

food, love, me, you
Anthony Hamilton

the scent of happy meal plastic toys
asteroid shaped cheap parmesan flakes
still-frozen corn bites in shepherd's pie
picking out the mushrooms from Sunday's Bourgingon

The form of a written letter is similar to the abundance of presenting a king a feast.

Texts, tweets, yelps describe the conciseness of meals—how to most conveniently find the best meal possible that matches a user set criteria.

Detachment masks itself as attachment in these latter forms. It's a continuation of detachment to the service industry. We know when someone genuinely cares about us. These contrived and concise moments of food have pushed us into a moment where there isn't time or labor to give a genuine care. As a hospitality professional, I don't see this as a knock on my profession rather the demands and expectations put on by convenience and concision over time it takes to care about someone, or in the case of food, something. It's the difference between being served at a restaurant versus an interest in a romantic partner. The reverberations and intensities of these experience carry a different weight. The way a conversation carries, the way we lose time with each.

I think we do know this in food. How do we feel when we get completely absorbed in eating, and enjoying a meal. A food that has been layered and structured with love is starkly distant from the profit-driven model of running hospitality operations. Operations, indeed, where corners and costs are cut with formulas fit for excel sheets.

This is just to say
*I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox*

and which
*you were probably
saving
for breakfast*

*Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold*

-William Carlos Williams

The emotional or affective criteria of how segments of the hospitality industry approach their job across cuisine types and price points. The preceding analysis mainly focuses on the overarching system we navigate, but doesn't take into count the quiet intensities of loving resistance that occur within it.

The bodily effects of consuming food are similar to ones of love, precisely being in love. Satisfied, relaxed, drunk/tipsy, sleepy, heart-racing, sweat on the back of your neck, salivating. Both give us life in different ways of filling and consuming our mind or body. This affective relationship between love and food is a starting point to ask nearby question to the topic and look at the status of hospitality, and speculate a future.

I'm excited about the speculative future that Lil Debs presents in their wine and cocktails menu. Specifically the tasting notes. The tasting notes diverge from the commercially, filler tasting notes that meet a customers demand to magical notes that deliver intensities.

The tasting notes that various institutions have normalized like rock melon, high tannins, and different fruit associations. These canonical terms have been replaced with affective statements.

Full body baptised
wood panelled car
nose kisses
midnight drugstore lights
country picnic sweater
Wine tasting notes from [Lil Deb's Oasis](#),

The training of going to food places, forming memories from cuisines, and receiving toys from fast food places. How we respond to our "Sunday dinner". What foods and scents give us memories. In example, McDonald's will always have a sense of excitement for me. It was rare Saturday mornings when my dad would take my sister and I to the McDonald's for breakfast and time in the playpen.

We cannot accomplish this exact replication as hospitality workers. What I am suggesting is that the subtle form, imagery, and language surrounding the conditions of contemporary hospitality work can evoke these memories and sentiments through affective means. The decor of the restaurant, using the slim inefficiency to change our language around food whether speaking or written, providing the histories of dishes, ingredients and connections whether they are known or unknown.

My uncle's recently recreated his grandmother's (my great-grandmother's) borscht through internet research. And he did, using tastes he remembered from childhood. And while it's unlikely this is the exact recipe, it doesn't stand as a placeholder for my family's borscht rather it now is the family recipe. I think these histories in food and hospitality are important even if they are only iterative memories, and can come across to people as love.

This may seem like additional labor for the already overworked. But I see it as an act of resistance. It slows the rate of food consumerism. It provides the love letter answer to food detachment. But this emotional labor can't just come from the hospitality workers, but also must be mimicked through language and image to create communities that appreciate this.

The scene of white English lads going for "an Indian" is, at once, mythic and actual. The ingredients of this scene of schismogenesis usually require the following: that the Anglo-Celtic men (the customers) should be inebriated; that the male South Asian waiters should be endlessly patient and polite; that the customers should be entirely ignorant of anything to do with South Asian culture (food culture, particular); that they should be racist but in an offhand manner rather than confrontationally; that the customers should order the hottest dish on the menu and not balk at its spiciness; that the customers should carry on vociferously drinking alcohol. Actuality is usually more complex than myth.¹

This is where dissonance occurs. Food's ability to provoke affective intensities similar to love, and memories of family and loved ones, comes to a clash with the pressures of consumption. As a media food invokes all five senses: the taste, the sound of chewing, the smell, the feel in hands and our mouths, the sight which leads to its innate ability to activate intensities so strongly which creates an eerie strangeness when provided as an Excel-line item.

Highmore does propose an abstract solution related to politics, and it can be looked at from a communal standpoint of a service-environment. The language has always been present to view restaurants and food commerces as communal with words like family, guests, hosts, and even love you being used repetitively. If these everyday terms can enhance the experience of the hospitality

¹ From Ben Highmore's Bitter After Taste. Schismogenesis is defined as the cultural processes arising from the meeting of distinct cultural groups or factions (often aggressively)

industry, can the everydayness of the imagery, history, and memory of food provide an avenue to diminishing the clash between affect and consumption, and rather create these two way avenues of care that line up with food's affective potential? This is where I see the potential of reviving recipes, and new writing in tasting notes: the intentional obscuring of information around food is an affective, portal to invite guest's memories, emotions, and thoughts, rather than dictate. It removes the canonical training of food and inserts space for play and the absurdity of food as a media.² They catalyze a desire to loving metaphors and deepen the entanglements of food experiences.

Citations:

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's *The Futurist Cookbook*

Ben Highmore's *Bitter Aftertaste*

Kathleen Stewart's *Ordinary Affects*

Lil Deb's Oasis

² See projects like the Futurist Cookbook