconic Israeli-national food and was adopted into the Israeli culinary repertoire as part of the cultural colonialism process representing selective appropriation of Arab cuisine (Gvion 2006)^[2].

2.7 Nir Avieli (2005:168) claims that iconic dishes are particularly suitable means for the negotiation and expression of complex and contradictory ideas concerning national identity. To that I will add that the changes taking place in national-iconic dishes are used to express the fragmentation of the national-identity form that characterizes the 'glocal' post-modern situation. I claim that the organic version of hummus reflects the inclusion of additional representations of 'otherness' to the dish. Therefore, organic

hummus constitutes – to use Douglas and Isherwood's words ([1979]1966) – concretization of the cosmopolitan culture in Israel.

2.8 Culinary changes in appropriated dishes that became local-national signifiers expose the extent global culture was intertwined in the local culture and the different ways in which collective individuals shape the historical forces of globalization and localization and assimilate them in everyday activities such as eating.^[3] I argue that processes occurring in the global macro-social level, i.e., in the materialistic and symbolic production process, are experienced, paradoxically at times, as the opposite in the micro level, i.e., feelings, sensations and tastes produced by an individual's action of eating. The case of organic hummus demonstrates the conditions and limitations of producing organic food in Israel, as well as the lack of congruence between the production process of organic food to the merits and symbols attached to it in distribution and consumption processes.

2.9 I will demonstrate this argument by analyzing the three main stages in the process that turns food products such as chickpeas, sesame seeds, wheat, and olives into hummus: production, distribution, and consumption.

2.10 In discussing the production processes I will present the way that the 'organic' nature of hummus is designed under structural conditions of integration in global trade. The discussion dealing with distribution modes will demonstrate how it leans on symbolic representations of re-localization, and the discussion on consumption will emphasize this practice as more a part of nutritional-health discourse and less motivated by environmental concern or social justice.

First, I will introduce the field of organic food in Israel.

The glocalization of organic food in Israel

3.1 For many people, organic food symbolizes the spearhead of the struggle against the consequences of globalization. Growing, labeling, distributing, and consuming organic food is conceived as an expression of an alternative narrative and as a reaction to the alleged harmful influence of conventional agriculture and food production (Belasco 1993 [1989]; Whatmore & Thorne 1997; Lang & Heasman 2004; Knight 2009: 203-204). But at the same time, organic food symbolizes progress, economic wellbeing, and cultural elitism. The global organic food market changed in the last few years from a network of local producers and consumers to a global institutionalized and industrialized system, and became the food of social elite (Buck et al. 1997; Guthman 1998; 2003). In the United-States, for example, organic food attained the scornful moniker 'Yuppie-chow' (Guthman 2003).

3.2 Since the beginning of the 1980s, and in tandem with cultural and economic neo-liberalization, Israel has seen the rise of a new middle class (Ram 2008). The lifestyle of this category might be characterized by consumption patterns encompassing leisure activities (Kaplan 2010) and whose profession involves designing, processing, and producing knowledge and symbols (Ram 2005:53). The widespread perception in Israel is that organic food is the food of these privileged social groups. An additional cultural-social category ascribed in the public discourse to eating organic food, includes the participants of the 'new age' culture,^[4] who include in their private and public lives alternative activities to the main stream, and hold onto the perception of mutual ecology, which sees the world as an integral holistic entity (Ruah-Midbar 2006).

3.3 Thus, it seems that organic food in Israel expresses the two main axes of glocalization: it is a product of popular culture, driven by the force of the accelerated new – post-Fordist – production system, but also an outcome of the longing to go back to a local experience and the resistance to the cultural homogenization of industrial modernization.

3.4 The formal definition of organic food presented by the IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) includes four main principles that are the basis for defining organic food:^[5] The principle of health – protecting the health of the earth, plants, animals, and humans; The principle of ecology – protecting ecological cycles and their continuing existence; The principle of fairness – between farmers, workers, distributors, merchants, and consumers; and The principle of care – taking responsibility and protecting the public and the environment. This definition was formally adopted by companies supervising organic products in Israel and has been used since 2000.

