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Foreword

Culinary tourism, an exploratory relationship to the edible world, is the subject of this beautifully conceived book. Whether you go to food or food comes to you, the nature of the encounter is what defines a food experience as culinary tourism.

Where food is the focus of travel, as in gastronomic tourism, itineraries are organized around cooking schools, wineries, restaurants, and food festivals--in the case of Sardina, this includes festivals celebrating the sea urchin, mullet, wild boar, chestnuts, or torrone, among others. Food magazines and epicurean guide books, which have long celebrated the gastronomic opportunities afforded the mobile eater, orient the reader to particular foods, dishes, and cuisines, their pleasures, their histories, and their locales. Often, these publications also include recipes. Whether read like a musical score or actually performed in the kitchen, such recipes prompt the culinary tourist to relive vividly remembered but ephemeral travel experiences in rich sensory detail, while offering vicarious travel for the armchair tourist.

Even when food is not the main focus of travel, eat one must, whether or not a memorable experience is the goal. Making experiences memorable is a way the travel industry adds value—and profit—to an essential service like food. Indeed, the tourism and hospitality industries design experiences, including culinary ones, within the constraints of the tourist's time, space, and means. They do this by making the world an exhibit of itself. A collaboration between highly self-consciousness producers and consumers, culinary tourism is a space of contact and encounter, negotiation and transaction whether at home or abroad.

While the question of authenticity does not generally arise in the course of ordinary life, it is a hallmark of touristic experiences, the culinary included. Why, if we don't debate the authenticity of the toast and coffee of our daily breakfast do we become anxious about the authenticity of an ethnic restaurant or travel experience? Restaurants, as several essays in this volume show, are prime sites of designed experiences, collaboratively produced. As businesses, not museums (though often like museums), they adapt themselves to their market, including both their customers and their competition. The preoccupation with their authenticity goes to the heart of the concept of culinary tourism that informs this volume: namely, how self-consciousness arises from encounters with the unfamiliar and challenges what we know or think we know about what is before us. It is our ability to recognize ourselves in what is presented and our uncertainty about the rest—that is, our heightened sense of the distinct components in the mix, the visibility of the seam between the familiar and the unfamiliar, and our inability to experience the coalescence as such—that provokes anxiety or delight. While we tend to speak not only of the authenticity of a dish or restaurant, but also of an authentic experience, without clearly distinguishing them, *authentic experience* makes the *question* of authenticity--and debating that question--constitutive of such experience.

Not authenticity, but the *question* of authenticity, is essential to culinary tourism, for this question organizes conversation, reflection, and comparison and arises as much from

doubt as from confidence. The ensuing conversation tests and extends one's own knowledge and discernment. Whether culinary tourism is inspiring, boring, or frustrating depends on the balance between challenge and mastery, a balance that is recalibrated with the accumulation of experience.¹ This way of thinking about authenticity is in keeping with the focus of *Culinary Tourism* on the culinary tourist as an active agent.

Culinary tourism creates opportunities to find, test, and push thresholds of the unfamiliar. Newness arises from unpredictability and culinary tourism, to the degree that it constitutes a break with one's daily routine and even with the predictability of the tourism industry, affords innumerable occasions for new experiences. New experiences expand the ways we create and know ourselves because they dehabituate and estrange much that we take for granted: they unsettle *habitus*, those embodied dispositions and tacit understandings that require little shocks to come into consciousness. Culinary tourism is shock treatment. It brings "life" into view through the surprises afforded by the unexpected and the unplanned—"Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans," as John Lennon is said to have said. As the essays in this volume so vividly demonstrate, culinary tourism familiarizes the new and estranges the familiar, redrawing their relationship with each new experience.

While openness to variety makes the species adaptable, wariness of the unknown puts new and potentially dangerous foods to the test before they pass the threshold of the mouth. This is why, as several essays in this volume show, challenging foods are highly charged, whether they are beloved, detested, stigmatized, or reclaimed. As one essay in shows, such foods may form the centerpiece of an initiation rite among Mormon missionaries newly arrived in Guatemala, for whom the challenge is to manage disgust—or, rather, to subject oneself to the possibility of a culinary conversion experience. Such foods may be the subject of deep play, as in the Hawaiian festival discussed in this volume, where poke, a stigmatized dish, is reclaimed, with humor, and subjected to playful differentiation, elaboration, and mobility within the shifting hierarchies of the cultural field. Relentless focus on a single food or dish, like the gauntlet thrown down to Iron Chefs, encourages ingenuity. In contrast, mixtures (poke, chili, bouillabaisse, chowder), because they combine different elements in different proportions, are subject to almost infinite, if minute, variation, before mutating into something else. Culinary competitions based on mixture dramatize what it takes to make a coalescence hold still as an identifiable dish. They mark--and contest--the point where a dish becomes something else. Synthetic and indeterminate, such mixtures calibrate distance, placement, and relations between generations, communities, locations, and times.

What is it about food that distinguishes culinary tourism from tourism more generally? Not only does food organize and integrate a particularly complex set of sensory and social experiences in distinctive ways, but also (and perhaps for this reason) food experiences form edible chronotopes (sensory space-time convergences). The capacity of food to hold time, place, and memory is valued all the more in an era of hypermobility, when it can seem like everything is available everywhere all the time. Shopping, cooking, and eating become more like accessing an edible database of infinite permutation than stepping into a culinary world that is defined by particular coalescences of geology, climate, history, and culture—the coalescences understood in terms of *terroir* and protected by *appellation*. Though wine is bottled and even air is canned (a humorous souvenir that suggests the impossibility of transporting the effable quality of being there), it is the immobility of a coalescence—the specificity of experiencing it on the spot, in relation to season, ripeness, freshness, perishability, and total world of which it is part—

that requires that you go there. Indeed, this is the *raison d'être* of tourism proper. Going there, however, is a matter also of invention, in the case of “Jewish” restaurants in what was once the Jewish quarter of Kazimierz, a suburb of Cracow, where such restaurants mark an absent presence, as one of the essays demonstrates. Not only invention, but also intensification, can be seen in celebrations of soul food or down home cooking in the Catskills and elsewhere, as discussed in this volume.

Even as the edible database and its permutations expand exponentially (and perhaps as a result of this expansion), so too do allergies, food restrictions, and special diets. À la carte becomes the norm, even during the domestic family dinner, to the degree that survives at all, while culinary tourism on the road adapts to the constraints of kashruth or vegetarianism. At the same time, foods associated with such diets go mainstream, as evidenced by the burgeoning kosher food industry and growing market for soy products. Such diets, whether medically, religiously, or otherwise mandated, make many attributes of culinary tourism a regular part of everyday life, as much through saying no to what is not allowed as yes to what is.

As the study of tourism proper attends more closely to lived experience and the study of food explores its transactional character, these fields will find in *Culinary Tourism* a powerful conceptual framework and rich case studies. From kosher Oreos to the gentrification of Mexican cuisine, from the charismatic cooking of Basque communities in Spain and the United States to the mainstreaming of southwestern cuisine, *Culinary Tourism* maps a lively cultural and intellectual terrain for future research.

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¹ See Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Beyond boredom and anxiety* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1975).