

CANADA:
A TASTE OF HOME /
LES SAVEURS DE CHEZ SOI

Edited by Ylenia De Luca
and Oriana Palusci



GUERNICA
World
EDITIONS

TORONTO—CHICAGO—BUFFALO—LANCASTER (U.K.)

2022

Copyright © 2022, the Editors, the Contributors,
and Guernica Editions Inc.

All rights reserved. The use of any part of this publication,
reproduced, transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic,
mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise stored
in a retrieval system, without the prior consent of the publisher
is an infringement of the copyright law.

Guernica Editions Founder: Antonio D'Alfonso

Michael Mirolla, editor

Interior design: Jill Ronsley, suneditwrite.com

Cover design: Allen Jomoc Jr.

Guernica Editions Inc.

287 Templemead Drive, Hamilton (ON), Canada L8W 2W4

2250 Military Road, Tonawanda, N.Y. 14150-6000 U.S.A.

www.guernicaeditions.com

Distributors:

Independent Publishers Group (IPG)

600 North Pulaski Road, Chicago IL 60624

University of Toronto Press Distribution (UTP)

5201 Dufferin Street, Toronto (ON), Canada M3H 5T8

Gazelle Book Services, White Cross Mills

High Town, Lancaster LA1 4XS U.K.

First edition.

Printed in Canada.

Legal Deposit—Third Quarter

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2022939987

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: Canada : a taste of home = les saveurs de chez soi /

edited by Ylenia De Luca and Oriana Palusci.

Other titles: Canada (Guernica (Firm))

Names: De Luca, Ylenia, editor. | Palusci, Oriana, editor.

Series: Guernica world editions ; 66.

Description: Series statement: Guernica world editions ; 66 |

Text in English and French.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20220258643E |

Canadiana (ebook) 20220258708E | ISBN 9781771838252 (softcover) |

ISBN 9781771838269 (EPUB)

Subjects: LCSH: International cooking. | LCSH: Ethnic food industry—

Canada. | LCSH: Cultural pluralism—Canada.

Classification: LCC TX725.A1 C36 2022 | DDC 641.59—dc23

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Oriana Palusci <i>Introduction: A Taste of Home in Multiethnic Canada</i>	1
Nathalie Cooke <i>Reflecting on Home and Away—over a Canadian Literary Meal</i>	11
Marco Modenesi <i>“Un rigatoni jumbo spécial à la pepperoni mambo, ou quelque chose comme ça”.</i> <i>La dimension gastronomique dans Le Matou d’Yves Beauchemin</i>	41
Alessandra Ferraro <i>Repas de famille dans Impala de Carole David ou la déconstruction du stéréotype maternel</i>	56
Éva Zsizsmann <i>Bits and Pieces of Home. Food Imagery as False Memory</i>	72
Carmen Concilio <i>Fasting in Abundance in Canadian Literature</i>	83
Angela Buono <i>Pas et repas : parcours littéraires de la nourriture entre stéréotypes et appartenance identitaire</i>	96
Valeria Zotti <i>La cuisine du terroir dans la littérature québécoise traduite en Italie: les limites des corpus parallèles</i>	109

Licia Canton	
<i>A Taste of Home: Growing Up Italian in Montreal–North</i>	142
Eva Gruber	
<i>Eating, Speaking, Belonging: Food and/as Communication in Canadian Immigrant Fiction</i>	153
Ylenia De Luca	
<i>L'alimentation en situation de minorité.</i> <i>L'apport des immigrants à la diversification de l'espace social alimentaire de Montréal</i>	172
Silvia Domenica Zollo	
<i>Représentations métalinguistiques profanes autour du lexique culinaire québécois</i>	184
Roberta La Peruta	
<i>Selling a Taste of Italy on TripAdvisor: Italian Culinary Terms in Toronto's Little Italy Menus</i>	201
Daniela Fargione	
<i>"vulture capital hovers over our dinner tables": Larissa Lai, Rita Wong and Ecological Transcultural Alliances</i>	233
Simona Stano	
<i>Eating almost the Same Thing: Japanese Cuisine in Canada</i>	250
Julia Siepak	
<i>Recuperating Tastes of Home: Indigenous Food Sovereignty in First Nations Women's Writing</i>	269
Kamelia Talebian Sedehi	
<i>The Lack of Food and Trauma in Basil H. Johnston's Indian School Days</i>	285
Anna Mongibello	
<i>Moosemeat & Marmalade: Analyzing Mediatized Indigenous Food Cultures on TV</i>	299

