

Threefold Documentation

Jürgen Dollase's Conception of a 'National Registry of Culinary Art'

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Abstract *In the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung of September 11, 2015, the – not always entirely uncontroversial – restaurant critic and gastrosophist Jürgen Dollase wrote a short essay called Dreifache Dokumentation. Who really wants to preserve our culinary knowledge, needs a national culinary art register. What would its creation look like? In this essay, Dollase raises a number of fundamental cultural and media-theoretical questions concerning the archiving, canonization and documentation of 'culinary art', which in many respects can be connected to fundamental questions of art and media history, the theory of documentation and the archive. In this contribution, the essay will be analyzed and discussed in detail in order to outline the theoretical challenges of a documentation and archiving of culinary art beyond the – for various reasons very problematic – symbolic registration by the algorithmic 'recipe'.*

How is it possible to archive culinary art and cooking practice, given that they are designed for instant consumption and therefore ephemeral? The obvious answer is to archive recipes – but this answer has its problems. If one function of media is to store information, how can culinary information be stored?¹ This and similar questions are the central concern of my paper. I will discuss them with reference to an inspiring paper by Jürgen Dollase, who also explores these questions.

Jürgen Dollase is a renowned 'gastrosopher' and culinary critic, who has contributed to several journals on fine dining. His best-known work is perhaps a series of articles entitled 'Geschmackssache' (A Matter of Taste), produced between 2004 and 2016 for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. He has written several books on avant-garde cuisine, but also on very specific techniques and experiments in cooking (see Dollase 2017). His writing is known for the transposition of theoretical lingo ('structuralism', 'deconstruction') into culinary discourse and for the creation of new

1 There are several different initiatives that are dedicated, in different ways, to the question of archiving the culinary tradition, see for example <https://www.maas.museum/australianculinaryarchive/>

concepts ('nova regio').² This theoretical rhetoric has earned him ridicule from other writers, who find his style exaggerated and annoying.

Fig. 1: Dollase, Jürgen (2015): "Dreifache Dokumentation".

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Feuill

Geschmackssache

Dreifache Dokumentation

Wer unser kulinarisches Wissen wirklich bewahren will, braucht ein Nationales Kochkunstregister. Wie sähe dessen Erstellung aus?

Die Dokumentation von Kochkunst und Essen gehört auf eine Ebene, die den Geschmack der Menschheit im Range eines Weltkulturerbes sieht. In dieser zweiten Folge zur Diskussion einer möglichst präzisen Beschreibung und Erhaltung kulinarischer Errungenschaften (siehe F.A.Z. vom 4. September) geht es um Überlegungen zu Theorie und Praxis eines möglichen Nationalen Kochkunstregisters.

Welche Werke sind es wert, in ein solches Register aufgenommen zu werden, wer trifft die Auswahl? Man wird Persönlichkeiten finden müssen, die sowohl die traditionelle Küche als auch Klassik und Avantgarde überblicken und in der Lage sind, Hervorragendes zu erkennen. Die Schwierigkeit wird dabei kaum im Bereich der üblichen Hochküche liegen, sondern einerseits bei der Bewertung traditioneller Küchen, die man von den Schlacken der Kommerzialisierung und Industrialisierung des Geschmacks befreien muss. Andererseits aber auch bei jener innovativen Avantgarde, die nicht so einfach in Schubladen zu stecken ist und eine zügige Dokumentation deshalb verdient, weil sie – etwa aus wirtschaftlichen Gründen – nur begrenzt erfassbar ist. Allgemein muss es sowohl um bereits durchgesetzte Werke von Rang gehen als auch um solche, die nicht massenkompatibel sind, aber eine Erweiterung des kreativen Spektrums bedeuten.

