CHAPTER 5

The shock of the new: a sociology of *nouvelle cuisine*

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This chapter offers a sociological analysis of *nouvelle cuisine*. *Nouvelle cuisine* presents an interesting focus for the sociologist concerned with the relationship between food and culture. It has held culinary pre-eminence among certain sections of the middle class and is claimed by many commentators to have revolutionized the provision of French *haute cuisine* in the commercial hotel and catering industry.

Introduction

In recent years there has been a growth of academic sociological interest in the cultural significance of food and eating. Building on the early work of such pioneers of the field as Lévi-Strauss (1966) and Mary Douglas (1975), much of this research has been directed towards the everyday meanings attached to food in (mainly) domestic settings (Murcott, 1983). While of value to both the general theorist curious to elaborate the symbolic significance of food and eating

and the home economist/social nutritionist concerned with issues of family constitution, research to date has rarely taken as its focus the wider question of dining outside the home and is further limited by a characteristic focus on small samples of working-class subjects and 'everyday' food.

There are, of course, exceptions to this general tendency, notably Mennell's (1985) seminal historical study of the comparative development of British and French cuisine, Driver's (1983) semi-academic account of British domestic and restaurant cuisine in the period from 1940 and Finkelstein's (1989) analysis of restaurant dining. However, on the whole dining outside the home has been ignored by sociologists of food and eating and the commercial provision of food has suffered particular neglect.

This chapter offers a sociological analysis of *nouvelle cuisine* in the UK context. For many, *nouvelle cuisine* is regarded as the most rarefied of all forms of *haute cuisine*, epitomizing gastronomic excellence and good taste. At the same time, *nouvelle cuisine* has been a frequent focus for satirists. It is 'A child's portion served to an adult' (Beard and McKie, 1987). Even Paul Bocuse, a chef associated with the nouvelle style, has allegedly stated that 'The so-called *nouvelle cuisine* usually means not enough on your plate and too much on your bill' (quoted in Green, 1985). *Nouvelle cuisine* thus attracts adulatory enthusiasm and satirical derision in seemingly equal proportions. However, that it should attract such attention at all is significant since the role of French *haute cuisine* in the culinary life of the UK remains restricted to a small social circle.

The contention of this chapter is that *nouvelle cuisine* is important as a social and culinary phenomenon, the importance for sociological analysis deriving from its adoption by certain sections of the middle class. Further, in all its many forms, *nouvelle cuisine* remains above all else experimental: it has seemingly neither become institutionalized as the successor to, or next stage of development, in conventional *haute cuisine*, nor been wholly rejected, though some writers detect that the very concept is on the wane. In this respect, the *nouvelle* style provides a useful focus for analysing processes of change in *haute cuisine*, particularly in the light of *nouvelle cuisine*'s position in both restaurant and domestic dining.

Finally, the *nouvelle* style is of interest because of the nature of the market relationship that exists between producer and consumer. *Nouvelle cuisine* is very much a producer's product, yet it has been embraced by an audience willing to be dictated to by suppliers – not perhaps altogether unusual in a world where the power of the latter is routinely used to mould consumer tastes, but curious in that the market for *nouvelle cuisine* is normally regarded as one characterized by considerable discrimination and exacting demands.

The characteristics of *nouvelle cuisine*

Use of the term *nouvelle cuisine* is, ironically, not new but can be traced to the 1730s and cookery books of the chefs Menon, Marin and La Chapelle (Mennell, 1985, p. 163). It resurfaced in the 1880s when it was associated with the generation of chefs dominated by Escoffier. In recent time, the term *nouvelle cuisine* has been associated with the championing by French food writers Henri Gault and Christian Millau of styles of cookery practised by, *inter alia*, Paul Bocuse, Michel Guerard and Roger Vergé. According to Barr and Levy (1984), Gault and Millau christened this style of cookery in a 1973 article entitled 'Vive la *nouvelle cuisine* française' published in their gastronomic magazine. Despite the diversity of culinary styles represented by the work of alleged practitioners of *nouvelle cuisine*, in a later (1976) publication, Gault and Millau identified 10 characteristics common to this gastronomic phenomenon (Mennell, 1985, pp. 163–164).

(a) Unnecessary complication in cookery was rejected and, in respect of technique, led to a favouring of poaching, baking and steaming.
(b) Cooking times for many commodities (notably fish, seafood, game birds, veal, green vegetables and paté) were reduced, aiming, so Mennell argues, to 'reveal forgotten flavours' (1985, p. 163) as a result of more naturalistic cooking.
(c) The best ingredients were used wherever possible, purchased at markets daily.
(d) Menus were shortened and the long menus of large hotels abandoned.

