



CULINARY CULTURE AND SOCIAL IDENTITY IN CINEMA: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GASTRONOMY-THEMED FILMS

SİNEMADA MUTFAK KÜLTÜRÜ VE TOPLUMSAL KİMLİK: GASTRONOMİ TEMALİ FİMLERİN KARŞILAŞTIRMALI ANALİZİ

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to analyse to what extent the culinary culture, the emotional meaning of food, the unifying power of food and its social reflections are reflected to the audience in gastronomy-themed films and to create the dimensions of gastronomy representation in cinema in this direction. In this regard, 18 films with an IMDb score of 7 and above were included in the research, and these films were examined between August 23 and October 11. As a result of the study, 4 “Dimensions of Gastronomy Representation in Cinema” were determined. These are “cultural representation”, “emotional and social connections”, “artistic and symbolic roles”, and “sociopolitical and economic impacts”. Gastronomy-themed films not only offer entertaining content to the audience but also introduce food culture to societies and enable the understanding of cultural identities. Gastronomy-themed films increase the interest of the audience in different cultural culinary heritages by highlighting local cuisines and cooking techniques in particular. In the research, it was found that gastronomy films support cultural sustainability by reviving culinary practices that are under the threat of extinction, especially under the influence of globalisation. In addition, gastronomy-themed films draw attention to the sociopolitical effects of food by associating culinary arts with cultural narratives. As a result, it has been understood that gastronomy-themed films are not only focused on gastronomic consumption but also serve as an important tool in understanding social and cultural identities.

Keywords: Gastronomy-Themed Films, Cinema, Culinary Culture, Social Identity

Özet

Bu araştırmanın amacı, gastronomi temalı filmlerde mutfak kültürünün, yemeğin duygusal anlamının, yemeğin birleştirici gücünün ve toplumsal yansımalarının izleyiciye ne kadar yansıtıldığını analiz etmek ve bu doğrultuda sinemada gastronomi temsilinin boyutlarını oluşturmaktır. Bu bağlamda, IMDb puanı 7 ve üzeri olan 18 film araştırmaya dahil edilmiş ve bu filmler 23 Ağustos-11 Ekim tarihleri arasında incelenmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda “Sinemada Gastronomi Temsilinin Boyutları” 4 adet olarak belirlenmiştir. Bunlar; “kültürel temsil”, “duygusal ve sosyal ilişkiler”, “sanatsal ve sembolik roller”, ve “sosyopolitik ve ekonomik etkiler”. Gastronomi temalı filmler, izleyiciye eğlenceli içerikler sunmanın yanı sıra toplumlara yemek kültürünü tanıtmakta ve kültürel kimliklerin anlaşılmasını sağlamaktadır. Gastronomi temalı filmler, özellikle yerel mutfakları ve pişirme tekniklerini öne çıkararak izleyicinin farklı kültürel mutfak miraslarına olan ilgisini artırmaktadır. Araştırmada, gastronomi filmlerinin özellikle küreselleşmenin etkisiyle yok olma tehlikesi altında olan mutfak pratiklerini yeniden canlandırarak kültürel sürdürülebilirliği desteklediği bulunmuştur. Ayrıca gastronomi temalı filmler, mutfak sanatlarını kültürel anlatılarla ilişkilendirerek yemeğin sosyopolitik etkilerine dikkat çekmektedir. Sonuç olarak, gastronomi temalı filmlerin sadece gastronomi tüketimine odaklanmadığı aynı zamanda toplumsal ve kültürel kimlikleri anlamada önemli bir araç olarak hizmet ettiği anlaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gastronomi Temalı Filmler, Sinema, Mutfak Kültürü, Toplumsal Kimlik

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1. Introduction

Gastronomy-themed films are a very important tool of modern culture that will both entertain and shape perceptions about food, culture and tourism. Most of these films reflect these culinary traditions to the audience, show the complex relationship between gastronomy and identity, and develop a deeper understanding of various cultures (Cunha, 2018; Testa et al., 2019; Carpio et al., 2021). Gastronomy-themed films increase the attractiveness of tourist destinations and give momentum to the tourism sector. Such films may serve as a worthy promotional tool in attracting tourists who actually want to have a real taste of the cuisine. For instance, films about local foods can stimulate specific regions and encourage people to travel to these places for personal taste. This is also evidenced by studies that have indicated gastronomic tourism is an important travel component for most travellers, and hence food is always considered when planning trips (Bukharov and Berezka, 2018; Uçkan-Çakır et al., 2020; Sutiadiningsih, 2024; Supriyadi, 2024).