Die Dokumentation eines Werkes beginnt natürlich im Wesentlichen damit, was normalerweise in schriftlichen Rezepten erfasst werden kann. Das sind Listen verwendeter Produkte, Mengenangaben, Garzeiten, Kerntemperaturen und Handlungsanweisungen, die gründlich spezifiziert werden sollten. Bei den Produkten werden Herkunfts- und Qualitätsangaben eine Rolle spielen. Mengenangaben und Garzeiten sollten seriös dokumentiert werden. Die Kerntemperaturen, die bei vielen Stücken nicht wirklich aussagekräftig sind, sollten spezifiziert werden, und es sollte neue Kriterien geben, um den

technisch erfassbaren Teil genauer als bisher zu beschreiben. Dazu gehören das Erfassen der Intensität von Reduktionen, die Messung von pH-Werten oder auch Angaben zur relativen Dichte von Flüssigkeiten in Grad Brä.

Bei Aromatisierungen wird es nicht nur um „eine Prise Curry“ oder Ähnliches gehen, sondern auch um das Ausmaß an Röstrosten oder die Einwirkungen von aromatisierenden Flüssigkeiten wie Fonds beim Pochieren oder Überglanzern. Die Diskrepanz zwischen den üblichen Rezepten und dem, was tatsächlich erfassbar ist, wird dabei erheblich sein müssen – von der Möglichkeit, zu Studienzwecken per Gaschromatographie ein Aromenspek-

Der mit Abstand komplizierteste Bereich ist die geschmackliche Dokumentation. Er wird im Wesentlichen in drei Schritten ablaufen. Erster Punkt ist ein Gespräch mit dem jeweiligen Protagonisten über die Beweggründe seiner Arbeit – vor allem bezogen aufs konkrete Gericht. Ein wichtiger Teil sollte sich damit beschäftigen, wie die Gerichte unter sensorischen Aspekten zu essen sind und welche möglichen Inhalte kommuniziert werden sollen (von Erinnerungen an frühkindliche Geschmacksbilder bis zu geschmacklichen Irritationen). Der zweite Punkt ist die Dokumentation einer Degustation mit dem Ziel einer objektiven Geschmacksbildung. Diese Beschreibung sollte ebenfalls durch eigens geschulte Spezialisten erfolgen, die in der Lage sind, Geschmacksbilder in all deren Komplexität und in so vielen Zusammenhängen wie möglich zu registrieren und in Worte zu fassen. Diese Beschreibungen müssen ein Gesamtbild ergeben, das von den sensorischen Details bis zu den Zusammenhängen der kulinarischen Konstruktion möglichst viele Daten ermittelt.

Diese objektivierende Analyse muss um eine völlig neuartige Betrachtung ergänzt werden, deren Ziel es ist, das Geschmacksbild des zu dokumentierenden Werkes in seiner Beziehung zu anderen Geschmacksbildern zu beschreiben. Ein vollständiges Bild kann sich erst dann ergeben, wenn der Topos des Objekts zwischen ähnlichen Werken im Verhältnis zu populären Kreationen oder auch zur industriellen Geschmackskultur ermittelt wird. Es kann dabei klarwerden, dass Werke der Avantgarde viele Leute nicht als „richtiges Essen“ einstufen, klassische Werke als immer fremdartiger gelten oder allgemein Hochküche wegen mangelnder Bezüge zur populären Esskultur zu einer Spezialküche wird, das Qualitätsbegriffe unter Druck geraten oder die Präferenz für bestimmte Werke bestimmten gesellschaftlichen Gruppen zugunsten werden kann.

Diese kulturelle Rückkopplung des kulinarischen Werkes wird schließlich abgerundet durch eine stilistisch-historische Einordnung, die die Stellung des Werkes innerhalb der Fachgeschichte beschreibt. Die Frage, inwieweit solcher Aufwand überhaupt notwendig ist, sollte sich angesichts dessen, was wir in dieser Richtung bisher besitzen, erübrigen. JÜRGEN DOLLASE



trum zu analysieren, abgewen. Bei der bildlichen Dokumentation versehen sich diverse Fotos von selbst. Step-by-Step-Fotos, die normalerweise bei Kochbüchern als besonders präzises Element gelten, sollten unbedingt durch eine filmische Dokumentation ersetzt werden, die sämtliche Schritte erfasst. Es wird dabei wichtig sein, diese Dokumentation unter Anleitung des dokumentierenden Spezialisten zu machen und nicht – wie das in fast allen Fernsehformaten der Fall ist – vorrangig auf atmosphärisch dichte, kommerziell motivierte Bilder zu achten. Es muss sichtbar werden, was zu dokumentieren ist.