(e) Strong marinades for meat were rejected and game was served fresh not high, a trend doubted in its effect by Barr and Levy on the grounds of the reduced palatability likely to result from such a practice (1984, p. 63).
(f) Rich and heavy sauces were eliminated, especially béchamel and espagnole. Use of flour roux was regarded with disdain and sauces were made by reducing cooking liquids and finishing with cream or butter while making wider use of herbs, lemon juice and vinegar in the dressing of dishes in an effort both to bring out the flavours of the commodities uses and avoid a perceived tendency in existing French *haute cuisine* to mask poor ingredients with heavy sauces.
(g) Inspiration for new dishes was drawn from regional cookery rather than Parisian *haute cuisine*, though this tended to preclude heavy peasant-style dishes such as casseroles.
(h) Modern kitchen technology was used, if only experimentally. Food processors, microwave ovens and the use of frozen foods were not precluded.
(i) The dietetic implications of food were an important element of menu planning. Red meats (excepting lamb) were frowned upon and frying was used, if at all, only sparingly. Use of salt and sugar was reduced.
(j) The new chefs had creativity in abundance and a premium was placed on constant innovation and experimentation.

To this list Mennell (1985, p. 164) adds a further point – that most of the *nouveaux cuisiniers* identified by Gault and Millau were chef-patrons, owners of their own businesses. Mennell accounts for this in terms of a *general* gastronomic rebellion against the culinary orthodoxy of Escoffier, as enshrined in the international hotel industry (an orthodoxy that was and still is the primary influence on culinary education and practice, at least in the UK) and the more *specific* early association and training of several leading practitioners of *nouvelle cuisine*. Mennell writes:

> Several of its leaders were students of the great Fernand Point at the Pyramide in Vienne, and went on like him to own relatively small restaurants in provincial towns. Perhaps it was inevitable that the bureaucratic pressures and accounting preoccupations within modern hotel

> chains would today make them unpromising sites for cooking at the highest level, however suitable an environment they had given Escoffier. Accountancy plays little part in *nouvelle cuisine*. By its nature it is expensive: it requires the finest ingredients and is extremely labour intensive. (Mennell, 1985, p. 164).

For writers such as Mennell (1985), Barr and Levy (1984) and Levy (1986), *nouvelle cuisine* is the latest stage in the procedural development of French *haute cuisine*. The concept of 'process' is preferred to labels implying more radical change since it is argued that, historically, there is a discernible tendency for the development of cuisines to be characterized by an overall trend towards increasing refinement – manifest in *nouvelle cuisine* through the aforementioned simplicity in the use of fewer ingredients with more discrimination, enhancement of natural flavours in cooking and the production of dishes which are more differentiated in flavour because they are less masked by the use of basic sauces (Mennell, 1985, p. 165).

Acceptance of this view of culinary development is not unproblematic for it encourages the idea of such development as inevitable. It is a status quo view and one that has led Murcott (1986) to detect foodie partisanship in Mennell's (1985) work (that is a lack of academic detachment for the subject matter). Such criticism is not without foundation. A fundamental problem with the position of Mennell and other commentators is their failure to disengage fully the social and nutritional/culinary dimensions to Gault and Millau's '10-point plan'. The 10 characteristics of *nouvelle cuisine* do not simply embody principles of *culinary* philosophy and technique but reflect a range of social values and concerns that go unelaborated. For convenience, these will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter in terms of the social construction, social production and social consumption of *nouvelle cuisine*, with the aim being to illuminate the cultural rather that the culinary basis of this style of cookery.

The social construction of *nouvelle cuisine*

In social as well as in culinary and nutritional terms, *nouvelle cuisine* has been presented as superior to both previous

traditions in *haute cuisine* and other forms of food co-existing contemporarily with it. In a moral sense, *nouvelle cuisine* is not only intrinsically 'good', it is the very best there is. In much the same way as working-class mothers in a study by Murcott (1982) viewed 'cooked dinners' (comprising meat, potatoes, vegetables and gravy) as vital to the maintenance of family health, promoters of *nouvelle cuisine* emphasize the goodness of the food and its centrality to the well-being of those who possess a refined palate. Such goodness derives from the purity of the ingredients employed and the methods used in cooking them.

