

Investigation of the Effects of Food Criticism on Gastronomy [CITATION]

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Evaluation of Gastronomy Items in Roman Mosaic Art

Abstract

This study examines the importance and impact of food criticism within the field of gastronomy. The study utilized literature and document reviews, as well as content analysis methods. The conceptual framework of food criticism was established through a literature review. The findings were evaluated using content analysis, and the effects of food criticism on gastronomy were categorized into four main themes. Upon examining these themes, it was found that modern food criticism began with gourmets and gastronomes who educated society about food. The yearbooks published by La Reynière between 1802 and 1812 established criteria for food evaluations. In the 1900s, the Michelin brothers published a red guide for hotels and restaurants in France, a practice that continues to this day. After the 2000s, with the advancements in communication technologies, many websites were launched where customers could create interactive content and evaluate restaurants. As a result, while food criticism has evolved from gastronomy and gourmet traditions, it has yet to achieve the recognition it deserves within the field of gastronomy.

Keywords: *Gastronome, Gastronomy, Gourmet, Food Criticism, Food Critic.*

Introduction

Although criticism generally carries a negative connotation, the Turkish Language Association defines it as "the work of examining to find and show both the right and wrong sides." Criticism involves evaluating both the positive and negative aspects of an event or phenomenon logically and understandably, with an objective and impartial perspective. The concept of criticism has gained importance in gastronomy, as it has in the fields of art, literature, and thought.

The term "gastronomy" was first used in the title of a poem in a literary work in France in 1801. This concept is defined as a discipline that covers the most appropriate enjoyment of food and beverages or all elements related to food. The famous gourmet Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin defined gastronomy as a field that "scientifically deals with the systematic examination of everything that includes human nutrition."

Those who evaluate food production and consumption in the field of gastronomy are gastronomers and gourmets. Gastronomers conduct research to guide society and try to benefit it with the data they obtain. Today, developments in technology and communication have brought different perspectives to the food and beverage industry. One of these perspectives is food criticism. Food critics taste and analyze food, share their dining experiences with the public, and evaluate various aspects of restaurants.

Conceptual Framework: Contribution of the Historical Process to Food Criticism

The first figures to contribute to food criticism in the historical process were Marcus Gavius Apicius, Archestratus, and Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin. Apicius researched the names and origins of Roman dishes with his Roman cookbook "Apicius," while Archestratus recommended the best dishes in the Mediterranean world in his poem "Hedypatheia." Brillat-Savarin laid the foundations of modern gastronomy in his work "Physiology of Taste."

The term "gourmet" is derived from the French word "gourmand" and was first used in the 1500s. The chefs who made French cuisine lighter during the reign of Louis XVI are considered the first modern-day gourmets. In the early 19th century, Alexandre Balthazar Laurent Grimod de La Reynière became

one of the founders of modern gastronomy with his work "L'almanach des gourmands." Grimod is known as the first critic to evaluate restaurants.

In the 20th century, the Michelin Brothers published the first hotel and restaurant guide and began awarding stars to restaurants. Starting in 1926, the Michelin Guide became a system that brought respect to restaurants. In the USA, Duncan Hines published the "Adventures in Good Eating" guide, and Jonathan Gold became the first food critic to win a Pulitzer Prize in 2007.

Today, food criticism has gained importance as a new field with the rapid development of the gastronomy sector. However, this profession has not yet gained full respect worldwide. In Turkey, there are a few food critics such as Tuğrul Şavkay, Artun Ünsal, Vedat Milör, and Mehmet Yaşın. This study aims to investigate the impact and contribution of food criticism to the field of gastronomy.

Method

This study aims to determine the importance of food criticism in the field of gastronomy and its future effects. The scarcity of literature sources on food criticism emphasizes the originality of the study. The study was designed using qualitative research methods, and the concepts of gastronomy and gourmet, as well as the historical process, were examined to determine the conceptual framework of food criticism. Data were collected through the document review method; restaurant ratings were obtained from online sources. The effects of food criticism on gastronomy were evaluated using the content analysis method, and the findings were interpreted by dividing them into themes. The validity and reliability of the study were ensured by similarly interpreting the results by three different researchers

Results

Michelin Stars

- **Origins:** Started as a guide to restaurants in Paris, Lyon, and Marseille.
- **System:** Established in 1936 with a system of zero, one, two, and three stars.
- **Star Meanings:** One star means "very good in its field," two stars mean "excellent cuisine," and three stars mean "worth a special trip."
- **Chef Suicides:** Alain Zick (1996) and Bernard Loiseau (2003) committed suicide due to the loss of stars.
- **Confidentiality:** Identities of inspectors are kept secret, and restaurants evaluated learn their results at the end of the process.
- **Criticism:** The Michelin Guide has been criticized for focusing on French cuisine and being more lenient towards Japanese cuisine.
- **Impact:** Michelin-starred restaurants see a 20-30% increase in business.

Forbes Travel Guide (FTG)

- **Established:** A travel guide for US drivers founded in 1985.
- **Evaluation:** Uses two formats: facility visits and service evaluations.
- **Rating System:** Uses a five-star rating system.

American Automobile Association (AAA)

- **Establishment:** Founded in Chicago, Illinois, in 1902.
- **Rating:** Rates restaurants and hotels as three, four, and five diamonds.
- **Rating System:** Food taste and service order are scored 80%, and the ambiance of the establishment is scored 20%.

Zagat

- **Establishment:** Founded in New York in 1979 by Tim and Nina Zagat.
- **Rating:** Uses a 30-point system based on customer surveys.
- **Digitalization:** Acquired by Google in 2011 and integrated into Google Maps.

General Findings

- **Food Criticism:** Its impact on gastronomy and rating systems plays an important role in the prestige and business volumes of restaurants.
- **Privacy and Trust:** The secrecy of the rating processes increases the reliability of the systems.
- **Psychological Effects:** Ratings can create serious psychological pressure on chefs.
- **Criticism and Innovations:** Systems have faced criticism and undergone various innovations over time.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Today, to be a successful food critic, it is necessary to receive a good education in gastronomy, writing, journalism, or communication; to learn various foreign languages; to follow innovations in the food and beverage sector; and to be familiar with world cuisines. Food critics should be open to food cultures, have a wandering spirit, have developed intercultural communication skills, and be able to combine relative concepts in taste. Critics should be able to methodologically evaluate the history of food, its journey from soil to table, and the transformation of food into a work of art.

To be a successful food critic, it is necessary to be knowledgeable about food, adventurous, able to manage time well, have creative writing skills, and be able to meet reader expectations. Critics should make consistent and sensible comments, use original photographs, communicate with the pioneers of the sector, and be objective. Critics are generally artistic, creative, intuitive, and impressive. With the development of the internet, food criticism has also undergone a positive transformation.

Food critics' comments are important for the gastronomy world and lead to new taste discoveries. Critics should be objective, but biases can still occur. Food criticism should not be seen as an elitist job; it should benefit society from an intellectual perspective and have an ethical background. Food criticism should transform into a form that can benefit the entire food and beverage sector and should approach society as a whole with empathy. As a result, food criticism has not yet fully expressed itself in the field of gastronomy, but it has developed throughout history.

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