Esterino Adami <i>A Taste of Diaspora: Linguistic and Cultural Representations of Parsi Food Discourse in Canada</i>	324
Rita Calabrese <i>In a Mississauga Indian Kitchen</i>	341
Marina Zito <i>Pâté chinois, tourtières et autres délices de la cuisine québécoise</i>	360
Mirko Casagrande <i>“Poutine is not Canadian”: Food and National Identity in Canada</i>	369
René Georges Maury <i>Un goût du vin affirmé au Canada—fortes croissances de la consommation vinicole et de la production viticole</i>	389
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	399

SIMONA STANO

*Eating almost the Same Thing:
Japanese Cuisine in Canada*¹

*Les animaux se repaissent,
l'homme mange,
l'homme d'esprit seul sait manger*
—Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

1. Eating almost the same thing: translation, language
and food

“EVERY SENSIBLE AND RIGOROUS THEORY of language shows that a perfect translation is an impossible dream” (Eco 2001: ix). With these words, in his introduction to *Experiences in Translation*, Umberto Eco alludes to the impossibility of existence of *equivallence* in meaning, describing translation as an operation consisting in “saying *almost* the same thing,” namely a form of *similarity* in meaning. The Italian semiotician conceives translation as a special case of interpretation, thus insisting on the fact that it does not simply concern a comparison between two languages, but rather the interpretation of two texts in two different languages, that is

1 This project received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 795025. It reflects only the author’s view, and the Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

to say, a “negotiation” or “act of communication” (Nergaard 1995) between two cultures.

Although specifically referred to verbal language, Eco’s reflections are also crucial to the understanding of the processes of translation of other codes—including food. As we illustrated in Stano 2015a and 2015b, in fact, food can be considered a “language” through and through. Just like language, food preferences and taboos, by revealing our taste, allow us to express our values, beliefs, morals, etc.—that is to say, our “cultural identity.” Moreover, food is a powerful means of communication with other people, and in this sense it represents perhaps the most immediate way by which we can come into contact with other cultures:

In order to be meaningful, every food system should be “ours” and not “theirs”: we cook and eat this way, at this time, in this order, with these ingredients and without those others—because this is the polite way, the right recipe, and because this food is tasty, while others are disgusting. These oppositions can exist within one society—for instance underlining class, age, or clan distinctions. Or they can mark the boundaries between different societies, different structured layers (for instance, religious) of a society, and different cultures (Volli 2015: xiv).

Such a plurality of “languages” inevitably entails a process of translation: what happens when different food systems, or “foodspheres” (Stano 2015b), bump into each other? How does the passage of elements across such spheres take place? Evidently, the idea of a perfect translation is an impossible dream in this case too. Rather, an attempt to “eat almost the same thing” can be made.

Drawing on these considerations, the following paragraphs aim to explore how translation takes place in the food realm and with

what effects of meaning, combining the observation of relevant case studies² with more theoretical reflections.

2. Canada: multiculturalism and food hybridization

Migrations, travel and communications incessantly expose local food identities to food alterities, activating processes of transformation that continuously reshape and redefine such identities and alterities with major consequences. In this sense, Canada is particularly relevant: since 2001, immigration has evidently increased and it still represents the main driver of the country's population growth, with an increase of 321,065 new immigrants in 2018 (Statistics Canada 2018). This entails great diversity and multiculturalism, with relevant effects on the gastronomic level. In fact, Canada has been said to have "a cuisine of cuisines" (Clark in Pandi 2008), with hybridization being elected as its main peculiarity. This is particularly evident in Toronto, the city with the highest proportion of immigrants (46.1% of the total population according to the 2016 census) in Ontario, which in turn is the Canadian province with the biggest immigrated population (29% of the total population, compared with 28% in British Columbia, 21% in Alberta and 14% in Quebec). With over 70 ethnic groups from the Pacific Rim, Asia, the Middle East, Britain and the Mediterranean, the city represents Canada's gastronomic and cultural hub, whose cuisine ranges from classic European fare to Latin American, from Asian to Caribbean flavours, and so on and so forth.