3.5 How do these principles come to be realized in the complex symbolic and contradictory meanings embedded in organic food in Israel? What are the ways in which the producers and consumers of organic food in Israel organize their affinity to the tension-saturated symbolism of the idea organic? What are the ways in which organic is 'translated' to the Israeli cultural context? The process of turning hummus into a carrier of the organic idea sheds light on these questions.

Production: organic commodity fetishism

4.1 Hummus is a dish that enchants its fans. The fondness for it is great in the Middle East, so much so that the well-known cookbook author Claudia Roden named the dish 'the flagship of the Arabic kitchen' (Litani & Ariedi 2000:24). Actually, hummus is quite a simple food. It is just a puree of dried chickpeas that were soaked in water and cooked until they were soft, pulverized, and mixed with a paste of sesame seeds called 'tahini', and served topped with olive oil^[6]. The production of organic hummus includes the same ingredients, but the raw materials originate in organically grown crops.

4.2 Some rural sociologists define organic food as food that de-mystifies the social relations embedded in the food we eat (Raynolds 2000). Patricia Allen & Martin Kovach, for example, claim that organic food is

intended to undermine the 'commodity fetishism' of the industrial-agricultural process, and is perceived as an object that de-mystifies the hidden layers of food production conditions (Allen & Kovach 2000). Contrary to this, organic hummus in Israel reveals the fetishism of organic food in and of itself.

I will demonstrate this argument by focusing on the main ingredients of hummus.

Chickpeas

4.3 Organic chickpeas are grown mostly in Israel, dried and packaged by one of the big organic food distributors (Adama, Harduf, and Nitzat Haduvdevan) and distributed to supermarkets, stores, and restaurants. A large proportion of Israeli organic chickpeas are exported. Mostly, the chickpeas constitute the local ingredient in Israeli hummus (organic and non-organic). A local supply of chickpeas is possible because Israel's climate is suitable for growing them, and due to the development and improvement of agricultural processes carried out in Israel. In addition, the global demand for Israeli chickpeas and the integration of Israeli agriculture in the global market brought about an increase in the local supply (Retig 1998). Nevertheless, organic hummus producers claim that in the cases in which they did not have locally grown chickpeas, they did not hesitate to use organic chickpeas imported from other places in the world, or as one of the hummus producers phrased it: *'My customers are a lot more interested if the Hummus is made from organic chickpeas, those that are free of pesticides or genetically modified. The question of their origin doesn't really bother them'*^[7].

Organic tahini

4.4 The second main ingredient of hummus is sesame paste called 'tahini'. Many in Israel see tahini as a local product. One of the reasons for the 'Israelization' of tahini is its integration in the 'falafel' dish, another food fixated as a symbol of Israeli nationality. Indeed, in the past, sesame seeds were grown in Israel. But since the growing process requires manual labor, wide open spaces, and coping with a low profit margin, its production in Israel has ceased almost completely. Most of the sesame seeds used to produce tahini are imported to Israel from countries along the equator – Guatemala, Uganda, Eritrea, and mainly from Ethiopia.

4.5 One of the largest tahini production plants in Israel is the Achva-Achdut factory. The factory, which specializes in producing tahini and halva, allocates about 5% of its capacity to producing organic tahini and is the main supplier to the local market. All restaurants in which organic hummus is served use tahini produced by the Achva-Achdut factory. The factory owner testifies about his product: *'Our organic tahini is devoid of preservatives, stabilizers and additives, is grown from environmentally friendly crops and even the salary we pay our workers is good'*^[8]

4.6 It seems that the factory meets most of the principles for growing organic food: health, ecology, and care. But what about the principle of fairness? Well, the Achva-Achdut tahini factory is situated in the Barkan industrial area (Ariel), east of the green line – Palestinian territory under Israeli military control for 43 years. This fact contradicts in a way the principle of fairness. However, it does not prevent the supervising company, Agrior (which is responsible for giving permits for marketing organic produce in Israel) to mark the tahini manufactured in the factory as 'organic'.