Source: FAZ September 11 2015, p. 12.

- 2 See Borkenhagen (2017), who analyzes how, in the field of high cuisine, scientific and technological procedures have become important in recent years (e. g. 'molecular gastronomy'). Dollase's discourse is the equivalent of this development in the field of 'gastrosophy', in that he imports notions from the humanities and philosophy.

In this paper, I want to focus on an article from *Geschmackssache*, published on September 11, 2015 in the *FAZ*. It is called *Dreifache Dokumentation (Threefold Documentation)*.

Dollase does not discuss the pros and cons of particular chefs, restaurants, cooking styles or techniques – he addresses the question of how cooking and particular ‘works’ (by which he means finished meals), can be documented and archived. He invokes classical questions from media studies and related disciplines but applies them to an object that has not previously been examined within these disciplines, culinary information. In the following paper I will read Dollase’s article closely and contextualize its arguments. As he states, this is the second of two articles addressing this question, but the first one – in *FAZ*, September 4, 2015³ – will not be the focus of my essay.⁴

1. Constructing the Canon

Dollase begins by declaring that he sees the art of dining as part of the world’s cultural heritage. That is, he sees dining not only as a biological necessity, but also as a form of cultural expression and heritage, in line with other forms such as architecture, art etc.⁵ The logical next question is therefore: “Which works are worthy of inclusion in such a register, and who makes the selection?”

First of all, by using the notion of *Werk* (work), Dollase puts the results of cooking on the same level as other artworks and compares them to other art forms. Secondly, he addresses the question of which of these works might be selected for the ‘register’, meaning a kind of canon. And indeed, this is a central question for the constitution of cultural heritage. What is included? And who decides? “It will be necessary to find personalities who can survey traditional cuisine as well as classical and avant-garde, and who are able to recognize excellence.” Obviously, the selection should be made by competent personalities (*Persönlichkeiten*), capable of recognizing excellence and of making a trained and experienced judgement – similar to those described by Galison for the analysis of images in 20th-century science.⁶ ‘Excellence’ is of course

3 Its title is “Schreib das auf, Koch! Um die Kochkunst steht es gut, um deren Dokumentation dagegen nicht. Vor allem bei der Beschreibung von Geschmack fehlt es nahezu an allem.” (Write that down, cook! The art of cooking is in good shape, but its documentation is not. Almost everything is lacking, especially in the description of taste.)

4 All quotes are from Dollase’s text, unless otherwise stated. They were translated from German by myself.

5 This is not a completely new idea, see e.g. Csergo/Desbuissons (2018).

6 See Galison (1998) on the central role of the trained eye and the “interpreted image” (329). See the above-mentioned first essay by Dollase, that focuses on outstanding chefs and their publications, which publications he later came to see as unsatisfactory.

notoriously difficult to define. In many fields where ‘taste’ plays a role – in wine (e.g. Shapin 2016), tea, whisky, beer,⁷ but also in art (Bourdieu 1984) and even high-end sound equipment – a certain kind of accumulated expertise, refined sensory perception and an elaborate and sometimes highly idiosyncratic jargon is the apparent form of this type of judgement.⁸ Basically, Dollase distinguishes three styles of cooking: traditional cooking, classical style and avant-garde. This resembles on the one hand the differentiation between high and low culture (‘classical’ vs. ‘traditional’), on the other hand established narratives from the history of art (from ‘classical’ to modernist ‘avant-garde’). ‘Avant-garde’ is understood as innovative and difficult to classify. Dollase insists that the canon should include both established ‘works’ and experimental extensions of the ‘creative spectrum’. His discussion strongly resembles early (and more recent) discussions on the construction of a canon of art (and literature etc., see Guillory 1993: 3–82).