Within such a varied "melting pot," Japanese cuisine is of particular interest. Although having changed considerably over time, as a result of processes of translation and "fusion," hybridizing with

2 More specifically, we draw on an ethno-semiotic research carried out in 2013 in Toronto, Canada, whose main results were published in Stano 2015b and 2016. Relevant findings are used here, further discussing and elaborating them in view of the paper's objectives.

elements typical of other culinary cultures, it is considered one of the most “traditional”³ cuisines of the world. The Japanese have a specific term, *washoku*, to refer to their traditional dietary cultures, in opposition to *yōshoku* (literally “Western food”), which spread in the country after the end of its isolationist foreign policy known as *sakoku*. Added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in December 2013, washoku is celebrated worldwide for its centuries-old cooking techniques and recipes. And even before the United Nations’ acknowledgement, the intention to “protect” Japan’s traditional cuisine brought to the establishment of a government-supported seal of “authenticity” for Japanese restaurants abroad.

Washoku is very rich in variety, both in terms of ingredients and culinary techniques. The usual format of its meals is known as *ichijū-sansai* (“one soup, three sides”): a bowl of soup (*ju*) containing vegetables or tofu, a bowl of plain steamed rice, a small plate of *konomono* (pickled seasonal vegetables), and *sai* (fish, tofu, meat or vegetables). Often overlooking such a variety, most Japanese restaurants abroad offer menus basically centred on sushi—which is certainly emblematic of the Japanese foodsphere but is not its only constituent. Despite its consistent Japanese community, gastronomic services in Toronto have also mainly served sushi to their customers, at least until the last decade: while Vancouver, being on the Pacific Rim, opened up to other specialties (such as *ramen*, *soba*, *udon*, *yakitori*, *tonkatsu*, *okonomiyaki*, etc.) before, “Toronto wasn’t ready” (Matsumoto in Mintz 2020). Sushi is therefore crucial to the understanding of the processes of translation of the Japanese culinary code and the effects of meaning deriving from them. Based on this consideration, the following paragraphs provide a semiotic analysis of “traditional” sushi, then taking into consideration some emblematic cases of “translation” served in Toronto.

3 Although mainly referred to an “original” and crystallized status, “tradition” is a dynamic process involving continuous transformations and changes—in a sense, a series of “translations” which unceasingly redefine it (cf. Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983; Marrone 2016; Stano 2014, 2015b).

2.1. Traditional sushi

There is no evidence of the actual origins of sushi, but it is thought that it was introduced in Japan in the ninth century (Mouritsen 2009: 15). Originally, it represented a culinary technique for long-term preservation, namely a process of fermentation of fish stimulated by wrapping it in soured fermenting rice, so that the fermenting rice and fish resulted in a sour taste—which explains the name *sushi*, literally meaning “sour-tasting”. Traditionally, when the fermented fish was taken out of the rice, only the former was eaten, while the latter was discarded (Itou *et al.* 2006). The reduction—almost elimination—of such a process of fermentation⁴ (cf. Zschock 2005) and the new techniques of preparation and practices of consumption of sushi have profoundly changed it, leading to a great variety of fillings, toppings, condiments and shapes.

Building on existing literature describing the main varieties of sushi,⁵ we introduced their semiotic analysis in Stano 2015b. On the level of *configuration* (cf. Greimas 1973), we classified the main components of sushi into humid ingredients (fresh vegetables, such as avocado, cucumber or carrots, raw or cooked fish, roe and condiments) *vs.* dry elements (dehydrated *nori*, dried seeds), with rice occupying an intermediate position between these two poles. In fact, the liquids (water and soy vinegar) used during the process of boiling permeate the previously dried grains (i.e. “natural”

4 Long fermentation still characterizes a few forms of sushi, which are not very common. An example is *narezushi*, in which skinned and gutted fish are stuffed with salt, placed in a wooden container, immersed in salt again and finally weighed down with a heavy pickling stone. After six months, during which the water seeping out should be constantly removed, the sushi may be eaten, remaining edible for another six months or more.