Gastronomic films sometimes reflect and shape diverse cultural identities. They also reflect to the audience the importance of food in society. Films on gastronomes are one avenue for cultural expression that permits filmmakers to investigate themes of gastronomic heritage, tradition, and community through a gastronomic lens. It is an important representation for understanding cultural diversity and tolerance, whereby viewers are allowed to express appreciation for all kinds of cuisines and their historical backgrounds. For example, films that reflect the culinary practices of certain cultures can inform viewers about the social and cultural importance of food, thereby developing a sense of connection and empathy towards these cultures (Nicoletti et al., 2019; Lequeux-Dincă, 2024; Polat, 2023; Saatci-Savsas and Uşak, 2023).

2. Literature Review

Gastronomy-themed films, which have become a genre in their own right since the early 1980s, play an important role in preserving and promoting culinary heritage (Lindenfeld and Parasecoli, 2023). In order for a film to be considered a gastronomy-themed film, it must have certain characteristics. These characteristics are as follows: The film narrative should generally be shaped around a food or kitchen story, the main characters should relate themselves to food as part of this story, the act of eating should offer a social analysis area in terms of content and form rather than just filling the stomach, the images in the film should centre on each stage from the preparation of the food to its consumption, and food should be used as a metaphor in the narrative (Kanık, 2018; Yüksel, 2018). By emphasising traditional cooking methods and local ingredients, these films contribute to the preservation of culinary practices that may be at

risk of disappearing due to globalisation and modernisation. This kind of protection is essential not only for the preservation of cultural identity but also for providing an economic stimulus to local economies through gastronomic tourism. Regional cuisine films may revive viewers' interest in local food systems and challenge them to explore, come closer to, and patronise local farmers and producers. The gastronomy-themed film might promote more effective culinary learning and skill development. The gain for viewers, in most instances, comes as great insights into the realms of the culinary arts: cooking techniques, recipes, and the cultural importance of dishes. The educative aspect then kicks in by inspiring one to cook and find new cuisines, hence enriching their culinary repertoire.

Gastronomes have become an important genre within the greater universe of film and cinema, where food links with storytelling, cultural exploration, and even social commentary. These films not only introduce food but also reflect on the complexity of the production and consumption of food and the socio-political implications of culinary practices. Probably, the most striking feature or trend in the films on gastronomical themes is the happening genre of culinary documentary films that really elaborate on pressing issues around sustainability, health, and ethical consumption. For example, "Jiro Dreams of Sushi" (2011) not only showcases the art of sushi-making but also explores themes of dedication and the pursuit of perfection in the culinary arts. Thus, it elevates food to an art form while encouraging viewers to reflect on their own culinary experiences (Sutandio, 2023). Films such as "Julie & Julia" (2009) intertwine the lives of two women through their shared passion for cooking, emphasising how food can serve as a bridge between generations and cultures. This narrative approach emphasises the emotional and relational aspects of cooking, showing that food is not just food but also a means of connection and expression (Shafto, 2010). The film "Chef", released in the year 2014, helps entrench this idea: it depicts the journey of a chef in reclaiming his passion for cooking amidst various personal and professional problems, as argued by Shafto 2010. This goes to say that the influence of film genres based on gastronomical aspects is not restricted to entertainment alone. Generally, films in such genres act as agents of sociocultural change or awareness. For example, the TV series "A Bite of China" in 2012 had a huge influence on the impression of Chinese food culture by promoting regional dishes and local traditions, which simultaneously helped to promote local tourism (Xu et al., 2020; Qu, 2023). This TV series thus demonstrates how food media can mould destination images and engender a greater appreciation for cultural heritage through gastronomy.

The aesthetic dimension of gastronomy-themed films is also very important because the visual representation of food often captivates viewers and enhances their sensory experience.

Cinematic techniques such as close-ups, slow motions, and vibrant colour palettes are used to create an immersive experience of the beauty of food (Sutandio, 2023). This aesthetic appeal is particularly evident in films such as “Ratatouille” (2007), which combines animation with culinary art to convey the joy and creativity of cooking, thus encouraging viewers to explore their culinary potential (Shafto, 2010).

In addition, gastronomy-themed films often have broader cultural narratives, reflecting societal values, norms, and challenges. These food-themed films are, therefore, forms of diversified media that amuse the people, put them on notice, and even mobilise them into action. Such films are, thus, imperative in revealing, through degrees of narration, visual appeal, and cultural perspectives, the complexities surrounding food systems, the relevance of culinary traditions, and even the ethics involved in consuming food.