Such discussions immediately raise questions about the limits of inclusion: What about non-European forms of food? The notion of ‘traditional’ is perhaps open enough to include global styles of cooking, but do the ‘classical’ and ‘avant-garde’ categories apply to every development in global cooking? Perhaps they do apply in China, for example, where there are several local, ‘traditional’ cooking styles, but also one or more ‘classical’ high cuisines? Is avant-garde global anyway? Or are these categories deeply Eurocentric? The troubling questions that beset art history and literary studies – of how to construct a canon while avoiding unjustified exclusions – are crucial here too. One could argue that ‘canon’ is an inherently problematic concept that should be avoided, since a canon is exclusive by definition. But a canon has important functions (Guillory 1993: 3–82). It is a reduction of complexity and should include examples that show the outstanding achievements in a certain field. Of course, there has to be a discussion about what exactly is meant by ‘outstanding’, but to have *no canon at all* is actually not a progressive but a reactionary idea. This is because it could lead to a competition in which it is not necessarily the most outstanding but the most aggressively marketed examples that prevail. Dollase obviously does not want to leave the field to the commercial food industry, which establishes – as its canon, so to speak – a range of stereotypical, undifferentiated taste models (too much sugar, too much salt, too much fat etc.).

7 Beer is an interesting case: in the past, beer was coded by class, and in a sense, this is still the case today. Beer was the drink of the laborer, while wine was associated with the upper classes, and the whole elaborated discourse was restricted to wine. Nowadays, with phenomena like ‘craft beer’, a kind of ‘winization’ of beer seems to be taking place. This shows, as Bourdieu (1984) has pointed out, that ‘taste’ is coded by class.

8 There is of course the obvious problem that the competent personalities have to be found first – by another level of competent personalities and so on. This infinite regress can only be solved historically, in the sense that there has to be a historically sedimented institutionalization of what is called ‘good taste’. Such institutionalizations presuppose recording media.

He wants to protect the more difficult, complex, subtle concepts of high cuisine against this dominance of easily consumable, popular, aggressively marketed, even addictive taste schemas.

2. Documentation of a Work of Cooking

Dollase continues his discussion with the question of how a ‘work’ of cooking can be documented. The most obvious form is the written recipe. In 2004 Ferguson wrote:

[C]uisine belongs with the performative arts, and as for other such arts, the social survival of the culinary performance depends on words. Recipes make it possible to reproduce the original, or a reasonable approximation thereof. On this continuum, the plastic arts lie somewhere between the literary and the performing arts because although there is a disjuncture between the medium of creation-production and the idiom of criticism, there is a palpable, more or less permanent product. (Ferguson 2004: 20)

The recipe is addressed here as the basic and sufficient medium to store the culinary knowledge necessary to reproduce (and thereby perform) the dish. The recipe is an algorithm that specifies the steps and sequences of actions to be taken to arrive at the finished dish. But as everyone who cooks presumably knows, often these recipes do not really work as they should – terms like “a pinch of curry” are imprecise and give only a vague hint of how the dish is actually prepared. The reduction of the cooking process to a sequence of written instructions tends to reduce complexity in a problematic way. This is why Dollase calls for a large amount of precise additional information: “Origin and quality information will play a role in the products. Quantities and cooking times should be seriously documented. Core temperatures, which are not really meaningful for many pieces of meat, should be specified, and there should be new criteria to describe the technically recordable part more precisely than before.” But even with much additional information, there are still aspects that are technically not ‘recordable’ (not least because often ingredients are responsible for the taste – which can only be described in abstract or abbreviated terms, e.g. ‘pepper’ in general without specifying which pepper exactly⁹). This immediately recalls Kittler’s insistence that notation cannot record certain aspects of music, namely the actual sound produced.¹⁰ Notation is an algorithm showing how to perform a given piece of music, but it does leave some room for interpretation and is always colored by the concrete and contingent circumstances of performance. As

9 With special thanks to Jens Ruchatz.

10 The limits of recording are also a central theme in theatre and performance studies, and since dining has an irreducible performative aspect, these problems reappear here too (Eco 1977).

we can compare concrete performances of a given composition, we can also compare concrete performances of a given recipe.¹¹ There is a crucial difference, however: the development of first analog, then digital sound recording has made it possible to archive the contingent performances of musical compositions, but no similar mode of preservation exists for smell and taste.¹² While we can document a specific performance of a specific composition, we cannot document a specific performance of a specific recipe.