4.7 Even though some elements of fairness are neglected, both producers and consumers of organic hummus in Israel are not aware of it and do not see this as a problem. The main questions consumers ask the producers are questions that deal with its 'organicness', healthfulness, and the quality of the tahini. Most of them are troubled whether *'the tahini is produced from whole sesame seeds'* (which are considered healthier) *or perhaps the organic tahini is based on sesame seeds which aren't whole'*^[9]

Organic whole wheat pita bread

4.8 Hummus is usually served accompanied by pita bread. The pita is torn and dipped in the hummus. This form of eating has the name 'wiping'. In most Israeli restaurants it is customary to serve hummus accompanied by pitas made from white flour. In serving organic hummus it is customary to serve pita made from whole wheat flour, which is perceived by many consumers as complimenting the organicness of the hummus and its high quality.

4.9 The whole wheat pita symbolizes opposition to industrialization and the nutritional inferiority symbolized by pita made from white flour. Ironically, those pitas, produced in factories in which non-organic pitas are produced, are the reason that some of the restaurants serving organic hummus are not awarded official organic certification from local supervising companies. In any case, whole wheat pitas can be easily recognized by their taste, texture, and unique color, and they are perceived organic and healthy even without formal endorsement. Some of the restaurants in which organic hummus is served, hold workshops for preparing whole wheat pitas. Perhaps that is why these kinds of pitas are perceived as a product that is not industrialized, produced by hand and therefore symbolize environmental care. But in the Israeli case, the symbolic rootedness of whole wheat flour does not have structural validity since most of the wheat used for producing flour in Israel (including whole wheat organic flour) is imported.^[10]

Olive oil

4.10 It is customary to serve hummus seasoned with large amounts of olive oil. In the last few years olive oil attained a double revival in Israel: first, the health properties and virtues attributed to it accelerated the consumption of olive oil. Second, 'gourmatization' and the creation of refined eating culture, influenced by

global culinary trends [which crown the Mediterranean cuisines and the prevalent use of olive oil (Meneley 2007)], increased its supply and demand.

4.11 Organic olive oil is derived from olives grown without the use of fertilizers and free of pesticides. Most of the organic olive oil consumed in Israel, and used to prepare organic hummus, is from local producers. In the Aba Gil organic restaurant (detailed later), organic olive oil is an important ingredient proudly exhibited and offered for sale. The restaurant owner buys the oil from a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) called 'Green Action'. The goal of this organization is to encourage consumption of fair trade products in Israel under the brand name Saha.

4.12 The International Fair Trade Association (IFAT) focuses on reducing inequality and exploitation experienced by growers in the third world, and does not deal with creating fair trade processes between producers and local consumers in developed countries. In Israel, the organization 'Green Action' made modifications to these global fair trade principles^[11]. Their website states: '*In Israel, as a multi-cultural state comprising many different populations and classes, there is a need to apply the fair trade principles locally*'. Accordingly, the movement began to apply fair trade principles to protect the Palestinian food producers. The organization supplies Palestinian olive oil, which its producers testify is pesticide-free and organic for all intents and purposes. But, in fact, the olive oil distributed by Green Action is not branded as organic and does not carry the label of the Israeli organic supervising companies, since the producers do not have the economic or cultural capital necessary to apply to a supervising company and attain the organic label. And so, in fact, the oil, which seems to meet all four principles defining organic food, does not attain the label of the supervising company and is in fact not considered, institutionally, organic.

4.13 '*As far as I'm concerned – what is important in olive oil is the quality and that it doesn't have remnants of pesticides*'^[12] – claims one organic hummus producer. He points out that the main exchange-value of 'Green Action-Saha' olive oil is quality and health, but not necessarily fairness and decrease of social inequality in Israel.

4.14 To conclude, exploring organic hummus production processes reveals aspects of integration in the global commodities flows, appropriation and colonization, but also aspects of anti-globalization and political opposition.

4.15 However, many of these aspects are not realized and do not manifest themselves in the symbolic level of organic hummus and the values attributed to it in the framework of distribution and consumption, which I will discuss in the next two sections.