3. Methodology

In recent years, there has been an increase in both gastronomy-themed films and academic studies on this subject. However, when the literature is examined, no academic research has been found that examines and compares films as a whole. For this reason, this research aimed to conduct a comparative analysis of how much the culinary culture, the emotional meaning of food, the unifying power of food and its social reflections are reflected to the audience in the films by considering gastronomy films as a whole. In this direction, 28 films were reached by considering the features sought in films to be accepted as gastronomy-themed films by Kanık (2018) and Yüksel (2018). Among these 28 films, films with an IMDb score of 7 and above were the subject of the research. 18 films with an IMDb score of 7 and above were found, and these films were analysed between August 23 and October 11. Research has shown that higher ratings on platforms such as IMDb generally reflect the aesthetic quality and narrative effectiveness of films. It has been stated that the distribution of ratings by professional film critics can provide insights into the aesthetic quality of films, and it has been suggested that higher scores indicate the artistic value and audience engagement of a film (Lundy et al., 2016). It has been stated that films with ratings of 7 and above are more likely to be perceived as valuable and worth watching (Bialecki et al., 2017). Therefore, by selecting films with an IMDb score of 7 and above, the aim was to ensure that the research focused on films that were likely to resonate positively with audiences.

A qualitative research method was applied to the research. The qualitative research method is applied in order to examine a subject in depth (Creswell, 2013). Film format was accepted as a document type and used as a data source. A descriptive analysis method was adopted to examine the data. Descriptive analysis is aimed to convey the findings in an organised and interpreted

manner. In line with this goal, there are four stages: systematic and clear description of the data, explanation and interpretation of the descriptions made, explanation of cause-effect relationships and reaching certain results (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). Findings were created by paying attention to these stages in the research and were discussed in the conclusion section.

4. Research Findings

In this section, 18 films determined in line with the research were examined one by one and as a result, the dimensions of gastronomy representation in cinema were determined.

Tampopo (1985)

Directed by Juzo Itami, the film "Tampopo" (1985) is a Japanese comedy centred around a woman named Tampopo, the owner of a struggling ramen shop. After two truck drivers, Goro and Gun, arrive at the restaurant as customers, they decide to help Tampopo perfect her ramen-making skills. Her episodic venture into the world of Japanese food culture as a restaurateur determined to create the best ramen for Tampopo's best ramen restaurant is a humorous and surreal journey.

The film is interwoven with short stories that explore people's unique relationships with food, showcasing its sensory, social, and cultural dimensions. Tampopo is considered an entertaining "ramen western" with its mix of slapstick comedy, romance, and love of food (White, 2015).

Babette's Feast (1987)

Directed by Gabriel Axel, Babette's Feast (1987) is a Danish drama that focuses on gastronomy, spirituality, and transformation. The film follows Babette, a French refugee and former chef who comes to live in a small, religious Protestant village in Denmark. Working as a maid for the village pastor's daughters, Babette lives a modest life for many years. Later, Babette unexpectedly wins money from the lottery and decides to spend her winnings preparing an extravagant French banquet for the locals.

The film's pivotal feast scene is significant in that it showcases Babette's culinary artistry and dedication to excellence. Through a menu of French delicacies, wines, and complex flavours, Babette introduces the villagers to the beauty of fine dining. This feast not only broke the monotony of the simple lives of those living in the village but also served as an expression of gratitude and love. In this way, the film conveys a message to the audience that food has the power to nourish the soul, bring people together, and reveal deeper layers of compassion and understanding. Olivier (2012) explains this situation by saying that the film has a narrative

that implies that there is a precise overlap between the super-sensory spiritual nourishing pleasures and the sensory pleasures of the sensory field.

Like Water for Chocolate (1992)

Like Water for Chocolate (1992), directed by Alfonso Arau and based on the novel by Laura Esquivel, is a Mexican romantic drama that intertwines food and magical realism to explore themes of love, tradition, and desire. Set in early 20th-century Mexico, the story centres on Tita, a young woman who is forbidden by family tradition from marrying her true love, Pedro. Heartbroken, Tita injects her emotions and feelings into her dishes. These emotions and feelings begin to affect those who eat them deeply.

Through this magical connection between food and emotion, the film shows how Tita's unspoken passions and pain transform her culinary creations and impact everyone around her. Each dish in the film represents a particular moment or emotion, from longing to heartbreak to joy. The film also shows how food is a powerful tool for emotional expression and resistance against oppressive traditions.

Eat Drink Man Woman (1994)

Eat Drink Man Woman (1994), directed by Ang Lee, is a Taiwanese film that examines family, tradition, and change through the lens of gastronomy. The story revolves around Mr. Chu, a chef in Taipei, and his three adult daughters, each struggling with personal and romantic dilemmas. Every Sunday, Mr. Chu prepares a rich variety of dishes for his daughters, including fried Taiwanese mussels, chicken and cucumber cold salad, shredded shrimp in lettuce, four types of vegetables, steamed chicken with black fungus, and mandarin pancakes, and these dinners serve as a ritual in which family dynamics and tensions are revealed.

