
Madhur Jaffrey’s 1981 *Vegetarian Cooking* met with much success partly due to the absence of a clear textual tradition. Even as we understand that cookbooks were often written for “foreign” audiences, a critical engagement with food studies in South Asia needs to engage with oral sources and their re-configuration through food blogs in the digital arena.

II. Cookbooks we began to associate with the Indian Sub-continent’s culinary history began in the Mughal period. As “Gastro Politics in Hindu South Asia” reminded us, cookbooks often become the “literature of exile, nostalgia, and loss.” Now since 1968 when Kala Primlani’s *Indian Cooking* and Meenakshi Ammal’s *Cook And See* were first published in 1968, the modern genre of community cookbooks has taken root. In all of these, food cultures act as proxies for expressions of social relations and displays of power.

III. The need to consolidate collective identity often finds ultimate expression in the form of the cookbook as the fount of tradition. Today the food blog can be seen as the digital cookbook. In blogs, the urge to authenticity versus the urge to popularity finds individual storytelling via individual adaptation of varieties of family food traditions. As opposed to the perception of a shared lifestyle and community identity, new food sites cultivate the embodied self and community through gastronomy as hobby. New online communities re-draw the lines of “individual” taste and community identity through food.

IV. At FLAME University, students in Literary and Cultural Studies were asked to compare food histories by researching regional culinary history and documenting these findings through blogs they made.

Histories of communities written in food blogs animate these questions: the relationship between ‘production’ and ‘consumption’, the study of food habits, the links between social stratification and, culinary practices, and the study of food habits in a comparative context as a history of migration and globalization.

STUDENT WORKS:

V. Though Colleen Sen and Lizzie Collingham embark on a macro history of food cultures and their journeys, food studies on India cannot skip over the politics of food identity in the name of the internationally neutral category, “Indian food.” Just as restaurants have become spaces to explore culinary otherness, and TV shows offer up food porn, the internet remains a site of desired authenticity and niche interest in specifically regional foods. In undoing the category of “Indian” food, often homage is being paid to community memory or domestic familiarity through a new representation of the regional.

WORKS CITED


Khare, R. S. The Hindu Hearth and Home.