Distribution: organic 'hummusia' and 'organic fast-hummus'

5.1 Organic hummus is sold in Israel in two ways: the first is through Aba-Gil restaurant.^[13] This restaurant adopted the distribution concept characterizing restaurants called 'hummusiot'. These are small daytime restaurants, most of which are managed and run by members of one family. Hummus is the main dish served, and it is customary to prepare it early in the morning in huge pots. These restaurants are usually open from morning until noon. During this time all the hummus prepared that morning is sold. These restaurants became widespread in Israel in the 1970s and most of them are run by Palestinians who are Israeli citizens. Some of the hummusiot that became known for their quality and popularity with the Israeli Jewish population carry the name of the Arabic restaurant owner: Abu Hassan, Abu Adham, Abu Taher, Abu Maher, Abu Shukri, and others.

5.2 Gil, a young Jewish entrepreneur from Tel-Aviv, began running a hummusia (hummus restaurant) four years ago. Before that, Gil spent a long period of time in Europe and India, where he studied Tibetan medicine. Gil manages his restaurant in the same format as the hummusiot. That is the reason he called his restaurant 'Aba Gil' as a parody and 'Hebrewization' of the Arabic 'Abu' attached to the popular Arab hummusiot (both Abu and Aba mean father). But, Aba Gil's hummus is presented as organic. Aba Gil achieved relative success and wide media exposure. The restaurant was named 'The first Zionist organic restaurant' (Lavi, 2009) and even tour guides such as 'Wallpaper city guide'^[14] and 'El Al' (Israeli airline) magazine recommend trying the 'national' dish not in its 'regular' or 'industrialized' version, but the 'organic, more authentic version' – their claim^[15].

5.3 Alongside hummus, the restaurant serves a taste of new age culture in Israel. This is expressed by the influence of Far Eastern culture (or at least representation of the east by the west) demonstrated by the color orange (identified with Eastern cultures) that dominates the décor of the restaurant, futon sofas, low tables, and the creation of a serene ambience. In addition, the customers are invited to take part in 'rituals' of preparing compost (organic fertilizer), experience making organic pitas from whole wheat flour, and be updated on spiritual activities and self-healing treatments advertised on the restaurant bulletin board.

5.4 Gil serves foods, in addition to hummus, that are defined by him as vegetarian, healthy, dietetic, and environmentally friendly. Out of all the foods, why was hummus chosen to be the central food of this organic restaurant? Gil explains: '*First of all, I had and still have, a great love for hummus. Second, when I learned about nutrition, I understood that it isn't coincidence that certain foods developed in certain places... the spices used, the plants and vegetables have a deep connection to the place. It is not a coincidence that hummus developed here in the Middle East. It has qualities that are essential here. Hummus speaks for itself, it exists. It is THE food here*'^[16]

5.5 The second way for selling organic hummus is through restaurants situated inside the supermarket chain Eden Teva Market, which specializes in natural, healthy, and organic food products. Eden Teva Market is designed to be similar to the American supermarket chain Whole Foods Market. The hummus counter in the supermarket operates according to the McDonaldization principles, which George Ritzer

(1995) stressed in his essay 'McDonaldization of Society': efficiency, calculability, predictability & control. These restaurants sell organic hummus, whole wheat pitas, organic whole tahini, organic falafel, and organic chopped vegetable salad. These are produced and served utilizing production and marketing methods that allow serving the portion quickly, as a part of a 'business meal', with a fixed menu displayed on large lit posters and employment of temporary workers wearing uniform clothing (in the color green, which symbolizes environmentalism).

5.6 Eating organic hummus in Eden Teva Market thoroughly represents the cultural omnivore characterizing our era (Peterson & Kern 1996; Warde 2000). On the counter on which the diners eat are placemats depicting a reference to hummus from the bible. From the performance aspect, the placemat expresses the assertion that 'hummus is ours, the Israeli Jews'. But this local-symbolic representation is realistically interwoven in other expressions of the global: the hummus served on the counter is given a hybrid expression – the Eden Hummus Bar (like Burger Bar or Sushi Bar). Furthermore, the diner who chooses to eat organic hummus in the supermarket Eden Teva gets to literally encounter a global-cultural supermarket: the way to the hummus stand entails an encounter with a department in which there are hundreds of spices from all over the world; a stand offering over 100 imported tea infusions; a stand in which more than 60 types of legumes imported from Egypt, Mexico, the United States, China, Guatemala, and many other places are displayed; a variety of dried fruits imported from China, North and South America, Canada, Russia, and Central Asia; departments specializing in food products from the Far East; a coffee shop offering different mixtures of imported gourmet coffee; and even a sushi bar. And so, the Israeli symbolic representation of hummus is integrated in 'a taste of the world' and in assimilation of varied 'other' cultural representations.