The 'goodness' of *nouvelle cuisine* in this context reflects well-documented social anthropological evidence highlighting the preoccupation in many social milieux with concepts of impurity. To this extent, *nouvelle cuisine* can be seen as akin to a social purity movement, concerned with recapturing some golden age cookery and/or achieving some rapport with that which is held to be truly representative of nature and naturalness – both elements being signalled in the emphasis on simplicity and freshness and also in the utilization by chefs of regional (country) cuisine for inspiration. This 'back to Eden' analogy must not be overdrawn, yet appeals to a more natural past in cookery are an important element in the promotion of *nouvelle cuisine*.

This can be seen by taking a second example of the way in which *nouvelle cuisine* is accorded superiority by it proponents: by the emphasis place on the exceptional creativity and artistry of chefs and their products. Constant innovation, experimentation and self-sacrifice by chef practitioners are all factors advanced in support of the proposition that *nouvelle cuisine* is not merely cookery but involved 'art' beyond ordinary culinary craft. Not only the production but the presentation of *nouvelle cuisine* is depicted as an artistic activity lying somewhere between painting and sculpture. The use of the finest ingredients and the best skills necessitates use of the best display techniques. Thus as Levy (1986) notes, sauces are placed under, never over, the food. To this might be added the observation that *nouvelle cuisine* dishes tend to be highly sculpted, a bas-relief in a sea of colour (though the ubiquitous and clichéd octagonal plates that characterized early '*nouvelle* photography' seem to have fallen into relative disuse).

In the mythology of *nouvelle cuisine*, chefs' artistry is elevated to a new status as Levy shows:

> … the arrangement of the plate became the duty (and pleasure) of the cook, not the waiter – and food as art was born. Silver service died, as chefs everywhere made pictures on plates. (Levy, 1986, p. 139)

Mennell (1985, pp. 144–145) argues a view similar to the above while at the same time cautioning against 'great men' theories of cuisine and supplying detailed evidence of artistic preoccupations in *haute cuisine* going back several hundred years. Therefore, the putative artistic superiority and innovation of the *nouvelle* style relative to previous traditions in *haute cuisine* is, in historical terms, nothing more than the most recent manifestation of established practice.

Earlier in this section, an analogy was drawn between *nouvelle cuisine* and social purity movements. One characteristic of the latter is that members are bound together to some extent by perceived threats of disapprobation and disapproval from wider society, however real such threats may or may not be. To some extent, this attitude is found in many writings on *nouvelle cuisine*. Here a distinction is made between 'true' *nouvelle cuisine* and 'genuine' practitioners and sham *nouvelle cuisine* and charlatans, as in the following remark by Levy (1986, p. 139).

> The pioneers of *nouvelle cuisine* stressed the freshness of the ingredients. Second rate imitators stressed their expense. *Nouvelle cuisine* was concerned with health – avoiding refined flour, reducing fats and shunning fried food. The band-wagon jumpers-on lowered calories by making portions minute. *Nouvelle cuisine* chefs like to experiment with new ingredients and techniques. Their sedulous apers valued novelty above all else.

A similar view is taken by Mennell (1985, p. 164).

> Perhaps it is unavoidable that as its ideas are adopted by lesser talents in less liberal contexts, *nouvelle cuisine* too will undergo routinization and become a dogma.

Such responses emphasize the extent to which the moral integrity and superiority of *nouvelle cuisine* is seen as liable to dilution through the cheapening of content and method and the degradation of form. Attempts to maintain the integrity of what amounts to an ideal of *nouvelle cuisine* reinforces its exclusivity. In the strictest sense, however, *nouvelle cuisine* cannot be seen as completely analogous to the 'ideal type' social purity movement because, as the preceding quotations suggest, perceived threats of dilution come less from outside the community of professional chefs than from within it.

Here one of the many paradoxes of *nouvelle cuisine* is encountered, namely that the emphasis on creativity and individuality, while embracing *generally* systematic principles, has so far eschewed the *specific* systemization of dishes and recipes. No formalized repertoire of dishes that represents *nouvelle cuisine* exists. Many practitioners have, of course, published their recipes but to date there is an absence of anything approaching the status of those manuals that enshrine the orthodoxy of Escoffierian cookery for apprentice and practising chefs, for example the *Larousse Gastronomique*.

While too much should not be made of the point, it does seem likely that any such systemization is unlikely to occur. If precise culinary and recipe standards were set then this would create an operational as opposed to theoretical orthodoxy and *nouvelle cuisine* would lose what makes it distinctive, since constant innovation, creativity and experimentation would have been abandoned in favour of a flexible nucleus of 'standard' dishes.