5 See in particular Detrick 1981; Hosking 1995; Ashkenazi and Jacob 2000; Barber 2002; Dekura, Treloar and Yoshii 2004; Lowry 2005; Mouritsen 2009; Zschock 2005; a synthesis can be found in Stano 2015b.

rice,⁶ in Lévi-Strauss's 1964 terms), thus making "culturalized" rice move toward the humid end of the spectrum. On the other hand, the particular practices of preparation of sushi rice and the use of sugar and salt ensure a certain degree of cohesion among the cooked grains, which are not used and eaten separately but pressed together to form wider units, where they tend not to be clearly discernible nor too easily separable from each other. Therefore, from a semantic point of view, the grains of rice lose importance *per se*, moving the focus of attention to the solidity of the whole piece they become part of—which, compared to the fish and other ingredients such as fresh vegetables or roe, cannot be considered humid but should be rather placed on the continuum between the two poles. Furthermore, "culturalized" rice shares another important characteristic with one of the main dry ingredients of sushi: nori. While the latter allows consumers to hold makizushi between chopsticks (or temaki between their fingers), preventing their breakage or decomposition (*functional* level), the former has the same function in nigirizushi, whose rice grains are glued to each other because of sugar and other substances used in or resulting from the process of boiling (e.g. the starch, partially eliminated by the common practice of washing rice before cooking it, yet still present), thus forming small compact pieces that diners may pick up using chopsticks or their own hands.

Moreover, as regards the structure of sushi, we identified other crucial factors that make it possible to distinguish its ingredients: *external* elements *wrap* the *internal* ones, which are on the contrary *wrapped* by the outer ones. In relation to such oppositions (wrapping *vs.* wrapped and outside *vs.* inside), the components of

6 Both rice and nori are already "culturalized" at the beginning of the sushi preparation process, since they are dried. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that even the slightest intervention of man on any substance forces it to abandon the pole of Nature and move toward that of Culture. Here we use the adjective "natural" to strengthen the opposition between these ingredients and the results of their elaboration by cooks during the sushi preparation process.

sushi are characterized by interchangeability, since the same element could correspond either to one pole or another depending on the type of sushi. In the case of futomaki, hosomaki or temaki for instance, nori is the external element wrapping both rice—in an intermediate position, at the same time wrapped (by nori) and the wrapping (of fresh vegetables and fish)—and other ingredients placed at the centre of sushi. On the other hand, in uramaki, nori finds itself in an intermediate position, with fish and vegetables on the inside—wrapped by it—and rice on the outside—the wrapping of it. A second layer of seeds or roe then reinforces this wrapping structure, enclosing the whole piece. The only element that never changes its position or function despite the different configurations of sushi is its centre, made of raw fish and fresh vegetables.

This fact has major implications on the previously analyzed oppositions: dry *vs.* humid, on the one hand; and nature *vs.* culture, on the other. In maki, such contrasts are characterized by *gradualness*: while in futomaki, hosomaki and temaki, the “culturalized” rice mediates between the humidness of raw fish and fresh vegetables on the inside and the dryness of the seaweed on the outside, in the more elaborate structure of uramaki, the intermediation element becomes the “culturalized” nori, which, once put between the fish/vegetables and the cooked—and therefore partially humid—rice, absorbs part of their water, abandoning its dry nature to draw closer to humidness. The same gradualness characterizes the passage from nature to culture: given that even the most simple and slight intervention of man on any ingredient—be it the result of such process either raw or cooked—draws it away from the first pole only to move towards the second one, as it implies a certain degree of elaboration, we should ascribe the elements composing sushi to different positions on the continuum between these two extremes (for more details, cf. Stano 2015b). It is remarkable that in all the main types of traditional sushi, the elements closest to the pole of nature are placed either at the centre (raw fish and fresh vegetables) or on the outside (roe, seeds, or “natural” nori), with rice (the preparation practice of which places it in terms of proximity

towards the “rotten” rather than to the “cooked,” according to Lévi-Strauss’s terminology) mediating their opposition. Finally, nori can occupy various positions: while appearing closer to the unelaborate when wrapping sushi from the outside, the seaweed draws closer to culture in uramaki, where its further “culturalization” makes it occupy a position similar to that of rice, to which it is also contiguous.

The configuration of sushi therefore seems to emphasize the importance of the so-called *tsutsumi* or “wrapping principle,” which is central to the Japanese semiosphere and characterizes various spheres, from the presentation of gifts to the corporeal and temporal dimension, from the organization of space to the presentation of the self and the use of language (Hendry 1993). Definitely, sushi can be conceived as the prototype (Eco 1997) of all “wrapping objects”: although its configuration changes when considering different typologies, its structure always implies more layers, with an *oku* (“centre” or “heart”) representing its unchanging element. Moreover, the highlighted gradualness characterizing sushi stresses the importance of the centre, making its contrasts with the external layer—somehow “permeable” and “crossable” according to a precise order.