5.7 The common denominator of the hummusia version and the supermarket version is the prevailing socio-economic conditions and the global ideals that allow tying the concept 'organic' with hummus. These global conditions are those that create the imagined re-localization of hummus. The Americanization of Israeli society, which is expressed in the way the supermarket chain Eden Teva Market is run and designed, is the one renewing the symbolic representation of hummus as a neo-national commodity that signifies a particular past and imagined cultural continuation between Zionism and the ancient Israeli sovereignty. The new age culture represented by the Aba Gil hummusia symbolizes ancient continuity that preceded Israeli sovereignty and expresses ancient merging in the regions' cultures and the sanctity of nature and place, implemented in the post-modern, multi-cultural-Israeli context.

5.8 In the area of distribution, just as in the area of production, I find a discrepancy between the post-modern structural conditions, not to say post-Fordistic, to the symbolic representations of locality and continuity.

Consumption: 'health is first (and also taste)'

6.1 Organic food is perceived both in popular discourse and in marketing practices as a niche product. The relatively high price of organic food in Israel^[17] is the main reason that organic food is consumed mainly by the economic elite, who are capable of paying these premium prices. Yet, the preference for organic food requires not only economic capital but also suitable cultural capital, in order to realize practices of reflexive consumerism. A survey conducted in Israel in July 2010 shows that people with a high level of education are more likely to buy food products that are labeled as natural, healthy, and organic.^[18]

6.2 American publicist David Brooks claims that the word organic (like words such as: rustic, authentic, natural, simple) became one of the adjectives most commonly used by the 'new middle class' in the United States who he calls 'Bobos' – bourgeois-bohemians (Brooks 2000:83). In Israel, organic food is consumed by a similar social category that shows a preference for foods classified as 'simple', 'delicate', 'authentic', and 'unprocessed'. And so, together with other organic foods, organic hummus was integrated mainly in the culinary repertoire of these privileged social groups.

6.3 Indicative interviews conducted with organic hummus consumers in Israel revealed that most of them do not give much thought to the production process of hummus, to the carbon footprint of the foods they consume, and the rest of the production conditions described before^[19]. The main reasons for the preference for organic hummus over non-organic comes from the hummus being *'clean, healthy, lower in calories, and devoid of harmful substances'*^[20]. Another main motive is taste. Many consumers attribute culinary quality to organic hummus: *'This hummus is served hot and fresh. It doesn't cause a feeling of heaviness and is free of the after-taste of preservatives'*^[21]. In his seminal book 'Distinction', Pierre Bourdieu presented the nuanced connection between taste and social class; and pointed out that upper classes prefer tasty, health-giving, light and non fattening foods (Bourdieu, 1984:190). It seems that organic hummus integrated in the Israeli elites culinary repertoire in the same way and is perceived as one of the tasty-healthy commodities used to demonstrate their refined taste.

6.4 When organic hummus consumers are asked what is the reason for their preference for organic hummus over non-organic, environmentalism and social justice are expressed only as marginal motivation. Sustainability, for example, is a term customarily used by consumers, but it seems that the main object they want to sustain is their bodies and health. For example, Tomer, an accountant from Tel-Aviv who eats organic hummus for lunch on a regular basis explained his eating preference: *'I came here (to organic restaurant in Tel-Aviv) because I was looking for healthy food. I've been a vegetarian for many years and I'm strict about yoga and a healthy diet [...]. For work I travel a lot overseas. In Europe and America there is no problem finding healthy restaurants, organic restaurants [...]. I started eating here regularly because of the hummus which is very tasty and has a good texture. I also persuaded some friends from the office to try the hummus and we come here two-three times a week. We all love hummus, so why should we compromise on industrial or unhealthy hummus? In order to save a few shekels? [...] As far as I'm concerned, the main thing is the quality of the hummus and the taste. Regarding organic and the whole*

thing with environmental quality – I recognize the importance of these subjects but to tell the truth – it's only a bonus!^[22]

Summary

6.1 This article demonstrates the centralism of the global socio-economic conditions in the changes taking place in the symbolic and materialistic production processes of hummus in Israel. These enable the creation and flourishing of organic hummus, which has become integrated within the Jewish-Israeli culinary repertoire, as part of the creation of a local variation of cosmopolitan habitus. This habitus is based on accessibility to the 'global buffet' and the symbolic expressions which arise out of it.