Perceived threats of dilution from within the professional community of *nouveaux cuisiniers* is perhaps best understood as a manifestation of competition between practitioners, serving as a constant reminder of the need to be 'true' to the general characteristics of the art. At the same time, insistence of adherence to general principles serves not only as a mode of critical censure but as a way of further differentiating *nouvelle* practitioners from other chefs and cooks, the 'sedulous apers' of lesser skill and talent. In both cases, the threat of dilution forms part of the rhetoric of individualism that surrounds the production of *nouvelle cuisine*. It is to this that attention now turns.

The social production of *nouvelle cuisine*

As shown in the previous section, *nouvelle cuisine* is not produced in a social vacuum. Culinary production is conceptualized and executed in a social context which in turn reflects the values, beliefs and ideologies of the producers. This is what is meant here by the social production of *nouvelle cuisine*. At the heart of this process is the concept of individualism. Individualism plays a crucial role in the rhetoric and self-image of *nouveaux cuisiniers*. This is also true of those consumers of *nouvelle cuisine*, as will be shown later.

The rhetoric of individualism that surrounds the production of *nouvelle cuisine* is embodied in a set of tightly interlocking mythologies (in the Barthesian sense) (Barthes, 1972) about the organization of culinary production. The first of these concerns the standard account of the origins of modern *nouvelle cuisine* which supposedly lie in the efforts of an initially small group of independent chef-patrons who, dissatisfied and/or despondent with the potential for practising their craft in the highly standardized settings of large hotels, chose alternative routes to self-fulfilment, being joined, as the fashionability of *nouvelle cuisine* spread, by similar entrepreneurs.

The concept of 'entrepreneur' plays a significant if submerged role in the mythology of *nouvelle cuisine*, for the practitioner is hardly ever an entrepreneur through choice. Rather, the business-owning route is forced upon the practitioner: *nouveaux cuisiniers* are portrayed as unappreciated artists, frustrated with an establishment that does not understand them and forced (initially at least) into realizing their talents in the restaurant-industry equivalent of a garret. This is the chef as individualistic hero and entrepreneur, risking all for his or her talent. It is also a highly questionable view even when extended, in modified form, to embrace those chefs employed by others (sympathetic to new cookery) in small restaurants and hotels.

While it may be true that the varieties of new cookery are more readily found in small owner-managed operations (irrespective of whether the chef is owner or employee), there is no evidence to suggest that such businesses are any more or less risky than any owner-managed operation in the UK catering trade. The implicit view that *nouveaux cuisiniers* risk all for

their art in becoming chef-patrons, and that this is a key factor differentiating them from other (less talented) chefs, does not bear scrutiny. Indeed, as Chivers (1973) has pointed out, the desire to own a business is widespread not only among chefs but certain other catering occupations as well. Nevertheless, the concept of individualism applies no less in the analysis of *nouveaux cuisiniers* than other chefs. It is essentially a *petit-bourgeois* notion of individualism embodying the notion of the 'little' man or woman attempting to conserve space for themselves in a world in which both state and society are increasingly seen as impinging upon their liberties.

In the context of the social production of *nouvelle cuisine*, this can, secondly, be further illustrated by reference to the self-perception of *nouveaux cuisiniers* in respect of the rest of the culinary profession and catering trade. As previously observed, *nouvelle cuisine* chefs are seen as being possessed of exceptional creativity, a creativity that marks them out from the majority of their peers. No systematic explanation of these exceptional talents has yet been advanced. What is made clear is that such creativity cannot flourish in a culinary establishment so clearly linked, historically with upper and upper-middle class values that assumed pre-eminence at the end of the nineteenth century and has led to the perpetuation of a culinary aristocracy that derives its authority from the power and control it has consistently exerted over professional training and occupational culture. Each initiate's career must progress through a relatively clearly defined number of stages in an occupational hierarchy predicated more on position, status and time-serving than on creative talent and innovation.

If the culinary system established by Escoffier reflects the values of the old European aristocracies and *haute bourgeoisie*, then *nouvelle cuisine* is the cuisine of the new and essentially provincial middle class. The tendency of *nouveaux cuisiniers* to turn from metropolitan to regional sources for culinary inspiration is a reflection of conscious preoccupations not only with 'naturalness' but with markets. It is no coincidence that the French progenitors of modern *nouvelle cuisine* were themselves of largely *petit-bourgeois* origin and set up business in the provinces. The characteristics of *nouvelle cuisine* so carefully identified by Gault and Millau reflect the sensibilities of men

whose livelihoods were ultimately bound up with class and geographical considerations. In the UK context, as elsewhere, time has perhaps eroded the significance of such associations, though it is worth noting that many of those practitioners of *nouvelle cuisine* who are judged among 'the best' are based as much in the provinces as in metropolitan areas.