Such an order is even more important where *taste* is concerned: not only does the heart of the sushi host its most “natural” ingredients, but it always represents its most savoury part. This is true both in the cases of complete wrapping, as in the previously mentioned examples, and when it is partial, such as in nigirizushi or oshizushi. Notwithstanding the structural differences between these types of sushi, on the one hand, and “sushi rolls,” on the other, the centre still remains its most flavoursome part and the one most difficult to access. In fact, in the case of hosomaki, futomaki, temaki and uramaki, the tastiest ingredients correspond to the raw fish and the vegetables (which are located at the centre), since wasabi—which is tastier than them—is not put into the plate itself, but can be added later by diners themselves. By contrast, in nigirizushi and oshizushi, the most savoury element—wasabi—is not visible, but is

generally concealed between the different layers, in a hidden centre that reveals itself only at a later time, when it comes into contact with the tongue.

2.2. “Translated” sushi: Shinobu and Guu Izakaya in Toronto

What happens to the traditional configurations of sushi and the effects of meaning resulting from them when such a food is prepared and consumed in a different foodsphere? We intend to answer this question by comparing two relevant case studies analysed in Toronto from February to August 2013: a restaurant where the “traces” left by translation processes seem to be concealed as much as possible, resulting in one of those places usually referred to as “traditional” Japanese restaurants; and a restaurant where the translation processes are instead explicitly shown, enhancing the relationship with the context in which it is inserted.

2.2.1 Guu Izakaya

First established in Vancouver in 1993, Guu Izakaya opened a new restaurant in Toronto in 2009. Named after the common Japanese place for after-work drinking (where sake is served together with other drinks and foods), it aims to combine tradition with modernity, and washoku with local tastes. Probably because of its origin, as mentioned above, it overthrows the common predominance of sushi in Japanese restaurants abroad in favour of mainly cooked courses including meat, fish, soups, noodles and various rice-based plates. Nonetheless, different options are generally present on the menu of the day, including interesting forms of “fusion” with the local foodsphere.



Figure 1. Plates served at Guu Izakaya (from top left to bottom right: *Karaage Roll*, *Chirashi Don*, *Unagi Chirashi Udon*, *Karubi Don*).

In the so-called *Karaage Roll*, for instance, an external layer of rice (partially sprinkled with a few sesame seeds) encloses a strip of nori, in turn wrapping a heart of lettuce and *karaage*⁷ chicken. The adaptation to local tastes is evident not only in the ingredients used—which nonetheless are assembled maintaining a certain degree of gradualness with respect to both the nature/culture and dry/humid oppositions described above—but also in the seasoning accompanying the course: mayonnaise. The presence of lemon, generally included only in *chirashi*, further enhances this aspect, recalling the common local habit of squeezing it onto fried meat or fish. The processes of “translation” are therefore exalted in this case, reflected by the position of the six rolls, allowing eaters to clearly identify the ingredients used.

⁷ *Karaage* consists in deep-frying chicken or other types of meat or fish in oil after marinating them in a mix of soy sauce, garlic and ginger, and coating them with a seasoned wheat flour of potato starch mix.

No other variety of maki or nigiri was encountered during the period of observation, but various versions of chirashizushi and donburi were present. *Chirashi Don*, presented as “special assorted sashimi on sushi rice,” is generally served in a white ceramic bowl with a white ceramic spoon, and a small dish with two separate sections for soy sauce and wasabi. The first remarkable aspect concerns the denomination of the plate. Donburi (literally “bowl”), frequently abbreviated to *don*, consists of a dish including fish, meat, vegetables and other ingredients served over rice. More specifically, *kaisendon* is a bowl comprising thinly sliced sashimi on rice. One of the main differences distinguishing *kaisendon* from *chirashizushi* concerns the rice: while the former is made with plain steamed rice, the latter contains sushi rice. The denomination of the plate served at Guu Izakaya therefore reveals a sort of paradox, since its description makes the presence of sushi rice clear, therefore using the word *don* to reference only the container in which the food is served (which is itself generally referred to as a donburi). As regards the food-material, in this case fish, the variety is reduced to some slices of salmon, seabass, tuna and salmon roe. Vegetables include cucumber, white cabbage and ornamental chives. With respect to the structural configuration of the dish, it should be remarked that seaweed is not placed between the rice and the fish, as is usual in *washoku*, but rather sprinkled in very thin strips all over the plate, breaking the above-described “wrapping structure” and generating an effect of visual “disorder,” making the course resemble a salad. Furthermore, wasabi is not included in the dish (as usual) but is placed in a different container, while *gari* (ginger), which generally accompanies this dish, is totally absent.