The film used food as a metaphor for love, communication, and intergenerational exchanges. As Mr. Chu's daughters each forge their own paths, traditional Sunday feasts have been transformed into a space for both bonding and quiet rebellion. While reflecting the rich textures of Chinese cuisine, *Eat Drink Man Woman* demonstrates how food can be a language of compassion, even in the midst of unspoken conflict.

Big Night (1996)

Directed by Campbell Scott and Stanley Tucci, the film *Big Night* (1996) is an American comedy-drama that revolves around two Italian immigrant brothers, Primo and Secondo, who run an Italian restaurant in New Jersey in the 1950s. Talented but naive chef Primo is devoted to authentic Italian cuisine, while pragmatic businessman Secondo tries to adapt to American tastes in order to save his failing restaurant. In a last-ditch effort to achieve success, they

planned a lavish dinner for a famous jazz musician - the "big night" - with the aim of boosting their business by increasing publicity through this big night.

The focus of the film is a meticulously prepared feast featuring traditional Italian dishes such as the iconic "timpano", symbolising the brothers' deep love and pride in their culinary heritage. This carefully prepared dish represents not only their passion for food, but also their struggle to survive in a new culture. While *Big Night* beautifully reflects the artistry and labour behind cooking, it also manages to reflect the tension between authenticity and compromise in the pursuit of culinary dreams.

The God of Cookery (1996)

The God of Cookery (1996), directed by and starring Stephen Chow, is a Hong Kong action-comedy that satirises celebrity chef culture through screwball humour and over-the-top kitchen battles. The film follows Chow, once an arrogant "God of Cookery" who loses his title and reputation after being exposed as a fraud by his rival. Having hit rock bottom, Chow eventually decides to partner with a street vendor named Turkey to rediscover the true essence of cooking and restore his honour. Together, the duo creates iconic dishes such as "Pissing Beef Balls" and "Sorrowful Rice", which highlight Chow's journey back to culinary authenticity. The film is notable for its over-the-top cooking competitions, zany humour, and creative cooking techniques that blend kung fu with gastronomy elements. *The God of Cookery* parodies the intense drama of the food world while also emphasising humility, passion, and the importance of creating dishes that touch people's hearts.

Chocolat (2000)

Directed by Lasse Hallström, *Chocolat* (2000) is a French American romantic drama that explores themes of tolerance, tradition, and liberation through the art of chocolate making. Set in a conservative French village in the 1950s, the story follows Vianne Rocher, a free-spirited chocolatier who opens a chocolate shop during Lent, much to the dismay of the town's religious mayor. Having the unique ability to sense people's favourite chocolate/candy/dessert, Vianne's chocolates bring joy to people, improve relationships, and enable villagers to discover themselves.

From spicy hot chocolate to elaborate confections, Vianne's creations represent a sensual and transformative force that inspires people to break free from oppression. Through the warmth and sumptuousness of chocolate, *Chocolat* demonstrates the power of food to awaken desire, nurture connection, and subtly dissolve rigid social norms.

Mostly Martha (2001)

Directed by Sandra Nettelbeck, *Mostly Martha* (2001) is a German drama film centred on Martha Klein, a talented but strict chef. Martha's structured world is turned upside down when she becomes the guardian of her young niece, Lina, after a family tragedy. In addition, the owner of the restaurant where she works hires Mario, an easygoing and passionate Italian chef with an improvisational approach to cooking that clashes with Martha's strict methods. Throughout the film, food serves as both a source of comfort and connection as their evolving relationship develops, and Martha struggles to embrace spontaneity. The film's depictions of food—from meticulously plated gourmet meals to Mario's heart-warming Italian cuisine—symbolise Martha's journey toward balance, love, and a more open-hearted approach to life. While the film *Mostly Martha* shows the healing and transformative power of cooking, it also conveys to the audience how food can overcome differences and encourage closeness.

Ratatouille (2007)

Directed by Brad Bird and produced by Pixar Animation Studios, *Ratatouille* (2007) is an animated film that tells the story of Remy, a rat with an extraordinary talent for cooking. Living on the busy streets of Paris, Remy dreams of becoming a chef, despite the social belief that rats should only enter the kitchen as harmful animals. When he finds himself in the prestigious restaurant of his culinary hero Gusteau, Remy teams up with an unlikely ally, Linguini, a bumbling garbage man.