6.2 In the framework of the Israeli cosmopolitan habitus, organic hummus serves as a flag of rootedness and belonging to the Israeli collective. It allows for the symbolic interweaving of trans-national and post-national values of environmentalism, sustainability, and cosmopolitan moral orientation. But realistically, the wind in this flag is the wind of capitalization and commodification of social relations in Israel, including the colonial relations between Jews and Arabs. Connecting 'organic' to 'hummus' enables re-designing the dish, while shedding some of its particular representations (Arabic; a reflection of the Jewish-Palestinian conflict) and changing it to a post-particularistic cultural object, devoid of political-historical context.

6.3 Organic hummus weaves the previous representations of the dish hummus (national and Middle-Eastern food) and makes it into a means for demonstrating accessibility to networks of knowledge, information and global similes, to cultural-consumer-post-modern being and to an indicator of cultural cosmopolitization. In this way, in spite of the comparative decline of the modern national identity (Zionism) (Ram 1999:135), and despite the (relative and limited) founding of a civil society and liberalization in Israel (Ben Eliezer 1999), hummus continues to be expropriated from the Arab or Middle-Eastern identity and continues to be appropriated to the Jewish-Israeli culture. Only, with the change of hummus to organic hummus, the appropriation becomes an arbitrator through gentrification of the food in Israel, which is characterized by the symbolic presentation of life style, health, and, to a lesser extent, global environmentalism.

6.4 Indeed, the appearance of a multi-dimensional food such as organic hummus testifies to significant cultural changes taking place in Israeli society, including cultural openness and the formation of cosmopolitan identity. But exploration of the symbolic representations and the structural processes related to Israeli cultural artifacts, teach us something about the nature of this cosmopolitan identity: that the ideals of health and quality constitute the main component in the Israeli organic model. These values express faithfully the new 'Israeliness' that developed beginning in the 1970s. This culture is based on individualism, ambition, and a hedonistic narrative, which is contrary to the collective unification which characterized the earlier Israeliness (Ram, 2005: 48). But does being a cosmopolitan in Israel mean 'adopting an identity free from national borders' as comes from the dictionary definition of the term 'cosmopolitanism'?^[23] Not necessarily.

6.5 The phrase 'rooted cosmopolitanism' (Cohen 1992; Beck 2003) is an expression for simultaneous involvement in the local and the global. Sociologist Sydney Tarrow claims that whereas cosmopolitans move physically and cognitively outside their origins, they continue to be linked to place, to the social networks that inhabit that space, and to the resources, experiences, and opportunities that place provides them with (Tarrow 2005:42). And so, in the case in front of us, the appearance and absorption of symbolic aspects such as 'green thinking' and 'global environmental perception' in Israeli society expresses cosmopolitanism and longing for 'global'. However, the concentration on the self demonstrates the anchoring of the rootedness of cosmopolitanism in its Israeli version. Health and quality, which arise from my research as the main values in Israeli organics, might be related to the concept 'not to be a freier' (best translated as not to be gullible or easily tricked). This concept, used to describe an individual who refuses to be assimilated in the collective or be at its disposal, is a central symbol of the current cultural fabric of Israeli society (Roniger & Feige 1992).

6.6 The Israeli cosmopolitan repertoire is focused on life style and western fashionable trends characterized by commodification of health, gourmatization, and caring for oneself, without fundamental involvement with the other. Therefore, I would like to suggest the concept 'symbolic cosmopolitism' to describe this cultural repertoire.

6.7 Analysis of organic hummus ingredients, in addition to the modes of distribution and consumption, demonstrate that the fetishism of organic food in Israel is designed according to discrepancies between the structural conditions and the symbolic representations. Production of organic food in Israel is mostly based on global procedures; its distribution is based on symbolic patterns of re-localization, but is actually imagined by virtue of global structural processes; and in the consumption processes symbolic post-material patterns of fairness and environmentalism are interwoven, but they are fundamentally tied to the self.