Unagi Chirashi Udon consists in “grilled eel and simmered salmon on rice.” On the one hand, it recalls a very common Japanese course, *unadon* (sometimes spelled *unagidon*): a donburi dish with sliced eel served on rice. On the other hand, the inclusion of salmon—which is widely consumed within the local foodsphere—introduces an element of novelty, adapting it to the

local taste. The chromatic and structural configuration of the plate further enhances this aspect, making it look like a salad, just like in the previously described case. Furthermore, wasabi and soy sauce are in this case substituted by thinly sliced celery, crumbled white onions and candied ginger, marking a further detachment from the Japanese “tradition.”

Adaptation to local tastes also characterizes the *Karubi Don*, described as “Japanese Style BBQ Beef Ribs on Rice,” where meat substitutes fish, also introducing another innovation: the use of barbecue sauce, very common in Canada. Moreover, green salad is added to the plate, preventing people from seeing the rice and thus making the plate *seem* what it *is not* (in Greimasian words, giving the *illusion/lie* of a meat course lying on salad). The three vegetables (sliced carrots, cucumber and cabbage) accompanying the dish further enhance its adaptation to the local foodsphere. Finally, as regards to the denomination of the plate, it should be noticed that the word “chirashi” disappears: this is the case of a proper donburi, including cooked meat on plain steamed rice, although altered to suit local tastes.

2.2.2. Shinobu

Shinobu presents itself as an “Authentic Japanese Restaurant,” paying particular attention to the preparation and design of plates, which are cooked and served exclusively by its Japanese staff.

With respect to the supply of sushi, in addition to the most common nigiri, diners can find different types of maki (referred to as “sushi rolls” on the menu), which generally introduce remarkable variations. *California rolls*, although keeping the same denomination of the common American adaptation of Japanese maki—where avocado is used instead of or together with raw fish, especially salmon—are subject to changes in relation to the food material, including avocado, cucumber, or fish cake at their centre, as well as an external layer of tobiko wrapping them. More evident changes



Figure 2. Plates served at Shinobu (*Volcano Rainbow rolls* and—bottom right—*Spicy Salmon Don*).

affect the other rolls, which take on a spicy characterization (e.g. *spicy tuna roll*), and also a vegetarian connotation (e.g. *avocado rolls*, *cucumber rolls*, *avocado* and *tofu rolls*, and *sweet potato rolls*). Many plates, moreover, include crunchy components, such as tempura or other fried ingredients. Crispiness reaches its peak with the *Volcano Rainbow rolls*, which have no particular linguistic description in the menu, except for the fact that they are served with honey sauce. The visual dimension offers more details about the plate, introducing its practices of preparation: the rolls are brought to the table by the waiter who, after pouring honey sauce over them, caramelizes the topside with a small blowtorch. Such practice recalls the words of Roland Barthes in *Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption* (1961):

The Americans [the same could be said with respect to the Canadian foodsphere, which has been largely influenced by the American one, *NdA*] seem to oppose the

category of sweet [...] with an equally general category that is not, however, that of *salty*—understandably so, since their food is salty and sweet to begin with—but that of *crisp* or *crispy*. *Crisp* designates everything that crunches, crackles, grates, sparkles [...]. Quite obviously, such a notion goes beyond the purely physical nature of the product; *crispiness* in a food designates an almost magical quality, a certain briskness and sharpness, as opposed to the soft, soothing character of sweet foods. (ET 1997: 23).