The film beautifully showcases the art and passion of French cuisine and highlights the importance of creativity, intuition, and the joy of cooking. Through a series of inventive food scenes, Remy shows that great food can come from the most unexpected places. The main idea of the film is that everyone can cook, regardless of their background, and it emphasises that food has the transformative power of bringing people together. The film *Ratatouille* is a heartfelt tribute to gastronomy and shows how it can inspire dreams and transcend borders.

Julie & Julia (2009)

Directed by Nora Ephron, *Julie & Julia* (2009) follows the lives of two iconic women who are connected by their passion for cooking. In the film, Julia Child spends her time in France learning the art of French cuisine, which leads to her becoming a beloved cookbook author. It also tells the story of Julie Powell, an office worker in New York City who embarks on a year-long challenge to cook the 524 recipes in Julia Child's cookbook, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*.

Through its dual narratives, the film focuses on the joy and transformative power of cooking. While Julia Child's journey emphasises the importance of perseverance and creativity in the

kitchen, Julie Powell's quest reflects the challenges and triumphs of modern cooking, showing how food can serve as a tool for self-discovery and fulfilment. The film highlights iconic dishes such as Beef Bourguignon and lobster, showing how both women's culinary adventures ultimately bring them closer to themselves and each other. *Julie & Julia* is presented to cinema lovers as a heartfelt tribute to the passion for gastronomy that can inspire and connect people across generations.

Soul Kitchen (2009)

Soul Kitchen (2009), directed by Fatih Akin, is a film that revolves around Zinos, a passionate but struggling restaurant owner in a multicultural area of Hamburg. Zinos runs a soul food restaurant called Soul Kitchen, which is known for its relaxed atmosphere but lacks innovation in the kitchen. Facing various challenges, including financial difficulties, Zinos revamps his business.

In the process, he hires a talented but cantankerous chef, who begins serving fresh and vibrant dishes that reflect the neighbourhood's diverse cultural influences. The film showcases the power of food to bring people together, explore identity and foster community and highlights the joy and chaos of restaurant life. Focusing on the art of gastronomy, *Soul Kitchen* is an important film in that it blends humour, romance, and a love of gastronomy, showing how the act of cooking can transform not only a job but also the lives of those involved. *Soul Kitchen* emphasises the importance of authenticity and passion in both food and life, while also providing a joyful exploration of what it means to find one's place in the world through cooking.

Jiro Dreams of Sushi (2011)

Directed by David Gelb, *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* (2011) is a documentary that tells the story of Jiro Ono, a respected sushi chef and owner of Sukiyabashi Jiro, a world-famous sushi restaurant in Tokyo. At 85 years old, Jiro is a paragon of culinary excellence, dedicated to meticulous sushi making. The film showcases his relentless pursuit of perfection, his daily routine, the complex techniques he uses and the high standards he demands of himself and his apprentices.

Through stunning visuals and candid interviews, the documentary highlights the philosophy behind Jiro's approach to gastronomy. These are reflected in the audience as simplicity, quality materials, and discipline. The film explores the intense dedication required to master the art of sushi, while also exploring themes of ambition, legacy, and the connection between food and personal identity. The film also touches on the dynamics between Jiro and his sons, especially

his heir Yoshikazu, who struggles to live up to his father's legacy. *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* serves as both a love letter to sushi and a meditation on artistry and commitment in the culinary world. The film ultimately explains the profound impact food has on culture and the human experience.

The Lunchbox (2013)

The Lunchbox (2013), directed by Ritesh Batra, is an Indian romantic drama film that examines themes of love, longing, and connection through the lens of food. The film stars Ila, a young housewife who prepares a special lunch for her husband and hopes to rekindle their flagging relationship. However, due to a mix-up by the dabbawalas (lunchbox delivery system in Mumbai), the meal she has carefully prepared is delivered to Saajan, a lonely office worker on the verge of retirement. As Ila and Saajan exchange notes through the lunchbox, their relationship develops through their shared love of food and heartfelt conversations. The film beautifully highlights how home-cooked meals are not just nourishment, but also a way of expressing emotions and cultural identity. As Ila's culinary creations reflect her desires and hopes, Saajan finds solace and joy in her cooking, which becomes an element that revitalises his ordinary life.

The Lunchbox emphasises that food can act as a bridge between people, encouraging connection and understanding despite physical separation. Through its intimate depiction of meals and the rituals surrounding them, the film reflects to the audience the transformative power of gastronomy to nourish relationships and inspire change in daily lives.

Chef (2014)

Chef (2014), directed by Jon Favreau, is a comedy-drama film about Carl Casper, a talented chef who goes through a midlife crisis after losing his prestigious restaurant job due to a negative review from a food critic. Frustrated and trying to reconnect with his passion for cooking, Carl Casper decides to open a mobile restaurant, travelling across the country to offer his creative interpretation of Cuban cuisine.

