



SEMIOTICS OF DIGITAL **GASTROMANIA**

editors of the issue

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CALL FOR PAPERS

Since the adoption of Web 2.0, the Internet has chosen food and nutrition as its favorite topic. The Chowhound boards, for example, have been active since '97, a fact which speaks volumes about how much we owe the "great conversation" of online social media for the culinary megatrend we call—according to Marrone (2014)—*gastromania*. Indeed, food and discussion on the Internet are intrinsically linked, a now inseparable combination.

Throughout the world, bloggers and culinary influencers have thus become cult authors, able to accumulate large numbers of loyal readers—*followers*—able to access their favorite anywhere via the Internet (by reading and commenting on their blog or Facebook page), in bookstores (by buying their cookbooks), and around culinary festivals and sponsored gastronomic events. It is not rare that successful bloggers actually organize paid cooking classes aimed at providing participants with the possibility of establishing even more direct contact with them. Thus, culinary writing on the Internet fits perfectly into the paradigm of the convergent culture typical of the digital sphere (Jenkins 2006), that works by constantly reformulating stories, texts, and characters according to the specificities of the various media. Bloggers and culinary influencers present themselves to the public as *intermedial heroes* (Marrone 2003) whose utmost desire is for media affirmation and popularity: for them, the blog is merely the starting point (or the legitimization instrument) of a professional career. Food writing on the internet thus takes on a political character for precisely this reason, generating texts and identities that are fighting to bring their authors out of anonymity and into trend leadership. Cuisine, therefore, becomes a political instrument of negotiation and construction of individual and group identities.

At the center of any culinary quest, there is a valuable object: the recipe. If culinary blogs emerge as collections of recipes, their authors talk about themselves as subjects of a pedagogical trail (in a usually self-centered narrative: "along the way, I'll tell you my culinary trajectory").

At the same time, for the readers, the recipes become actual challenges to overcome in order to have access to the core of the blog's editorial promise. In a sense, recipes require a double commitment, both that of the reader properly speaking, and that of the cook (or the aspiring one): a cookbook cannot be only read. Cooking the recipes of blogs becomes essential to realizing the universe of meaning which is the object of the narration. Doing this takes time and patience, and a medium or long-term endorsement in an affiliation process perfectly suited to the serial nature of the blog. Through recipe after recipe, story after story, therefore, the author's culinary form of life gets outlined and, at the same time, an audience of faithful readers ready themselves to become its defenders and promoters.

On the other hand, on the internet, collective identities related, for example, to particular food subcultures: vegans, health-fanatics, subjects on a diet, etc. acquire more and more strength. These identities constitute themselves on the net and use the tools offered by social media platforms for exchanging information and managing their political coordination, socialization and interaction, preparatory to any proselytizing activity.

Subject to this call are research papers on the cultural transformations which arise from gastronomic discourse on the net, between blogs and social networks. This online gastronomic discourse brings into question new and old media around peculiar stories and characters, and is capable of establishing itself as an instrument of interaction between users in the post-media political context. Therefore, we expect semiotic and interdisciplinary analyses that investigate intermedial culinary narratives from the perspectives of narrative, enunciation, passion, experience, space, gastronomy, music, cinema, life forms, media and political rhetoric, etc., in search of general invariants on the articulation of culinary discourse on the net and beyond.

DEADLINE FOR APPLYING 23/12/2019

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