In the case of the Volcano Rainbow Rolls, such an opposition is overcome thanks to the practices of food preparation, which meaningfully take place before the diners' eyes. The addition of fire, whose contact with the sushi is intermediated by the honey sauce, marks the passage from nature to culture not exactly in terms of raw/cooked (after caramelizing with the blowtorch, in fact, only the superficial parts of the toppings—the salmon and avocado—partially abandon their raw status because of the heat generated by the flame), but rather in terms of *smooth/crispy*. It is precisely the honey (*sweet*) sauce that, by reacting to fire, makes the transformation from the *soft, smoothing* character of the topline (i.e., avocado and salmon, along with the honey poured on them) of the rolls to a crunchy, crackling, sparkling—in other words, *crispy*—layer, “wrapping” them as much as possible. On the other hand, the smooth *vs.* crunchy contrast is partially kept by the presence of the melted sauce trickling to the bottom of the sushi, on a high/low axis. A major implication of such a transformation should be remarked upon: before the addition of fire, the slickness of the rolls—due to the presence of raw humid toppings, such as avocado and salmon, and of the sweet honey sauce poured onto them—would make them difficult to pick up using chopsticks. The transformation caused by the caramelization process (fire + intermediation of sauce) eliminates the slickness, making the sweet flavour of the sauce, along with its smooth character, slide to the bottom of each roll, therefore facilitating the action of the

chopsticks. “Translation” and “tradition” are therefore presented as complementary in this case, precisely thanks to the action of the providers of the eating experience.

The case of the bowls of rice, presented as donburi (although containing sushi rice and raw fish), is partially different. The Spicy Salmon Don, for instance, is described as “spicy salmon, sesame, flying fish roe, sushi rice.” The presence of nori further enhances its proximity to chirashizushi, although it becomes a sort of decoration, untidily positioned along the border of the container, in an upper position. This distances the seaweed from the pole of culture compared to its common usage in chirashi, where the humidity of the two layers enclosing it (humid raw fish, above, and semi-humid cooked rice, below) re-humidify the previously dried vegetable. Moreover, the visual configuration of the bowls suggests the idea of a salad, although in this case, the presence of wasabi and gari on the top of the fish and the absence of any particular local ingredient strengthen its relationship with Japanese “tradition.” On the other hand, the spicy character of the plate, strongly underlined by its name, hankers to local tastes.

3. Eating almost the same thing

As highlighted, the traces left by translation processes emerge at different levels, from the arrangement of foods within the plate to the characteristics of food materials and the display of particular of preparation practices, and even the provision of specific consumption practices. Specifically, as regards the material level, some dishes seem particularly sensitive to the processes of adaptation to the local foodsphere, causing interesting processes of resemanticization. Chirashizushi is emblematic in this sense, since it involves not only differences in the nature of the foods contained in the dish—which come to include components typical of the local foodspheres—but also at the structural level—with nori becoming visible wrapping instead of being wrapped and concealed—and the deriving

investments of meaning. Differences become even more evident in the case of other types of sushi, which, although more formalized, change in different ways. New ingredients are introduced, while others are eliminated or visually concealed. New configurations affect the wrapping/wrapped relationship, as well as the raw/cooked contrast and the related semantic oppositions. Beyond the peculiarities of each case, it is interesting to notice how the material dimension can never be conceived as separate from the symbolic and semantic level: ingredients, recipes, tools, etc. sum up and signalize specific aesthetics, practices, values and meanings.

This evidently recalls the dynamics described by Eco: even when the promise of an “authentic” experience is showcased, it is impossible to prepare, eat, look at—in other words to “experience”—the “same” sushi as that found in washoku; only similarity (“almost” the same sushi as that found in washoku) can be pursued. A negotiation process always takes place, and in the case of food becomes even more evident since it involves multiple aspects and dimensions. Ingredients change, their combinations change, the sensorial and aesthetic responses they activate change ... Yet the reference to the Japanese foodsphere remains perceptible, more or less in the background, marking the success of a cuisine that has established its (culinary) identity by promoting a process of “admission” (Landowski 1997) of otherness (i.e. appreciating food products, practices and aesthetics precisely because it is “theirs” and “ours,” to cite the terms used by Volli 2015)—instead of forms of “assimilation” simply reducing it to its internal codes. After all, as Paul Ricoeur (1990) reminds us, identity is constituted by an inextricable tie between *selfsameness* and *selfhood* or *ipseity*: while the former relies on unchangeable aspects, the latter is rather based on change and continuous “adjustments” (cf. Landowski 2005). In this sense, identity implies alterity to such an extent that it cannot be grasped without it. The cases considered show that, even more than language, food represents an easily crossable frontier, a space where the incommensurability of cultures gives way to encounter and comparison. Such an encounter, although partial, makes cultures

acknowledge themselves as different and separate but not necessarily irreconcilable. The Canadian foodsphere definitely shows us that this is one of the greatest values of the “almostness” characterizing translation processes.