The film highlights the importance of culinary creativity, the joy of cooking, and the deep bonds that food can create between people. While travelling with his young son and a friend, Carl Casper experiences a vibrant street food culture that showcases the power of high-quality ingredients and the joy of sharing food with others. The dynamic between Carl and his son also highlights the personal growth that can be achieved through culinary experiences. With a strong emphasis on the art of cooking and the excitement of culinary discovery, *Chef*

emphasises the importance of family and friendship in the journey of self-discovery, while also emphasising the freedom of creativity in gastronomy.

The Hundred-Foot Journey (2014)

The Hundred-Foot Journey (2014), directed by Lasse Hallström, appears as a culinary drama film that examines the intersection of cultures through food. The film follows the Kadam family, Indian immigrants who open a restaurant called Maison Mumbai across the street from a Michelin-starred establishment owned by the proud chef Madame Mallory.

As the Kadam family introduces Indian cuisine to the locals, tensions begin to arise between the two restaurants, leading to a culinary rivalry. However, the film gradually reveals how food can bridge cultural gaps and foster understanding. With its rich cinematography and mouth-watering cooking, The Hundred-Foot Journey highlights the artistry and passion behind both Indian and French cuisine, bringing together the unique flavours and techniques of each culture.

At the centre of the story is Kadam's son Hassan, who demonstrates extraordinary culinary talent and eventually becomes a bridge between the two worlds. Through what she learned from Madame Mallory, the film highlights themes of mentorship, innovation, and the idea that a love of food can unite people from different backgrounds. The Hundred-Foot Journey presents a heartwarming script that showcases the beauty of culinary diversity and the transformative power of gastronomy.

The Founder (2016)

Directed by John Lee Hancock, The Founder (2016) tells the true story of Ray Kroc, a struggling milkshake machine salesman who discovers a small but innovative fast-food restaurant run by the McDonald brothers Dick and Mac in San Bernardino, California. Impressed by their efficient food preparation system and focus on quality, Kroc saw potential in developing their concept into a nationwide franchise. The film deals with the evolution of the McDonald's brand and introduces the audience to the gastronomic innovations that revolutionised the fast-food industry, especially the assembly line approach that emphasises speed and consistency. Kroc's vision led to the rapid expansion of McDonald's but also led to ethical dilemmas and conflicts with the McDonald brothers, who prioritised quality and customer experience over profit.

As Kroc navigates the complexities of their business partnership and his quest for success, the film highlights the commercialisation of food and the transformation of American dining habits. By reflecting on the balance between culinary integrity and the pursuit of

entrepreneurial ambition, The Founder shows how fast food is reshaping the landscape of gastronomy and consumer culture in the United States.

A Chef's Voyage (2020)

Directed by Christopher Thompson, A Chef's Voyage (2020) is a documentary that follows renowned chef David Kinch as he embarks on a unique culinary journey across France, exploring the essence of French gastronomy. The film follows Kinch as he travels to various regions known for their rich culinary traditions, drawing inspiration from local ingredients, techniques, and the stories behind their dishes. Throughout the journey, Kinch visits renowned restaurants, farms, and markets, interacting with other chefs and producers who share their expertise and passion for cooking. The documentary brings the beauty and complexity of French cuisine to the audience, emphasising the importance of seasonal and locally sourced ingredients. Kinch also reflects on the influence of his experiences on his own culinary style, while also emphasising the artistic and philosophical aspects of cooking.

As the film progresses, it becomes clear that food is not just about nutrition; it is an expression of culture, history, and community. A Chef's Voyage explores the art of cooking as a deeply personal and collaborative process, showing how gastronomy can connect people and inspire creativity across borders. The film serves as both a travelogue and a love letter to the culinary world and is important in showing viewers the richness and diversity of global cuisine.

The Menu (2022)

The Menu (2022), directed by Mark Mylod, is a dark comedy-thriller that satirises the world of fine dining and culinary elitism. The film follows a group of wealthy guests who travel to a remote island to experience a special tasting menu prepared by celebrity chef Julian Slowik (Ralph Fiennes). Each section of the meticulously prepared meal is designed not only to delight the senses, but also to provoke thought and reveal deeper themes about wealth, privilege, and the culinary world. As the evening progresses, it becomes clear that the meal is far from ordinary. Each course serves as a commentary on the guests' lives and relationships, revealing their flaws and secrets. The film cleverly critiques the pretentiousness of the fine dining experience and the sometimes transactional nature of gourmet cuisine. The film also highlights the disconnect between chefs and their customers. The film portrays gastronomy as both an art and a weapon. Chef Slowik uses his culinary skills to confront his guests and question their perceptions of food and its value. Intricate plating, creative ingredients, and theatrical presentations showcase the beauty of high-end cooking while also allowing us to explore the dark side of the culinary elite.