Taste and smell are chemical senses, and taste at least is a 'near' sense.¹³ We have no media for the storage, transmission and processing of chemical information, only for physical (in the sense of 'physics') information. So, we cannot build an archive that contains the best meals made by the most talented chefs, in the same way that we can collect the best performances of musical pieces. For a genre like jazz, incidentally, such recordings are far more important for transmission than notation, since jazz improvisations resist written notation. Perhaps someone should write a history of cuisine in analogy to jazz ... In any case, the fact that there are no media for chemical (gustatory, olfactory) information¹⁴ may be the reason for

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- 11 See Kittler (1999: xxiv-xxv) (translator's introduction): "For sights, sounds, and other data outside the traditional purview of language to be recorded, they had to be squeezed through the symbolic bottleneck of letters, and to be processed in meaningful ways they had to rely on the eyes and ears of hermeneutically conditioned readers. Reading, in that sense, was an exercise in scriptographically or typographically induced verbal hallucinations, whereby linguistic signs were commuted into sounds and images. With the advent of phonography and film, however, sounds and pictures were given their own, far more appropriate channels, resulting in a differentiation of data streams and the virtual abolition of the Gutenberg Galaxy."
- 12 A performance of music is fleeting, as is a meal which disappears – but in contrast to music the performance of a meal cannot be recorded (and even in music there remains an unbridgeable gap between the performance and its recording in terms of intensity and sound quality, not to mention the question of which performances are recorded in the first place). The solution of exhibiting reproductions, which is used for other perishable objects (such as mushrooms in a mushroom museum, see <https://www.pilzmuseum.de>) does not make sense for cooking: in the case of mushrooms, it is the visual appearance that is central, but a meal is meant to be tasted, so a reproduction in wax etc. is of no use for archiving it. There are of course wax reproductions of food, often to be found in window displays in Asian countries to represent the food on offer, but these do not serve the function of archiving a meal.
- 13 Since it is a 'near' sense, it is unclear how the information could be transmitted. Some interface directly connected to the tongue would be necessary, but such an interface would presumably produce too much discomfort ('somatic noise') to be usable.
- 14 In principle, it is possible to imagine that you could reconstruct chemical information, e.g. a smell, if you had all the information about its components, but this would be exceedingly difficult. See Gardner/Bartlett 1994, 212: "For example, there are some key flavour constituents of beer that are below the detection limits of most gas chromatographs. Moreover, the relationship between the physicochemical properties of the odorant molecules and their sensory impact is still unclear, in spite of a considerable amount of research effort."). What I mean when I say that there are no media for chemical information is that there is no technology

the comparatively low acceptance of cooking as an art and could also be the reason why smell and taste were always conceptualized as lower senses in philosophy (Korsmeyer 1999). But this also points to the limits of our 'physiocentric' notion of media, which is historically centered on physical transmission, be it vibrations of a medium (sound) or electromagnetic waves (sight).

These basic differences notwithstanding, Dollase insists: "The difference between the usual form of the recipe and what can actually be recorded will unavoidably be considerable." Therefore, the extended form of documentation Dollase proposes goes far beyond what 'usual recipes' can deliver. He explicitly recommends the use of film/video: "Step-by-step photos, usually considered a particularly precise element in cookbooks, should definitely be replaced with filmic documentation that captures all the steps." He describes the established practice, in some cookbooks at least, of showing photos of isolated steps of the cooking process. Although this might be helpful, Dollase is of course right in saying that complex movements of the hands, for example, cannot really be conveyed in this way. The purpose of visual or audiovisual documentation is to transmit the precise, and in conventional recipes often implicit, forms of manual knowledge applied in the preparation of food. In this sense, the additional forms of documentation can be seen as ways to store as many forms and aspects of 'tacit knowledge' as possible (which then of course loses its 'tacitness').¹⁵ But a video camera alone will not suffice: "It will be important to make this documentation under the guidance of a documenting specialist and not – as is the case in almost all television formats – to focus primarily on atmospherically dense, commercially motivated images." Specialists in culinary documentation are needed, who can focus the documentation on the aspects that are actually necessary and avoid the kitsch of a certain culinary aesthetics – for example, one that evokes a kind of 'Italianness' and associated emotional values in the representation of food, instead of conveying the precise information needed.¹⁶ This shows once again that a simple audiovisual reproduction is not sufficient; the documentation must be guided by expert knowledge and intersubjective standards for how the cooking is to be documented. "The process that is to be documented must become visible." Not only is trained subjectivity needed to recognize the excellence of the taste and smell