The combination of ideas of risk and entrepreneurship constitutes a potent force in the self-perception of *nouveaux cuisiniers* and, in turn, their perceptions of others. This, not only is the chef-patron a heroically creative artistic refugee, but one who is prepared to abandon the 'subsidy' to his talent supplied by the culinary establishment (and its conventions) and élite patronage, linking personal reputation to entrepreneurial flair.

Risk and entrepreneurship combined with artistic freedom are all expressions of the rhetoric of individualism that surrounds the production of *nouvelle cuisine*. All three are closely linked to a fourth concept, that of 'responsibility'. The producer of *nouvelle cuisine* as chef-businessman takes full responsibility for production, for the quality of the product and for the standards of delivery of the product to the consumer, all central tenets of modern *petit-bourgeois* culture with its emphasis on personal service and customized products. Waiting staff are, allegedly, marginalized.

In conventional restaurants, the purchase of a meal also entails the purchase of service, traditionally supplied by an intermediary – the waiter/waitress. In *nouvelle cuisine*, the role of waiting staff is reduced, with the chef taking skills from them, denying them one of their principle functions – the arrangement of food on the plate of the consumer. Consumers do not participate in the rituals of dining out in a restaurant serving *nouvelle cuisine* for the service, as conventionally construed. What might be termed 'the food is less than brilliant but the service is outstanding' syndrome disappears under *nouvelle cuisine* which, with the close control of the chef, approximates to a solo form of performing art: the chef reappropriates his or her skills at the expense of the waiter who is deskilled.

As part of the mythology of *nouvelle cuisine*, it works rather well to suggest that chefs have reasserted themselves, put waiters in their place and drawn closer to the consumer is assuming responsibility for their work. In fact, if anything, the

marginalization of the waiter under *nouvelle cuisine* can be seen as part of a much wider trend in the catering trade towards concentration of capital in the kitchen. In the case of *nouvelle cuisine*, this may be human capital as opposed to plant and equipment, but the process is not in any way extraordinary. Waiters have been undergoing a process of marginalization for years, the trend towards plated service going back at least three decades. Further, the demand for silver service skills persists at virtually all levels of the catering industry and, in many types of operation, waiters have acquired new work tasks including, in many instances, those involving cookery.

In this section, the ideological context in which *nouvelle cuisine* is produced has been explored in terms of the mythological qualities – values, beliefs, images – imputed to the producers, both by themselves and others. What needs to be stressed here is that the extent to which the topics discussed are 'true' or 'false' is largely irrelevant and probably impossible to establish, although the extent to which some are potentially more or less accurate can be determined. What is significant is the extent to which as a body of folklore, the themes examined support an image of *nouvelle cuisine* and its practitioners which links closely to consumers' concerns, as the following section shows.

The social consumption of *nouvelle cuisine*

Both in its production and consumption *nouvelle cuisine* is a middle-class cuisine. As Barr and Levy (1984, p. 65) note, eating *nouvelle cuisine* displays one's income. There is nothing unusual about this: participating in the ritual of public dining at the higher levels has always been a way of evidencing distinctiveness (Riley, 1984). However, within the bourgeoisie, such methods of marking distinctiveness have seemingly been more closely directed to a display of refinement and good taste primarily for the benefit of those similarly placed in the class structure (Riley, 1984, p. 103). Financial security, that is the ability to afford *haute cuisine*, is taken for granted and financial status is marginalized in favour of expressions of class solidarity predicated on shared assumptions about 'good food' and 'good taste'.

Nouvelle cuisine is slightly different. Its consumption is no less an implicit expression of financial security, for *nouvelle cuisine*

is very expensive, but the 'value ratio' between money and the content and quality of *nouvelle cuisine* expresses brasher values. They are values which somewhat paradoxically express individuals' membership of the middle classes while at the same time distancing themselves from it, for *nouvelle cuisine* is the cuisine of the *arriviste* middle classes, predominantly the young and upwardly mobile with high disposable incomes and a desire to differentiate themselves from both the established (usually older) and competing class factions.