The Menu met with cinema lovers as a sharp comment on modern gastronomy. The film explores themes of power, creativity, and human experience, while also questioning the ethics and motivations behind culinary trends. The film blends humour and suspense, prompting viewers to ponder the true nature of art in the food world.

When the research findings are examined carefully, the dimensions of gastronomy representation in cinema are determined as four. These dimensions are named as “Cultural Representation”, “Emotional and Social Connections”, “Artistic and Symbolic Roles” and “Sociopolitical and Economic Impacts” as seen in Figure 1.

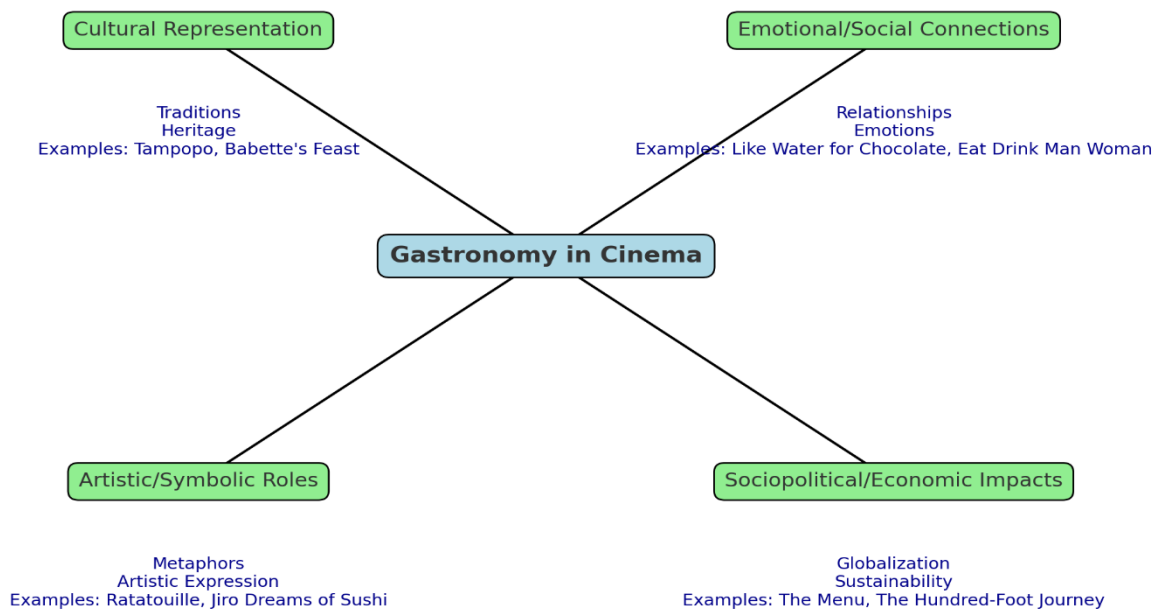


Figure 1. Dimensions of Gastronomy Representation in Cinema

Each dimension, when examined carefully, reflects a critical aspect of how food is used in storytelling, from the role of preserving traditions and enhancing cultural understanding (Tampopo, Babette's Feast) to expressing emotions and strengthening relationships (Like Water for Chocolate, Eat Drink Man Woman). In addition, some films use gastronomy as a metaphorical or artistic tool (Ratatouille, Jiro Dreams of Sushi), while others address broader societal issues such as globalisation and sustainability (The Menu, The Hundred-Foot Journey). Figure 1 summarises how gastronomy films go beyond mere culinary depictions to function as cultural, emotional, and political narratives that enrich the viewer's perspective on gastronomy.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This research aims to carry out a comparative analysis of gastronomy films by considering them

as a whole. When the research findings were examined, it was understood that gastronomy was shown to be a multidimensional form of cultural expression through films. In films, food went beyond being a source of nutrition and was considered a tool that could reflect individuals' identities, emotions and social relations (Jacob, 2022). For example, Itami Jûzô used food as a visual metaphor and narrative tool in the film "Tampopo" and worked to privilege this approach to the plot, character and storytelling (Iles, 2001). At the same time, in the film Tampopo, in addition to scenes that only show how to make ramen, there are also table etiquette lessons in which "Western style" spaghetti is taught (Hoff, 2009). Films such as Tampopo and Babette's Feast have shown that the act of cooking and sharing allows individuals to express themselves, find a place in the community and create their own values. On the other hand, films such as Chef, Ratatouille and Julie & Julia emphasise how the food-making process can be intertwined with artistry, creativity and passion, and suggest that the kitchen is a space of individual discovery and liberation.