Works Cited

- Ashkenazi, Michael and Jacob, Jeanne (2000), *The Essence of Japanese Cuisine. An Essay on Food and Culture*, Hampden Station, Baltimore: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Barber, Kimiko (2002), *Sushi. Taste and Technique*, London: DK Publishing.
- Barthes, Roland. “Pour une psychosociologie de l’alimentation contemporaine,” *Annales ESC*, XVI, 5 (1961): 977–986. English Translation (1997), “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption,” in C. Counihan and P. Van Esteric (eds.), *Food and Culture: A Reader*, New York and London: Routledge, 20–27.
- Barthes, Roland (1970), *L’Empire des signes*, Paris: Skira. English Translation (1983), *Empire of Signs*, New York: Hill and Wang.
- Dekura, Hideo, Treloar, Brigid and Yoshii, Ryuichi (2004), *The Complete Book of Sushi*, Singapore: Periplus Ed.
- Detrick, Mia (1981), *Sushi*, San Francisco: Chronicle Books.
- Eco, Umberto (1997) *Kant e l’ornitorinco*, Milan: Bompiani. English Translation (1999), *Kant and the Platypus: Essays on language and Cognition*, Orlando: Harcourt Brace.
- Eco, Umberto (2001), *Experiences in Translation*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Greimas, Algirdas Julien. “Un problème de sémiotique narrative : les objets de valeur,” *Langages*, 31,8 (1973): 13–35.
- Hendry, Joy (1993), *Wrapping Culture: Politeness, Presentation, and Power in Japan and Other Societies*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence (1983), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Hosking, Richard (1995), *A Dictionary of Japanese Food: Ingredients & Culture*, Tokyo-North Clarendon-Singapore: Tuttle Publishing.
- Itou, Kouji *et al.* “Changes of proximate composition and extractive components in *narezushi*, a fermented mackerel product, during processing,” *Fisheries Science*, 72, 6 (2006): 1269–1276.
- Landowski, Eric (1997), *Présence de l’autre. Essais de socio-sémiotique II*, Paris: PUF.
- Landowski, Eric (2005), *Les interactions risquées—Nouveaux Actes Sémiotiques*, 101–103, Limoges: Presses universitaires de Limoges.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1964), *Mythologiques I. Le cru et le cuit*, Paris: Plon. English Translation (1969), *The Raw and the Cooked*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lowry, Dave (2005), *The Connoisseur’s Guide to Sushi: Everything You Need to Know about Sushi*, Boston: Harvard Common Press.
- Marrone, Gianfranco (2016), *Semiotica del gusto. Linguaggi della cucina, del cibo, della tavola*, Milan-Udine: Mimesis.
- Mintz, Corey. “How Japanese cuisine has blossomed in Toronto,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 3 2020, available at <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/toronto/article-how-japanese-cuisine-has-blossomed-in-toronto/> (last access: April 27, 2020).
- Mouritsen, Ole G. (2009), *Sushi: Food for the Eye, the Body & the Soul*, New York: Springer.
- Nergaard, Siri (1995), *Teorie contemporanee della traduzione*, Milan: Bompiani.
- Pandi, George, “Let’s eat Canadian, but is there really a national dish?” *The Gazette (Montreal)*, April 5 2008, available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20120823171831/http://www.canada.com/montrealgazette/columnists/story.html?id=6ad83058-3f7b-4403-8aa8-dce47b16884e> (last access: April 26, 2020)
- Ricoeur, Paul (1990), *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris: Seuil. English Translation (1992), *Oneself as Another*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Stano, Simona. “The Invention of Tradition: The Case of Pasta, one of the Symbols of Italian Identity,” *Signs & Media* 8 (2014): 136–152.

- Stano, Simona (2015a), *Cibo e identità culturale / Food and Cultural Identity—Lexia*, 19–20. Rome: Aracne.
- Stano, Simona (2015b), *Eating the Other. Translations of the Culinary Code*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Stano, Simona. “Lost in translation: Food, Identity and Otherness,” *Semiotica*, 211,1/4 (2016): 81–104.
- Volli, Ugo (2015), “Preface,” in S. Stano, *Eating the Other. Translations of the Culinary Code*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, xiii–xvi.
- Zschock Day (2005), *The Little Black Book of Sushi: The Essential Guide to the World of Sushi*, New York: Peter Pauper Press, Inc.