similar to a camera, with which you could take a kind of 'snapshot' of a smell and then share it with someone else to tell them how wonderful a dish smells. There are in fact technologies for the analysis of smells, so-called electronic noses. But these technologies do not store and reproduce smells, they simply analyze whether there are potentially problematic chemicals in the air and then sound an alarm (e. g. when food is starting to go bad).

- 15 Schmidt (2012) criticizes the notion of 'tacit knowledge' since there are local didactic practices – e.g. the use of photography to document manual skills – to store and transmit such knowledge, which is therefore not tacit. If it really were tacit, it could not be taught at all.
- 16 See Barthes (1977) for the famous analysis of an advertisement for a pasta sauce and the way it produces 'Italianness'.

of a given food, but also – and every theorist of documentary cinema would agree – trained experience is required to document the significant elements (and not the ‘atmospheric’ aspects) of a cooking process. Perhaps a reflexive documentary, which lays bare its own premises and the standards applied, would be a useful approach (for the reflexive documentary style of Harun Farocki, see Pantenburg 2015).

3. Documentation of Taste

But all these steps are still just the beginning. Now comes the most complicated part. “By far the most complicated area is the documentation of taste. It will essentially take place in three steps.” This is where the “threefold documentation” comes into play.

First of all, interestingly, Dollase recommends interviews with the relevant chefs: “The first point is a conversation with the respective protagonist about the motives of his work – especially related to the specific dish. This should include a discussion about how the dishes are to meant be eaten, with respect to sensory aspects, and what content they are intended to communicate (from memories of early childhood taste images to *geschmacklichen Irritationen* [literally ‘taste irritations’, meaning surprising, disconcerting or discordant flavors]).” Dollase’s endorsement of a qualitative method – doing interviews with chefs (for more on interviews, see Ruchatz 2014) – makes it clear that the operation of turning food into an art relies on mechanisms known from the art world. As we know already from art, this is helpful, but not sufficient. As with (audiovisual, performative) arts, the art of cooking might reveal the difference between the self-description of artists and their external appearance and the way it is interpreted by others. Interestingly, these self-descriptions include a kind of set of instructions for ‘how the dishes are meant to be eaten, with respect to sensory aspects’. This disrupts the naturalized ideology that dining is a purely private affair. It shows the cultural construction of food: one cannot simply eat by oneself. Perhaps some forms of eating are just private forms of absorbing nutrition and having gustatory and olfactory experiences, but many if not all are social forms of *Tischgesellschaft* (‘table company’) (Därmann/Lemke 2008),¹⁷ and of course cultural forms – media – that can communicate certain values, markers of distinction, or cultural concepts of eating. What courses are served and in what order? How is the food arranged on the plate, forming a composition similar to that of an image? (Autsch 2012) What message does this composition transmit? What message does the order of elements and the combination of different elements convey? How does the meal quote cultural traditions and transform them by ‘taste irritations’? How does it relate to ‘early childhood taste memories’,

17 Rirkrit Tiravanija and Daniel Spoerri are artists who reflected on this in very different ways.

thereby acquiring a kind of psychological dimension?¹⁸ Finally, a meal can also transmit political messages – for example, does it contain meat or not? (Adams 2010) This plethora of difficult questions shows how complicated Dollase's idea of a documentation of taste really is.