While the films Babette's Feast and Tampopo convey how food expresses cultural behaviour, they also convey to the audience how food-related practices such as preparation and consumption can unite individuals. Both films focus on female chef heroes and similarly convey to the audience how cooking can be used to liberate women from domesticity. These two films represent Japanese, Scandinavian and French cultures, respectively, by depicting the value each culture places on food and the relationship people establish with food through cooking and eating. First of all, the two films showed that food has a function beyond its vital function by representing it as a form of culture (Durant de Saint Andre, 2021). Apart from these two films, the film Big Night also determined the loss of cultural originality with the decline of traditional culinary knowledge as the main theme (Beneduce, 2022). Moreover, in the film Jiro Dreams of Sushi, sushi has ceased to be just food and has become a representation of the ancient Japanese concept of shokunin, which emphasises discipline, perfection, beauty, hard work and sacrifice through its complex production and consumption process (Sutandio, 2023). When the film The Hundred-Foot Journey is examined, the cultural importance of food comes to the fore again. In this film, identity in an ever-changing world and culture refers to representations of change and acceptance (Toma, 2022; Wan, 2023). Because the film also makes references to the conflict between classical and new cuisines (Yılmaz and Yüksel, 2021). When one looks at it, it can be seen that food is a cultural phenomenon, an element that unites people, and an element that creates change and conflict in all these films.

Similar to the film Like Water for Chocolate, the main character in the film Babette's Feast has shaped cooking as an area of artisanal creativity. She has also made the kitchen a place of self-

expression. Babette, who placed much less emphasis on seeing cooking and eating as a social endeavour, used the kitchen as a space for individual artistic expression (Lindenfeld, 2003). What Babette's Feast, Like Water for Chocolate, and Chocolat have in common is the use of food to reflect the liberating spirit that emerges when culturally forbidden things are temporarily suspended (Laine, 2005).

Food has actually been used as a metaphor in many films. For example, in the film Like Water for Chocolate, food served as a central focal point and symbol. The many close-ups of the food being prepared, served, and eaten emphasise its social and symbolic centrality. In the film, food is especially important as a voice for women and the emotions they feel abundantly (Counihan, 2005; Elgindi, 2023). In the films, food has served as a tool for the protagonists to communicate their feelings and thoughts and embrace their identities (Chirobocea, 2017). For example, in the film Eat Drink Man Woman, it is seen that emotions are expressed through food. One of the characters (Chia-Chen) in the film Eat Drink Man Woman gives messages such as anger, love, compensation, rage, rebellion, and withdrawal through food. This makes food a perfect carrier of the message that is intended to be given (Rawnsley, 2008).

Films not only promote culture and flavour but also take a close interest in kitchen workers and their working environments (Pekyaman and Kocabaş, 2023). For example, The Menu film is about the competition experienced by the kitchen staff in the restaurant and their internal relationships. In the film, how the employees work in a stressful and pressured environment and how they react are also shown to the audience. We see a similar situation in the film Jiro Dreams of Sushi. Throughout the documentary, our protagonist's working environment and his communication with the kitchen staff are reflected to the audience.

Some films can leave important marks on the audience. The foods and their recipes featured in gastronomy-themed films have a similar impact on the audience, and the audience has been cooking with these recipes for years. The film Like Water for Chocolate is one of them. The recipes mentioned in the film are still tried by many viewers.

These multidimensional representations of gastronomy in films show that food is not only a physical need but also a form of expression that has the power to build bridges between cultures, create emotional bonds and bring individuals together. In this context, these films about food have revealed how cinema reinterprets food as a field of existence in a social and individual sense, by treating gastronomy as both a means of communication and a field that shapes individual and cultural identities.

Apart from all these results, this research not only emphasises the multifaceted role of gastronomy in cinema but also has important implications for both academic research and the

gastronomy sector. Future research could investigate how gastronomy-themed films affect viewers' culinary behaviours, preferences, and attitudes toward cultural diversity. On a sectoral level, stakeholders in the gastronomy industry can collaborate with filmmakers to create narratives that emphasise regional culinary practices, thereby promoting cultural sustainability and creating economic growth. In addition, gastronomy-themed films can address global issues such as food sustainability and ethical consumption, encouraging viewers and those in the industry to adopt more responsible practices.

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Ethics Committee Approval

Since there is no situation requiring ethics committee approval or legal/special permission in the research, ethics committee approval was not required.

Contribution Rate Statement

1. Author: % 100

Conflict of Interest Statement

The study has no conflict of interest with any institution or organization.