6.8 The realm of organic food in Israel ties producers, distributors, and consumers in a limited discursive field, concentrated mainly on the individual, and does not pretend to turn the act of cooking and eating into a social critique or political-consumer praxis.

6.9 Organic hummus is a commodity saturated in paradoxical aspects, characterized by culinary-ideological dissonance. Materialistically, its ingredients are organic chickpeas, organic tahini, organic whole wheat pita bread, and organic olive oil. But symbolically, it is composed of imaginary re-localization and global ingredients, used by the westernized elite in Israel to represent a cosmopolitan whole-environmental identity.

Notes

- ¹ The Heschel Center for Environmental Learning and Leadership is a non-profit organization. Its declared mission is 'Building a sustainable future for Israeli society – environmentally, socially and economically – through education and reflective activism' <<http://heschel.org.il/eng/about/mission>>
- ² It should be mentioned that culture researchers Dafna Hirsch and Ofra Tene (2010) argued that as a result of industrial manufacture and commercial distribution, hummus was already an established 'national dish' in 1967.
- ³ For example, see the encounter between McDonald's, as the epitome of global fast food, and the Israeli local version of fast food, namely the falafel (Ram 2004).
- ⁴ A category constituting by itself a part of the new middle class in Israel (Tavory 2007:114).
- ⁵ See > http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/principles/index.html<
- ⁶ Of course there are many ways to season hummus. Most common is lemon and garlic, but the chickpeas, tahini and olive oil are mandatory ingredients.
- ⁷ Taken from an interview with an organic hummus producer from Tel-Aviv which took place on 9 September, 2009.
- ⁸ Taken from an interview with the owner of Ahva-Achdut factory which took place on 7 October, 2009.
- ⁹ Taken from an interview with an organic hummus producer from Tel-Aviv which took place on 7 September, 2009.
- ¹⁰ The wheat grown in Israel – organic and non-organic – constitutes 5–25% of the yearly quantity used for grinding flour. The rest of the flour produced in Israel is ground from imported wheat (Central Bureau of Statistics 1998).
- ¹¹ See <<http://www.greenaction.org.il/fair.php>>
- ¹² Taken from an interview with an organic hummus producer from Tel-Aviv which took place on 7 September, 2009.
- ¹³ Recently the name of this restaurant was changed to 'Aba Gil – Organic Food House'.
- ¹⁴ See <<http://www.abagil.com/wp-content/gallery/press-e/press-7.jpg>>
- ¹⁵ See <<http://www.abagil.com/wp-content/gallery/press-e/press-8.jpg>>
- ¹⁶ Taken from an interview with Gil Maoz, an organic hummus producer on 9 September, 2009.
- ¹⁷ In Israel, organic food products are 20–25% more expensive than parallel non-organic products. This data is taken from a survey conducted by Panels Institute for *The Marker* newspaper (in Hebrew) published 8 July, 2010. See: <<http://shivuk.themarker.com/news/index.dot?id=49889>>
- ¹⁸ See <<http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3215322,00.html>>
- ¹⁹ This finding arises from interviews conducted with 17 diners in the following restaurants: Aba Gil, Eden Teva Market, and Yevulim in Tel Aviv; Eden Teva Market in Kfar Saba; and consumers of organic Hummus in the Tel-Aviv harbor farmers market. The diners were chosen randomly during a visit to these restaurants. All the interviews were conducted in the restaurants themselves. In addition, two interviews were conducted with a waiter and waitress from Aba Gil restaurant. All interviews were conducted between the months September 2009 and March 2010.
- ²⁰ Taken from an interview with an organic hummus consumer on 18 November, 2009 (Female, 23 years old).
- ²¹ Taken from an interview with an organic hummus consumer on 4 February, 2010 (Male, 30 years old).
- ²² Taken from an interview with an organic hummus consumer on 6 November, 2009 (Male, 38 years old).
- ²³ The definition is taken from: Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 4th edition, 1989:267, Oxford University Press.

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