Eating *nouvelle cuisine* food does not so much display a person's level of income but more the manner in which it was acquired. Favouring *nouvelle cuisine* entails elements of risk on the part of the consumer as it does on the part of the producer: the risk of lampooning that comes less from the general public than a variety of commentators who, frequently, both promote and sneer at the new cooking: and the risk that bedevils all catering, namely that there will be shortfall between expectations and reality. These minor risk elements are an important way of cementing an affinity between chefs and their public. The basis of this is a mutual empathy deriving from a shared mythology that each is different, slightly superior, part of the (coming) mainstream of their professional and/or class group and yet still slightly peripheral, independent, creative and experimental.

The naturalness of *nouvelle cuisine* also performs an extremely important function in terms of class and economic values. The stress is on *nouvelle cuisine* as restrained, aesthetic gourmet cooking and traditional *haute cuisine* as excessive, ersatz and gourmandesque. *Nouvelle cuisine* may be expensive but symbolically it is not the food of the gastronomically greedy. The naturalness/health motifs de-emphasize guilt aspects imputed to traditional *haute cuisine* with its emphasis on richness, adulteration and luxuriance embedded in a complex system of excessive ritual.

Nouvelle cuisine is a sanitized gastronomy, the artistry of which is naturalistic and representational, redolent of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's attempt in the nineteenth century to return to more basic, pastoral values and truth in colour and form. For consumers, it is the non-vegetarian version of 'eating virtue' (Atkinson, 1983). It is also the cuisine of the 'can do'

generation, of the bullish middle-class professionals. And here perhaps lies the greatest of the paradoxes that is *nouvelle cuisine*, for while it is essentially valorized as a chef's medium, the new cookery is intrinsically ephemeral and insubstantial. Anybody *can* do it, as is testified by the extent and frequency to which *nouvelle cuisine* is transported into the home:

> … think what it means for the home cook when something only needs 40 seconds cooking. It means your friend can be with you from preparation to table. It turns cooking into theatre. (Barr and Levy, 1984, p. 65).

The mythologies that surround the social production of *nouvelle cuisine* are far from invalidated because of its transferability between restaurant and home. On the contrary, its essentially democratic accessibility confers all the qualities associated with the professional producers of *nouvelle cuisine* on the consumer-amateur. That anybody can cook naturally, artistically and creatively if they follow general principles that do not detract from the qualities of the professional purveyor but buttresses them, for imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and the possibility of imitation arises from the leadership of the professionals. *Nouvelle cuisine* restores cults of the personality as a central feature of gastronomy after a period in which, post-Escoffier, culinary Taylorism had disassociated the means of production from the producers.

Conclusions

A charitable interpretation of prior academic and quasi-academic interest in French *haute cuisine* in general and *nouvelle cuisine* in particular would be that it is motivated by a concern for a widespread democratic uplifting of people's taste (Murcott, 1988). Less charitably, the expenditure of so much energy on analysing the supposed quality of *haute cuisine* can be seen not only as élitist (in ignoring popular cuisine) but as neglectful of more important questions concerning the production of *haute cuisine*, such as exploitation of the labour used in producing it and the extent to which the persistence of a dominant culinary paradigm encourages chauvinism and ethnocentricity. More

important yet is the 'true' nature of *nouvelle cuisine*. Its promoters are guilty of extraordinary intellectual liberties. Ignoring the dietary patterns of the majority, Barr and Levy write:

> It looked like a fashion, but something *had* happened. Cooking had moved into its next phase. The cooking of the industrial revolution was over. The North had lost. The sunnier Catholic and Eastern countries won the battle of the estomac. (1984, p. 64).

Similarly both writers argue that:

> Some fuddy-duddies still think that *nouvelle cuisine* is a fad that will be replaced. (Barr and Levy, 1984, p. 65).

However, in another article, Levy (1986, p. 143) detects that *nouvelle cuisine* contains within it its own seeds of destruction. It is difficult to take seriously these outpourings on *nouvelle cuisine*, if only because in analytic terms they are part of the problem rather than the solution. *Nouvelle cuisine*, to more so than its *haute cuisine* predecessors, is a social construct rather than a culinary one, reflecting the narrow concerns of, and changes within, the middle class. *Nouvelle cuisine* is the fish and chips, hamburger, pizza and pancake of the middle classes. It may become an integral part of the culinary scene but it will always be on the periphery of 'serious' food and eating, remaining far more interesting for its sociological, rather than gastronomic significance.

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