Secondly, Dollase demands the description and documentation of the taste: “The second point is the documentation of a tasting with the aim of an objective description of taste. This description should also be produced by specially trained specialists who are able to register flavors in all their complexity and in as many contexts as possible and put them into words. These descriptions must provide an overall picture that identifies as much data as possible, from the sensory details to the contexts of the culinary construction.” Here, once again, we encounter the problem that the flavor has to be transcribed into words, a notoriously difficult media transposition that leads to sometimes bizarre language games. And Dollase calls again for trained specialists – who are able to transform the subjective experience of taste into an ‘objective’ description.¹⁹ There is also a comparative perspective: “This objectifying analysis must be supplemented by a completely new kind of consideration, the goal of which is to describe the flavor of the work to be documented in its relationship to other flavors.” The existence of a standardized and in this sense ‘objective’ archive allows comparisons to be made – as in art history, where, since the invention and use of the double slide projection, it has been possible to make comparisons between artworks, standardized to the same scale. This then allows the construction of formal, stylistic or iconological histories of art and also panoramas of global art, in a *musée imaginaire* (Malraux 1961).

Dollase envisions a *musée imaginaire culinaire* of this kind. Not only does this pave the way for formal, stylistic histories of cooking and also panoramas of global food, but

[a] complete picture can only emerge when the topos²⁰ of the object is defined in relation to similar works, popular creations, or even industrial taste culture. It may become clear that works of the avant-garde are not considered ‘real food’ by many people, that classical works are considered increasingly foreign, or that high cuisine in general is becoming a detached cuisine because of a lack of reference to popular food culture, that concepts of quality are coming under pressure, or that a preference for certain works can be attributed to certain social groups.

18 For a Lacanian discussion of food see Zwart (2015). The famous ‘madeleine’ in Proust, the smell of which triggers involuntary memories, has to be mentioned here.

19 For ‘objectivity’ see Daston/Galison (1992).

20 Dollase uses the unusual expression ‘topos of the object’ in relation to food. I presume what he means by this is stereotypical concepts of taste.

The comparisons also reveal social stratifications of taste, which ultimately show the production of 'distinctions'²¹ and the way certain 'avant-garde' forms of cooking reach and challenge the limits of the ontology of food itself.²² The reception of these forms is therefore mixed – like the reception of avant-garde art. Finally, Dollase comes back to the formal, stylistic history of cooking, which allows the historical positioning of the work: "This cultural feedback of the culinary work is finally rounded off by a stylistic-historical classification, which describes the position of the work within the history of culinary art. The question of whether such an effort is really necessary should be superfluous in view of what we possess in this direction so far." The last sentence of the paper shows that Dollase is not satisfied with the contemporary state of things. Food is not documented well enough – so it cannot become a cultural heritage comparable to other forms of art.

Jürgen Dollase's short essay is rich and dense and shows that he is not only an outstanding restaurant critic, but also a theoretician on the infrastructures, media and media aesthetics of cooking and food. He addresses fundamental questions, which I have tried to sketch in this essay. The central problem is how culinary information (besides recipes) can be stored, and therefore how a culinary archive can be constructed. These are questions that are likely to remain central for all future study of media and food.

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- 21 See Bourdieu (1984) esp. pp. 68, 185 & 405 on culinary topics – which are rare in Bourdieu's famous book.
- 22 This is especially the case in 'molecular gastronomy', of which the work of Ferran Adrià is the most famous example (<https://elbullifoundation.com>). In this kind of avant-garde cuisine, several basic parameters of food are 'deconstructed' (as Dollase would put it) and critically reflected on in a way that is reminiscent of the reflexive strategies of modernist aesthetics. Another stunning example is the work of Stefan Wiesner (<https://www.stefanwiesner.ch>), see this comment: "Cuisine de terre", at least this is what it is for us, because Swiss Stefan Wiesner cooks with charcoal, bog oak, wood, stones, leather, rust, peat, tree resin, moonmilk, cow's horn or ambergris" ('Cuisine de terre', zumindest ist sie das für uns, denn der Schweizer Stefan Wiesner kocht mit Kohle, Mooreiche, Holz, Steinen, Leder, Rost, Torf, Baumharz, Mondmilch, Kuhhorn oder Amber, <https://www.foodhunter.de/stefan-wiesner-der-hexer-aus-der-schweiz/>).

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